

## Striking Light, Striking Dark

1. イッシ地方の仕事唄 Ish Province Work Song, サム・ハミル  
The plan is the work.  
The work is play, joy.  
Wherein reside silence and song  
side by side  
lighting, the way.
2. どうして忘れられよう? How Could We Forget? ライナー・マリア・リルケ  
How could we forget those ancient myths that stand at the beginning of all races: the myths about the dragons that at the last moment are transformed into princesses?  
Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who only wait to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps all that frightens us, in its deepest essence, is something helpless that wants our love.
3. 一 (ひとつ) Unity, パブロ・ネルーダ  
all leaves are this leaf  
all petals are this flower  
and abundance a lie.  
for all fruit is the same  
the trees are one, alone,  
and the earth, a single flower.
4. 至点 Solstice, サム・ハミル  
Old snow turns to ice  
what solitary stillness  
empties this cold world.  
\* \* \*  
Snow-laden cedars,  
like monks in green and white robes,  
all learning to bow.  
\* \* \*  
One stick of incense,  
one last bottle of sake—  
one, and one, and one.  
\* \* \*  
The moon, still alone.  
Ten thousand whirling galaxies  
and, simply, the moon.
5. 孔雀の羽 Peacock Feather, ライナー・マリア・リルケ  
Peacock feather:  
peerless in your elegance,  
How I loved you even as a child.

I took you for a love token  
which by silversilent ponds  
elves in cool nights hand each other  
when children are all gone to sleep.  
And since good little Grandmama  
often read me of wishing wands,  
I dreamed, you delicate of air,  
there flowed in your fine filaments  
the crafty force of the divining-rod—  
and sought you in the summer grass.

6. 悲歌 Elegy, サム・ハミル

It is almost dawn,  
the procession of stars  
journeying again  
into blindness. You who could  
not touch me show me the way.

7. それの全て (デイヴィッド・ワゴナー「誰が太陽になる？」の翻案による)

All of it adapted from David Wagoner, Who Shall be the Sun?  
when you saw that man was coming you changed into the rocks  
into fish and birds, a swimin' a flyin'  
up on that hill there's you  
have i held you much too lightly  
have i broken your silence too  
carelessly in my hands i drunk you and burnt you and carved you and knew you  
and danced upon your skin  
all of it  
suffering my foolishness  
I'll take care of this and more.  
as the old wait quietly among the clumsy children  
the others are coming soon  
I must change into the people, my people, we people, only people  
but how do i change myself?  
if no one here can really teach me and reach me and calm me and know me  
then let me become myself  
i will learn to crawl, stand and fly,  
anywhere, everywhere around you.

8. お告げのような Oracular, サム・ハミル

Gray alders turn glistening black  
in the moonlight so yellow  
it has blinded all the stars.  
In all the leaflets night,  
no sound.  
Rain frozen on the boughs.

9. 文学的翻訳のワザ The Art of Literary Translation, サム・ハミル

1.

Asking one who is  
not a poet to translate  
poetry is like  
asking a heart surgeon to  
repair your brakes—every  
once in a while, you'll  
find one who can do it well.

2.

Squabbling as they will  
in busy traffic, two crows  
make meals of road kill.

10. 探求 The Search, ジョン・ローガン

But for whom do I look?  
The whole night long you will see me walk  
or maybe during the day  
watch me pass by.  
But I do not wander.  
It is a search. For I stop here,  
or here, wherever people gather.  
Depot, restaurant, bar.  
But for whom do I seek?  
You will see me coming back  
perhaps at dawn. Sometimes  
the faces seem like tombs.  
I have tried to read the names  
so long my eyes darken in their graves  
of bone. (The bodies of our eyes lie side by side but do not touch.)  
But for whom do I look? My search  
is not for wife, daughter or for son  
for time to time it has taken me from them.  
Or has wrenched me from my friend:  
I will abruptly leave him,  
and I do not go home.  
Then, for whom do I seek? Out of what fear?  
It is not for queers  
for my search leads me from their bars,  
It is not for whores,  
since I reject their wares,  
or another time may not.  
Then for whom do I look?  
When I was young I thought  
I wanted (yearned for) older age.  
Now I think I hunt with so much rage  
that I will risk or lose  
family or friends for the ghost of my youth.  
Thus I do not know for what I look.  
Father? Mother?

The father who will be the mother?  
Sister who will be the brother?  
Often I hunt in the family of others—  
until hope scatters.  
I will call up a friend or student at night  
or I will fly  
to see them—will bask and heal in the warm  
places of their homes.  
And I must not be alone  
no matter what needs be done,  
for then my search is ended.  
So now the panicked thumbs of my poem pick  
through the grill. They poke  
the lock  
and put out a hand and then an arm.  
The limbs of my poems  
come within your reach.  
Perhaps it is you whom I seek.

11. 虚鈴 Kyorei, 「虚鐸伝記国字解」より  
明頭来明頭打・暗頭来暗頭打  
If light comes, I strike it. If dark comes, I strike it.

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We wish to thank Sam Hamill, William O'Daly, the Sociedad Chilena del Derecho de Autor (SDC), the Neruda Foundation and Alice Cato for their support and assistance in making this CD possible.