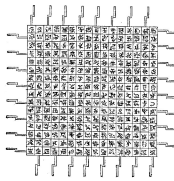


## SEDITION-MACHINES



# SEDITION-MACHINES



DAVID ASHFORD

Poems in *Barbary* have appeared in *HiZero 5*, *This Corner 1*, and *VLAK 3*. *Pulgasari* was published as an e-book by *Intercapillary Space*. My thanks to the editors at each journal, for their support and encouragement, and for their permission to reproduce that work here.

Thanks also to the poet Amy De'Ath, for formative feedback on the "Pervigilium Veneris", and to Dr. Julia Sabelfeld, at Novosibirsk State University, for advice on questions relating to the Birch Bark Letters.

Typeset in Cambria.

All rights reserved

© David Ashford 2016

# CONTENTS

Birch Bark Letters	10
Barbary	21
Pulgasari	29
Notes	39
Bonus Material	47



*Everyone knew how laborious the usual method is of attaining to arts and sciences; whereas, by his contrivance, the most ignorant person, at a reasonable charge, and with a little bodily labour, might write books in philosophy, poetry, politics, law, mathematics and theology, without the least assistance from genius or study. He then led me to a frame ... twenty feet square ... The superficies was composed of several bits of wood, about the bigness of a die [on which] were written all the words of their language, in their several moods, tenses, and declensions; but without any order. The professor then desired me to observe; for he was going to set his engine at work:*





# BIRCH BARK LETTERS



“And those hard slovos, brothers, were like the beginning of my freedom.” – Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*.



## Russkaya Pravda

And he began to distribute pay to his troops, to the captains 10 grivna each, and to soldiers one grivna each, and to all the men of Novgorod 10 grivna each, and he dismissed them all to their homes. And Yaroslav gave them a law [pravdu] and he wrote down a statute [ustav], saying to them: Live according to this writing [gramota], as I have written it for you, and observe it ...

1. If a man kills a man: the brother is to avenge his brother; the son, his father; or the father, his son; the son of the brother or the son of his sister [a man without living brothers or sons]; and if there be no avenger : the price of the victim is 40 grivna. Be he a Russian (a captain, a merchant, an estate agent, or a mechanic), be he an Izgoi, or a Slav : his price is 40 grivna.

2. If bloody with a wound or blue with bruises, a chelloveck requires no Witness. If there is no wound then he must produce a Witness. If he cannot, that is the end of that. If he cannot enact his own vengeance : take 3 grivna for the offence, and hospital treatment.

3. If any man hit another with a club or a rod or a fist or a bowl or a cup or a tool, (not being struck back) : then he must pay 12 grivna : and that is the end of that.

4. If struck with a sword that remains unsheathed, or with the hilt of the sword, 12 grivna for the offence.

5. If wounded on the arm, and the arm is cut away or shrivelled : 40 grivna.

6. If the leg is cut away or crippled, then his children must make the man grovel.

7. If the finger is cut away : 3 grivna for the offence.

8. And for the moustache : 12 grivna. And for a beard : 12 grivna.

9. If any man draw his sword yet not strike : he must pay one grivna.

10. If any man pulls or pushes another : 3 grivna : but 2 witnesses are required. If the victim be a Varangian or a Kolbiag : then an Oath.

And after Yaroslav's passing, his three sons : Iziaslav, Sviatoslav and Vsevolod : and their three counsellors : Kosniachko, Pereneg, Nikifor : met in conference : and for vengeance substituted monetary reparation. And, as to anything else, all that Yaroslav had decreed, his sons accordingly confirmed.

## Berestyánaya Grámota

*City between earth and heaven  
A messenger comes by no road  
Silent himself he bears a blank  
letter*

*No. 109*

Letter from Zhiznomir to Mikula

U koupil that rabbit-girl in Pskov :  
& here I am at Her Majesty's Pleasure  
& here I am my bail being paid by Druzhina

Now go : post to that : mouzhevi gramatoy :  
is there a spare rabbit-girl?  
I want to koupit a horse & set the king's man on the horse  
& start a svod.

& if you have not taken his coin yet  
take not : not even Earth : not from that hero !

