

# Rachael Guynn Wilson, Three Books and a Poem

01/03

Having in mind many great publications that, since the pandemic began in March 2020, have not had a chance to circulate in usual ways, I put the following prompt to an array of heavy readers: List three poetry books that stood out. Define “poetry book” as broadly as possible. Define “stand out” not at all. Choose one poem from any of these books and write one hundred words about it – a brief annotation, recommendation, question, observation. Six responded with these soundings. e-flux journal has also reprinted each of the poems the contributors chose to write about. We thank the writers and their publishers for permission to do so.

– Simone White

\*\*\*

Rosmarie Waldrop – *The Nick of Time* (New Directions, 2021)

Tomiko and Ryokuyo Matsumoto – *By the Shore of Lake Michigan*, edited Nancy Matsumoto, translated by Mariko Aratani and Kyoko Miyabe (UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, Summer 2022)

Ra’ad Abdulqadir – *Except for this Unseen Thread*, translated by Mona Kareem (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2021)

## On “Velocity But No Location” by Rosmarie Waldrop

What is most complete is the fragment. Pregnant of itself. A sentence should have a little surfeit, or sweetness, like the train that pulls in just past the station platform. Or, the sentence should stop short, arrive haltingly, in discrete bounds, the way Atalanta traverses the Dichotomy. For a poet to write a life, she must first write half a life, then half a half a life, and so on, ad infinitum. The modern solution to this ancient paradox is velocity. The poet has written poems containing more than seems possible. We may apprehend them in an instantaneous leap, but we will never reach their end

– Rachel Guynn Wilson

2

With transcendent assertiveness our concept of spirit poses, denying its tie to reference standards in the brain and its frailty. But where should we point to show the mind is in pain? Assertive mess. Can we compare it to pushing the blanket down to our navel? a summer day? phenomenal

e-flux journal #125 — march 2022  
Rachael Guynn Wilson, Three Books and a Poem

cleavage? How ghostly the past, daring us to break its barrier. Yet insists that nothing we do is without connection to our embryonic development. Would a small vagina be a sign of refinement, like having no appetite? Or more like red pants seen across the expanse of the Rhine?

11

I may not be sure of the meaning of a word but I don't doubt it has one. The way I seem to see the ground with my feet, even the uneven ground in the garden, even when it's too dark to point a finger at the trees, every one of which will outlive me. The way I am sure of my body, but don't trust my feel for its edges enough to relieve myself like a man, standing, legs spread above the waterfall. Instead just fight against sleep, lack of stamina, the storm, such bitter cold, my fingers numb with. All the while trying to catch up with the words that outrun my understanding, let alone salt on their tail.

12

A thought is a tremendous excitement. Like a stone thrown into a pond it disturbs the whole of our double nature, bass, reed, breasted, boiler, *gänger*, entry folded over understudy doubling the cape of good dope. Even though each nerve fiber carries only one sort of signal and has to act together with others. The word *together*, however, and the little word *and* are nests of ambiguity. This is why you look for a device to measure how far we're out of each other's depth. Or bed. Intimate brace of nerve cells not all alike, immense number of words in infinite combinations.

13

*for Denise Riley*

There is pleasure in composition, in grasping the connection of the one and the many. The way we gradually discover how the dancer's movements are anchored in, and anchor, the axis she spins around, the way the backbone is held up by the muscles acting in concert; or our sense of self, by the mirror. Without it we are forced into constant activity to make up for the lacking image. Like the squid or dogfish, being heavier than water, must swim continually throughout their lives. Desperate activity, I

say, and often fruitless, all brains incessantly active, down into our dreams, leaves off the fever tree, electric.

14

It's difficult to realize the groundlessness of our beliefs, but my style is fragmentary in any case, and my life as perplexed as my writing. Wrong connection, connoption, conclusion, shirt inside out, buttoned wrong, short breath. Rain comes, and mist clots about the trees. I shoulder the wrong assumptions, say "I know" the way we'd say "I am in pain" and don't question evidence or self. But then, clear conscious discrimination is an accident between the vapors of the mind and the opaque body, the cracking of knuckles, biting of fingernails. Still, I believe that all mammals, apart from the duckbilled platypus and the porcupine anteater, give birth to live young, and the females nurse them.

X

This excerpt appears by permission of Rosmarie Waldrop. From "Velocity But No Location" in *The Nick of Time* (New Directions, 2021), 23, 27–28. Copyright © by Rosmarie Waldrop.

02/03

e-flux journal #125 — march 2022  
Rachael Guynn Wilson, Three Books and a Poem

**Rachael Guynn Wilson's** critical and poetic work has appeared in *apricota* (Secretary Press), *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Chicago Review*, *The Distance Plan*, *Hyperallergic*, *Jacket2*, *Kenyon Review*, *Matters of Feminist Practice* (Belladonna\*), *Ritual and Capital* (Bard + Wendy's Subway), and elsewhere. She is a co-founder of the Organism for Poetic Research, a member of Belladonna\* Collaborative, Managing Editor at Litmus Press, and teaches at the School of Visual Arts.

03/03

e-flux journal #125 — march 2022  
**Rachael Guynn Wilson, Three Books and a Poem**