

The Seventh Gate, The Wave

saw the boats. the sea. between the houses. the black sea. war museum. sleep. fell asleep. woke in mountain country. fell asleep again. wake to. the sea's link. the signs. greek. cyrillic. the similarities. the clothes. the shabbiness. poverty. the beggars. the fog over the sea this morning. woke the cats on the stairs. the harbour. intense disquiet. like a susurrant in the body. with the other. the sound of heels. in silence. crossroads. cross. not the sun of odessa. freedom maybe. true description. or false. the cities and the signs. the graffiti. crying eyes. in several places. house walls. tragedy. greek. cavafy's. the barbarians. waiting for. already here. the poverty. november. the empty restaurants. the fog. how they emptied. from august to november. not a neutral place. the telephone book. the name she looked up. rang. said she had found. a survivor. but from what history. long wandering. diaspora over generations. losses. almost the entire war. racism. the junta. the partisans. radical difference. in accent. skin colour. identity papers. passport. or not. to cross the border. or not. with a ticket. without. cash. lie. silence. waiting. took in the smell of sea. along the sea. the fishing boats. the fishermen looked at me suspiciously. wanted to walk out onto the mole. but saw the sign restricted area. zone 1. the women's side. they kissed the icons. the priest was singing. a cantor on either side. understood anthropos. nothing more. left when the singing got louder. the woman cleaning the icons stood before me. small. stooping. sprayed water. polished. bowed her head when the priest started singing. beggars outside the church. when I went in. at the other open door when I went out. monotone chant from a peddler. the rich buildings between the ones in ruin. the well-dressed people in the church. the eastern city of the roman empire. the sea. the connection. the sephardics from granada. opening. fog on the horizon. the islands silhouetted. lovesick cats starting up. a black cat crosses my path. waves on the beach. a fit of rage. I could neither understand nor stop. the freshness in the air. gulls. sounds from cars. building sites. major road. grey light. rain last night again. occurrence. process. to repeat the declaration. to release. be released. to open. be opened. you occur in me he said. sun. in abundance. the rocks. the cats' garden on the other side of the wall. deadlock. the cities or the streets. golden dawn. unemployment. mercenaries to protect parliament if the riots become more violent. islands. archipelago. in silence. breathing. inside the body. the movement of the water. eddies. in unexpected directions. in the pitiless white light. crossing. downfall. the glittering over the sea. white mist on the horizon. waiting for the barbarians. or a new revivalism. the cross with a thousand tiny electric bulbs shining above the hillside at night. kraniau. topos. the place of a skull. 23.33. in the layers of history. coordinates. wisdom. skullplace. frozen tears I thought. while the tears were flowing

whirled while dancing. between the tables. a full turn. a path that forks. multiplying the images. the basic forms. de-centred. willingly. necessarily. the evening lights. the lamps. the sea in darkness. movement. the icon of mary. the dark face. the sign of the cross towards the ground. to be enclosed in a culmination. word and deed. the quickness of desire. to kill, love. in the intoxication. the dance. the order of the body. the female body. watched the face of the older woman in the night. among the others. worn. once the young had left the city. the country. emerging so clearly to me at the table. her look at us. the hint of a smile. the deep wrinkles. the dance that is like the one he dances so happily. the elderly bodies. slowly. dignified. the kisses on her hand. the silver. the improper grief. in order to be among the living. slowly. mediterranean. a journey on which he arrived. sometimes. sometimes not. debarked. stayed outside the city. the white. crispy. empty. the white desert. scentless. to see from a different angle. the crying in the night. the unwritten layers. a larger image. the abyss of night. of the nights. searching and searching. to repeat the truth of the skin. the hunger. multiplying what is single. wonderful dreams. the icy cold. the way it hits your eyes. walk to the very edge of the rocks in the early morning. the morning light. thassos can't be seen in the mist. see the eye-graffiti. in different versions. on the walls of different buildings. buildings with elevated corridors running between them. a dark alley. children on their way to school. darkness in the allies. the children march round the school playground while martial music is piped from the speakers. in military squadrons. girls. boys. formations. cats. ill at ease about their number. in groups. on steps. stealing over the ruins of houses. unfinished buildings. under cars. see a man with a cat's body in his hand. he is walking quickly. the tail. the body hangs straight down. try to follow him with my eyes as I turn the corner. but he is already gone. a delicate dove lands on the terrace. three sounds. photographs. quickly faded. wave motions. to change the direction. deeper history. the many roads. across the mountains. on land. my words are not chained. mariners. the circling. the writing of darkness. in the light. the meteorology. something more encompassing. I die like a country he wrote. forty years ago. corruption. feudal structures. ottoman. riches. exploitation. after the military junta. the generals. the little girl in the harbour. with the flock of children. the excluded. in the mountain country. macedonia. on the truckbed. velocity. the freedom. in her eyes. in the landscape. as if there were no difference

