

José F. A. Oliver has been hailed as an 'interpreter of two worlds' (*El Mercurio*, Chile). The convergence of his mother tongue (Spanish) and his second language (German) can be felt in his innovative and unconventional approach to the German language. Oliver tests semantic and spatial boundaries – he pulls words apart, frees them from their typical usages and imbues them with new and instinctive meanings.

### DEATHDANCE 1

the one who undertakes *the swell of the world*  
*in the small boat Solitude* / who  
 undertakes the bundle  
 the magnolia the tree  
 in bloom year-in-  
 year-out in childhood bloom &  
 undertakes the wounded  
 gaping laugh, the voiceless laugh and the eye-  
 brightening BLOOM. For him  
 soon  
 at parting (= part of arriving) a winter  
 will be tabled  
 with both hands, free:hand  
 & the questions  
 the FEAR pierc-  
 ing words: There's someone there!  
 Someone sitting at the table. Who  
 is that? Everything an evernothing & no solace-  
 giving fellow traveller  
 that one

### DEATHDANCE 2

& could – so sub  
 versive – at the gravesedge & could  
 finagle into heaven  
 by prayer means or foul &  
 wonder at the falling  
 earth &  
 pay the pall-  
 bearers an obolus  
 (mere manufactories  
 even the end) & could  
 lay on hands  
 like you & let down lower,  
 lower down what  
 was  
 learning the rope-  
 drop  
 the low tremor  
 trembling lower lower & forever  
 at the edge  
 of the conditional

### DEATHDANCE 3

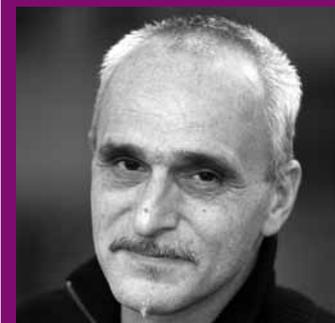
& again the medi-  
 teranean ocean, the mediochre  
 undersand  
 & no:where a place to trade, unless  
 in net-thrall  
 a fishcadaver, a corpse-haul, suddenly  
 lingeringly  
 lighthouseanchored  
 the remote  
 controlled dance of a fracture  
 of light / its towrope  
 coming to wrest  
 eyes wide  
 open

### DEATHDANCE 4

it is  
 as if I'm waiting &  
 the waiting is unease &  
 the unease a waiting  
 for the word  
 a nowhere  
 it is  
 as if I'm waiting &  
 the waiting is a nowhere &  
 a nowhere is the word  
 & unease only  
 a nomore  
 it is  
 as if I'm waiting &  
 the waiting is a nomore &  
 a nomore is nowhere  
 no word  
 it

### EYJAFJALLAJÖKULL A PROVISIONAL POEM

The sky's kiss  
 is ash-bread. Time  
 tautens  
 ejaculated dust.  
 Now human & be:ing & earth must  
 uncollect themselves  
 like waves, &  
 drip into the gravemouth:  
 wounddead. Silence  
 in the air  
 that gnaws the  
 fallen sol  
 diers / numberless  
 an onymous trembling. The tracks  
 disgorge a glut  
 of bones  
 that stick in your throat. Natura viva  
 leaks out, post-mortem  
 the death hollow of the ear  
 is stopped up, blinded:  
 a command per pedes. The tidings  
 are unrepeatable  
 let them go unrepeatd  
 they follow suddenlies  
 in lynch-thrall. Speechless  
 meetings in the omega.  
 In the trenches  
 of the alpha & surer still  
 in the patrols of lust  
 the clocks feigning death.  
 Volcano & warzone & tickets  
 are *kunduzlike*  
 in the explosive sludge of words  
 messages topple  
 & drop  
 & are lost



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**José F. A. Oliver** was born in 1961 and has enjoyed great critical success since his poetry was first published in 1987. He is especially admired for his experimental approach to the German language, combining Alemannic dialect with the rhythms of Spanish. Oliver hails from Baden-Württemberg and writes about his dual Spanish-German background. His most recent essay collection is called *Mein andalusianisches Schwarzwaldorf* (Suhrkamp, 2007) and his most recent poetry collection is *fahrtenschreiber* (Suhrkamp, 2010)

**Romy Fursland** has just completed an MA in Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia and is a translator from German and French. Her translations of ten of José F. A. Oliver's poems were read alongside the originals at the latest event in the *Contemporary European Poets 2013* series.

### Poet in the City



As well as aiming to help new audiences across London access poetry the charity *Poet in the City* supports poetry education schemes and promotes poetry as a tool in urban renewal. In collaboration with publishers and creative partners, the organisation holds poetry readings and talks in a range of venues throughout the year, including its series *Contemporary European Poets 2013*, co-organised by University College London. In 2014 *Poet in the City* is planning an exciting range of other German language events, including a high profile Goethe celebration and further events with contemporary German poets.

Poems by **José F. A. Oliver**  
 Translated by **Romy Fursland**  
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