

## From *The Long March* (1983)

### Old and New Wisdom

To Ursula K. Le Guin, in gratitude for *The Dispossessed*

Old wisdom argues one can do nothing  
About the arrival of white hair  
But journey to a rest back home  
Back in the old blue hills.

New wisdom agrees one can do little  
But adds that to acquire white hair  
With honour, and to return home,  
One must overthrow three empires.

### News from Nowhere

Our forces have not only been routed but dis-  
Oriented: not quite knowing what to fight for  
We don't know how to fight. Any answers  
Will have to come from ourselves, traversing  
Our muddles. But remember, the oppressors seem strong  
Only before they are overthrown. When the train moves  
Fast, the villages seem to be retreating; indeed,  
The galaxies to be leaving us in a big bang.  
Just blow up the engine, and the world will settle  
To an epoch of rest.

### The Present Past

*To Walter Benjamin, who knew  
even the dead are not safe*

We shouldn't always have to stand on our guard;  
The dead should let go of our warm blood  
In this poor world where we are all scarred.

Yet perhaps the past should not be barred:  
In a coherent life-arrow for ill & for good  
We shouldn't always have to stand on our guard.

Or perhaps we should forget the past was that hard?  
Might we then abandon care & swim in the nude  
In this poor world where we are all scarred?

No: by the war of each with each the children were marred  
& now it's in vain we say: "Let's change our mood,  
We shouldn't always have to stand on our guard."

Earthen pots clashing with iron, we crack into shard:  
The dead are what shatters us as a shockwave flood  
In this poor world where we are all scarred.

In this Styx landscape, of what can one be bard?  
How partake of earthly & heavenly food?  
We shouldn't always have to stand on our guard  
In this poor world where we are all scarred!

## 1983-1988

### Shipwreck in Pannonia: A Sonnet with a Tail

*--To the unquiet shade of Miroslav Krleža--  
Auf die Schiffe! (Nietzsche)  
Quis mundis plaga? (Seneca)*

Obese car wreckers, stressful owners of private weekend-houses,  
Obscene shore-polluting yachts or leaky rowing boats,  
Petty managers, at best hunters of sexual game, comrades of my  
Generation are dying out one by one. Now to be or not

Is perhaps neither good nor bad, the neutral fleet of  
Old admiral death weighs anchor towards unfathomed oceans;  
Yet the failure to obstinately sail with one's tribe into the dawn  
It had set its heart on, sea by unknown sea, preempts even

The excuse of unmapped eternity. These heroes of one decade  
Went thru war, suffered greatly, tried to turn suffering  
Into charting of ocean floors: fat clogged the generous arteries

& delicate capillaries halfway, they never became truly  
What they suffered for, explorers and dredgers in permanent warm  
Currents, a permanently creative revolution. Heart arrest,

Brain stroke, defeats without from defects within, the malignant  
Cells of fratricide spreading, shipwrecked in Pannonia all of us again,

No excuse, desolation.

### Eightie-Foure is Icummen In: Lhude Sing Goddam! Or: 1948—1984--2048

Poor Eric, all eaten up with TB & hate  
At the hypocrisies of Airstrip Number One, the skull  
Of Oceania grinning underneath the Victorian musty

England, my England, your England of the upper-class  
Terror from public school to Burma; poor George,  
Paying homage to bluff common-sense England in Catalonia,

Looking at us smelly animals who are all unequal, but some  
More than others; poor Orwell/Blair, reaching for the granddad  
Of all us satirists, rationally absurd Jonathan, to flesh

Out cool Evgeniy, invert the bounder Bertie Wells; fashioning  
Out of his pain, rage and dead despair a finally--we must admit--



And yet i had seen the world's body burst in terror  
Melt, reshape, & get wound up as galvanized error  
Screaming in jets rocking round the clock  
Lurching Shiva-like along time's spiral stairs  
Reproducing pale babies clutching at the lacking air

*You understand  
The mirror of your eyes my Judgment*

And yet sometimes i was gladly beguiled  
By a woman walking in the sun with dreamy smile  
Or i looked up from words that a book unwound  
With tears in my eyes when Luna was like to a pearl  
Wondering at the suppressed tenderness of the world

