

# ***Dandelye— or, Beneath this River's Tempo'd Time We Walk***

**SAUN SANTIPREECHA**

**Solo Exhibition (July 1-29, 2023)**

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## **POETRY READING TEXTS**

Poetry and literature have always played a large role in my life and creative explorations. A large portion of my process revolves around reading, whether poetry, fiction, non-fiction or theory, and they form a web through and within which I work. I'm also fascinated with language itself as one of the most accessible materials with which to work. These are some of the poems that have influenced, either directly, in relation to, or created in response to, works within this exhibition.

### **E. Sitwell, *Three Rustic Elegies***

#### **I. The Little Ghost Who Died For Love**

***From The Collected Poems of Edith Sitwell (published 1949-1954)***

*Read by Erika Sukstorf*

*For Allanah Harper*

*Deborah Churchill, born 1678, was hanged in 1708 for shielding her lover in a duel. His opponent was killed, her lover fled to Holland, and she was hanged in his stead, according to the law of the time. The chronicle said, 'Though she died at peace with God, this malefactor could never understand the justice of her sentence, to the last moment of her life.'*

'Fear not, O maidens, shivering  
As bunches of the dew-drenched leaves  
In the calm moonlight... it is the cold sends quivering  
My voice, a little nightingale that grieves.

Now Time beats not, and dead Love is forgotten...  
The spirit too is dead and dank and rotten,

And I forget the moment when I ran  
Between my lover and the sworded man—

Blinded with terror lest I lose his heart.  
The sworded man dropped, and I saw depart

Love and my lover and my life...he fled  
And I was strung and hung upon the tree.  
It is so cold now that my heart is dead  
And drops through time... night is too dark to see

Him still.... But it is spring; upon the fruit-boughs of your lips,  
Young maids, the dew like India's splendor drips.  
Pass by among the strawberry beds, and pluck the berries  
Cooled by the silver moon; pluck boughs of cherries

That seem the lovely lucent coral bough  
(From streams of starry milk those branches grow)  
That Cassiopeia feeds with her faint light,  
Like Ethiopia ever jeweled bright.

Those lovely cherries do enclose  
Deep in their sweet hearts the silver snows,

And the small budding flowers upon the trees  
Are filled with sweetness like the bags of bees.

Forget my fate... but I, a moonlight ghost,  
Creep down the strawberry paths and seek the lost

World, the apothecary at the Fair.  
I, Deborah, in my long cloak of brown,  
Like the small nightingale that dances down  
The cherried boughs, creep to the doctor's bare  
Booth... cold as ivy in the air,

And, where I stand, the brown and ragged light  
Holds something still beyond, hid from my sight.

Once, plumaged like the sea, his swanskin head  
Had wintry white quills..."Hearken to the Dead...  
I was a nightingale, but now I croak  
Like some dark harpy hidden in night's cloak  
Upon the walls; among the Dead, am quick;  
Oh, give me medicine, for the world is sick;  
Not medicines, planet-spotted like fritillaries

For country sins and old stupidities,  
Nor potions you may give a country maid  
When she is lovesick... love in earth is laid,  
Grown dead and rotten"... so I sank me down,  
Poor Deborah in my long cloak of brown.  
Though cockrow marches, crying of false dawns,  
Shall bury my dark voice, yet still it mourns  
Among the ruins—for it is not I,  
But this old world, is sick and soon must die!

Being one of my favorite poets, Edith Sitwell's poetry and her musical explorations of language and poetry are never very far from my mind and her poetic 'trptych' *Three Rustic Elegies* ended up completing the loop of my own triptych *Three Elegies*. For this event I have chosen the first of the triptych to be read, *The Little Ghost Who Died For Love*.

This poem speaks to similar themes as Akhmatova's *Requiem*—another poem which began my explorations on the triptych—on the traumas and violence inflicted on women, their stoicism and strength, and the systems which ensnare them, which for me very personally resonates with my own mother's traumatic experiences in Thailand and my childhood growing up watching her own resilience, stoicism and strength in the face of it.

### **A. Rimbaud, Le bateau ivre (The Drunken Boat)**

**1871**

***From Arthur Rimbaud: The Drunken Boat Selected Writings (2022)***

***Translated by Mark Polizzotti***

*Read by Luc Trahand*

As I glided down impassive Rivers,  
I no longer felt boatmen guiding my path:  
Whooping Redskins had used them for targets,  
And nailed their nude corpses to the colorful masts.

I couldn't care less about the crew or its cargo,  
Flemish grain or English twill.  
When my boatmen were gone and the ruckus all over,  
The Rivers carried me at my will.

In the mad undulations of furious tides,  
In the winter I ran, duller than a child's brain!  
And in spring, the Peninsulas wrenching apart  
Had never split to such triumphant strains.

