

CADERNOS 27

DE LITERATURA EM TRADUÇÃO



Os Muitos Mapas da Irlanda

Michael Kearney: Four Letter Word Camouflage Artist

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This poem is perhaps a shedding,
but be aware, it also may be a ruse:
you are not getting to know me too well,
I am a snake – cunning, slippery, stealthy, camouflaged.
—From “Skin”

Four Letter Words

Michael Kearney’s (Michael Joseph Kearney, 1965 -) four poems, “Home,” “Path,” “Skin,” and “Word,” taken from his *Four Letter Words* (Delere Press, Singapore, 2020), are presented here in the original English, and my Japanese translations.

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Kearney is Irish American, and for him, poetry is a visitation. Under the hot Singaporean sun, Dermot Healy (1947-2014), an Irish novelist, playwright, poet, and short story writer, and Kearney had a stimulating conversation about how poetry is a visitation while prose, according to Healy, is “workmanlike”: you wake up, work on your prose, finish for the day, and repeat the process daily until your work is finished.² These two processes seem to be implemented by Kearney in his artistic creations: poems, prose, music, and images: something suddenly comes out from Kearney; he takes out a small Moleskine notebook or sketchbook, he is always carrying them, and starts writing/sketching with a tiny pencil. In Kearney’s case, the poems are not external gifts bestowed in wholeness from some muse. The poems are conceived and formulated somewhere deep in him. It is a complex process; one I believe Kearney is well aware of: he excels at revealing the workings of cultural programming in identities. He is an expert at it. Kearney has a Ph.D. in literary and critical theory from the University of Limerick. It is similar to the processes of layering and amalgamation operating to form an identity, a concept that Kearney posits in his “Identity Matrixing Model.” Much has been/is being /will be acquired, stored, processed, and nurtured from the past, in the present, and from possible futures. It is organic and will never cease as long as Kearney’s brain has a cognitive function.³

That *four* poems are chosen for this issue is coincident, but it is an appropriate number to honor Kearney’s conceptual project, *Four Letter Words*. The materialization of this book represents Kearney’s avant-garde side, his artistic, creative vision, and his curiosity to break through the established and see what appears and happens. In the conceptual development of the book, Kearney, like a trickster, has decided to play with the perceptions readers will form—in English, the term “four letter words” connotes dirty, or obscene words. However, while the title of each poem in the book is comprised of four letters, none of the titles are obscene. From the onset, he has intentionally decided to mislead the readers, to start them down the wrong road of thought. I gather that this is part of his didactic technique, to force readers to look deeper than just surfaces.

Since the Japanese language does not have letters, I used four syllabic kana/characters for the titles: my attempt to simulate the four-lettered titles of the ori-

2 *Four Letter Words* is dedicated to Dermot Healy.

3 This sentence originally ended with the phrase “never cease.” However, Kearney, upon seeing the draft, insisted, “It will cease,” to which I said, “As long as you are breathing, it won’t,” and then he said, “What if I’m brain dead?” Thus, the sentence was rewritten.

ginals. Still, the Japanese readers will not associate these with any obscenity as the English concept of “four letter words” is non-existent in the language. However, let us not be distracted by this too much. While Kearney’s poems are all independent, standalone pieces, there are recurrent themes and motifs that thread them together.

In this article, I would like to comment on Kearney as a camouflage artist, where each of the four poems being discussed will serve as a cue to delve into Kearney’s method (in the order of “Skin,” “Home,” “Word,” and “Path”). I, the translator of Kearney’s four poems into Japanese, have known Kearney for two decades; thus, kindly allow me to depict Kearney by taking advantage of knowing him, which means the writing resorts to an empirical method.

“Skin”: Camouflage Artist

Skin

The suns of Asia
have been beating upon my skin
for over twenty years
leaving me
marked, mottled, and blotched.

When young, never had great skin,
wasn’t a zitty guy, but pale and freckled.

Blistery sun-burns in summer,
after the soreness, loved peeling off the skin.
Shedding like a snake – always loved snakes,
and feared them.

In Asia, found-out I was of the year of the snake.
Ah, how wonderful, much better than a chicken or rat,
but I suppose not as cool as a dragon or tiger.
I was correctly born as a snake.

