

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise

W.H. Auden

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FREE POETRY

Christian Prigent
Translated by Adrian Kien

An Anatomy Lesson

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Une leçon d'Anatomie

*par Christian Prigent
traduit par Adrian Kien*

Il serait sot de mourir dans le théâtre anatomique.

Büchner

Adrian Kien lives in Boise, ID where he teaches composition and poetry at Boise State University. He has also taught English in Dijon and Chambéry, France. His collection *Who is There* was recently published as an ebook at Blazevox.org.

Christian Prigent was born in 1945 in Bretagne. He is the author of over thirty works of poetry, fiction and criticism. He gives readings of his work regularly throughout France. Most recently, he appears in a book-length interview and discussion of his work called, *Christian Prigent, quatre temps* by Bénédicte Gorrillot from Argol Editions.

The collection *Une leçon d'Anatomie* (An Anatomy Lesson) was published by P.O.L. in 1993 in *Écrit au Couteau* (Written with a Knife). This work seeks, much like Blake, to cut poetry from all that is not poetry – the mundane and monotonous doings of our bodies and egos. We slips and explodes as we negotiates the intestinal twistings of language and bodies. The rhymes and puns in his poems are labyrinthine. He seeks to lose you in holes where perhaps you will achieve self-annihilation or at least some good honest self-deprecation.

IX

For,

*When the body gives up its hold,
a new figure appears, that of Man.*

Hölderlin

(sick of this
papa
pooh-poohed
see bone
see dead

that is:

the scatterbrain
that asks (and casts
your life your sad bag
body
into the rattle can)

and without that without
this cowl
we lie
we eat
we flibber
we hang
between the blood hook
of life and the
snot drop of un
consciousness

where the meat
encoccyxes itself
and simmers)

An Anatomy Lesson

*by Christian Prigent
translated by Adrian Kien*

It'd be pretty funny to die on the anatomical stage.

Büchner

Translator's Introduction:

"I speak the living and animated speech of one who is knowledgeable and I will call the written oration of it a kind of image," so says Alexander Benedictus, in a defense of the Anatomical Theater. It is not enough to simply look or read about the body. We must experience it. In a similar way we experience our bodies through poetry – forming our mouths to speak a body.

the showing itself
 the human laid open and why
 a run-through form of
 the creator in barbarian terms
 anatomizing the body
 and its ritual space

We enter the Anatomical Theater to speak of 'I' and the body. We will speak from the things themselves, and not ideas about those things. So that when we mention depth of character, our only depth is that of the chest cavity, the length of a femur, the radius of a skull. Reach your hand up into the ribs and feel the heart.

Here is your measure
 (of man)
 a fingered depth
 by vivisection we come
 to di -
 section.

These short abysses are all we can read in the language of the things themselves. Yet how deeply we want to fall into them; head-first, screaming for God in the clouds of a nuclear explosion.

