

1. “I like to say, guardedly, that I could define poetry this way: it is that which gets lost out of both prose and verse in translation.” (Robert Frost, *Conversations on the Craft of Poetry*)
2. “I accept her *little* for as long as I can oppose it to trivial, to minor, to young. To the extent that I can hear it – that I can make it – speak of an art of attending to all the small differences. [...] To each flower its own special attendant.” (Kate Briggs *This Little Art*, 328)
3. “It addresses you. Or is it because you have made it address you? [...] At some point in the process of becoming attached to the work, you have misrepresented the work to yourself and now you have come to love your misrepresentation more
4. Farming machinery from the 1920s
 - a. A threshing rig of the type featuring in *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*





Above: Nichols and Shepard engine powering threshing rigs in the 1920s & ancient thresher

5. Inscription of *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*

This book is for Thomas McGrath Jr.:

And for all of us

Together

A little while

On the road through.

6. One of the epigraphs to *Part I*

Whenever I see my Friend I speak to him;
But the expecter, the man with the ears,
is not he. They will complain too that you
are hard. O ye that would have the cocoanut
wrong side outwards, when next I weep
I will let you know.

*H.D. Thoreau (from *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*)*

7. “ensuring that [all] voices are recognized as counting”
(CFP “What Matters” Ganteau, Lenormand, Sorlin)

All extracts below from *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*

And I am only a device of memory
To call forth into this Present the flowering dead and the living
To enter the labyrinth and blaze the trail for the enduring journey
Toward the round dance and the community of light...
(136)

— I’m here to bring you
Into the light of speech, the insurrectionary powwow
Of the dynamite men and the doomsday spielers, to sing you
Home from the night.

Night of America.

Gather you
At my million-watt spiritlamp, to lead you forward forever, to conquer
The past and the future...
(138)

And perhaps the commune must fail in the filth of the American night –
Fail for a time ...

But all time is redeemed by the single man –
Who remembers and resurrects.

And I remember.

I keep
The winter count.
And will remember and hold you always although
Fortuna, her heavy wheel, go over these hearts and houses.
(155)

The past holds,
Like a sad dream trapped in granite: what foot can slip free what trail
Blaze in that night-rock where the starry travelers search?

I hear them knock at the far doors of the night I see
Through the haze of marble those shadowy forms...
comrades...
I'll sing you
Out of the prison stone, I'll pick the lock of your night...
(163)

8.

*Through that fatal weather, O Friend and Stranger –
You: reading the crystal of this page! – it was you I sought!”*
(LIF 378)

9. Searching for your hand to hold while we write this down together –

This: _____

_____*

* It may be that these lines (and there may be many more than suggested here) constitute the key to the whole poem – and perhaps to *all* poems, or at least to those where unseen collaborators of present and future have added lines of their own.

10. From Roland Barthes's *The Preparation of the Novel* (quoted in Briggs, 115)
“[E]very work I read as desirable, even as I am desiring it, I experience as incomplete [...] because I didn't do it myself, and I have to in some way retrieve it by redoing it; in this way, to write is to want to rewrite: I want to add myself actively to that which is beautiful and that I lack.”

11.

“Translation conceived as a means of writing the other's work out with your own hands [...] with all the attention, thinking and searching, the testing and invention that the task requires. [...] Translation as a responsive and appropriative *practising* of an extant work at the level of the sentence, working it out.” (Briggs, 119)

12.

“One can sit down at one’s table every morning at the same hour, assured of giving birth to something. Of course, the quality and the quantity of daily production can vary but the nightmare of the blank page is, for its part, definitely exorcised. It is, besides, this very reassuring guarantee which fundamentally places translation in the domain of the artisan rather than in that of the artist. However difficult translation may sometimes be, as distinct from creation it is fundamentally *risk-free*.” (Briggs, 252)

“Robinson Crusoe is a novice, a beginner. He has never made a table before. But others have. He is fortunate in the sense that he has a model in mind. [...] He knows what a table *is*: he has seen and used them before, back in York, in England. Like the translator, he is not tasked – he has not tasked himself – with making something wholly original, in the sense of unprecedented, without reference or comparison. However, it turns out his table will not be an *invention*.” (Briggs, 251)

“Translation conceived as a means of writing the other’s work out with your own hands, in your own setting, your own time and in your own language with all the attention, thinking and searching that the task requires. [...] Translation as a laborious way of making the work present to yourself, of finding it again yourself, *for yourself*. Translation as a responsive and appropriative *practising* of an extant work at the level of the sentence, working it out [...].” (Briggs, 119)

13.

“[T]he value we recognize and invest in literature. The right words in the right order [...]. These necessary words, in this necessary order. There is literature, arguably, or what we call the literary, when this matters: when we feel like something would be wrong should ever these words or their ordering be changed [...] [W]hen the words of a translation matter in turn, when we feel, in a translation, that it must indeed be these necessary words in this necessary order, the translation has become literature too.” (Briggs, 41-42)

14. Details

- “From here it is necessary to ship all bodies east.”
- Chablis
- thin wrack of cloud
- seven-tongued; crying for
- god-loving
- blaze

- And have you had
BATS in yr belfry, Bees in yr bonnet, been Bird-brained
and Beaver-struck? Badgered yr Da for dash
or Saturday buckshee, tryin' to Bulldoze and daze
the poor man till, totally Buffaloed, he turns loose
of the totemic nickel so you may monarchize an ice-cream
cone or play the weekendin' social Butterfly,
o me bucko?

Et n'as-tu pas été
BONOBO baiseur fou, dingo du minou, une araignée dans ta
tête de linotte ? Et n'as-tu pas cavalé après ton pater
pour un' prime, ou un bakchich du samedi, requinant
jusqu'à temps que c'pauvre homme hébété lâche le
sou totémique synonyme d'un weekend papillonnant ,
toutes ailes déployées, agrémenté d'un cône de glace au citron,
Ô jeune Blanc-Bec ?

- Cooïn → Quoyn → Quince → Quoyn
- Bounding along on my belly on my little drug-along sled
À la remorque, allongé sur le ventre, tressautant sur mon petit traîneau
- magic/ Of the whistling distant engines –
magie/ du sifflement des motrices lointaines –
- Where the banker's birch logs flare in the open fireplace flue
...

15. From Daniel Hahn *Catching Fire, A Translation Diary*

“[W]hat I am seeking is fidelity to what I imagine to be the source text's *effect*,” he writes (14). More precisely, “to allow readers who could not access [the poem in English] a proxy experience that's as precisely the same as that other book as possible.” (201)

“[...] I'd like a reader of the translated [author] to be able to recognise a bit of h[is] writing just as confidently as a reader of h[is] original might.” (91)