

RYOKO SEKIGUCHI

FROM ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO

TRANSLATED BY LINDSAY TURNER

When one of the apartment buildings in the city center is demolished, though the space might remain entirely empty, a part of the naked wall remains attached to the buildings on either side of it like they couldn't quite get it off all the way, and the variation of colors and wallpaper patterns, like a multi-colored screen, gives a sense of each of the rooms as they once were. If streets are also like this, the meetings of long ago will be stacked on one of those floors and the meetings to come will be suspended, or—following several times with my eyes the phrase “to keep in my heart,” in spite of my new leather shoes, my pace didn't slow at all.

“There are extraordinary things. I was missing you a lot. I wanted to see you.”

The faces of the living who aren't here and the shadows of the ghosts and the air stirred by those who never existed: in what ways are they similar, in what ways different?

The map of the city spread out on the desk, I was hunched over wanting to identify a building, on a whim I wanted to look for the street called Morais Soares and soon I found the letters “rua Morais Soares,” but the street seemed larger than I thought it should, as if it were a boulevard, and a bend in it that should certainly have been there wasn’t on the map although I can even now make it materialize before my eyes, the climbing vine half-yellowed and falling from the top of the short white arch that runs between the sides of the street, the scent of those flowers, fully in season despite their state, or the dark magenta door just to one side, just a little shorter than a person’s frame, and then the breath of the person walking beside, the little movement of her switching her purse from one hand to the other, the feeling of the moment when we turn the corner, where we slow just an instant and where her cheek brushes my chest: I stand up, suddenly dizzy, is it that I was reading the map all wrong until now, or is it the wrong way of crossing the street, or is it that we’ve misread your story,

Ghosts don't need to arrange their meetings, but for you it's still necessary,

At the moment when our lips touch I think: this moment in which we encounter each other, really, the only space where we don't have to wait for the hour to approach boldly, face-on, what happens there, between meetings, in general?

In a city built among the hills so consequently all the streets are sloped, the irregular reflections of sunlight reach their fullest and for almost half the year, from May through September, this paradoxically deepens the shadows. No way to know what phenomenon this might cause among the strata of those who lived here long ago. The southern zone opens wide onto the Tejo river, the streets exist for those who pass through them, and in front of the English bookstore, a man who arrived some time ago for a meeting at six o'clock starts awkwardly up the hill, while the meeting set for seven descends in a rattle of beating wings.