With our meat hooks

Car,

*Lorsque le corps à ce point se détache,
 Une figure sitôt resort, de l'Homme.*

Hölderlin

(t'es sapé d'ça
 pépère
 tapé
 où l'os sort
 tu vois ta mort

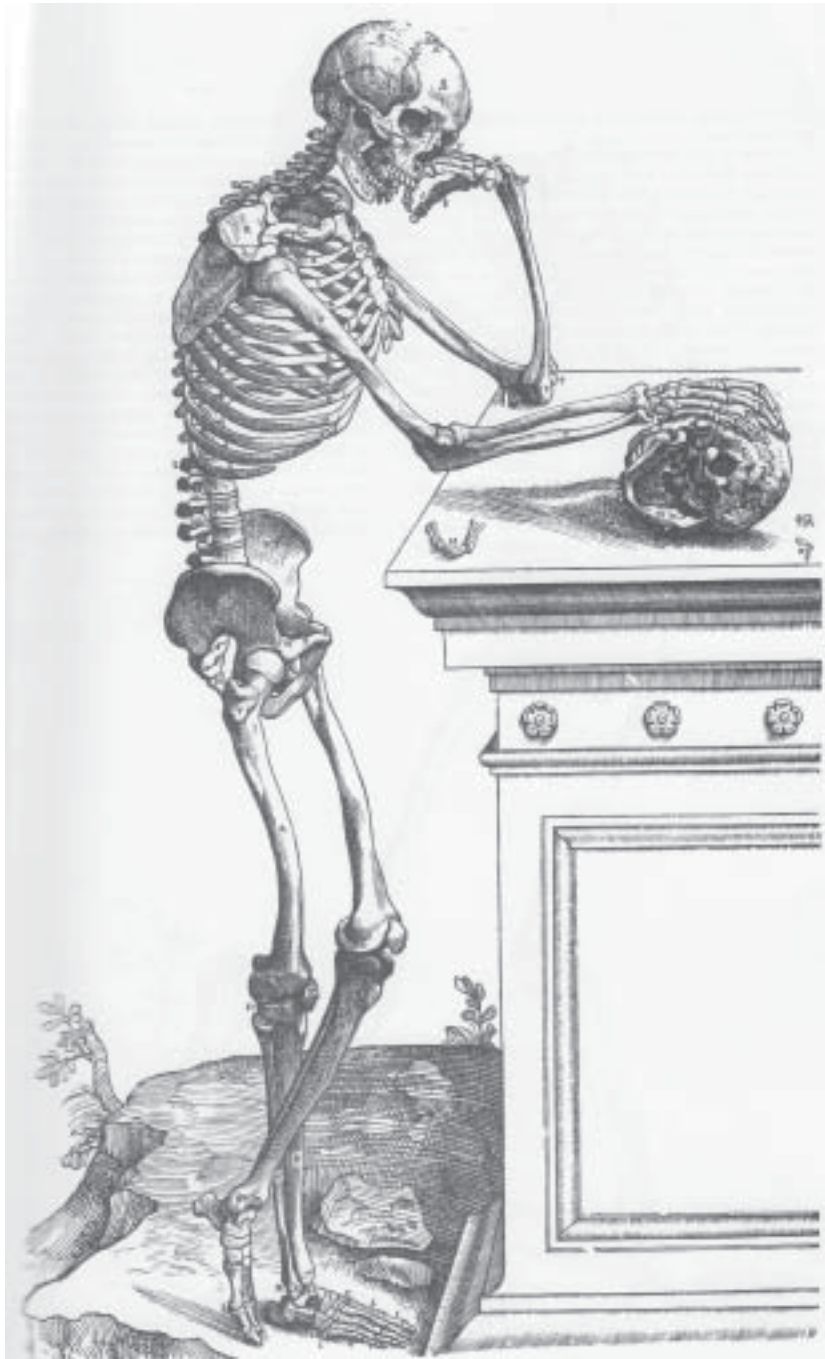
c'est-à-dire ça:

l'écervelé
 qui t'axe (et tosse
 ta vie ta cosse
 outrée
 dans l'acoustique
 du trou oblique)

et sans ça sans
 ce cal
 on ment
 on mange
 on ne sait pas
 on pend

au crochet d'sang
 de vie à la
 coulée d'sinus à l'in
 conscience

où la viande
 s'encocysse
 et cuit)



with our scalpels we will
celebro the body
its ritual and performance:

Here churns the G.I. train.
Here the humors pass the living
fruit on the branch. An expulsion
of breath -

We reach our hands (our hands!) to pull
an apple from the bough to reveal “the amazing and
divine workmanship of God the Creator” (Benedictus).

Here, then, is my lampshade of eyelids. I wear it at parties when
God is a wind. If this seems clichéd and predictable, it is. If my
words have found purchase in the feet of man, then they are
pegged to the earth and its natural course. I cannot stray from that
with which I am so familiar.