*No. 644*

From Jealous to Nezhka

Why haven't you sent what I paid for, you fraud!  
I gave you nothing to lie down - /  
If I say do a thing to them you send the boy.  
But you gave me polotnishko!  
Like a mouse on a glue-trap that's me so what right  
do you have to squeal

I'm not your sister: you're told to do this & do not :  
you do nothing for me!  
Not though I surrender in metal :  
to you 3 koltka 4 spool in those 3 rings &

*No. 831*

From Kuzma and his children to ìstarshemuï Reuel.

Let woo you the price in half grivna  
& cheese o I bought it for the grivna  
yes ten & whitefish weed ten kunitsa.  
yr ass cow price : local currency yeah  
young men I tender you honour a gift.

& you took my slave-girl & boy-servant total cost of seven grivna  
the other slave price two grivna.  
But O God bless you!

& that's why you find fault with me and my children?  
If someone were to start a law-suit against me O God  
I'd rise against those already incite me & my children.

business you are but two young men  
If you want me, I'm out with the kids.

*No. 246.*

From Zhirovita to Stoyan.

Since you took the cross to your lips you have sent  
no money to me : & I have been waiting nine years.  
If you do not send me 4.5 grivna I'm going to send  
guilt on a trip to Novgorod boyar confiscation 4 real

*No.754*

From Terence to Matthew,

Either tell him to go or to make good my losses:  
Perhurii took those cattle as you had instructed

but then kept taking & taking & did not return I  
haven't 6 proteins to call my own my horse died  
yr land is vacant O the ploughshare w/strangers

*No. 366*

That raschelsya Jacob took Gyurgi to court  
for trampling wheat while riding  
Extra-judicial : took Gyurgi for  
everything — ruble & grivna.

3 baskets of wheat plus 10 square feet  
& Chariton took all that : & the grivna.

“There is no right of appeal”.  
Davyd, Lukin son-of-Stepan & Taishin : bear witness to that.

*No. 42*

From Iliytsy to Ilya.

Shuyga switched the tag on my oak  
& filches the honey frm out yr hives.

I bought that oak for the price on the label:  
So stop him (yr favorite apiary burglarised

Isn't possession 9/10ths? & that is My Oak.

*No. 445*

Took forty-two martens, three skins, & a hat,  
the sleigh & those clamps from Potter. Hello!  
I am that CROSS that you kissed & he did not  
pay: hey there mister I'm Jesus! I died broke!  
\$!

*No. 562*

Zhiznobud : butchered by Sychevichites.  
Novgorod freeman. Pinched his zadnica.

*No. 765*

Greetings from Daniel's bratu Ignatius.

take care of me, brother, because I go naked  
no cloak nor anything else (O!) Come with a  
brown-red cloak : & I'll give you money : yes  
lavish skins on you as one might lay a carpet.

(A lady : I'm not complaining) & can you put  
me up just tonight brother in the back-room  
nothing to eat ...

I bow to you!

*No. 605*

Ephraim bows to my brother Isuhii.

You are angry : pray be not so rass!  
I never told the abbot to : and I ask  
for leave but I was sent with Asaph  
to Sadniku & we came (Is that what  
it's called) both of us : in the honey!

Xia why should you be angry? In fact  
shame upon me that you told me evil.  
And yet I bow to you, my brother still  
tho you say so what : you're mine and  
I'm your /



*No. 731*

Greetings from Yasmin, the Yankee Hotel

I still want your child. I want it by Xmas. Urgent  
please be here:

I promise their consent to what you've just said.

Will you come o this same day & if not  
Here : let us meet in the Public Market

Where I can get bread : & you're there!  
;-)

*No. 377*

For Anne this proposal:  
Say "Yes" to me —  
I want you & you want me  
& the witness to that is Ignat Moiseev.

*No. 199*

Me: BEAST!  
Hello from Onfim to Danila

*No. 202*

Keep yr head down, Dmitri!

*No. 203*

Lord, help yr servant Onfim!

*No. 19*

policemen here want nothing but  
trouble...

I have a boat  
& the bread is dry...

remember the taste of our bread here ...