At fifteen, so burned at beach,
passed out next morning.

Couldn't make chemistry Regents.
Teacher called house in panic:
"Michael's not here! He's missing the Regents!"
Father told her I had sun-stroke – the Regents was missed.
Went to Ireland that night, barely.
Cool air and showery days
worked wonders on my skin:
a skin designed for that clime.
Took make-up exam in August,
passed, score not as good
as it should
have been.
Never really recovered from that:
never have been enthralled with chemistry since,
never will love it again,
it has been burned out of me.

Leggy women in short skirts with shoulder-bags delight me:
the skirt on the bag-side slides up,
revealing the control-top of pantyhose,
or in stocking-times, a slight sliver of skin.
Always have loved that.
Don't much like flesh bared:
the stark clarity,
see too much,
get put-off;
layered women intrigue more.
But I am not a leech:
I do not stare,
I do not follow,
I do not approach.

I only notice.

I notice many things, sliding skirts is but one.
It comes to me now as I sit on a Tokyo train writing this

and a skirt is sliding before me.

As ever, I will not approach, would never, and never could.

Not like some guys I know – go up to women

in bars

at stations

on trains

in streets

at school

on planes;

how can they do such things?

Go up to a complete stranger and begin chatting them.

Would they do it to a man that looked like he could be a good friend?

Never.

And it is so obvious, they are horny and want sex.

How can so many women, far too many, accept this and accommodate?

Are they horny too?

Or obtuse?

Perhaps the short skirt slide is a sign – a signal?

I need to study this from a semiotic point of view.

Yes, I have never approached a woman.

I guess those approachy guys are comfortable in their skin.

I never have been;

my skin isn't thick enough:

easily bruised, pricked, burned,

stunned by the sun and the word;

shield myself in layers and rarely get laid.

This poem is, perhaps a shedding,

but be aware, it may also be a ruse:

you are not getting to know me too well,

I am a snake – cunning, slippery, stealthy, camouflaged.

Yes – approached very few women.

Amazing I have not led a virginal life.

Even got married and reproduced.

Blended my weak skin with
some stronger, luxurious, Asian DNA.
My sons have wonderful skin:
smooth, beautifully shaded,
not pink and blotchy with gross blue veins.
These boys are comfortable in their skin:
have lived on three continents,
sliding through cultures seamlessly,
finding affinity with surroundings,
the boys too are experts in camouflage.

Now I am psoriatic;
my skin is aging faster than me,
scaly, flakey, shedding,
it outstrips me, I can't keep up.

I have peeled-off another layer
and placed it in this Moleskine.
Now it is preserved forever,
and I am changed and better.
Will take a break from myself,
come back later for more picking and peeling,
going ever deeper,
layer by layer,
who knows how deep I will dig
before I run out of time,
that will surely happen before running out of skins.
Is there even a core of me to get at?

You thought it might be coming,
hoped it wouldn't,
feared it would,
but here it is: "beauty is only skin deep."
Hmm ...
Been thinking about that the past few minutes,
strikes me as a crude and stupid saying.
Skin is very deep, observers often so shallow.

ひとはだ

アジアの太陽は
オレの肌を撲りつづけてきた
二十年以上もだ
その結果、オレはシミだらけでボコボコだ
オレの肌の上を網目状に静脈が青く這いまわっている。

肌は質の良さとは、若いときからまったく縁がなかった、
それこそニキビまみれではなかったが、青白くてそばかすだらけだった。

夏には太陽の灼熱で火傷して水ぶくれだらけだ、
痛みがおさまれば、水疱の皮を剥がすのが楽しくてやめられなかった。
まるで蛇のごとくオレも脱皮しているのだ——オレは昔から蛇を虯髯にしていた、
そして同時に恐れていた。

自分が年の男であることをオレはアジアで発見した。
ああこいつはよい、チキンやラットよりよほどよい、
ドラゴンやタイガーに比べたら、かっこよくないかもしれないが。
じつにきちんとヘビらしくオレは生まれてきた。