The knife reflects a torch
flicker to illuminate
the first cutting – a see
ping hole

Prigent's Introduction:

C'est écrit en face d'anciennes planches d'*Ecorchés*.

La chair à peine déposée, les corps prennent bouffonnement
la pose plastique.

Devant ça, la langue tombe sur ce qui la déchire.
Et rit (jaune).

Reste un rictus, qui rature l'épure anatomique (le sac de peau
et de mots, la surface lisse, le dessin clos, le savoir positif).

VIII

An
axe
ran
up his ass

from the breath bladder cavern
to the sacrum.

So dizzy on his toesy woesies
A scream chock-a-blocked
open.

Scruff to scrotum
stood forever
in this stature
to suckle the sk'eyes.

Oh say that,
that words endure
in the writing

of stuck-up asses
from whom fall, bones,
the sore words.

Prigent's Introduction:

This is written along side *Skinnings* from the middle ages.

The flesh painstakingly removed, the body assumes an absurd
statuesque pose.

In the face of this, the tongue falls on that which it strips away.
And laughs (forcefully).

What's left is a grin, that annuls the anatomic sketch (the skin
sack and words, the smooth surface, the finished draft, the positive
thinking).

VIII

Ça vint au sas,
l'axe,

au sacrum.

Depuis le vertige cale
un rôle d'homme

sur ses pédales.

Nuque et queue,
dans la stature,
eurent
à téter les cyeux.

Ça, ça dure, mots,
dans l'écriture,

à l'air des lombes
d'où tombent, os,
les maux.



I

L'hâle-capot des drugstorms!
Son zizi mazouté!
Son p'tit cal'çon dermeux!

– Voilà un homme!

Se déboutonne l'abdo:
strip à gogo!

Sous sa peau: veine énorme!
In cauda: con en forme!

Et, sur son torse,
L'impeccable force
des trognons, horizons
des horizons!

*L'homo, (qu'il dit)
que ce soit vide!
qu'ça s'allège le bide!*

- Sous la peau du tronc:
l'étron! l'oeuvide!

VII

For the gist
is this
a vertebra
bone erect

the sciatic

makes us stand
and we are off sawed

that's all.

I

Hail the tan tarp of drugstorms!
His greasy pipi pokes out!
His little derma drawers!

– Here's a man!

Strip the abadaba:
take it off daddy!

Under his skin: the big vein writhes!
In Cauda: pull the shit chain!

And on his etcha pecs,
the impeccable
oaks blow in breezes,
blow out
poof horizons!

Man (he says)
empty the bile bucket!
let loose this belly fruit!

Beneath the skin trunks:
the big turd! the evegguate!

VII

Car le gît
fut une vertèbre
qui s'est mise à bander

pour

la sciatique

On fut debout
et ça nous scia

c'est tout.



II

Ni sexe ni
barbaque:
juste graffiti,

Peau tirée.
Capot levé.

L'ex-corps, chié,
torche un trou, rien:

Moitié de cul,
fléau d'épaule.

Le corps n'a pas ces trous.

Car L'atomique anatomie,
en mie niqué,
n'est qu'bombyx à
neutre on.

Nul ne dessine ça.

*– It's me, Mr. No Ho',
see my derma-tarp
see my flay-me blade.*

*From my sack
the spud eyes cry.*

*This is how I huff
fumes
tangled-me-fumes.*

*Running full steam
for the jizz white tomb
and its funnel cloud cakes."*

*– Trourien, c'est moi:
voilà ma peau
et voilà mon couteau.*

*C'est par mon sac que jutent
les trous d'patate.*

*C'est à humer,
en vapeur,
en écheveau vapeur.*

*A toute pompe
vers le blanc d'tombe où
sont les trombes.”*

II

No sex no
chops:
just graffiti.

Skinned.
Hood popped.

