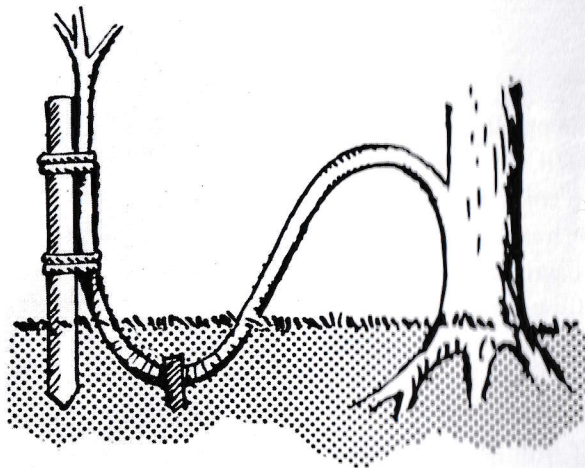


[...]

A beech bears chestnuts, a mountain-ash the silver-shine
Of pear-blossom; under an elm have acorns been crushed by swine.
Not one and the same are the methods of grafting and insetting "eyes":
Fir where, pushing forth from the midst of the bark, the soft buds rise,
And burst their filmy coats, even here in the knot's mid-wood
Is a slit made: deeply in this form an alien tree is a bud
Enclosed, and the life of the bark and its sap is it taught to share:
Or again, cut open are knotless, and a path cleft there
With wedges into the heart-wood; therein doth the gardener place
Slips of a fruit-bearing tree: thereafter in no long space
With fertile branches a noble tree hath skyward grown.
And marvels at stranger boughs and fruits that seem not her own.



THE HISTORY OF VIOLETS (1965)

Marosa di Giorgio

trans. Jeannine Marie Pitas

I

I remember nightfall and your room's open door, the door through which neighbours and angels came in. And the clouds—November evening clouds, drifting in circles over the land. The little trees burdened with jasmine, with doves and droplets of water. That joyous pealing, endless chirping—every evening the same.

And then in the morning, with its tiny dead angels strewn everywhere like paper birds, or the most exquisite of eggshells.

Your dazzling death.

II

When I look toward the past, I only see perplexing things: sugar, jasmine, white wine, black wine, the strange country school I attended for four years, murders, weddings among the orange blossoms, incestuous couplings.

That towering old woman who walked by our orange trees one night with her long white gown, her hair in a bun. The butterflies that left us when they flew off to chase her.

IV

This is the night of December lilies. Around ten o'clock, the flowers tremble a little. The nocturnal butterflies fly over them, their wings glittering with tiny gems, and make the flowers kiss each other, marry each other. And this occurs purely through desire. If I wish for something, it will appear. I need only to let go of my hands, my braids. And then I am opened to another landscape and other beings. God presides with his huge wings and black cloak, and then the deceased ancestors, my grandparents. All sit down to devour the great peace like a meal. And from my humble place I too share in this quiet jubilation.

But then, one time, Mother came all of a sudden and tapped me on the shoulder, and such was my fear, my shame, that I did not dare to rise to resurrect.

XVIII

At that hour, the tiny underground creatures were starting their work (those ones that wear heavy coats and work to the rhythm of drums: toc-toc). At that hour the moon had reached the summit of its brilliance, and all the doves scattered over the moon. But from a distance those birds looked like butterflies, great, sparkling flies. The doves flew over the moon, pecking at it, caressing it.

All of this became clearer as I watched the scene from the black forest of orange trees. And my grandparents sitting there, frozen, their cloaks a pale pink, their ill-fated braids.

They always held some too-brilliant thing in their hands: they showed it; they hid it. Is it a fallen dove? I stepped closer, looking, asking—Or is it a little hare from among the irises?

But they always gave me the strangest reply — It is a saint, they said — It is San Carlos, San Cristóbal, Santa Isabel.

I cannot put my memories in order.
The moon just wrecks them every time.

XXI

At the hour when the oak trees close up sweetly, and I am at the hearth beside the mothers, the grandmothers, the other women, and they speak of years long past, of things that now seem like mere dust. And this scares me, and it seems that this is the very night when he is going to come—the cursed field hand, the murderer, the thief who will strip us of everything. And so I flee to the garden, and the little underground creatures are already there. So beautiful—I say—with their smooth alabaster faces, their sharp, delicate, almost human hands, sometimes with rings even. How deftly they advance along the paths.

