

IN FELT TREEING



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A LIBRETTO BY
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Dramatis Personae

Lavinia (mezzo-soprano)

Eumenides (choral voice)

Forest (narrator)



(musk and tethered plumes
the treeless mouths
solemnity the very trouble
of direction
serving care by leaping from the
watch, assemblage such
cicadas warm the air
in threnody
a clime in thick

e.

as if to say / and when to spell it out
to distill / our pleasure
like baseness / how we talked of danger
stunned / in the wet covers

l.

our garments / just so
the darkness / a tumult
of many-runged / havens
the pleasure / left
burden / droves
snuffed / sensations wholly
used / wholly thin
how I freely / huff

(some variegated
cant for rolling
subject to gently
lash
the wantonness
of noon
incumbent
paper of the night
in softly
drop

l.

languish on the floor / makes me
curled / stretching toward the cave
roof where hang / the roses
where happily / and where

(come flora err
silhouette
dryness
of the clouds
to breathe

e.

what was called slate / rose

slack / rose-limbed

less liminal / consent

was necessary /

l.

brittle / I alert

though proclivity / no music

how natural / my tenacity, my cunning

suddenness / though too properly

suffer / herr ditch

my conqueror / I am a debutante

through / and through

(afearred dot
in yellow
wears at work
the river slips
to scoop
the ductal
mouth
all whet

e.

sallow blossom / dis-
sympathy your eyes / sort of
emphatic squints / spatially met
useless near you rend / already
yield / for instress

l.

I've thought / open little sequins
and have a model / with suction
so forget it / nothing like wrists
against the air / the people
had a silhouette / for showing buildings
where they lived together / with hands
 / saying stop
when they had to / stop

(petals to the ground
the privy gown
fresh meted
welts
cruel fate

e.

a smith / wrought burlesque
handsome and to yield / and yield alike
forthright / cede
thy static / chatter there
a useless slag / of villainy

l.

in truth the fly hath / barbarous deft

leveled one, smashed / tyranny

saddle hinge / given

propensity / for trilling

given heat / pasties

treason at the head / of the lesion

(beneath the sycamore
drew crystal to the wood
 spun iron lungs
 affixed
the trees breathe shade
 lisp addled haling
 open mouth, o wisp

e.

wrought / a lithe wood
drawn / the light sank
there / applied the makeup
made a surface dent /

l.

the remnants of which / lust came off so
we didn't speak / the mouth cracked
what it meant / moving and soft sounded
ribbons / our compost tongue
pressed flat / against my side
the wine / out gilded age

(too yield
let touching smart
regards the lips
in acre felt
so listless
in their tears
unfettered
eyes in long
held lock

l.

my gown had little / white
was creamy tones / red like
a garden / was suddenly suspect
to assign such scene / were to sit
with mouths / how they came
bitter / in careful rows

(threads left hover
some in song
disdain the wood
a darker mouth
though wool spate
lop their wings
a threaded ave
flight against the throat

l.

trim / the dress left
there I stood / there
speechless / an ellipse of tin
worlds / is no place
to hunt / is hulking
left me no tone / the mood
stung vast / remove
to pieces / loitering the field

(tender-hefted thrush
already ornament
alack
driven mad
the starlight
dark

l.

met a cutting lisp / I trow
intent on vim / latent vestibule
I was / unkempt, I was
parable in lesson / consistent
with the dappled skylight / and glib
forms in will / to spite

e.

at the limbs / of osiris
as they tremble loose / they even
tassels / further coital
amusements / they took liberties
at first / of liberty a tender
and sore age / louse at work
the trouser hold / his sire
meant evasive pressure / pouring forth

l.

 / a lite venom
kiss / to do so wet

e.

 / the perforated
glide / scene such
cut / the heat
was difficult / to write about
the torso / the golden
trow for /

l.

my shallow eyes / perch
as for the wind / has limits
I am a vision / of chastity
 / to be won

(the very ground
a swallow
and of ground dolorous
song a bay forth
mouths in ternary
at list against
the willowed eave

(bonnets from the light
the fabric trees
no shade
hoved trimmings by
in wake
and trammeled
by the walk
the gyre
wake they're culling
baskets of the grass

l.

if length be illness / arms
may meager shine / though short
of patient / miniature
the sequined / near my wetted talk
I sat and watched / the ship pull close
a job for me / may
cleft / a song
wasp / weep

(an ardor
sunned there fabric grass
as sunned the whole tree
could sunder sheaves
a body littered knit

e.

 / have molted
ethos / though a girl

 / guard us
we are newly / blind

l.

as sparrow / as lone branch
as omen / dangled from the gash
with time / hideous
leverage / we have fable
we here moral / err
and dance against / the clad precipice

e.

clung / met opulent and downtrodden
the boys smelt loose / molten round
the soft / feathered lungs
some liquid made of them / a derelict
tender substitutes for men / and love

(in ribbons
cusped
the breeze
come opt
minutia
flush wash
tips should
slow lipped
sun glazed
glass in harm

l.
how they missed / my song
beneath its curt / draft
with rose lips / with lips otherwise
scentless / patterned against
the canvas / of my breast
for I am seaward / I sacrifice my poles
a current / lisp this useless

e.

to track her near / the wood
and raked / subordinate
grace / as smooth
the heat / its precious
wind / their fingers
serve impartial / sweep
 / o tantrum
cyclic neath / you wooden lands

l.