Flay this shit corpse,
sop open the hole; what's he got in there:

Some ass
and a shoulder scourge.

The body is not these pus pits.

For, the atomic anatomy,
at its grubby middle meat,
is nothing but a nothing,
a neutron
bug bomb – Boom!

No one made this.

The ultra-skinned!
The frippery of his tripery!

Mr. Unhared-
from-his-hutch!

Plucked
from his shuck!

The neutral one!
The anti-I!

singing:

L'hyperdépoilé!
L'fripier d'son tripier!

Le délapiné
d'son propre clapier!

L'arraché total
à la vie d'bocal!

Le neutre On!
Celui qui pas Je!

dis:



III

Scie des troncs,
torsion.

Bras cassé.
Bras trop court.

Porc, scion d'crâne,
nuque arquée,
casqué cul.

- Dehors, les corps!

Vers l'exigu,
le boyau,

qu'enfile ma soeur,

la peur.

VI

"Hi, it's me!
Me! the rat accomplice!
Me! the neutron bomb!
Me! the kill switch flipped!

Mr. Self-Flensed!
Mr. No-Skin-Escaped-from-the-cangues-by-his-
tongue-and-chin!

The Grand-Masturbater!

The extra-mortal!
Barthelemy,
his own enemy!

Mr. Churn-Outs
of creep batter!

VI

“Moi l’ami des rats!
Moi l’bombe à neutrons!
Moi l’noeud du tronqué!

L’auto-dépecé!
L’exité des cangues
en peau d’langue!

Le Grand-Masturbateur!

L’mortel et demi!
Barthélemy,
de soi l’ennemi!

L’émis d’la baratte
en pâté d’effroi!

III

Saw the trunks,
twist’em off.

The snapped limb.
The stubbed limb.

Pork-apart, uh oh, skull-sprout
bandied scruff
of his brown skid lid.

Be off you bodies!

Off to the miniscule,
the gut alley jewel,

that pricks my sis,

with fear.





IV

Révérence!
Rêve!
Errance!
Raie faite rance!

Cou tranché trou
de boucherie.

Et sa bouche rit
de n'être plus là.

Mais là-bas, hurlant:

Changez de viande!
Zyeutez l'trou d'la viande!

Révérence aux trous de la viande!

V, 5

A vastness, beyond self,
a sky, outside self,
like lights-out inside.

Meat rags
ape pouches
of pustrami, bet

that they still
spew,
our dearest soul stuff,
ooze our deepest wounds.

Spurts: intestine
spindles, networks,
destiny, lost

thoughts of those
tanned by anatomy:

the eveguate!
the evacuate shell!

Enorme, hors l'homme,
le ciel, dehors,
comme dedans l'agonie.

Linges en viande
singent les poches
de bidoche, sache

que ça crache
encore,
les chéries,
les déchirures.

Jets: fuseaux
d'intestins, réseaux,
destin, l'oubli

des âmes
tannées d'anatomie:

l'oeuvide!
l'oeuvide!

Worship!
Wish!
Wandering shit!
Made of putrid fish!

