

Terese Coe

Here and Now and Then and There

Some creatures have a gift for the curious.
A father says it in *The 25th Hour*:
You came so close to never being born.
He says it to phantom children of his son,
invisible flecks from the unknown future.
You came so close to never being there
clarifies the presence of nonbeing
here or there or everywhere or where.
It's not as if we had a choice between
the vagaries of being and nonbeing
or visions taking shape to fill a void.
No one in the film is ever sure.
Even Then and Now are mysteries
they will not uncover, and nor will we.

The Key in Salonika

from the Spanish of Jorge Luis Borges

Abarbanel, Farías or Pinedo,
thrown out of Spain by ungodly persecution,
even now still hold in their possession
the key to a house in Toledo.

Free in the present from hope and terror,
they observe the key as day goes down.
In its bronze are what is past and what is far,
the brightness spent, and the misery I remain.

Now that its door is dust, the slim device
is code for the diaspora and the wind,
and is like that other sanctuary key

someone pitched into heaven on the day
the Roman stormed the wall with reckless fire
and out of the sky a hand received the key.

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You Are Not the Others

from the Spanish of Jorge Luis Borges

They will not have to save you, the diaries
left behind by those to whom you prostrate;
you are not the others, and now you see
the center of the labyrinth plotted by
your footsteps. The agony cannot save you,
not that of Jesus nor of Socrates
nor the towering gold Siddhartha, who
yielded to death in a garden as the sun
went down. Dust as well is the word
written by your hand or the verb formed
by your mouth. There is no pity in Fate,
and the night of God is infinite.
Your matter is time, relentless time.
Every instant of solitude is you.

A Bust of Janus Speaks

from the Spanish of Jorge Luis Borges

No one will open or close any door unless
he has honored the memory of Two-Face,
who presides over portals. I include the horizon
of the uncertain seas and the certain earth.
My two faces make out the past
and the future. I see them and they are the same,
the swords, the strife, and the evils Someone
could have done away with and has not done
away with and never will. My two hands
are missing and I am rigid stone. I cannot
exactly say whether I am seeing defiance
from the future or that of distant yesterdays
today. I see my ruins: the column cut away
and the faces, which will never see each other.