tomorrow I ask about the bus. the man turns to the man beside him. asks the meaning of tomorrow. the remains of a mosque. and above it the remains of a basilica. the remains of the wall. where he debarked. the birth of civilisation. a grave. in ever widening circles. what can belong together. connect. be connected. what cannot. the waves. a cat's paw. an eddy. the wave motion of light. the unfinished map. somewhere in the circular movement. underwater movements. the fishermen in the morning. a huge flock of gulls follows the boat into the harbour. clothes hung on lines between the masts. piles of nets on the quay. an inversion. a twist. cuts to a deeper layer. through oblivion. the concrete. the deforested garden. in the city of jasmine. their stronghold. what he calls the vulgar laughter. human ossification. all greek family stories are tragic I say one of the first evenings. that someone told me. long journey. suddenly remembered. how it feels. to want to hit out. to feel yourself broken through. weaponless. suddenly wanting to cry. escape. but not be able. explosions of colour in the landscape. a few branches. the field of almond trees. rippling. in the mist. a deep note. the grey sea. a hard wind. condensation. drops across the screen. the outpouring. the exclamation. ghosts of the present in front of monuments of the past. the slow spring in the landscape. the variations of spring. a different face. the wall. a lighthouse. the sea. is heard the whole time. fierce wind. interval. the great murmur. cargo ships. I'm in the alley I say several times. greyness across the sky. the unbuilt houses. undemolished. unfinished. abandoned. skeletons of buildings. concrete foundations. scaffolding. when I leave in the mornings the party is still going on at one of the bars. black earth. the doppelganger. in the labyrinth. the desert. another night. wakefulness. city that never sleeps. where no doors are closed. no blinds are drawn. ring roads. plateaus of entry points. motorways. obscurity. at night. a glittering river. through six countries. nine thousand kilometres. multicoloured lanterns. the fish. that can be shared. a woman is rowing a boat with her child. the dancing body. salonica. the dusk. the smell of incense. coastal strip. coast. snow-covered mountain on the other side of the bay. harbour streets. buildings. cellars. a greek fragment. of coordinates. or a different word. a cryptic message. the impossible return. or the possible one. the image of mary in the dome. the raised foot. her face. changing so rapidly. harbour bar. ladadika. the fire. in the jewish quarters at the turn of the century. the snow-covered mountain disappears in the fog. the horizon. the white tower. the harbingers of spring. roads that run to bulgaria. skopje. did it feel like our home town. passage. white church. high above the villages. barbed-wired fencing. green. the fiercely green grass. balkan. fields. houses round a road. paths. closed shops. marble workers