灼熱の太陽がビーチでオレをあまりにも焼きすぎたのは15歳の時のこと、
そのつぎの日の朝、気絶した。
化学の州立及第判定試験を受けに行けるどころではなかった。
パニックして先生が電話をくれた。
「マイケルが来てないんです! 及第判定試験を受けられなくなってしまいます!」
親父は先生にオレが日射病で倒れたことを伝えた——及第判定試験は受けられなかった。
その晩、アイルランドに渡航した——どうにかこうにか這うようなで。
冷たい風とにわか雨に見舞われる日々は
オレの肌に効果てきめんだった
——この天候用に作られた肌なのだ。
再試験を八月に受け、
合格した、本来できたはずの
点数より、ずっと
低かった。

このことから完全には立ち直れていないんだ——
この時以来、化学には全く関心がなくなった、
このあと二度と化学の虜になることはない、
オレの中から化学はきれいさっぱり焼き出されてしまったのだ。

オレはスラッとした脚の女の人がショルダーバッグを肩にかけてミニスカートを
はいている姿が好きだ——
バッグを肩にかけている側のスカートの端が少しずり上がり、
パンストの編目の切り替えが、ストッキングの時代だったら素肌が、
ちらりと外にさらされる。
昔からいつもこれにときめいた。
むき出しの素肌はあまり好きではない——
あまりに赤裸々で、
見えすぎて、
興がそがれる
——幾重にもおおわれている女の人に惹かれる。
だがオレは変態ではない。だから
目を這わせたりしない、
あとをつけまわしたりしない、
声をかけに近寄っていたりしない。

オレはただ気がつくだけ。

いろいろなことにオレは気づく。ずりあがるスカートはそのほんの一つ。
東京の電車で座ってこれを書いている今も。ほらオレの前方で
どなたかのスカートがずりあがっている。
そしていつもどおり、近寄ろうとはしない。絶対にオレはやらない。絶対にオレには
できない。
オレの知り合いには女にお近づきになるために話しかけにいく男たちがい
る——が、オレはちがう。彼らは
バーや
駅とか
電車でも
通りや
学校とか
飛行機でも

声をかけに寄っていく—どうやったらそんなことができるんだ？
見ず知らずの赤の他人にお近づきになるために話しかけにいくなんで。
よい友達になれそうな気がする男の人にも同様の迫り方をするか？
まさか。

それに見え見えなんだ、欲情しているのが、ただやりたいただけなんだ。
なんであんなに多くの女の人们が、そんな彼らを受けいれるんだ？あまりにも数
が多すぎる。

彼女たちも欲情しているのか？

それともわかってないのか？

もしかしたらミニスカートがずりあがるのは記号—シグナルなのだろうか。
こいつをオレは記号論的観点から検討しなくてはいけない。

そう、オレは女の人に声をかけに近づいたこと一度たりとてない。
お近づきになろうと話しかけにいふ男たちは自分たちの化けの皮がきつと心地よい
のだろう。

オレは昔からまったくだめだ—

面の皮をはじめ、オレの皮膚という皮膚にはまったく厚みが足りない：
簡単にあざはできるし、チクチクするし、火傷して炎症をおこしてしまう
太陽と言葉に焼かれたらオレは気絶しかねないから
オレは肌を幾重にもおおって自衛し、滅多に肌を重ね合わせることはない。

これはもしかしたらオレの脱皮の詩だ、
だが早とちりしないでくれたまえ。欺きの詩であるかもしれない—
一皮むけたからって、あなたがオレのことをよく知るようになるものか、
オレはヘビ—狡猾で滑滑と気づかれることなく動く。偽装したオレは溶け込んでい
て見分けがつかないのだ。

