

with love, to you by Arkadaş Z. Özger

oh, my
eagle with seven heads
my eagle who lays every head
of his
at the beginning of a mountain
and our love and the withered ones' fear
your twisting body is like such a living stream
because of course water
knows the hardness of the land where it will flow
and the land when it's torn by the water's body
now a river? what can you say?
this is revolution
this is a similar rate of flow you could say
i know what happens tomorrow
spring comes, grass grows
death also puts out leaves
i search for a mountain a long long time
the shade of a pine tree
that gives off good smells
at the sight of just a drop of sun
tomorrow i will smile at you
where you stretch out now in the grass
tomorrow new greenness will grow

*Translated from "aşkla,
sana," Sakalsız Bir
Oğlanın Tragedyası,
Ve, 2017, p. 104.
According to Özger's
editor, the poem was
written in 1972 for Özger's
friend Hüseyin Cevahir of
the THKP-C (People's
Liberation Party-Front of
Turkey). Cevahir was killed
by soldiers in 1971 after a
three-day siege (Sakalsız,
p. 131).*



schooldays : little earthquake, big disease

- 2019 : Sept 26

Reminder: Earthquakes

Earthquake Drills

People who don't know the procedures to follow when there's an earthquake

5.8, Silivri. several big shakes. like a very large truck was repeatedly ramming into the building.

clueless students (it hit right between classes so students were too busy running to class)

*little damage. no reported injuries
and school cancelled for the day!*

students were just super-loud. because we haven't had a drill yet this year. even though there was an earthquake a few days ago. a surprising number of teachers were clueless about procedures. actually had to shush some teachers.

had to tell another teacher to get his students back in the classroom. he was trying to evacuate before the all clear. they should have been still cowering under their desks.

headmaster flipped out a little

probably realizing that he should have listened to those of us who said we should have an earthquake drill right away after the earthquake a few days ago.

- Sept 27

today one of my prep classes was describing how their Turkish teacher cried and panicked during yesterday's earthquake. when i made a "i'm disgusted" face, they tried to defend her. "she lived through the 99 earthquake!" a few moments of silence, then, "our job is to get you safely out to the basketball court. then have a nervous breakdown."

- Oct 6

friday had a non-drill fire evacuation. again chaos.

- Oct 17

*at the moment, practice exams. my prep kids are writing boring boring paragraphs on the question "Are shopping centers beneficial or detrimental to society?"
obviously, i did not write this question.*

So the next few pages are all taken from my side of online chats, mostly with coworkers. Because I just can't seem to find enough quiet time in the day to keep a journal. (And maybe that's just as well. I come off as pretty arrogant here. Not sure I wanted to know that about myself.)

In case you don't know me—I teach English at a high school in Istanbul. This job wasn't supposed to be a career or anything. Just a way to pay the bills while I lived among the poets of Istanbul and translated their work into English.

Which isn't how it turned out. Working with kids tends to take over your life. Even when you happen to be at a bad school or get a bad class, there's always one or two students who need your attention. So you keep working for their sake. And next thing you know, translation is just something you do for a couple weeks each summer.



• Nov 7

speaking of evidence, i dreamt last night that I tried to decapitate someone with a lunch tray in the cafeteria.

• Nov 17

(too busy being bitter about all the little things)

• 2020 : Jan 11

we just put a deposit on an olive grove near Cesme.

• Jan 23

i----- says that we're off to izmir to buy the olive grove. hoping it doesn't take as long as expected. (what am i thinking? bureaucracy not take long?)

• Feb 21

just had my head-of-department classroom observation. (part of "the cycle.") a relief. don't have to think about my teaching practices for another 3 years.

• Feb 24

from a student's analysis of "Ode to Boy":

"I feel like she wants him to be in a good place in his life before she makes her move. Something like healing an animal before you kill it so you can eat a better meat."

• Mar 1

a few loud supporters for the beloved leader. but nothing like after the coup. could this be his first big mis-step? lira falling, as usual. people are happy the Syrians are leaving, even if they're going the wrong direction.

