

WILL STOKES

Koyaanisqatsi, or: Life Out of Balance
after Koyaanisqatsi (dir. Godfrey Reggio, 1982)

I have fed and over-fed myself,
have starved, yes, and purged myself,
as if my life's been one long stretch of chewing.
I have bound and chained and sold myself,
(and naturally have fucked myself),
waiting still on something more alluring.
U narcissistic Appalachian,
oversharing's out of fashion—
just float on down the creek till u get beached.
My breasts like jetties, Red Sea parted,
undertow, a life uncharted—
Please no more language. No more realm of speech.

Middle Kingdom

after Ana Božičević

Mornings in language class
Learning tones to
Order lunch noodles
At the restaurant called
Noodles Learning
Pinyin to chat with
Local boys Back then
Air still choked with
Smog and rules like
Avoid dating locals Avoid
Political speech Avoid
The foreigner's church
It was surveilled but
I didn't feel the spirit
Move there anyways
Too humid
Hadn't felt the spirit
Move anymore There was
A numbness The air was
At capacity Nights quietly
We'd leave the dorm
Taxiing discreetly to
Air conditioned clubs
The authorities hadn't
Raided yet Or rooftops
On the shore Safe in shadows
Dark wind cooling us
Between cigarettes
And baijiu shots
Excommunicado
Laowai faggot
Looking for surrender
The secular ecstatic
Mouths reshaped by
The gift of tongues
On the techno river boat

Danced together in the
Open Sweat into
Each other's shirts
Eyes nearly touching
Dark water reflecting
Neon facades
Annulling the stars
A current was moving
Beneath us but the boat
Never left the dock
We hadn't noticed
Police locked the
Moorings Made us
All file out No charges if
We complied So we did
Left some air between us
Air that remained
He called us a cab
Ferried me to the dorm
My Uber Charon
Alone in my room
I spat out my coin
Ate bao and wept