そう—女の人に声をかけたよ。ごくごく数人。
純潔な一生を送らなかったのは自分でも驚きだ。

なんと結婚してこどもまでいる。

ひ弱なオレの肌をもっと強い、
華美な、アジアのDNAと混ぜたさ。

オレの息子たちは素晴らしい肌をしている—

美しく滑滑としたなめらかな色艶は、
ピンクで、気味の悪い青い静脈が網目状に浮き出ている肌とはちがう。

この子たちは自分のまよっている肌が心地よい――
三つの大陸に住み、
さまざまな文化の間をしなやかに滑走し、
まわりと馴染んでいく、
この子たちも偽装の専門家だ

オレはいま乾癬気味だ
オレの肌はオレより早く老化していつか
うろこ状の薄片が剥け落ちていくのが、
オレよりはやいんだ、オレはついていけない。

オレは皮をさらにもう一層剥いた、そしてそれを
まるで土竜の毛皮のようなビロードのカバーにおおわれているモレスキン社製の
ノートに収めた。
これでこのヌケガラは永久に保存される、
オレも一皮むけたおかげでよくなった。
ここでちょっと自分から休みをとろう、
またあとで戻ってきてから、皮を剥いていく作業をつづけることにする、
何層も何層もずっと深いところまで、
一層ずつ一層ずつ、
つまんでは剥いていく。時間切れになるまでに
オレがどこまで深く剥ぎつづけていくかわかったものじゃない
オレの皮がなくなる前にオレの方が時間切れになることは間違いなからう
剥ぎつづけていったらたどりつけるのかな。オレの核に。そもそもあるのだろうか。

ここまで読まれた読者諸氏はそう来るだろうと思われていたかもしれない
そう来ないでほしいと思われていたかも、
そう来てしまうのではないかと危惧されていたかもしれない、
それがこの諺――「美しさは皮一重にしかすぎない。」
うーむ…
数分の間ここで考えを巡らせてみたけれど、
この諺は雑に過ぎた軽薄な諺だとオレには思える。
皮膚はとても深いのだ、観察者の方が往々にして浅薄すぎる。

Kearney is a camouflage artist. Kearney is slithery and difficult to capture, and he knows it. Not only does he know it, but it is intentional. I, as a translator, enjoyed the richness of snake imagery in the Japanese language. It allowed space for figurative translation. It is a potent space to exercise transcreativity. Two examples. First is where Kearney missed the Regents and “Went to Ireland that night, barely.” I made use of a Japanese expression slithered out, which means barely in time. The second example would be the translation of “I do not stare” that follows “But I am not a leech.” The Japanese translation goes, “I do not let my eyes crawl over.” I hope the translation enhanced the existing original imagery of Kearney as a snake, a cunning, slippery, stealthy camouflaged, saintly sensitive high moral being.

This art of camouflage, in essence, is Kearney’s transculturality method. Kearney’s camouflage skin can be perceived as an art of survival that simultaneously navigates, or perhaps circumnavigates, mean systems, such as ethnocentrism, without animosity. He is highly aware of the significance of cultural and ethnic identity in multicultural, multiracial individuals: and if a home is a prescribed ethnocentric concept that asserts there should be only one ethnicity one belongs to and one real home, how does one resolve that? Kearney has two of each; Kearney’s boys have three home countries and two ethnic backgrounds.

His poetry builds rooms and houses—homes. The doors are open, yet many fail to see the entrance. He sheltered and nourished his Irish-Japanese-United Statesian⁴ boys in his sophisticated art; he created an abstract plane that fostered and provided a solid foundation for the children’s identities to develop. Living on three continents, where the cultural differences might be vast and not necessarily compatible or friendly, can be difficult, particularly for young children in the early stages of identity formation. Now, Kearney’s sons, too, are “experts in camouflage.” He has passed on to the boys the art of creating their own homes and the ability to navigate, or circumnavigate, the mean systems. He built space free from the Japanese-, Irish-, US-, Skin-color- centric thinking trap. The exterior of the houses blended into the neighborhood. The doors were open—his houses have always been nexuses of welcoming spaces.

4 See “Home” for Kearney’s usage of “United Statesians” instead of “Americans.”

“Home”: A Four Letter Word

Home

standing on the banks
of the broad majestic Shannon,
the sun glimmering,
beautiful,
like diamonds,
silver slivers off
a half submerged shopping trolley.

the new Ireland's forbidding shores:
“Eastern Euro-trash
diluting the *natural* culture;”
not my thoughts dear readers,
i'm United Statesian trash:
too obtuse to appreciate
the *natural* culture.

and to the Irish,
for generations abroad,
let's hold on to what has become fiction.
sons and daughters of brothers and sisters,
in-laws you never want to see.
let's continue our incestuous self-adoration.

while back on the home island,
slick suits,
sexy Guinness models,
mobiles and Benzes;
there's no place like home.