• Mar 12

i----- is sick and i might be nursemaiding. (doctor says it's flu, so i haven't been self-quarantining. but maybe i should.)

• Mar 16

i'm trapped. there's no way i'm getting on public transportation if i don't have to. people are disgusting.

(saw a news story on the disinfecting of taxicabs in istanbul. of course cabs are what people take to get to the hospital. plus they're filthy even under the best circumstances.)

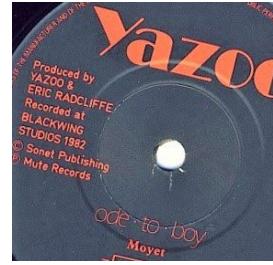
online "learning"?

which is basically teach-yourself.

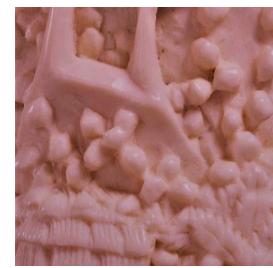
that's my approach, anyway.

or "pay me to make you teach yourself."

give yourself detention.



Now after all these years,
teaching has become a
way to pay for retirement.
The olive grove is part of
the plan. A little house on a
hillside a couple miles from
the Gulf of Izmir. Two
groves of olives actually.
One near the top of the
hillside, with regular
Gemlik-variety olives plus
some arbutus bushes,
some pines, and a giant
plane tree. The other grove
near the bottom of the hill,
with a couple hundred
hurma-variety olives, an
unusual type whose fruit
can be eaten directly from
the tree without
processing.



• Mar 17

before the ezan there's an announcement in Turkish NOT to come to the mosque. that's something to hear.

i haven't left the house myself since i got home from school on friday so can't say much about outside.

business as usual for me. i don't like to leave the house anyway. occasionally one of my students would have a little panic attack the last few weeks. that's the kind of thing i can handle. keep calm. look at the facts. breathe. (just don't breathe too near anyone.)

• Mar 22

no such thing as social distancing in the line at the grocery store. god help me i actually did cleaning today.

• Mar 23

i've piled on the homework.

but no more than usual.

and it's enjoyable work.

look at this weird advertisement and tell me what it's doing.

then read what your classmates wrote about it.

(the message is rich people will eat you.)

(the message is video games will destroy the fragile outer shell of your masculinity.)

school nightmares last night.

trying to teach but all these old ladies (former teachers?) are sitting in the back of the room chatting. i treat them like teachers treat students. walk back and ask them where their materials are, why they aren't on task. they look confused.

then i notice that one of them has her shoes off and her feet up on the desk. i rush over and scold. what do you think you're doing, young lady? (she's not young.) no one wants to see your dirty feet right now. and someone else has to use this desk next period.

terbiyesiz. i want your shoes back on and i want to see you out in the hallway in 5 seconds.

not surprisingly, none of my anxiety dreams are about dealing with actual students.

• Mar 24

i got dressed yesterday. stupid move.

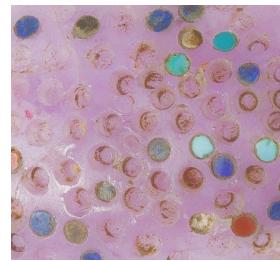
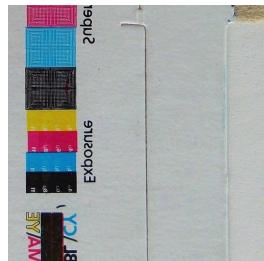
not today. no video conferencing allowed.

internet was off and on in this neighborhood anyway.

perfect for the first day of online ed.

I wonder how much of my contempt for education systems in general comes from my feelings of insecurity. (General anxiety about almost everything, but especially anything involving other human beings. Plus never-ending self-doubt, grotesque self-image) And how much comes from the duplicity and hypocrisy of those in charge of the systems. Not to mention the mediocrity of about half the teachers I've dealt with.