My maritime wakings were blessed by the storm.  
Lighter than cork I danced on the waves  
That some call the eternal rollers of victims,  
For ten nights, never missing the lamps' stupid rays!

Sweeter than to children the flesh of sour apples,  
The green water entered my hull made of pine  
And of stains of old vomit and indigo wine  
Cleansed me, while scattering rudder and grapple.

And from then on, I immersed myself in the Poem  
Of the Sea, infused by stars and lactescent,  
Devouring the green azure; where a floater pale  
And happy, a pensive carcass, might descend;

Where, suddenly tinting the blueness, the frenzies  
And slow rhythms beneath the dazzle of day,  
Stronger than liquor, vaster than lyres,  
Love's bitter redness ferment and decay!

I know the skies bursting with flashes, and winds,  
And the swells and currents: I know the dark eve,  
Dawn in its glory and nations of doves,  
And I've witnessed what men only thought they had seen!

I've seen the low sun, stained with mystical horrors,  
Illuminate with frozen violet strains,  
Like actors in dramas from antiquity,  
The distant waves rolling their shuddering panes!

I dreamed of green nightscapes with dazzling snows,  
A kiss slowly rising to the eyes of the sea,  
The circulation of remarkable sap,  
And quick phosphorescence in yellow and blue!

For months did I trail, like hysterical cattle,  
The fierce swelling surges assaulting the reefs,  
Not thinking that Virgins' luminous feet  
Might drive on the muzzle of those sluggish Seas!

I crashed, don't you know, into fabulous Floridas  
Where flowers combine with the eyes of black panthers  
In human skin! Rainbows stretched taut like reins  
'Neath the surface of oceans to greenish-blue herds!

I've seen great fermenting swamps, and fish traps  
Amid bulrushes where a Leviathan rots!  
I've seen torrents of water fall into flat calm,  
And distant cascades rushing toward the abyss!

Glaciers, silver suns, pearly tides, ember skies!  
Hideous wrecks in the depths of brown gulfs  
Where monstrous serpents devoured by vermin  
Fall from gnarled trees, giving off black perfumes!

I wish I could show these dorados to children,  
These gold fish in blue tides, and these others that sing.  
—Foaming floescence has lulled my unmooring  
And ineffable winds sometimes given me wings.

At times, martyr weary of poles and of zones,  
That vast sea whose sobbing caused my gentle roll  
Lifted toward me its dark flowers with suckers pale  
And I stayed, like a woman bent down on her knees...

Like an isle, tossing around on my decks the complaints  
And droppings of mocking black birds with blond eyes.  
And I navigated, when through my fragile rigging  
Drowned bodies came creeping down backward to sleep!

Now I, a boat lost 'neath the swirled hair of coves,  
By hurricanes tossed into featherless ether,  
I, whom Hanseatic ships or clad Monitors  
Wouldn't have fished from the depths of the sea;

Free, smoking, and rising in violet mists,  
I, who pierced through the red sky like a wall  
That offers—fine sweetmeats for proper young poets—  
The mucus of azure and lichens of sun;

Who sailed on, a mad plank, dappled with crescents  
Electric, escorted by seahorses black,  
When July crushes down as if under a cudgel  
Skies of ultramarine with blistering funnels;

I, who trembled on hearing the moans from afar  
Of the heavy Maelstroms and Behemoths in rut,  
Spinner eternal of blue listlessness,  
Of Europe I long for the old parapets!

I've seen archipelagos made up of stars!  
And isles whose mad skies to the wanderer open:  
—On those depthless nights do you sleep and depart,  
Golden birds by the millions, O Vigor to come?

But enough of my tears! The Dawn is distressing.  
Every moon is atrocious, and bleak every sun:  
Bitter love has swelled me with dizzying torpors.  
Let me go to the sea! Let my keel come undone!

If I miss any water in Europe, it's the puddle  
Black and cold, at the hour when day slowly dies,  
And a squatting child laden with sorrow lets loose  
A boat light and frail like a May butterfly.

Waves, no longer can I, washed with your langour,  
Follow the wake of the twill-bearing crafts,  
Nor cross through the hubris of pennants and banners,  
Nor drift past the haunted eyes of prison rafts.

There are many poems of Rimbaud's that I love but *Le bateau ivre* carries so much significance for me, particularly the ending of this epic and magnificent adventure of this boat with a little boy's paper boat in a puddle—with the remnants of home. For me it's one of the most moving poems which speak of a coming of age—both the eagerness and the bitterness, and of the dreams and fantasies, the hopes and curiosities all children have, broken through adolescence, illumined by the realization of illusion, and the need to return and yet at the same time to break the dream—through it all, the child's paper boat stays with us throughout our lives.