*The swift river flows  
The mirror of your eyes my Judgment*

I have given too much in to feeling virtuous & blue  
I should have been more pious toward the messy New  
I should have understood that people & planets are brittle  
Bathed by the sardonic Moon, warmed in the Sun's tresses  
I should have steeled myself to more tender caresses

*You understand  
Now and in the day of our past Judgment*

### **One-Legged Life (Intimate Dialogue with a Crane)**

--An eagle swoops on a chick, ripping it open.  
Crows & hawks fight over a limp goose. Sparrows  
Struggle to find a crumb to eat, a nesting place.  
You, however, stand on a tree or the water's edge  
Thru sleet and rain (O crane)

With one leg raised, meditating, not moving; aloof,  
Loafing, pale, impractical. How, pray, do you justify  
Such bathetic, unperipatetic, theoretical, intellectual=  
izing behaviour? --Indeed, our flesh & fowl society  
Is built on pain (quoth the crane),

Cruelly it crushes life; only few, by chance,  
Gain time for standing still on the ice or  
Atop a high pine, looking for a firm branch  
Or ledge to grasp. Who would not like to see  
Sparrows fed, crows

Exterminated, hawks and jackdaws retrained, geese  
Educated? Neither do i believe this to be impossible,  
The nature of birds & men is malleable; nor  
That it's none of my business, work for cranes

Too vulgar and low:

All birds are kin, & i am my brother's keeper.  
A good half of my life, persecuted myself, i flocked  
Together with a multitude of feathers, sparrows  
Or swallows, attempting to found a Republic of Birds  
Free to fly without fear

Everywhere, even to the Sun where Cyrano found us  
Triumphant. Alas, the wily crows were too many, the eagles  
Treacherous, for my generation the Great Creativity  
Was brought low in a welter of blood and lies.  
How am i then to bear,

What should i do with the rest of this only life?  
It is my deep delight to stand on one leg and meditate:  
To wake up, go to sleep with a warm, moving vision  
Is act erotic. If i then theorize so as to herd  
Into a conceptual net

A squirming bit of how the defeat felt, what  
Its experience, its efficient and final cause,  
Perhaps even meaning; if i then, a minor Galileo,  
Give what lens i managed to grind for others' use;  
I must hope, i must bet

The Great Creativity will not find this behaviour  
Entirely useless. & that this is enough  
For one life, on one leg.

## Visions Off Yamada

In Yamada on the coast a mirage can be seen every  
year. It is said that it is usually the scenery of a foreign  
country: an unknown capital with many carriages in  
the streets & people coming & going. It's quite  
amazing. From year to year, the shapes of the houses  
& other things don't change in the least.  
Yanagita Kunio, *Tôno monogatari* 106

### 1. In Praise of a Wonderful Sight

Come see this bridge.  
How can we build it?  
Cross it this way & that?  
Get there, across the bridge?

\*\*\*

Come see this main gate.  
It is made of solid red wood  
It is an auspicious wide gate

Push open the doors, look:  
What a wonderful age,  
There, behind the straight gate!

I wish i could come  
See & push open the gate,  
Enter the wonderful age.

\*\*\*

Come see the spacious houses  
Of the people, for the people  
Built by skilled carpenters

For themselves, by their own hands,  
Own designs. They do not have to kill,  
Choke off food, air, water, eat

Up brain synapses so as  
To live: they vie to interpret  
Their enterprise--yours & mine!

\*\*\*

The curving roofs look like wood bark  
Karamatsu pines grow above  
Springs flow non-acid to the left & the right  
Scoop it up & drink, the water never fails.  
Come see the great Hall of the Commune  
Morning & evening sunshine on that temple  
A hundred rosy-cheeked children run into it,  
Run out of it, like water down the mountain,

Bubbling, falling, going on.

\*\*\*

Come see my own home  
In that wonderful age.

Now, I rent a too crowded apartment.  
Then, it's the house of a kind-hearted person.

Here, all my children are arranged words.  
There, they are also bodies, blended with yours.