I still / my hologram
and sheen skin / its caustic
shining / I am miniature
in sun / covered in little
bulbs / a moment
on this bed / of leaves
we are outside / the warmed dark
inside my thighs / is warmth

(singular held
a feathered net
and land the mobile
let in lettered sieve

(desiccate too tied yield
a tint in berths
the upper wealth enlaced
a sanction
vines the more still
virus in the grass

e.

sprig and winter / deemed filament
caught blood / in deep buckets
and we were laughing / from the floor
we have two arms / each
we have / but two

(withdrew
the whittled end
pageantry and willows
loosely knit
leaves dappled
sores new dim

(erratum, the fragrant
shade led plastic
slow to wit

sorry for her
way in metal lets

(the grass iron
dusk by fanning
birds of prey
and to the wood
ran through

e.

liminal / used such and
such hue / a trim led hem
hung first / attest our effort

e.

hath added water / to the sea
hath disengaged our sight / its teeming brink
and naught our watch / upon your lips
anon / kindly met and tempt
tempt such / purely sharp in fragrance
that we propelled / that those around can see

l.

not paper / nor brittle
in that stolid / posturing
in brandish crux /
so brackish / as to splendor
I, helpless / I am
within the chamber / of my mouth
of what became / a remedy
within that even / night

(tell
pray summer
in its width
the cant for rolling
were to rend
in coarse
were to mold it hard
the morrow
over

e.

seldom level / what near authority

may flux / my garrulous

fold / solemn

in that teeth / were splendid cut

and marveled / how they ate

perchance / pearl

newly shed / a luxury

l.

doth leave me / still

in still skin / less

such / yield

l.

my dexterity / utter such

latent / in the fold

the inside glass / minced

weather in its common / place

I am hung thin / the body

of a tree /

/ surely I miss

dancing / the trees have a different look

COME FLORA ERR

solos for mezzo-soprano



Tree

Intrepid throat, deeply in my ears and cup
hold—leave me stump. Dripping gums in that
tomorrow, my heart.

Tree

Sound made the beach warm. I'd been sitting
near the beach. If I'd hands to help me knit
the cord. If a cord at hand could be strung
and with it time and with time's bullishness.
The hum made the greens plague around the
swell is where it started. The sky as fickle as
the sound.

Tree

Until I find a stream to cool this heat. Until
my mark runs freely in the heat, I cannot
see. This confidence doth mar my further
moralizing, and so prod forth, I told my
lonesome, prod. Our haven has us in retreat
to hide the callus hand, our nettled hut, your
war in the one and pet. How I was touched
ashen—made a flowering rush. Runs dripping
from said wrists and with it cheer.

Tree

The hand in the courtyard, the bird dropped
trinkets in my mouth. The platform, love, the
hand was a thing with five things.

Tree

We met at the station. We met in the metal
field to melt and laugh.

Tree

The nettled branches, the horses' hooves cracking in half, matting my hair. If I'd better developed my solipsism, my ashen leg and limp. In four, the flowers, their ruthless taxonomy and ignorance of fawning, which made us reconsider. The flat window with its open light.

Tree

There was comfort in how, standing with
my fingers, a pocket of warmth for warmth.
When you talked, your jaw did so much work
I knew to use my language.

Tree

My only guilt came in a song / I knew in
breath and tone / but failed lightly with my
own hot tongue.

Tree

Its feathered bunches—rent gold surface with numbers at the ridge's edge. The fire of its purple wings. It's a cloud. It's as big as my eyes and I am a cloud. My mouth retreats in terror near the forest edge—its sound the color of the words.

Its beak is round and plastic. It drags its hull against my face as I lower myself in flames, for I am a cloud, I am the shape of a large crow. It's no secret where I hide myself and in what pursed condition.

Tree

The massive space between us—the many
folded bodies there by the road, up and down
the quiet of the road. The contrition in my
lungs when I knew my final sound and how it
lit to blend my voice.

Tree

My other first, moths and laced accoutrements gave me longing. And that I was a solitary cocoon and could be seen through the silk bathing in the half-light of the field. To manifest such nostalgia in the form of symbols and pocked skin. I could be read, letters rose my bodice—I would be spared. The hollow sound as the birds left their nests, flying through the grass to be devoured and I saw them and made something from my throat. The birds flew to the ground, we felt them pass—communicated with the shapes of our bodies and from words made flint-like in texture and fragile from whatever height of the building. Solid hecatombs from the surface of our quarters to reduce our need to liquid—they were watching through the glass.

Tree

If I were held, I knew too many suns, my
porcelain breath. The weaker fabric at the
wrists had slowly thinned—neither tethered,
this predicament alone.

Tree

What could wrest my tongue from such
ambition litters me, rubbed from the ease of
both ends. I am subdued in the quiet of a
room. Moments alone held the thickness of
my mouth for cool. And now tuning in the
heather, a molten coat. Yet, to swallow in these
moments and still the growth of limbs. A
place to fold over, in half—how the darkness
smiles lightly on such raised folds, such knots.

Tree

To elicit cinder. My neck, the ascetic modality
of trees, that's why I left you. A principle
could be wanting in what I wanted to tell
you, so sleep behind me and I'll leave letters
in the birds' mouths. All of them so you'll
understand I'm troubled in different mouths.
To be infirmed, in a sordid measure, run faster
in the wind for cool. The sweat in my body's
making me candid and likewise the many-
legged troubles chase me from the dale's tope.
I have soldered my ears to the distant sound.
And so suddenly curbed.

Michael Cross edited the anthology *Involuntary Vision: after Akira Kurosawa's Dreams* (Avenue B, 2003), a companion piece to the New Brutalism reading series he founded in 2001. He publishes Atticus/Finch Chapbooks (www.atticusfinch.org), and is currently editing a volume of the collected George Oppen Memorial Lectures for the Poetry Center at San Francisco State University. He is pursuing a doctoral degree in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo. *IN FELT TREELING* is his first full-length collection.