- Mar 24 (*cont'd*)

or online "ed."

acc to tv, izmir is the only city where people are complying with curfews and social distancing.

brainstormed in class. stories about transformation.

there might be some stories about students turning into horses.

or some She-Ra / He-Man slash fiction.

- Mar 25

"why isn't every teacher giving exactly the same lesson as every other teacher at exactly the same time?"

"why aren't teachers handing in detailed weekly lesson plans to admin?"

if they want to know what I'm doing they can join my online classroom

otherwise, F off

i've been pondering why I feel so hostile lately

more hostile than usual, that is

i think it's because there's no one above me that i can look at and say, "i wish i could teach like that."

sad.

i'm only talking about those above me in the hierarchy.

there are other teachers i admire

(but no one I'm going to emulate)

i----- just went grocery shopping and said the streets were full.

so maybe the one expert's estimate of 600,000 deaths in Turkey wasn't so far off.

was watching the bread guy from the window this morning

no face mask

wearing gloves

but not taking them off between handling the bread and touching everything else in the vicinity

i----- had a huge coughing fit last night

probably the remains of the bronchitis from last week

no other symptoms

terrifying

- Mar 26

streets empty. schools online. clouds dark and gloomy.

finished commenting on all homework.

making soup now.

haven't finished cursing admin, though.

But maybe I'm being too hard on teachers. Maybe every occupation is full of mediocrity. Or it could be I'm being too hard on humans in general. It's not like I'm good at anything having to do with socializing. Or human relationships.



• Mar 28

i was (in my dream) at school early, rifling through desks, stealing things that students had carelessly left behind, when a former dean made his entrance. “helllooooo professa,” he says, with his big hands.

almost a nightmare.

then (in my dream) i was in a house exactly like my dream house, a multistory mansion packed with antiques, except this was an antique store.

i was filling my bag with odd trinkets, which i had no intention of paying for, when the owner came up to say they were closing. i started grabbing more stuff, shamelessly, filling my pockets and then headed quickly toward the door.

the owner came after me. i was ready to run.

(stop dream hoarding.)

the best antiques:

finding a purse that's still full of stuff

finding an old camera that still has film in it

finding a religious object whose religion you recognize but whose use you can't imagine

• Mar 30

Exhaustion

Irritation

Could admin just lighten up a bit? We're all stressed out. Don't need their nagging right now. Personally, I'm working more hours now than before

• Apr 4

netflix tiny house nation

derrida on grammatology

i----- baking non stop

playing with cat

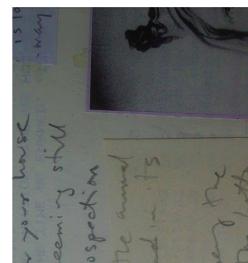
finding weird ads for students to analyze

or weird products for them to write ads about

Daily check-ins. A question like “What has made you glad lately?” or “Do you know anyone who is sick? Do you want to talk about it?” Not all students respond, but it seems to be helpful just to hear others talk about the topics.

Continuing doing things pretty much as I had before, giving students a structure within which they can learn (as much as possible) at their own pace and own directive.

Oddly, this is the less uptight, more understanding me writing right now. The last few school years about killed me. (And when I say “about killed” I’m not even sure how hyperbolic I’m being.) So I decided that this school year was going to be my “year off.” I mean I still teach and stuff, but I’m deliberately putting in less effort. Avoiding curriculum development, letting deadlines slip, minimal lesson planning, ignoring rules. Result? Feel so light. Doing everything and doing it all to a high standard is such a stupid burden. Other result? Students aren’t getting as much. My one prep class (prep is the year between 8th and 9th grades) occasionally doesn’t behave the way I’d like. And my creative writing classes aren’t really dynamic or productive. I could fix these things, but I make myself not do it. Just for this year.



- Apr 4 (cont'd)

Chatting a lot individually with students who were troubled even before this.