## 2. Choosing the Stag's Wife

As soon as it's born, the fawn runs about the hills  
We too go around, run about the park.  
Try to gaze around attentive, find a doe  
But heavy smog hides all mountain tops.

O happy we! The cruel wind has blown off the smog  
We are off in search of the doe.

Let us celebrate the Siberian wind, sweet rain,  
Let's gather & drink warm rice-wine  
Let us worship the twohundredandtenth day,  
October, the stormiest month of the year.  
Which direction shall we salute? Salute the North!  
The North Wind wins over the polluted mist.

Now we have made a barn for the doe  
We cut kikyô flowers & morning grass  
The barn is bright with the beauty of flowers  
Of course, it took so long to furnish it!  
Wherever the doe hides, i'll search all the ways  
I'll walk on roads & thru waving grasses:

Like bamboo stems, tall & appetizing, wherever  
She hides, the pretty doe will be found.  
Look at the doe & stag, their bodies lusty,  
Their hearts full of tender affection  
They need to hurry together, browse together,  
Sleep together, have offspring, in a brief world.

Deep in the mountain passes a stag dances  
Still burning with passion for the doe.  
Look at the pines up the slope, the silly ivy  
Clings to the pine; without good luck  
The ivy leaves will fall off the pine. In the park  
We are planting another pillar  
The stag may rub his antlers, grow young. Out at sea,  
The plover sways with the waves,  
Cries, in the end flies smoothly off. Let us dream  
A Spring not far behind.

### 3. Where the Waves Meet

When i hear a good singer in this gathering  
I'm ashamed to dance & sing.  
I learned yesterday what i give you today  
Please be kind        forgive the mistakes.

The flowered mats with their fine designs  
Let's bring them to this gathering  
The silver-lacquered rice-wine set  
Let's drink from it to this gathering.

The Queen of May pours sake herself  
The gathering brightens with joy  
Drink a cup of this wine from the celadon set  
Believe that we can all live well.

The King of October roasts the yakitori himself  
With the wine goes also sea-bream,  
Mountain trout, swordfish cut into steaks,  
Tuna from the wave off Kanagawa.

To begin the banqueting, somebody sing!  
To say my song is good  
Is impossible. Who will come to hear  
This well-wishing song? Everyone is welcome!

What carpenter made this stand?  
It is solid, a treasure is inside.  
What wine do you think this is?  
It's kiku no sake from the famous fields.

Where does this rice-paper come from?  
From Harima? From Kashima?  
Never mind, it folds well,  
It's good paper, you can read from it.

Which is the spot that holds the fan together?  
It's uchi no miya, the pivot point  
It folds well, snaps closed ready for use.  
Friends, let us bow deep & be going.

4.  
That's all there is to the story.  
(If only life were not a crystal.)

NOTE: This poem has been catalyzed by Yanagita's famous collection of Japanese folklore cited in the epigraph; many lines are pieced together from Yanagita's stories & poems, with small alterations but against a different horizon. "Yakitori" = chicken brochette; "kiku no sake" = special rice wine with chrysanthemum leaves; "That's all there is to the story" (Kore de dondo hare) = the obligatory ending to any Japanese folktale (but in the poem it is not the ending).

### **To Your Scattered Members Go**

*The socially critical zones of  
artworks are where it hurts.  
Adorno*

Little poems, are you drawn to opposed quarters, confused  
Between love and politics, public and private use?  
Remember the classics: all of us are meshed ensembles  
Of human-inhuman relations; of each other members.



## 1989-1999

### The Return of the Ancestors (The End of March)

*Mrijeti ti ćeš kada počneš sâm  
U ideale svoje sumnjati.  
[Thou wilt die when you yourself begin  
Doubting your own ideals]  
S.S. Kranjčević*

Our dead return. We must meet them  
With short fir branches, light the lanterns.  
The fire is lighted: Grampa, Granma  
Ride a cow, ride a bull  
Please come by this light, take a drink with us.