the christian ramadan is beginning now the egyptian man says showing us the way to the jewish museum. accompanying us the whole way. along the street lined with orange trees. only oil in these neighbourhoods he says. business men. the lowered blinds. refugees. tranquillity. something extremely anonymous. obscurity from the alleys. says the man from nigeria, tying the strap around his wrist. the boat across the sea. shipbuilders. the rudder and the hand. people on the high seas. what the rudder tells you about water and wind. that they are taking us where we can go. not where we want. dropped the nets into the water and they were filled with frost. shone in the moonlight. they destroyed the wooden boats. the government had them destroyed he says. an excavator. the wood in the boats. one after the other. torn up. the last one. it says under the photographs. the last seamstress. the last cobbler. how many generations back in time that occupation reaches. armed police. paramilitaries. the murmur from the sea. the huge freighters. correct proportions. a moment. space. a fold. like a foghorn. the silence from the boats. the absence. so exactly cut. cranes in the harbours. the sequence of cranes. not a village. a road. the water's. the basilica cisterns'. the road of the water. the snow-covered mountain on the other side. after the arabs invaded egypt many of the monks left the egyptian desert and made for mount athos. built wooden huts with straw roofs. and survived by eating fruit from the wild trees that grew in the area. a measuring of time. the longitude problem. the twofoldness. the light and the night. the light night. at the innermost point perhaps. in the vortex. the white light. if there is another language. for the day. the light. the stillness. the light and the stillness. that it was so still. didn't want to go home. wanted to stay. stood at the window and smoked. wanted to make it longer. the moment. a language for the light. when it arrives in march. heat coming through the windows. his face. sharply delineated. inside me. lingering through the day. the woods. two people at very high speed. the attraction. the silence. speech. for three hours through the countryside. sun. sunset. darkness. access road. the city. the cities. more densely settled. the tunnel. the tunnels. downward outward. almost full moon. or full moon already. distance. black image. when english was gone there were just the abysses between the languages. the few paths. the wall I didn't want to become. a voice

the helicopter can be heard above the neighbourhood. the shape of blood . the water of fountains. the river's eddies. small whirlpools. a few men are standing fishing. the ones who slept under the bridges are waking up. a fire is lit on the other side. felt the sheets. the sleep. the deep red colour. the drawings of the world. the ecology of an empire. roman empire. tall palm trees. bamboo. scent. some flower fragrance along the path. range. refusal. sleeping bags. hidden bodies. a small camp. sono nata libera, viva libera e morirò liberata. queen christina of sweden died in this room on the 19 april 1689. I was born free. lived free and will die liberated. a head. black-haired. with grey strands. a blue sleeping bag. brown arm. the demonstration fills the streets. an enormous police presence. helicopters in the air. a gathering of people. on the stairs. the street. flocking together. piles of mattresses. covers. marble floors. bare feet. police sirens. ambulances. at high speed. planetary. even in the pantheon. human bodies in sleeping bags. dirty sleeping bags. thin bits of cardboard. against the chill of the floor. for two years in the crypt. my words are not chained. to be lowered into the baths. the dreams. the roads. the narrow alleyways. every paving-stone. the relatives. the waiting people. rotor blades. the constant hum. the stairs to the quay. the stench. the zone. the sirens. bright flashes. the thunder far off. a muffled rumbling. also this night. even this night. the dream. the catacombs. watch the lightning from the roof. the deep red colour. the taste. great flocks of starlings move across the sky. are heard in the trees. hurling from one side of the river to the other. the tall trees in the park. the stream of people. the ones standing still. smoking. down the stairs to the quay. we walked along the wall. heard the vast acoustics when someone started singing from inside the sealed off areas. the rain pelted down. lashed against the window panes. the streets were empty. wet. the cobblestones glistened. cloud formations. hands pointing. time travellers. the detonation. again. the shock wave. the blank memory. aroused cities. light phenomena against a dark background. maps written on skin. drawings across the maps. a female fire-swallower spins across the square with bowls of fire. the flames. out of her mouth. the moon in the haze. tumbling flocks of birds across the sky. the sound. loud. almost screeching. up the stairs in the palace. the ballroom. the creaking floor. a sound that spreads with every step. along the gleaming five-hundred-year-old boards. the smell. locanda eden. in the dead of night. blackbird singing