## **Phra Phutthaloetla Naphalai, *Sang Thong Fragment***

**written approximately in between 1809-1824**

*Read in Thai melodic tradition by Sudtee Teesud*

To my knowledge there has not been a translation of this fragment into English. This fragment is taken from *Sang Thong*, a famous tale from one of the many lives of the Buddha which many Thais grow up with and has always been one of my personal favorites despite some of its contentious motifs, as seen from today's eyes. This fragment composed by King Rama II, Phra Phuttaloetla Naphalai (who was himself a great poet), for the royal court theater group in between the years 1809 and 1824, details one of the most moving episodes in the story (and of my childhood), a moment where the main character Sang Thong (a child born within a shell) who had fled home and was raised by a kind and loving ogre, Nang Panturat (who had been disguising herself as human), discovers her real identity and decides to flee her. This fragment is the farewell between them and their last moments together, between a mother who isn't his real mother, a son who isn't her real son, between their bond which, despite his love for her, he leaves. She gifts him her most prized magic, literally scoring it into a mountainside, before, after many pleas, cries until she literally dies of a broken heart. Thus begins the rest of Sang Thong's adventures, but I was always most drawn to this mother-son fragment, the inevitable moment of growing up, leaving home, but also a moment of reckoning of identity and belonging, in this case between two characters of different species. In a strange way, this relates to another favorite novel growing up for me, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, also a story of familial bond between two characters of different 'species' and the very human (and inhuman) bond between them.

## **A.Akhmatova, *Requiem***

**1935-1961**

***From Cardinal Points vol. 11 (2021)***

***Translated by Stephen Capus***

*Read by Erika Sukstorf*

*Unmoved by the glamour of alien skies,  
By asylum in faraway cities, I  
Chose to remain with my people: where  
Catastrophe led them, I was there.*

1961

In the terrible years of the Yezhov terror I spent seventeen months queuing outside the prisons of Leningrad. On one occasion someone "recognized" me. It was a woman who was standing near me in the queue, with lips of a bluish color, and who, of course, had never before heard my name. And now, waking from

that state of numbness which was characteristic of us all, she quietly asked me (for everyone spoke in a whisper in those days):

“And can you write about this?”

And I replied:

“I can.”

And then something like a smile flickered across what was once her face.

*April 1, 1957  
Leningrad*

*Crucifixion*

1.

*Don't weep for me, Mother,  
As I lie in my grave.*

Choirs of angels hymned the glorious hour,  
Dissolved in flame, the heavens glowed overhead.  
“Why hast thou forsaken me, my Father?”  
And “Mother, do not weep for me,” he said.

2.

Magdalen sobbed and wrung her hands in anguish,  
The disciple whom he loved was still as stone.  
But no one dared to look toward the place where  
The Mother stood in silence, all alone.

*1940-1943*

*Epilogue 1*

I learned how to read the meaning of downcast faces,  
To notice the way in which terror furtively peeks  
From beneath half-lowered lids, how suffering traces

Its stern cuneiform script on ravaged cheeks,  
How the hair which only the day before appeared  
Lustrously black, can turn ashen grey overnight,  
How smiles can fade on trembling lips, how jeers,  
However dry, can betray a tremor of fright.  
And if I now venture to offer up this prayer,  
It's not for myself alone, but rather for all  
Who, enduring the changing weather, stood with me there  
Beneath the indifferent gaze of that blank red wall.

### *Epilogue 2*

Once more the hour of remembrance draws near  
And it's almost as though I can see them all here:

The one who queued to the point of collapse,  
And the one whose time on this earth has now passed,

And the one, who shaking her head, used to groan:  
"When I enter this place, it's like coming back home!"

And I would have recorded you all in my verse,  
But they've taken the list where your names were preserved.

So instead I've made you a shawl out of words,  
Saved from the talk which I once overheard.

And I'll forget you, wherever I go,  
Whatever new horrors I'm destined to know.

And even if one day they somehow suppress  
My voice through which millions of lives were expressed,

I ask that you all still remember to pray  
For my soul on the eve of my burial day.

And if in the future they give the command  
To raise up a statue to me in this land,

I consent to this honor—but only so long  
As they solemnly pledge not to place it upon

The shore of the sea by which I was born,  
For my link with the sea has long since been torn;

Nor in the park of the Tsars, by the tree  
Where a restless soul is still searching for me;

But to raise it instead near the prison's locked door  
Where I waited for three hundred hours and more.

For I fear I'll forget in the vacuous peace  
Of the grave that old woman who howled like a beast,

Or the rumbling wheels of the black prison vans,  
Or the sound of the hateful jail door when it slammed.