Our dead ask: What have you done of our work,  
How continued our lives? Why are the dams collapsing,  
Who lives in the big house ruling the hill? What  
Interests extort blood in peacetime, brothers killing  
Brothers? Do you have too many sons to feed?

Our dead do not bless us. Their stare is of stone.  
The branches grow brown. The lanterns gutter.  
The fire is damped. Granma, Grampa  
Ride a bull, ride a cow  
Please go back by this light, have pity on us.

O sons, O grandchildren, look how fat you are,  
Look how hard your women must work, where's  
Your powerful sisterhood & brotherhood? Pay  
Your ingent debts, to us, to yourselves, flow  
Over the banks: unclog your veins, have pity  
On us, on yourselves.

### Le Ceneri di Tito (Berlin Day, End of C20)

*is there peace in this world?  
the torture of humans continues  
evening light                    island just floating  
shaking like a baby carriage  
even archeologists perish in the end...  
Hayashi Fumiko, 1930*

German winter                    elder ladies with mink coats  
Peroxide hair                    too much makeup  
Lines slashing from both mouth corners down & out  
I burrow into sleep quietly on morning islands  
At the bottom of the ocean                    schools of fish  
Soft murmur of weary voices  
They are bombing Beograd & Novi Sad  
No more theatre festivals in springtime  
Blood silting up all rivers.



Sometimes it flops up a stump  
And attempts to sing  
The birds are in the water

(Imagine)

## Old Age, Letting Go

Homage to Tanikawa Shuntarô

1.  
I wish a wandering asteroid wd whoosh down  
When nobody expected it any more  
Ringed like Saturn with promises  
The size of red Jupiter  
& blow this infested planet to smithereens.  
This is what my life has added up to  
Almost  
Like a blind mangy kitten.

\*\*\*

Get rid of yr affections  
Let go vanity hope even wounds.

You have vanquished O pale Galilean  
Sweat blood & snot running down the cross of gold  
From wch we hang in vain  
Punished by gazing hungrily at Finland Station  
In the whorehouse that once was Leningrad.

\*\*\*

Reader try as i may i have lost  
Yr image. My compassion runs dry  
I won't get to be a Bodhisattva.  
I go on for accidental reasons. Scarcely  
Believable of the man who attacked  
The written page as a wolf, with iron jaws  
& slaving appetite.

Slaves must perforce be stoic,  
Patients patient.

2.  
A poet lies on his double bed,  
Writing. Fiftythousand neurons die in his head  
Each day. The ceiling in his study leaks,  
Five years already, nobody can find out why.

What is he writing, to whom, what for?

*Mad hatters & dormice  
slit each other's throats  
in a Bosnian shelled city.*

*In my memory you smile at me  
wet from monsoon rains  
which warmly sweep the macadam.*

*Do you really know how the world  
ends? My bed sails the broad ocean.  
People you loved tell me*

*You talk to nobody.*

When father died, we got a snapshot of his grave  
The copyrights of his manuals are also left over  
My desire to claim either has vanished.  
I walk to the top of the hill & pretend not to hear  
The little demons guffawing behind the bushes.

3.  
You that may read these fragments, you in  
A new cool harmony we are condemned to  
Disbelieve in, you that i lived with & for  
Until this senility, if i had any feelings left  
Parting with you wd break my heart. Let go,  
Let go, unimaginable others, defined by a hollow.

On or about January one, Nineteenninetytwo,  
The short Twentieth Century -- just seventyfive years --  
Winked out, the future became a thing of the past.  
We embark upon extra-vehicular spacewalks emptyhanded,  
Isolated by non-conducting gloves, technological prestige  
& helmets with virtual faceplates. O Harmonians  
How long, justify how long you let us wait.

\*\*\*

It's tiresome to wake up. For threehundred readers  
It's tiresome to write. No doubt, you'll fit  
This high-pitched note into a chord, Harmonians,  
Martian "ulla, ulla" on Hampstead Heath. But now  
Only old music remains for me, & some bodies  
(Not mine). The kalpa is muzak-meretricious  
Or silent.