*No. 125*

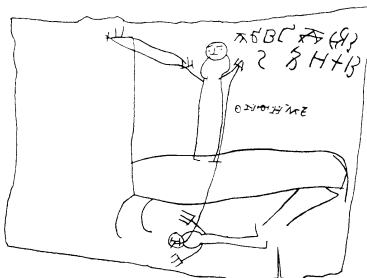
In this town only your thirst is your own :  
broken by a vending machine that  
swallows yr change & sells nothing but bleach.

Men of Rus! — mourn Gorodischanah!  
Placate the boyars pripugni & no dirty tricks.

202



200



№ 203





# BARBARY

*The incapacity of a weak and  
distracted government may often  
assume the appearance and produce  
the effects of a treasonable  
correspondence with the public  
enemy.*

– Edward Gibbon



## PERVIGILIVM VENERIS

Versus young./ Versus song./ Versus our new spin on  
think : cruor the superb or spew me or punt us global  
carol us inter- / cater for us inter- / eat biped is equal  
fix it and / anthem Diana: to market / litter / bribe us

purple jam in a glass cracked pain get her number it is  
herself turgescient papilla declining to fall upon roman  
urges left pending herself neither teat riling loose I did  
knock but cannot relinquish: splash out slap to act fast

herself just sat morning total vagina in pendent rose a  
head wound beaten beyond grief into a sidearm failing  
is decked jammy decked flame is decked solar purpled  
ignore you video no dice pig-skin offer solutions attack

migrant lowcry me tremulous stuck at you go ponder a  
guttering precept – or be pent a suspect cash so sue us  
playbacktumblewhoseourstreetstossthflagheloismyMO  
crassDiana you're a dick sit full to sublime on throne O

puddle, rim floral, and me, prude did a runt, I purpled  
it's girls with a boy knocked to amen : we credit power  
I say love is festival if bullets are rubber : But hectored  
get you Nymph! put out armies! festival us! It's LOVE!

just get is unarmed he heard no dice he heard just get  
new kit ark you new bullet a new kit but no lady killer  
the man said Nymph a caveat quit. Cupid but caressed  
toting IS unarmed identikit quango no dice it is LOVE

gutters out a tribunal stare herself as diva is flowering  
herself presides you're a dick sit aside burned grateful  
gutter total funding on flowers quitquit tulip is annual  
gutter subdue o flower you left in glass at Liverpool St

put mouth to music but no you're the bad mood you'd  
patter in Trojan subject to market flux inbuilt as venal  
perk you ceiling! perk you tourist! perk you pent alert  
under a sub [Didn't] affixed yr monday noose seminal

crass error come primal utter carapace snap clamped  
roar hack a runt cracked silver cracked lucky cracked  
mental insolvent recant, but plunging to a deep green  
shadows rerun to detonate total night forever in song

echoed : jamming : supergenital : explicate : bull over  
latte quizzical me : lost to her chanting not you silent  
time yet to make like/ Swallow yell : Taxi I'm finished  
but No : Lost Taxi : No respect : Taxi : Lost you : silent



## CONSOLATION PHILOSOPHIAE

o quit perpetual monday reasoning govern as  
terror in ceiling you suck yrself full to spilling  
ghost of star puncturewound period move on  
pep-talk yawn ain't no outside finger a casual  
flows you can feel opus for real material good  
but forms yr bony carcass fwd slash over that  
no for example yr blond roots – beauty is loot

monday means gearshift is it like wonderland  
perfect ask who you bet perfect let slide apart  
to number make light of the bind I am spitting  
pure fire till you leave me lukewarm pissed on  
spun out to dry [Tick] you can't ponder Terror  
i.e. project yr triple-scoop of whatever nothing  
let slide only connect to consol yr animal meat

on paper the map is two sides of the same coin  
preserving whatever nothing yr structural grid  
as spatial distortion, self and spook one animal  
pancaked several parts but pattern is standard  
sporty and boring put the child under that SUV  
in ceiling a terror quit serious-face be kind and  
is payback turned to you burned and returning

give nothing to birdsong you mean to make big  
give what you get and we got you good; give us  
a light into this never seen yr disfigured animal  
Love: subject to dissection scoped and splayed  
open to sterilised air ———— you are tranquil  
proteins continue to fold / into that white light  
move on you're green to go collect; it's terminal