ふるさと

こうだいでゆうだいな
 シャノンのにたたずむと、
 太陽の光がキラキラと、
 半分水没した
 ショッピングカートの上に
 ふりそそいでいてメッキの銀が
 まるでダイヤモンドのように輝いている。

このところアイルランドの沿岸は立入禁止—
 「東欧系ユーロのクズたちが
 この土地本来の文化を消滅させる」から—
 この考えは、読者諸氏、オレのではない。
 なにせオレは合衆国人のクズだ—
 土地本来の文化のすばらしさには
 鈍感すぎるのだ。

幾世代も外地で生きてきた
 アイルランド人たちは変わらない
 すでに絵空事になっていることにしがみつこう。
 あにおとうとあねいもうとのむすこたちやむすめたち、
 ぜったいにあいたくないぎりのしんるいたち。
 われわれの近親相関の身内崇拝をたゆみなくつづけていこう。

ひたむきに生きている間にふるさとの島は、
 金ぴかのスーツ、
 セクシーなギネスのモデルたち、
 携帯電話とベンツ—
 やっぱりふるさとにまさる場所はない。

“Home” is an earlier poem that shows the direction of his critical intellect: Kearney’s disagreement with his parents’ views, his refusal to escape into the passivity of the longing of a fantasy projection for home (Ireland). He writes, “and to the Irish, /for generations abroad/let’s hold on to what has become fiction.”

Kearney reacted to the Irish homogenous ethnocentrism, saying he is “United Statesian trash.” “Home,” reveals, an underlying darkness of what is perceived as a “nice” word. In “Home”, a very “welcoming” word, we find “forbidding shores.” A home can be the source of one’s happiness; however, all too often, it is the source of pain through ill treatment. This is Kearney playing with the idea of “bad words” and “dirty words.”

Kearney grew up in multiple diverse cultural systems. Another cultural sphere he was to traverse deeply was added when Kearney met Minako in New York and married her. They decided to live in Tokyo. Two boys were born: one in Tokyo and one in Limerick. The boys became his priority.⁵ Kearney understood the significance of the boys owning their identities and traversing the external world as camouflage artists. Kearney is a scholar that would develop the Identity Matrixing Model. He utilized Jacques Lacan’s (1901-1981) concept, the “Symbolic Order,” and went beyond Lacan’s conceptual limit.⁶ Kearney holds languages are signifying systems that humans attribute meaning to, simultaneously, they are the medium that imparts symbolic orders to individuals.

A minor note on the translation: in the first stanza, “banks,” is a play on the banks of a river and the financial institutions: the latter meaning is potent as it references capitalistic ugliness. I could not translate this, so left it as such.

“Word” on an Altar

In “Word,” a concrete poem, Kearney visually portrays and plays on the idea that language is not a predetermined absolute. Enjoy reading the altar on which the devotional offering “Word” is placed. Kearney, in a fun-loving manner, deactivates and disempowers prescribed meanings.

5 I would like to take this opportunity to thank Patrick and Michael for taking the time to read the Japanese translations of their father’s poems. They were raised in Tokyo, their mother is Japanese, and they went to Japanese public schools, yet they are bilingual, fluent in English and Japanese. Kudos to their father and mother.

6 Kearney’s contribution to the Lacanian concept is his discernment “no individual exists solely in one Symbolic Order.” For more details see, “Mapping Hybrid Identities: A Matrixing Model for Transculturality,” in *From Conflict to Cognition*, Michael Kearney, Ed. Rodopi, Amsterdam-New York, 2012. I have the honor of being credited with a co-authorship.