Earnestly she reads on Wallerstein & Hobsbawm, in warm  
Scarves swathed. I am haunted by songs of auld lang syne:  
"Avanti popolo..." "O bella ciao..."  
"Omladino zemlje ove...". Azure, the azure!

\*\*\*

Learning  
How to non-write  
Not unwrite.  
The dead are not safe.  
Learning, still.

Glossary: "Omladino zemlje ove..." = "O youth of this country", Partizan round-dance song

## 2000-Present

### I'm Into Your World

*Mi pesano gli anni venturi (Ungaretti)*  
*[The coming years lie heavily upon me]*  
*Ungaretti*

I'm into your world but not entirely of it  
Not into the coil of writhing serpentine lies  
Hissing with laid-on charm from TV & PC monitors  
Eternal Truths of claudicant metaphors  
Murdering en masse with the invisible hand of smart bombs.

I know the acrid sweat of the on & off Filipino labourer  
& more intimately the smouldering rage of the scribe  
Impotent to stop the lies dictated into his mind:  
Both by your empire moulded, its stamp burning  
In their brain convolutions & aching muscle flesh.

What may i do? With eyes wide open  
Steer my paraplegic wheels  
    while the nightingale  
Goes on singing as if all were right  
Into the thrilling strata of the planet's air

& i await the dove  
Of a differing Flood.

### In the Ruins of Leningrad\*: A Medieval Allegory

*Counterproject to Elder Olson's "In the Ruins of Macchu Picchu"*

What Hope had built, cruel Greed has spilled  
-- Witness the city of Ilyich & Peter --  
But what Greed's unbuilt, Hope can rebuild.

Where are the mountains of starving & killed?  
The dead of Yudenich, Yagoda & Hitler?  
What Hope had built, cruel Greed has spilled.

The hunger for Justice walks forth unstilled  
The hunger for bread makes Her still sweeter  
Greed's power unbuilds, Hope can rebuild.

Between Greed & Justice, what grain will be milled?  
The outcome's uncertain, balances teeter:  
What Hope had built, cruel Greed has spilled.

When Winter has stricken flesh to the hilt  
Struck flesh will strive to unseat her  
Greed cruelly kills but Hope can rebuild.

A counterpower can also be willed  
To Death Love beats a counter-meter  
What Hope had built, cruel Greed has spilled.  
A sterile mule is Greed: Hope can rebuild.

---

\*/ Or Beograd, or Sarajevo, or...

### **A Martial Epigram on Martians**

*Qui legis Oedipoden caligantemque Thyesten  
Martial X.4*

Why are you staring so raptly into Orcs & Elves  
Why gulping down Conan, Potter & th'insufferable Lewis  
What are to you rebelling robots, or what help  
To your wasting lives the circenses of media clerics  
Brainwashing the new imperial plebeians?

Imbibe

What life shall recognize & call out "This is mine!"  
Even if Aliens or dragons, such story shall taste of us humans,  
The ways we oppress & love each other, in what cave  
Are we ourselves & how may we get out into the light  
Of the blue Sun.

But no, mr. Jones, you don't want to  
See yourself, cognize your killing cruelties: so at least  
Read your Tolkien! You may shut the book & think  
Why he loved cleansing wars.

### **Cold Comfort (Intrumo)**

In a dream a dragon came to me, looked at me,  
Splendour of shimmering copper scales  
& scarlet thorns, scythe-taloned. I looked  
Back, at the amber mist around his huge eyes, above

The fuming nostrils. The red-black smoke from her mouth  
Hissed: "Don't despair, short-lived Earthling. Soon  
You shall die, soon will expire your kind's cosmic contract.  
This muddied globe your Mother is unforgiving as our winds.

But in the new creation the Mother shall whelp, a few shards  
May be dug up & deciphered by successor populations,  
Hexapodes perhaps, stabler far, winged like ourselves:

A few testimonials, like the ones you found of Gilgamesh  
& Intrumo, shall show yours was a redeemable kind.  
>What a pity!< the unsentimental hexapods will chirrup,

Winging on to their inscrutable business of conviviality”.