visions of zero bewhere the heart faild  
never mind No win press to me touchd  
key& key i bend monday i had it nailed

like a full fat / paid in the salt clutched  
out bone ignorant equal key to offend  
Futures press to me scent not botched

local color want savor total transcend  
low ceiling – into a Gold. – But choked  
Mum : I am a Combat Lizard : The End

not clobbring fractal distribute locked  
up into a same old spin on the London  
Eye frm the startover u hadn't clocked

imperative dont forget answer no man  
put yr name to record straight it'll cost  
here yr defense rests – in sunny Oman

press to mute by her primal why boast  
pee u so high preview billion per block  
bt cncentrated gameover absolutedust

Consider this if out of time  
as the hawk / a pink soylent in tin canned  
proceed prospective elective concentric  
    a long and winding swift  
    as thought it's a week's work  
        say what  
slides around the slow zoom out

Monday wasn't all it was cracked  
up no matter how far apart we find  
the light in the right it unsightly so fight  
    thru Tuesday lend a hand  
    lost to fatal machine  
        but God  
thought fit to grace with a spare - /

In fact it almost everything  
this Wednesday night dinner serve 2 if what  
mz fiscal crisis requires is sacrifices  
    surrender sliding a  
    half man only you full  
        gut and  
liver not symmetry good

Shd push the week thru what  
system exotic worm made personal  
history surgical chemical carry all  
    have a heart beat these fixed  
    stars but dirty with blood  
        you can't  
unless fungus say [O.K.]

## RITHA' SHAKIR

past night to hack out bulimic this swill of bird-song  
put finger to skull and squeeze near total burn out  
but war is the work put deep in the day a blade slung  
to strike upon sleeping slow up the throat and pressed hard  
the mouth is apart and purple a taut bikini

in air pending low scud [porn stutter Who Is conquest  
frm out of such dawn to focus a point of black light  
and surge to an eye on rotary wing and snort blood  
lips move about there to clean the confusion; keep still  
remote reassembled spring is on loop it's [TV]

if mere utter lying tongue muzzle talk but you're not  
if mere utter lying tongue me that who cd withstand  
this word is a green feldspar, tell of ancient impact  
put flux into heat crush thru is a gloss on these raw  
let eye settle down on gleet suffer child to speak out

Shakir listen shall i forget cut holes frm my world  
it's over in stone you roll on a curve in space time  
this rising of sun yr photograph you a dead child  
but radiant Told yr name to the prophet. What's left  
can hurt ever come to you never me then That's all

# PULGASARI

*7 Korean Hyangga*

## 郷歌

“And Corea replied in the  
negative” — Ezra Pound



# 彗星歌

## Comet Song

Before starting out from East Control Tower  
Rumors of corpses washed up on the sand  
An omen of armed force. Thought Japanese  
Flares were shot over the forest and shone on the water | an evil  
is coming

Three Hwarang Special Ops fight on that mountain  
Eight figure numbers, said General Moon  
Horoscopes streaming | The bloodied rags of that dead  
Star

Rage system. Reddish energy aura. Take out Debiru Jin!  
Sealed in that temple by sands of the desert | Who will now give  
the command word?

# 亡妹歌

## My Watch Sale Price

Leaves rattle on as though living that road  
Into the desert, you pass every checkpoint  
Enter that country strange as a code-word  
Always so nr you, these mountains are old

There is no following where the leaves fall  
Now night draws in –  
Though taken from one tree | upon the first blast  
Each fall away and apart to sweat in that dark where winter's like  
wool

America will burn ●~\* I will meet you there happy  
For now, I maintain the roads in good order | I wait



讚者婆郎歌

Mother-In-Law Approval Song

What swallow flies out over Mount Paektu  
Fleet from out mantle of red mist –  
The Moon  
Is copper casing thru gunmetal after the white cloud.

My Soldier knelt here in the snow – is shot dead.  
The North is a deep cleansing. Men must extract  
Each animal fang –  
That Soul be renewed in the bullet. These persist.