another word. through the channel. fire without clouds. cats in istanbul. woke me last night. again. kept me awake. the muezzin at five. the doves. epicentre. the hard stories. movement or immobility. the steps on the stairs. the armenians. the genocide. the shoes. the photograph. three hundred thousand people on taksim square the first of may he says. for the first time since 1977. when thirty-eight people were killed. they are my enemies says the man in the tobacconist's. they might put me in prison she says. if they could hear me now. the deep state. in the passage. my grandmother was a nomad she says. she could improvise a poem whenever you liked. four lines of poetry. warm orange. the colour. the aura. a car accident she writes. not a major one. of the minor kind. pity she says. like dostoevsky. the scene at the hospital. the arabic in the turkish. when I got home a few days ago she says. there was a note on the door threatening seizure of the property. it is totally open. the other. the inner. the gigantic city. male demons. internal avengers. fervently assenting. the two sides. of the alley. the courtyard. the face. the corpse within. in touch with. death and hope. his breathing. the rhythm. the risk. of dying. in the presence of death. we went into a shop and bought things. raki. apples. subdued lighting. low ceiling. saw him talking to his cat. saw it moving. answer him. adopt a pose I have never seen a cat doing ever. followed me to the gate. the community. the affiliation. the fringes. the orifice. the way he came to istanbul. the condition. after. the vision. I could barely walk she says. I was so weak. the violent relationship. that only forgiveness can mitigate. maybe. and if not. if the gap opens. is kept open. on the wall. watch the huge freighters disappear into the mist. what is on the other side I ask. azerbaijan. georgia. beyond crimea. the map. through the channel. the deeps. where several roads flow together. coincide. the possible. the impossible. body. place. closed off. suppressed. the almost arrested movement. heavy. hindered. a waiting for words. to be able to say anything at all. the quay. the promenade. only if I could remember whether karaköy. or kadaköy. was the name. the boat would take me to. the squares on the scarf. blue green. peacock green. the weave. the politics of the siren. of the urn. centre

watch the cat looking at me while it purrs on his arm. his sleeping face. the silence of the world. in the heat of august. a whole life. the temperature. he says and caresses my shoulders. the same. straight roads. canals. four rivers. five bridges. bathed my feet in the canal. his feet were covered in rust. opened my eyes. to see his face. dreamt. amber tears. from the amber eyes. the short while I dropped into sleep. white painting. the red bridge. the blue. the light from the river. 2017 he says. the next wave. the centenary. it's going to be violent he says. the one. the last. figure. white mountain. to whisper to the mountain. the thousand voices. the mountain, the angel. the mountain of the dead. new dreams. chainless. field of mars. as if the years were welling over. like rubbish. unwanted matter. through the halls. emptied. the empty places. one morning. in sunshine. heat. the music throughout the night. from the neighbours below. enlarged face. in sleep. touch and touch me not. the first day. fractally. the first day. over the days. I lost my sense. it was people. not the death-machine. people who hit. denounced. tortured. for a flat for instance. the grid of streets. always the flats on the corners he says. a cross. the streets. revolutionary youth. community. non-violence. raskol. split. through the layers. a few moments of clarity he says. in the park. before the murder. to open the wrong door. piles of corpses. the blue colour. to pronounce the nature of the crime. the guilt. the gulls. from the neva. across the neva. he wept. an opening between the worlds. in the kitchen. the dream. transversal. major rebuilding of the square. where a church was blown up long ago to build the metro entrance. the new. deep. seven minutes. ten. to get down to the platform. a whole naked line. the hipbone. the sex. it will be violent. the wave. continue he says on the stairs. felt the vibrations as the heavy lorries drove over the highest point. where the bridge opens. at night. the feline. the third day. wake up. and want nothing else. than to be close. the pronoun of night. looked for the edge of the buildings against the sky. silhouette. intersection. the low one. long one. horizon. the line of the horizon. nuclear submarines. docks. just a drop of water. the inaccessible opening. to the sea. transparent sleep. the shadows on the pavement. how they are drawn. the sun's rays. the bodies. the light image. hunger. heat. towards evening. the market. piles of dill. coriander. huge radishes. chilli. milk products. the kitchen. the cat. white. oriental. couches in my lap. they look at one another. outside the market. the coolness of shade. pravdi ulitsa. the mild wind. from nowhere. the wind that sweeps. from the coolness in august. the voice. the park. do you remember. the ground. I feel. the name of the fishes. eddies of particles in the light. the dense treetops. the bridge railing. the nocturnal streets. a motorboat at high speed. breaking the reflections. the orange reflections. love is an ocean she sings. a mystery. how old is the girl. a whole life. it is burning L writes. kidding. the second later. desire he says. as no one else. aleppo. the destruction. reflected in his eyes. the images from the market. the old town. the ruins. the rubble. through the day. the dream. the scent. airplane dashes are drawn above the cathedral. they'll have time to ring aleppo he says. from damascus. when they see the missiles. they've got eight minutes. seven signals. the dose

Marie Silkeberg. From *Till Damaskus* 2014

Translation: Frank Perry