Doing what I think works best, rather than listening to all the advice and directives that are constantly being posted.

Consistency? A plan? For instance, not long ago I got a little useful guidance from the deans about assignments and grades. This guidance was soon contradicted by admin.

Next year? What's going on? If I need to read new books or learn new curriculum, I might as well be doing it now. If I need to start financial planning because we're going to be paid only in lira, a heads-up would be nice.

There seems to be an assumption that teachers in general don't do much—not sure if it's the board or our admin—but the assumption seems even stronger now.

Sorry, working just as hard as ever. (And none of my planes have crashed this year—not yet anyway.)

Bitter? Suspicious? Yes.

- Apr 6

*i-----'s working right now
over-the-phone machine repair
it's a bit wearing
even for me
never to leave the house
always to be on the computer.*

tomorrow's lesson topic is "how are you staying sane?"

long discussion on gender roles in prep this morn

dominated by boys

unfortunately

but they prob needed it more than the girls

analysis of the "does she or doesn't she" clairol ads

head-of-department just sent us a feedback form

i filled out 2 of them on friday

bile

venom

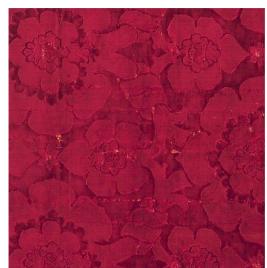
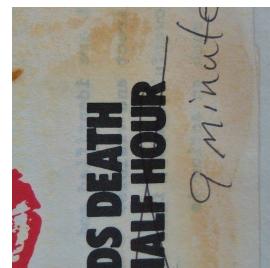
vituperousness

- Apr 7

*so we're not giving grades now, says admin
directly contradicting a message they sent last week
i kind of hope they replace us all with robots.*

Anyway, it's been a good year to sit back and observe. Observe myself, observe the students, observe the other teachers. What have I learned? (Other than the thing my parents always warned me about? That people won't like me because I act like I'm better than everyone around me.) Still too soon to know. I have a bit more sympathy for my fellow teachers and their struggles. (But only a bit. I mean this isn't rocket science. Or medicine for that matter.)





- Apr 7 (cont'd)

question of the day: "what do you do to stay sane?"

answer: "is that something we're supposed to be doing?"

- Apr 8

just had to go and douse the kitchen again with bleach and kolonya. plumber came to fix the sink while i was teaching. while students were doing group work, i gave the place a quick sprinkle of kolonya

i find it hard to open the computer in the morning.

- Apr 9

i think i might need to send a bile-filled feedback form in lieu of a bile-filled Molotov cocktail.

why does the plague have to be so slow? couldn't it just wipe everyone out in a few days?

come on, virus, we're busy people.

- Apr 10

it's always crazy. this is just a new crazy. i like not seeing my coworkers, if nothing else.

the news from the US sounds much worse than the news from Turkey.

Turkey meanwhile is claiming to be a WHO-approved model nation. maybe it's true. who knows. no coffins piling up in the streets yet. but as you know, social distancing doesn't come easily here.

the one saving point has been the lousy weather. the past few weeks have been gray windy & cold. no one wanted to go out anyway. but today the sun came out and kids and old people are in the streets again.

about a week before the schools were closed my admin said they had a plan. then the schools closed and we had no plan. every few days they send us new instructions. i've just been continuing what i always do, ignoring them as much as possible. i try to train my kids to be independent of me anyway. we google chat or zoom for a bit during classtime. they know what they need to be doing.

a lot of my kids are the children of doctors, so there's that trauma. but mostly they're just teenagers locked up at home with too much time on their hands.

i-----'s working from home too. he used to be doing technical stuff with refrigerators and air conditioners and such. now it's respirators.