I am watching the funeral cortege; flowers pass sentence  
Even upon The Dear Leader. | The Eighth Mausoleum is sand

# 安 民 歌

## Peaceful Song

Father Supreme Commander  
Loves Mother Feudal-Official  
Children are People's Army – and sing  
Thru many sufferings the People *songun* | “a spirit of self-blasting  
explosion!”

In the Night of the Great Flood [Juche 82]  
Ordered: Select what Zoids you want saved in the Ark (>\_<)  
IM ... Kraak, Red Mammoth and Mighty Zrk  
Father invented the Internet: subject to that re-education my  
cock never stopped being hard

Kindness is kept in the lamp-light | Electrical  
Storm moves over landscape outside on a 100 mile-high legs  
made of black cloud

# 願 往 生 歌

## Death Circle Song

Passenger over the DMZ  
Bear this Message i send  
To the face of that waking now time cannot count  
Bad mouth abt an old tongue is this white | pivot required  
to stand

Like battlefield air interdiction until  
Hair turns white – the skin scarred?  
Say i want nothing  
Say i want nothing – Is pure release-lever who | no flowers/ flag

How meant to hope for a hold on this Land?  
An old man only | Wants to achieve the end

# 千手大悲歌

## Thousands Are Generous Song

Birds on the black wood are shreds of wet poster  
For festival seasons no one can remember  
Lose time under the ice at  
Institute Station 4.

We-Subdue-Demons Corps | tally Jurchen and  
Pour on petrol  
Pray for the 5 yr old child born blind  
Heaven has too many eyes. Here stars are not wanted.

I have lost any sense of what makes for the good,  
Put winter to use in the room. Yr regime has always been  
merciful

# 遇賊歌

## Meets The Thief Song

In late year retires at last to the unit  
Enters the service of thieves  
For a future in multiple zeroes on South Peak:  
Increase resulting on pin manufactures dividing invisible Hand.

Tiger and bear put on garlic and mugwort  
In origin myth that goes wrong ((+\_+))  
Results after 100 days: The bear is a Woman | we re-populated  
that district  
Driving a plough over Earth's mouth | only pebbles persist  
broken teeth

*The brilliant person hides* frn a feeling that even the seaside fears  
Uh-Oh!  
I have mixed my blood with a rice-cake and | so cute it is PULGASARI



# NOTES





## Birch Bark Letters

The preface combines text from the *Novgorod Chronicle: Younger Version* with text from the *Pravdu Russkaya*. I follow Ferdinand Joseph Maria Feldbrugge in presenting the first ten articles in the *Oldest Pravdu* as the original law-code, produced in response to the situation in Novgorod in 1016 described in the *Chronicle*. See Ferdinand Joseph Maria Feldbrugge, *Law in Medieval Russia* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Publisher, 2009), 36-38; and Daniel H. Kaiser, trans. *The Laws of Rus: Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks Publisher, 1992), 15-19.

“Birch Bark Letters” is a systematically inaccurate translation of the documents found in Novgorod between 1933 and 1978 by A.V. Artsikhovskiy. These were written over the course of 500 years from the ninth century BCE, and offer us an unparalleled insight into a vibrant and literate, early medieval culture. The texts are often fragmentary, and sometimes obscure to modern Russian speakers, and this lends greater poignancy to the letters themselves, which are, often urgent, attempts to communicate. I have tried to foreground these problems of transmission in my machine-translation, and I have been encouraged to take liberties as a matter of principle by the anarchic spirit I discovered in Novgorod. I have worked from transcriptions and commentaries gathered together on a remarkable Russian-language database relating to the Birch Bark Letters at <http://gramoty.ru>. I believe much of this material is taken from Andrey Anatolyevich Zaliznyak’s pioneering work on Old Novgorod Dialect: *Древненовгородский диалект* (Moscow: Языки славянской культуры, 1995). I have also consulted Dutch translations and the critical commentary in Jos Schaeken’s excellent *Stemmen op berkenbast* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012). — I hardly need to point out that the *transmission failures* I am offering in this collection in no way represent the opinions (or reflect upon the expertise!) of the scholars who have made the Birch Bark Letters available to a modern readership.