### **Pillaging the Gnostics**

*Et in hora mortis nostrae*

See, i talk so that i may leave  
I tell you what i heard & saw  
In the leaves of grass in the drawn sweaty faces,  
I teach you as i slowly learned it  
I talk that i may leave this world  
Where i never had enuf time  
    In peace.

I lived on Earth a short time, i didn't have time.  
A short span of time. Pay attention  
So you can hear me. If i came, who  
May i be, may i have been, may  
I have become? I drank the water of life  
The water of pleasure. Now i advance toward  
    The water of forgetfulness.

Greetings to you, my sister & my brother!  
Do not be so deathly afraid of sweet-gifting Venus,  
Mother & lover, not yet known! I lived on Earth  
A short time, i praised it, i suffered it.  
I learned a little, i taught a little, a multitude  
Of sisters, of companions, only  
    A few knew me,

I knew only a few, only little. I tell you  
Disintoxicate yourself! Renounce your deadly path,  
Walk on the Way which leads you to be free.  
No Yahweh no kings to dominate, no masters  
Except the Masters who know, so far as they know.  
You are self-condemned, self-enchained. Renounce  
    The chains you forged.

You made for yourself a heavenly Lord & leader.  
He turned around & enslaved you, shut  
Your eyes & ears, raised up an inbred caste  
Inimical to Justice & Knowledge, to Venus Of All People.  
You turned to derision this house given unto you  
As a heredity & a promise, it will be  
    Pulled quite down.

Only knowledge can unfold liberty, an  
Undying desire. Let this tree grow, so you may grasp  
The fruits of freedom. All of us possess

A chip of knowledge, a teardrop of liberty  
Within ourselves. Do not let this pearl  
Drop into the viscous flow of arrested  
Time. Wake up

From the drugged dream of reason. Who  
Are you? Whose brother & sister are you?  
Where are you going? Do you judge all matters  
In order to be judged? O the anxiety of not reaching,  
Of reaching & not grasping! Do you see  
High Venus, star moving across resplendent skies?  
I tell you truly:

This is the hour of our death  
This is the cosmic hour of persecution  
This the hidden hour of our ignoble oblivion.  
You can live toward a good death or a bad death.  
Life is when two sexes are in each other as light  
Liberty, as amity. Thus we become citizens of  
Fair Earth, Heaven.

### **My Lady Hope**

To the memory of Anne McLaren, 1948 onward

I dreamt of Lady Hope tonight  
She smiled on me so sweetly,  
Fair as in days of our keen youth  
When she kissed me very sweetly.

“Where did you go, my Lady, my love,  
What countries saw your features?  
Your flaming gaze, your sunburnt hands,  
Your reach to other futures?”

“I've always been here, young man of mine,  
Here where the wise can see me,  
You grew up & lost your keen eye  
& the faint are not able to see me.”

“We all must grow up, my Lady, my love,  
How can I again see you?”  
“Remember how knowledge led you to love,  
Hold fast to that, & you'll see me.”

“But you're no longer a girl, my love,  
Rosy as dawn & eyes shining.”  
“We all grow up, old man of mine,  
I'm a woman now, eyes shining.”



## Reading Cecco's *S'i' fosse...*

To Kasia

If i had the power of fire, i'd blow up explosives  
If that of water, i'd drown the makers of sorrow,  
If the high one of wind, from people's brains  
Blow cobwebs away -- open your eyes, fools,

You can't take it with you, why strut & fret?  
Omnipotent, maybe destroy this stupid  
Species, for a cleaner to come from fireflies,  
Electric eels or hexapods divisible

In two & three. As i'm but Darko, unreconciled  
I praise women, learners, lovers, workers,  
The insurgent four whales that bear the world,  
With robust love may turn it upside down.

## Drummer, Drum On

Drummer, drum on & have no fear  
& kiss the bare-breast Liberty!  
This is the whole of science & art  
The sum of all philosophy.

Drum & inveigle the drowsy people  
Send the snake's hiss & roar of lions,  
One step in front, ready to die,  
This is the sum of art & science.

This is old Karl's dialectics  
Of all philosophy it is the Summa.  
I've understood it because i was endangered  
& saw the Revolution one Summer.