

Open and Closed Spaces

BY TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER

TRANSLATED BY PATTY CRANE

A man feels the world with his work like a glove.
He rests for a while at midday and has laid his gloves on the shelf.
Where they suddenly grow, spreading out
and darkening the whole house from within.

The darkened house is in the midst of the spring winds.
“Amnesty,” goes whispering through the grass: “amnesty.”
A boy runs with an invisible line angling up into the sky
where his wild dreams about the future fly like a kite bigger than the suburbs.

From a peak farther north, you can see the infinite blue carpet of the pine forest
where the cloud-shadows
are standing still.
No, flying along.

Translated from the Swedish

My Papa's Waltz

BY THEODORE ROETHKE

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz" from *Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*. Copyright 1942

When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities

BY CHEN CHEN

To be a good
ex/current friend for R. To be one last

inspired way to get back at R. To be relationship
advice for L. To be advice

for my mother. To be a more comfortable
hospital bed for my mother. To be

no more hospital beds. To be, in my spare time,
America for my uncle, who wants to be China

for me. To be a country of trafficless roads
& a sports car for my aunt, who likes to go

fast. To be a cyclone
of laughter when my parents say

their new coworker is *like that*, they can tell
because he wears pink socks, see, you don't, so you can't,

can't be one of them. To be the one
my parents raised me to be—

a season from the planet
of planet-sized storms.

To be a backpack of PB&J & every
thing I know, for my brothers, who are becoming

their own storms. To be, for me, nobody,
homebody, body in bed watching TV. To go 2D

& be a painting, an amateur's hilltop & stars,
simple decoration for the new apartment

with you. To be close, J.,
to everything that is close to you—

blue blanket, red cup, green shoes
with pink laces.

To be the blue & the red.
The green, the hot pink.

Chen Chen, "When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities" from *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities*. Copyright © 2017

Those Winter Sundays

BY ROBERT HAYDEN

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays" from *Collected Poems of Robert Hayden*, edited by Frederick Glaysher. Copyright ©1966