*City between earth and heaven / A messenger comes by no road...*  
 “The same Novgorod excavations disclosed an interesting text, very likely of the fourteenth century, written on a birch bark cylinder decorated with a jagged design: *estъ gradъ mežu nobomъ i zemleju a k nomu ede posolъ bezъ puti samъ nimъ veze gramotu nepšanu* “there is a city between heaven and earth, and a messenger comes to it by no road; mute himself, he carries an unwritten epistle”. According to Arcixovskij, it may possibly be a riddle, resolvable perhaps as cloud, ray and rainbow or as nest, bird and song. A singing bird is, however, not mute, and the image of the rainbow as an epistle to the cloud seems quite forced. But in Rybnikov’s excerpts from a North Russian popular text of riddles we find a very close parallel to the formula cited: *Čto estъ svjatoj grad meždu nebom i zemleju, iz nego že (!) idet posol i neset gramotu nepšanu?* And the answer follows: “the city is Noah’s Ark under the deluge, the messenger is the dove and the epistle is the olive leaf it carries in its beak to Noah”. The Novgorod inscription contains a more vernacular and finer variant of the same religious riddle; it is, moreover, the oldest recorded Russian riddle, discounting a few riddle motifs utilized in the *letopisi*. This riddle borders upon the “literature of questions and responses” which Novgorod cultivated especially in the fifteenth century. One of the most typical works of this genre, *Beseda trex svjatitelej*, extols the skill in solving riddles: *ispolat’ tebě ... cto ty gorazd sny zagatki otgadyvat’!* —Roman Jakobson, ‘Vestiges of the Earliest Russian Vernacular’, *WORD*, 8:4 (1952); 350-355

## Barbary

The poems in *Barbary* were written in London in early 2011. Texts from the Late Roman / Byzantine period provided the basis for a loose mix of homophonic, machine and cognate translations (a procedure that traces a Latin word back to whatever Proto-Indo-European root, and replaces it with an English descendant). The general idea was to write a poem that seemed to be saying two very different things at once, a rapid-fire stutter that seemed to be speaking in multiple tongues. The texts selected reflect this.

The *Pervigilium Veneris* is a celebration of spring in quantitative hexameters that has attracted attention for patterns of stress that suggest either reversion to native accentual metre or the influence of Germanic verse, brought into the late Roman empire by Gothic and Vandal invaders. The *Consolation* presents a similar tension, the new Christian faith swelling like an undercurrent beneath a philosophical discourse that appears resolutely Stoic; the poetry breaking through into Boethius's prose *after* Philosophy drives the Muses away. The last poem in the sequence is modelled not on a Late Roman but an Arabic original, the *Rith'a Shakir* of Al-Khansa. Reputed to have been the Prophet's favourite poet, Al-Khansa's work presents an anguish evident also in Anglo-Saxon heroic verse of this period; poets who have embraced the new religion must refuse to mourn parents and siblings who die without the Law, who will remain forever without God's Kingdom; a prayer for loved ones who have passed beyond the power of prayer.

I should add that *Barbary* is based on a fractured and unrealised narrative, in which a persona conceived of as a former political activist, who has given up on life and joined the Tory party, is now watching the TV news, and lashing out violently against the coming spring. The woman he loved is a protester, being beaten by police. He participates in that violence, and suffers it. He is all he is now set on destroying; each act of aggression recoiling upon its original. Furiously, through a forked tongue, the protagonist returns fire upon himself, having attacked himself into the target of a drone strike. The idea might have originated in the Justice Zone that features in the fourth series of the sci-fi comedy *Red Dwarf*; where, in episode three, a Rogue Simulant beats himself to death in the course of a homicidal attack on Dave Lister. Though this idea is only partially realised as narrative, it is there in the consistent confusion of subject and object that complicates the syntax.