And from motionless eyelids the melting snow,  
Like tears, down my cheeks of bronze will flow

As the dove in the watchtower calls from on high  
And the boats on the Neva go drifting on by.

*March 1940*  
*The Fountain House*

My large-scale triptych *Three Elegies*, which began as a contemplation of the Ukraine war, started with a reading and exploration of Anna Akhmatova's profoundly moving elegy *Requiem* which details her own experiences alongside many other women during the Great Purge written over three decades between 1935 to 1961. In contrast to Edith Sitwell's poetry, which completed the dialogue for me in this triptych, Akhmatova's *Requiem* resembles for me great war photography, being both a documentation and yet a subjective, often hauntingly poetic (as in the photography of Richard Mosse who captured war-torn regions with infrared camera technology including the Democratic Republic of the Congo) account and traces of these violent histories. And so it seemed fitting to begin the first layers of the triptych with the contemplation and inspiration from such a poem.

**A. Pizarnik, *The Possessed Among the Lilacs***  
**From 'Extracting the Stone of Madness: Poems 1962-1972**  
**Translated by Yvette Siegert**  
*Read by Sinclair Vicisitud*

I.

— The flower of distance is blooming. I want you to look through the window and tell me what you see: inconclusive gestures, illusory objects, failed shapes... Go to the window as if you'd been preparing for this your entire life.

— A café filled with empty chairs — garishly lit... The night takes on the shape of absence, and the sky of decay... Drops of water on a windowpane — there goes someone I've never seen before and whom I'll never see again...

— What did I ever do with the gift of sight?

— A lamp that's far too bright, an open door, someone smoking in the shadows, the trunk and leaves of a tree, a dog dragging its hind legs, lovers lingering in the rain, a newspaper in a gully, a boy whistling...

— Go on.

— (*Vengefully.*) A dwarf tightrope-walker heaves a sack of bones onto her shoulder and proceeds along the wire with her eyes shut.

— Oh, stop!

— She's naked but for her hat. She's hairy everywhere — and she's all grey, with a shock of red hair, so that the total effect makes her look like a fake chimney, like a stage prop in some play for the insane. A toothless gnome is chasing after her, munching on costume sequins...

— Please, that's enough.

— (*Wearily.*) A woman is screaming. There's a boy crying. Silhouettes are spying from their lairs. Someone walked by just now. A door shuts.

III.

Voices, rumors, shadows, the songs of the drowned: I don't know if they're signs or a kind of torture. Someone in the garden is delaying the passing of time. Autumn creatures abandoned to silence.

I was predestined to give things their essential names. I know that I no longer exist, but what I don't know is the thing that lives on in my place. I lose my senses if I speak — I lose all wisdom if I keep quiet. A violent wind has wiped out everything. And not being able to speak for those who forgot how to sing.

Out of all the poets presented here, Pizarnik is the most recent discovery for me, but like many of the great romances, I felt an instant connection. This series of poems in particular really struck me, alongside her magnificent *Extracting the Stone of Madness*, and in a way, I see my own work within the long tradition of flowers held within poetry, connecting distantly as well to Mallarmé's *Les Fleurs*, which I also engaged with for another painting.

**S.Teesud, *Dandelye***

**2023**

***English version by Saun Santipreecha***

*Read in the original Thai by the poet, Sudtee Teesud*

Dandelye, that lowly stalk	so earth-bound
Aquivers not from scorn nor crowned	with lowly jeers
Creates instead nutrition, values resound	along roots, leaves, to plumméd seeds
Does not let its little heart tear	nor tear into visions lost.

Dandelye, those flowers yellow	that earthly icon round
Beauteous white, fluffy balls abound	when Time's matured
Seeds far along the winds, cross ponds	land so close, yet far
Hard to suppress, to repress, to lure	through ashen veils the seeds endure.

Writing under the name *Sudtee Teesud*, which in itself is a play on the reversal of words and syllables whose meaning translates to 'to push to the limits, one's final acts' (and also echoes her own thoughts on reincarnation), my mom, a former teacher and poet, has written various texts and poems for as long as I can remember, largely unpublished. One of my fondest early memories was a collaboration with her on a small book she wrote loosely based on my childhood before the age of ten which was illustrated by various drawings and paintings of mine.

For the past several years, she and I had been on a kind of parallel journey experimenting and exploring the ancient Thai poetic form Khlong (one of the oldest of the four forms of Thai poetry: Kaab, Chan, Khlon, Khlong), she, writing in Thai, me transposing the form for use with English. It's very moving for me that for this exhibition, she has written a Khlong in two stanzas entitled *Dandelye*, which echo the various themes and ideas I had explored in my unfinished book of the same name (which itself was dedicated to her), and so the loop closes in on itself.