

A Tomb for Anatole  
(selections)

*after Stephane Mallarmé*

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Bill Marsh

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a duration e-chapbook

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## Note on Translation: *A Tomb for Anatole*

The starting point for the following poems lies in Paul Auster's excellent 1983 translation of Mallarmé's long poem, *Pour un tombeau d'Anatole*, released by North Point Press under the title "A Tomb for Anatole." These new translations are intended not to replace but to augment and reconfigure both Auster's translations and the task itself of translating from French to English. Drawing impetus from Walter Benjamin's claim in "The Task of the Translator" that "a translation issues from the original-not so much from its life as from its afterlife," the following poems attempt to define the "afterlife" of Mallarmé's Anatole while carefully acknowledging both Auster's work and the notion (again Benjamin) that "a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language..." With the intention of honoring the sense and form of Mallarmé's poem (its mode of signification), these new renderings make use of both homophonic and anagrammic translation tools in constructing the English versions of the original fragments. I use a set of devices, including anagram, same-sound correlations, exact or near-exact cognates, as well as common etymologies (near-matches of meaning), in an effort to rebuild the Mallarmé texts in such a way that both the syntactical variety and the physical shape (letters, words, lines) of the originals are reflected as well in the English.

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an infant dies to  
us both — de  
monstrates our  
ideal, child-man  
— anew! father  
& mother quietly  
    entrust existence  
survive a son in  
the two extremes —  
malassociating him  
acquiescing separate  
— death is more — nul  
ling this tiny “self” denied

(3)

better is  
he becomes <could> —  
that which was,  
engraved qualities  
dignity — etc.  
the hours you  
fought but never  
fought past

3

ailing in  
    springtime  
mourned in autumn  
    — celestial soul  
    —

idea      the wave -  
          attacks

2

4

if he's

reabsorbed

is a-part

it's he

— or his brother

me

shall i

say it

two brothers

—



5

repelled - - resting

in womb —

<just> over me

century

won't roll past

just for

my instruction

6

unknown  
mother, a face un  
recognized! —  
— image of me  
other than me  
transported in  
death!

7

          what's in refuge  
your future in me  
          become my  
purity through life,  
which i shall not  
    touch upon —

8

it's the epoch of  
    one  
Existence in us  
in us retrieved,  
    is not in lieu —  
— & if you  
    doubt these  
    mundane  
    testimonies —  
let's suppose that  
i live long enough  
—

pref.

father who  
eve'n in times  
gone bad had  
prepared a son —  
a touch sublime

---

“the double re  
plenished — the child's  
his own - the dull hour the desir  
ed sacrifice to one who's no  
more will triumph over  
vigor (man he wasn't to be)  
& through it all the task of infancy

the highest aim  
nothing but  
to part pure  
from life  
    you accomplish it  
in advance  
    in suffering  
        all this — gentle  
        infant so that  
This will be counted  
part of your due — your kin  
have bought the rest by their  
suffering the loss forever

II

(I

prayer storm  
(none for the dead)

—

knees, infant  
needed — bends  
to have our child  
— son's absence — knees  
bent to him — &

—

among the true dead  
an infant!

(2  
hands adjoin  
towards he who can  
not be touched —  
but who is  
— that space—  
es part —



(1

Pref.

cherished-

— great heart

<go> good son of <who>  
father - from

the heart

battled for projects

too grand

— avenues all

fell thru

failed to —

inheriting this

marvelous intelli-

gence from you, al-

(2)

ive again  
— constructed  
with his <neat>  
lucidity — this  
œuvre — too  
vast for me

& alas, (de  
priving me a l  
ife, all sacri-  
ficed, if it

(3)

isn't for the œ-  
— let him grow,  
de <prived> — &  
fear should all this  
created in joy rec  
over us more —  
seeing that i  
sacrificed my  
life — seeing i  
accepted as my  
own this death  
(cloistration)

example

we have in us  
part of you as «better-  
known selves»  
which often es-  
cape us — are set  
in us — in our  
acts, maintaining

—

infant, semen's  
idealisation

father & mother pro  
mising to  
never have another  
child

— per fossil increase  
alive - deceased

remedies  
in vain  
released  
nature 's  
lack of will

—

i'll take my  
self for  
dead

balms, liniments,  
consolations for us  
— doubt  
non-plussed! their reality

infant in our  
immortality  
a fact made  
of desperate human  
efforts — face —  
confides the feminine  
in a man's deeds  
a spirit's youthfulness  
to retrieve the mystery  
a pregnant wife

(1

made ill

since the day's mortal  
install — marked by  
malady —  
no longer him alas, same  
one we'd later serve  
the mortal pull we  
later would revere —  
resuming death is  
corruption — appearing  
thus, a son afflicted  
pales





with nod to parole (1  
 i could've made a fair  
 you, infantile du al  
 kind a fair thing  
 in lieu  
 — son traced, de faced  
 in us  
 — too fair — de  
 tach  
 son —  
 so often these or will  
 prove  
 that he  
 horrid days — fit —  
 joy  
 mouth remeshed, etc. ous role!  
 parole  
 - etc. a natal —  
 oubliette  
 say i'm acquit  
 ed — aiding thus

(2  
— a remnant in  
to the infant —  
youthfulness all  
of history's praise  
obliterated oh-  
ruin  
already passed  
suffering — retain  
in my turn  
nothing but that  
— etc. (mort

(3  
al or — to fasten  
you in me  
— piece that i be  
i see — soul in tears —  
— no, i re  
member one  
infancy  
— not mine  
dual voice)

---

missing you  
i knows — us

(4  
having deferred it  
+ )  
<& so it's>  
& so it's me,  
hands' audits —  
left in legacy!  
- silence  
(he will pardon)

(5  
Release!... in us  
tomb's curse  
— cuing us  
confounds us  
both  
— as a unit  
ending -  
    articula  
ted  
    late in you)

(I  
manifestations  
etc.  
cruel all  
Oh! permit us — no  
to view again...

egypt unseen —  
embalmed moments —  
hours, operations  
crypts — all this  
meant change

(2  
a day's barbarous &  
material-  
-exterior —  
maintained  
moral

& in us



view  
death's remorse

—

<Oh> intense tears  
of woman  
Oh! i will recognize  
your effort, ability —  
etc.

brother sister  
none ever is absent  
—

never is less than  
the present —

entire clouds tear  
<the vo> all night  
the void's immense  
product parceled  
out erases life  
— sparks annul  
sail past —  
quiet mortals  
    stay clear?  
cries  
    loud air