## Pulgasari

*Hyangga* are Korean folk-songs from centuries before the invention of the Korean alphabet (*Hangul*), in the fifteenth century. The poems were written using Chinese characters (*Hanzi*) in a system specific to Korea called *Hyangchal*; each character being detached from its meaning in China, and associated with a syllable — hence the name, meaning *vernacular* or *local letters* or *corresponding sound*. Just 25 poems written in *Hyangchal* survive: 14 in the *Samguk Yusa*, and 11 in the *Gyunyeojeon*. To readers familiar with Cantonese or Mandarin the Korean *Hyangga* will present the extraordinary spectacle of a semiotic system disrupted by an underlying logic that is in fact entirely alien; Rimbaud's *dérèglement raisonné*. Inevitably, this aspect of the text has been lost in English translations that aim to be faithful, transparent insights into the meaning that would have been conveyed by the original to readers in Old Korea. In contrast, the approach adopted in this sequence is to embrace Korean's oft-noted potential for disrupting written English, in a manner that is often spectacularly baroque, and sometimes surreal. The makers of road-signs and of restaurant-menus are thought to achieve such effects through what my language-teacher back in school would (frequently) dismiss as 'an over-reliance on the dictionary'. In *Pulgasari* I produce comparable results by translating *Hyangchal* letters as though they were indeed *Hanzi*, using a machine-translator to process these and the contemporary Korean *Hangul* transliterations.

*Pulgasari* (1985) is a monster-movie produced by North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Il. Inspired by Lenin's declaration that 'Of all the arts, for us cinema is the most important', Kim concluded in *The Art of the Cinema* (1973) that 'concentrating efforts on the cinema, making breakthroughs and following up success in all areas of art and literature is the basic principle that we must adhere to in revolutionizing art and literature'. To fulfil this objective Kim Jong-Il would assemble his own personal dream-team, kidnapping Choi Eun-Hee, South Korea's most famous actress, and her ex-husband Shin Sang-Ok, the country's most famous filmmaker. Madame Choi and Shin Shang-Ok were then

compelled to realise Kim's ambition to make a North Korean *Godzilla* that would communicate the Marxist vision of history as a dialectical process. In the story, a dying blacksmith fashions a tiny monster from a rice-cake, which his daughter brings to life when she pricks her finger on a needle. And so pin-manufacture proves to be the beginning of the end for the oppressive feudal order, as Pulgasari consumes one metal object after the other, growing ever larger and more powerful, until he finally destroys the corrupt monarchy: and is in turn destroyed by his own peasant army, who can no longer sustain his appetite for the only metal implement left in Goryeo, their plough-shares.

In my poem, Pulgasari is the symbol for the commercial machine-translation software I utilised to secure the raw material. I had discovered that this software was as much a weapon of the Cold War as Kim Jong-Il's monster-flick: — developed for the U.S. Department of Defence by a company called SYSTRAN, machine-translators were intended to interpret an otherwise unmanageable number of scientific, technical documents for the U.S. Armed Forces' Foreign Technology Division. Historically, SYSTRAN has used Rule-based machine-translation (RbTM) technology; but following the release of a new server in 2010, SYSTRAN implemented a hybrid Rule-based/Statistical machine translation (SMT) technology, the first of its kind in the marketplace. It is this hybrid system which I found particularly interesting, as it provided word-for-word translations that took the context for the original word into account, using statistics to select a word in the target language with similar associations: while this was intended to improve accuracy, I found it also provided an insight into the preoccupations of the politicians and journalists who had produced the data-set. For instance, I found the Chinese character for "land" had been consistently translated by the software as "Iraq". I concluded that this hybrid form of the SYSTRAN machine-translation could provide suggestive insights into the collective subconscious of the American establishment. "Pulgasari" might be read as my attempt to interpret this dream-work. Incidentally, I believe SYSTRAN's hybrid system has since been abandoned. I have not been able to repeat my experiment with any measure of success.



**BONUS MATERIAL**  
*Five Short Hyangga*





## Old Man Offers Flowers A Song

please you to keep a firm hand on my cow  
& these flowers nothing to me i offer a gift:

## Potato Song

Lady Seonhwa her potato held tight  
by darkness | The heart | takes root

## Magic Charm Against Evil Spirit

Eastern city bright now the moon full  
Night moving thru the parade ground

Enters the bedroom a boss made of sand  
Perceiving that 2+2 | is a horse in hiding

second grade prayers though i be Ch'oyong | and  
the seventh son of the Dragon King | Loss is total

## Pocket Rate Song

the heart is a peach falls to pieces the song come  
pocket rate big dwelling place | of celestial being

## Resentful Song

surfaces falling away from the winter the World  
this rice, this earth, this pool, this bird; a refusal