- Apr 10 (cont'd)

the surprising thing is that the technical specs for medical equipment seem to be much looser than those for regular consumer goods.

then there's the economy.

i'm reading 1984 for the first time now

perfect

i was monitoring one of my coworker's detentions

we were chatting about books

they were horrified that I had never read it

it's weird

not in the way I expected

i was expecting more totalitarianism

the proles seem to have it great

the bulldozers are busy at our olive grove. so far they don't seem to have ruined it. i insisted that anything remotely like a tree not be removed. or hacked at.

it's a long neglected plot.

lots of scrub.

- Apr 11

been doing "online 'education'" for three or four weeks now. For me, not a big change. i don't like to talk much in class anyway. i always put all their readings and homework online already. i train them for independent learning from day one.

but it's still irritating and exhausting.

the gvt suddenly announced a two-day lockdown at 1100 last night. so crowds rushed to all the stores. shoving ensued. this morning memes abound. "kimse koronasiz kalmasin!" (a typical advertising phrase, in this case meaning, let no one remain without corona.)

but so much silence now. makes me aware of how much roar of background noise there usually is.

- Apr 15

made the mistake of opening that one email from admin.

apparently i'm angry because i'm in one of the stages of grief. not because everyone is stupid.

dreamt that i had just moved to a new city. went for a bike ride.

took a wrong turn and couldn't find my way back. wandered for hours. no phone, couldn't remember my new address, didn't know anyone's phone numbers.

yed the kindness of
Id not given me,
could not tell it,
tracking, with lior
lifting earth, pou
rt hole
:: boy and dog
ess).



- Apr 18

i don't think i like feelings.

- Apr 20

my first period class was just zoom-bombed!

two strange names appeared on the participant list.

i thought that maybe some students had just changed their settings.

the one claimed to be President Obama.

i muted him so that i could get on with the beginning of class.

he unmuted himself and said, Don't you ever f---ing try to mute the President of the United States. so i ended the meeting and set up a new one.

woke everyone up, if nothing else.

first period monday is always a drag.

IT thinks it was my students who did it

the one who spoke certainly sounded like my chief suspect

oddly, i'm kind of happy

it took some (slight) effort on their part

now, if they had just been more creative

tomorrow i will make them brainstorm a more interesting

zoom-bombing

- Apr 24

beyond finding it hard to open the computer in the morning.

now just want to cry.

on the other hand, some hope. topic sentence from a text analysis

by one of the least motivated students i've had in the last few

years:

In the song "Gangsta's Paradise" by Coolio from the way

Coolio says the lyrics we can understand that he is in much pain and that affects the songs structure very much.

Or, closing sentences from an essay by one of the quiet students:

Agamben argues that *Muselmann* is the true witnesses of

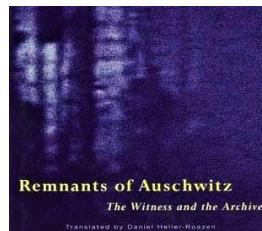
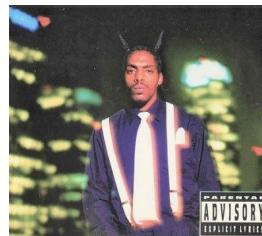
Auschwitz, but they are muted forever because those

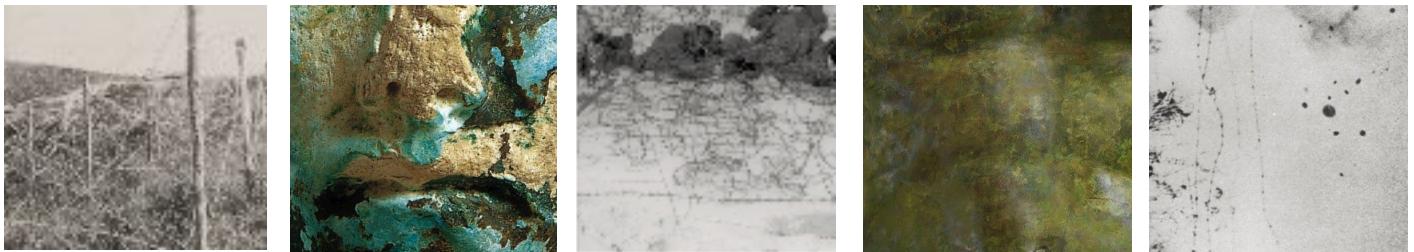
Muselmann who survived from the Nazi occupation are

unconscious and many of the *Muselmann* had died. Turning

Muselmann into non-human presences are beyond the ethic

rules, and so I believe that Giorgio Agamben's view is more humane.