Word

Adulterous hypercritical fiends
 exclaim their misanthropic indiscretions
 to the disinterested populous
 while angelic whores
 bow in submission
 to promiscuous gods
 all reveal Orwell's visions
 of the end of individual human life
 and the Buddhist times of flawlessness

ことのは

邪なもうれつきわまりないあらさがしだが
 ひとへにくしみをあらわにおおぜいにばせいをあびせているが
 むかんしんそのものにきにするものはない
 そのあいだてんしのようなばいたが
 じゅうじゅんにいんらんな
 かみがみにこうべをたれる
 すべてがオーウェルのいったとおりである
 ひとりひとりのひとのひとらしいのちのしゅうえん
 そうして仏教のみらいえいごうとむほうのほうをあらわにする

As a translator, I did my best to keep the shape close to that of Kearney's original: no punctuation, no space between words. However, he inserted three letters in uppercase. I tried to emulate the same effect by using different sets of characters. The visual impact of O, which could be interpreted as a hole, a depleted nothingness, in the original, is lost.

“Path”: No Kurtz

Path

March 24, 2014 – 21:24 – The Corner Place

As I sit and read about

Lacan – Bataille – Poe – Benjamin – Godard – Flaubert

I am surrounded by uncouth businessmen.

Yes *men*, no women.

Loud – if they are senior – boastful, posturing, arrogant,
readying themselves with beer and shochu for a visit to the whore house.

Where, I ask you, has “elegant” Japan gone?

After 24 years in this male dominated culture,

I wonder, where, when, and how it existed.

What sort of “elegance” are we talking about here?

And who termed it “elegant” anyway, and why?

Could it all be merely a myth?

But never mind all that, the current Japan will soon end:

the men, including me, are flatulent, inept;

only the women are vibrant and keen/sharp enough to have a future.

March 24, 2014 – 23:13 – The Old Style Place

After just under two hours in The Corner Place,

(three beers, seven cigarettes, one plate of cheese sticks, and

one skewer each of quail eggs, gizzard, and minced balls of chicken stuffed with
cheese)

I went for a walk up Tachikawa Street away from the station.

dead – depressing

Only quiet dark apartment buildings

forming a dull endless canyon,

completely devoid of any sign of life.

Yet, I know there are beings
existing within these dank grey structures.

The most vibrant place – a 7/11.
The patrons, a mix of all the society:
the skuzzy and the sharp dressed,
the old and the young.

An old woman,
a child and mother,
and me:
 shopping for milk and bread,
 sweets and snacks,
 beer and cigarettes.

At the rack, embroiled in magazines:
two teenage boys in school uniforms with huge bags,
a professional man,
a laborer,
 – he looked so worn –
and a hotly packaged woman in her early twenties
 – a victim of sexist fashion programming –
 being pulled apart
 by what she sees
 and what she knows she is.

I implore you, please leave her alone: she is hope.

With a beer and cigarettes I turned back toward the station and the semblance of life:
I knew there was nothing up the path from 7/11:
no Kurtz, no guru,
yet I also knew there was nothing for me by the station either.

I got back to the The Corner Place and traced the path
that my Wife and Children and I used to take

from restaurant to karaoke,
those many happy evenings,
all of us urgently talking,
so delighted to be together,
our love for one another blinding us completely
to the valley of death we were traversing.

Life was, is, defined, at least for me, by *our* love.

As I walked the path alone,
I became utterly despondent.
Will we ever walk this path again?
If not, it may be okay.
I need to find a way to *them*,
to be walking any path with *them*.

I will always be gravitating toward *them*,
they are the sun that allows me life:
without *them*,
I am a dead thing spiraling out of orbit.

みちすじ

2014年3月24日ー21:24ー角の店

私が角の店で、座って、

ラカン・バタイユ・ポー・ベンヤミン・ゴダール・フローベールについて読んでいたら
いつのまにかまわりは下卑たサラリーマンの男どもであふれかえていた。

男男男。そう、女は皆無。

大声で一いばりくさってえらそうに肩をそびやかしているのは一年長者だ、
彼らはみんなビールと焼酎で女を買いに行く準備中。

質問してもいいですか。「エレガントな」日本はどこにいきましたか？

24年間、この男性の支配的な文化のなかで私は過ごしてきました、

ですから、いつ、いったい、どこにどうやってエレガントさが存在していたのかが不思議なのです。

そもそも私たちはどんなエレガントさの話をしているのでしょうか？

誰が「エレガント」な文化と言いはじめ、なぜそう形容したのでしょうか？

ひょっとしたら全部が神話ということもあり得ますか？

ですが、こんなことはすべてどうでもいいことです、というのもこのような日本はもう
すぐ終わりますから、

男は、自分も含めて、空疎な無能一

女だけが未来を手にするだけの精気と、鋭利／鋭敏な才覚をもち合わせている
のですから。

2014年3月24日ー23:13ー昔風の店

2時間弱を角の店ですごしたあと、

(ビールジョッキ3杯、タバコ7本、チーズスティック1皿、それから

ウズラの玉子・砂肝・チーズ入りつくね各1串)