They attack the best violet, the one with a grain of salt, the celan-

dine that fumes like a bit of dough with honey, the basket of butterflies' eggs—oh, how they quiver.

They act with such confidence.

One time, my mother decided to trap one; she killed her, skinned her, and put her in the middle of the night, of the meal. And that creature retained a bit of life, an almost unreal death, she seemed to have fled from a funeral banquet, or jumped out from the casket of some marvelous corpse. We gulped her down, and she was almost alive.

The ring I now wear was once hers.

XXV

From cypress to cypress flew the planets—one of them huge, fixed in space like a lemon, like a flame.

From cypress to cypress flew the train. Their sad violin signaled the parting, the southernmost point of all things. At times, the adults said something like, "Oswald has died and they're bringing him to Station _____" but, since she was only five, neither Oswald nor death meant much of anything to her.

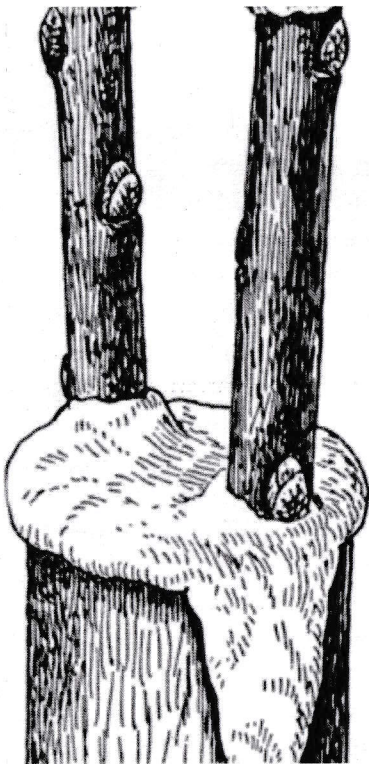
At that hour the adults—grandfather, grandmother, father, mother—withdrawed to the altar. But she preferred to remain in her own corner of the garden, watching the pinecones fall. Oh, what light branches, full of strange cherries.

Then, Iván appeared. He said, "My heart is a rabbit." And she had to look up, because he was tall, he was a man. He stooped and knelt down; she stared at his chest, looking for the two long, white leaves, two long, white ears. But then, suddenly, slowly, she began to figure things out. Her terror was such that instead of fleeing towards the house, she ran to the grove, stumbling among the branches as she went. But there seemed to be some men and women there, motionless under that cover, perhaps with some awful scheme in mind, and animals with four or five staring green eyes that scrutinised her, gazed into her core.

And so, nearly obviously even to herself, she ran out to the open space; she was going to hide among the vines, seek refuge among their huge leaves. But, already twilight's bats were flying overhead, smoking their little silver cigarettes. And she stopped. Iván had found her and

was coming toward her, now just two or three meters away. She fainted, and he lifted her, hugged her and said, "Don't cry. I'm taking you back home."

She knew full well that this was not true.



*Just in that space a narrow slit we make,
Then other buds from bearing tress we take;
Inserted thus, the wounded rind we close,
In whose moist womb the admitted infant grows.*

[VERGIL]

BRAVE NEW WORLD (1932)

Aldous Huxley

A squat grey building of only thirty-four stories. Over the main entrance the words, CENTRAL LONDON HATCHERY AND CONDITIONING CENTRE, and, in a shield, the World State's motto, COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY.

The enormous room on the ground floor faced towards the north. Cold for all the summer beyond the panes, for all the tropical heat of the room itself, a harsh thin light glared through the windows, hungrily seeking some draped lay figure, some pallid shape of academic goose-flesh, but finding only the glass and nickel and bleakly shining porcelain of a laboratory. Wintriness responded to wintriness. The overalls of the workers were white, their hands gloved with a pale corpse-coloured rubber. The light was frozen, dead, a ghost. Only from the yellow barrels of the microscopes did it borrow a certain rich and living substance, lying along the polished tubes like butter, streak after luscious streak in long recession down the work tables.

"And this," said the Director opening the door, "is the Fertilizing Room."

Bent over their instruments, three hundred Fertilizers were plunged, as the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning entered the room, in the scarcely breathing silence, the absent-minded, soliloquizing hum or whistle, of absorbed concentration. A troop of newly arrived students, very young, pink and callow, followed nervously, rather abjectly, at the Director's heels. Each of them carried a notebook, in which, whenever the great man spoke, he desperately scribbled. Straight from the horse's mouth. It was a rare privilege. The D.H.C. for Central London always made a point of personally conducting his new students round the various departments.