• Apr 27

But, on the other hand, another student's suicide ideations:

My life

I can suicide if I want
Or rot in a corner,
slowly
Casually jump down a cliff

• Apr 28

Got up early this morning to go to the ATM. First time out of the building in weeks. Odd to walk in the open. Not scary, just disorienting. Felt a bit dizzy. The best time of year to be outside in Istanbul. Buttercups. Wisteria blossoms. New fig leaves. Songbirds taking a rest before passing on to less hostile climes. Best of all, didn't see a single person.

Now the dread of waiting for my first period students to log on. I was trying to explain this to a student during the first days of online teaching. He wanted to know why I wasn't using microphone and camera in our classes. (The first week we did text chat only.) Sputter. I'm not sure. I guess stage fright. I got so used to going into the classroom every day I forgot how terrifying it is. But you always seem so confident. Seem.

In other news, we're in more-or-less lockdown till at least the end of the Ramadan holiday, May 26.

Actually, my coworkers aren't incompetent (maybe one or two, but not all). Mostly just unpleasant. Pricklier than me, if that's possible. More layers of defense. Plus a few of whom believe the best defense is a good offense.



I suppose if I were the saint I aspire to be, I'd help create a more secure, more open, less fearful environment. So the question is, What would that look like? What specific actions would I take? Which behaviors of mine would I change? Or more importantly, which behaviors could I change in the long term? I mean, it's easy to be nice to people for a little while, but ultimately behavior has to be a reflection of who you are. Or to quote the Apostle Paul and my confirmation verse, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

One of many reasons why the idea of past and future lifetimes is so appealing.



Metensomatosis by Joseph-Daniel Guigniaut

The Egyptians wanted above all to prevent the soul at the destruction of the body from having to seek out another abode and from being condemned, because of the blemishes contracted in life, to finding itself in the body of one of those animals whose vices resembled its own and thus to run out the cycle of the great and sweltering period of three thousand years. They hoped that this soul in the permanence of its mortal dwelling place would have time to purify itself in the place of the dead and to prepare itself to appear before its judge and divine father, there to account for its actions during life, and to escape the disastrous necessity of metempsychosis, or rather, of *metensomatosis*.

examples: According to Guigniaut, "palingenesis ... must be distinguished from metempsychosis or mesentomatosis [misspelled in the French text]. While this latter, a crude belief, has all souls travel from body to body, the former, a purified doctrine, only admits that the universal soul, the soul of the world, by eternal vicissitudes, circulates in all phenomena of the material world, of which it is the life-giving principle, a principle without whose presence the entire chain of being would be broken and the creative force which ceaselessly produces new bodies would be extinguished" (Nouvelle galerie, p. xxxii).

And now, there were sublime spirits, strong souls, who, having kept themselves pure and without spot in their earthly existence as in the subterranean life of Amethes, are returned three or more times to earth, to take up bodies and there serve as examples to other men, to teach and save the inhabitants of earth, and then to be raised to a higher rank. This is what Pythagoras learned from the Egyptians and what Pindar sang in accordance with Orphic and Pythagorean dogma. Hermes himself, or Thoth, the god of the spirit, the guide of souls in their migrations, was said to have accomplished the great earthly pilgrimage three times without reproach, which earned him the nickname Trismegistus, or three times great, and it is known that Pythagoras-Apollo, no doubt after the example of Trismegistus, claimed to have appeared on several occasions on earth under various names and guises. In these evolutions from primitive pantheism, the gods therefore also had their transmigrations, as they had their analogous incarnations.