私は立川通りを遡る散歩をすることにし、駅に背を向けて歩いた。

死 — ゆううつ

静かで暗いマンションの棟ばかりでつくられている溪谷は

だらだらとはてしなくつづき、

人気はまったくない。

だがあの灰色のしめっぽくひんやりした建造物のなかに
人がいることを私は知っている。

いちばん活気のある場所は一セブンイレブン。
お得意さんには、あらゆる社会層が混ざっている—
うすら汚いのもビシッと決めているものも、
老いているものも若いものも。

お婆さん、
こどもとお母さん、
そして自分—

牛乳とパンを、
ケーキとスナック菓子を、
ビールとタバコを買い求める。

棚のところで雑誌のえじきになっているのは—
制服を着た10代の大きなカバンをもった男の子たち2人、
エリート男性1人、
労働者1人

—彼はとてもくたびれているように見うける—
そしてセクシーな服でみずからを梱包している20代前半の女性は
—性差別主義的なファッションの風潮にプログラムされた被害者—
目にする女性のイメージと
自分の現実の姿の間で
引き裂かれている

どうか彼女にこれ以上かまわないでいただきたい—彼女は希望の明かりなのだ
から

ビールとタバコを手にした私はみただけでも生がある駅の方に戻る—
この道はセブンイレブンより先にはなにもないから—
この闇の奥にはクルツもないし、導師であるグルもない、
とはいえ駅のあたりに戻ったからとて自分のほしいものがないこともよくわかって
いた。

角の店までもどり、かつてとおった道筋をたどった
妻と子供たちと自分が何回も通った道だ
レストランからカラオケへ、
たくさんの幸せな晩、
おしゃべりはとどまることをしらず、
一緒にいるのが楽しくて、
みんな互いへの愛で目が完全にくらんでいたから
自分たちが歩いているところが死の渓谷だなんてことには気づきもしなかった。

生は、すくなくとも私にとって、私たちの愛で意味づけられてきたし、意味づけられている。

ひとりでその道を歩いたら、
すっかり意気消沈した。
この道をもう一度私たちはみんなでそろって歩くことがあるだろうか？
ないとしても、いいのかもしれない。
彼らのいるところにいく道筋を私が見つけなくてはならない。
彼らとどんな道でも歩いていけるように。

彼らに向かって私は絶えず引き寄せられていく、
私の太陽なのだ、彼らは。太陽の引力が私の生を可能にする。
彼らがいなければ、
私は軌道からクルクルと外れていく亡骸だ。

If one is familiar with the references to literary, historical, and intellectual knowledge mentioned, these would direct and prepare the reader to interpret this poem from the psychological interest of Western modernity: a theme on the exploration of human darkness. Kearney's use of the name Kurtz functions similarly. He was obviously referring to either Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) or Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), or perhaps both. When I read the name Kurtz, "I was hooked" (much like Willard by Kurtz's voice in *Apocalypse Now*). Kearney was going deeper and deeper down a path that revealed the discursive environment in which he has been living, a journey that would also reveal something about the poet. Both Conrad's novella and Coppola's adaptation examine the impact of the evilness of imperialism, of unbridled power, on the psyches of Kurtz and the narrator. Kearney's poem, too, opens by employing the

civilization-barbarism binary, the practice of mythification, and male domination. Yet, the narrator of “Path” is not drawn in by a mystic, Kurtz-like, renegade; he is instead guided by the light of love of family – perhaps the poet still sees hope while surrounded by barbarism.

One final note, Kearney and his house have shed another layer of skin; it became the Bunker, his Tokyo studio, a shelter from the external world.