Translated from Nouvelle galerie mythologique, comprenant la Galerie mythologique de feu A. L. Millin, Firmin Didot frères, 1850, vol. 1, pp. xxx-xxxii.

metensomatosis:
According to linguist Raoul de La Grasserie, "mesentomatosis [misspelled in the French text] ... is first of all entirely mechanical. It involves reincarnating in any body whatsoever in order to survive—in one's own, in that of a child, even in that of an animal. It is a manifestation of the instinct of preservation, no idea of punishment or of reward. But later on, such a transmigration acquires a moral aim. It is only the soul of the sinner who will enter a lower body as punishment; that of the just will have a kinder destiny" ("Du rôle social du sacrifice religieux," Revue de l'histoire des religions, 1901, p. 18).



In the Bird Way by Sema Güler

An angel would come
night would come, to play with the winter mist on the children's
faces ...

And we would revert once again,
to the dust of the prophets who wetted with both hands the face
of the age
the dust of the stones and the bleeding mouths ...

Because we are the finite loves that carry perfection within
ourselves
that resemble those

Where have you forgotten me,
time that plucks the leaves of prayer from my breast?

A fish trembling in the deep dark, in its pensive body
came to me fearing to be buried alive.
If the tales be true this was my beloved.
Love, undoubted, reclusive, detached from all.
You will not ask:

"The moon is the first of the dead," I said
inadequate, often

They abandoned me offended, then
to that curling cold wooden toe of Sleep

This was unjust. Alone, below ground. This fantasy
was an end an absolute solitude or a tear, I asserted
... I look out between the garden's iron bars, out
beyond the bones. In your trees there's a flock of
green birds, I do not accept this.

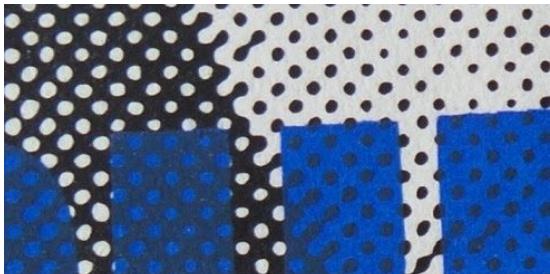
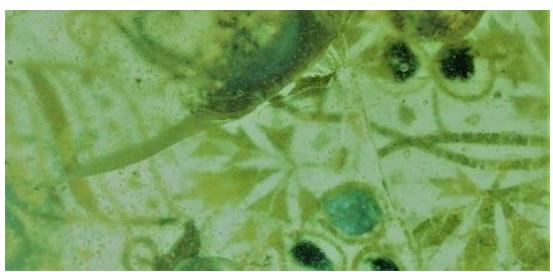
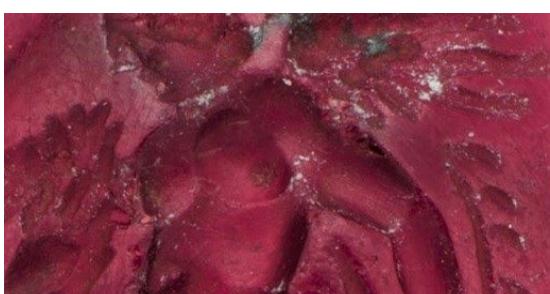
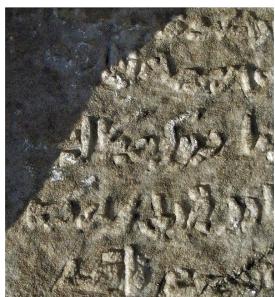
But it was death, it was deep.

*Translated from "Kuş
Minvali," Uyanış:
Karanlıkta Daracık Bir
Seyir Yolu, Bence, 2011,
pp. 18, 44-45.*

• April 2020

dwanzine@gmail.com

letter-ish, newsletter-ish, zine-ish



- some images © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- some images from an old sketchbook or from my own photographs
- many images from various public domain collections or fair use
- the poems? “permission pending”