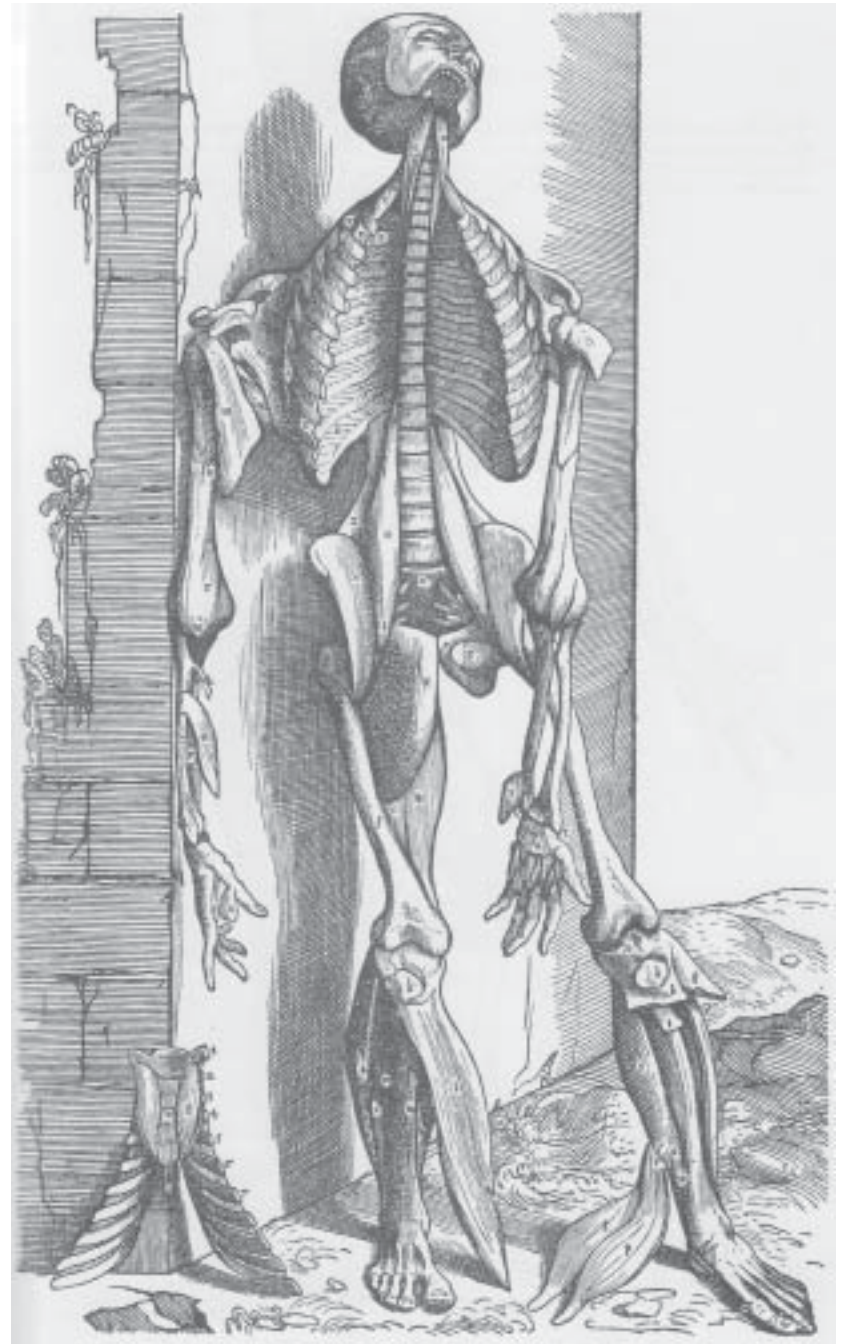
Throat cut cake hole
of butchery.

And his mouth laughs,
hee, hee, to be so sawed off.

But from the balcony they jeer:

*Take back this pitted barfroast!
Deliver us from this barbeque!*

Worship the meat pits!





V, 1

C'est un couple découpé
lé sur l'eau
au large est l'eau

haume levé des vagues
racines des cieux

y a les projos du jet
de sperme céleste sur
leurs crânes

et pourtant calme plat

nuées lavées de tout oiseau
sauf (à la voûte de
charbon)
la bonne chair des yeux que crève
un soleil cru

V, 2

Les muscles sont fous
tus
entre l'os et l'étal sus
pendus
aux crocs
en viands d'hommes

reste une jambe
la trame
le calme pour les petits
bateaux

V, 4

Oh bones Oh meat
of red calf sap
and the sea spread open

the beam of light
leads to the world you feign
to touch

but through spasms
like when you punch
yourself in the face – hard

V, 4

Oh, les os et la viande
le sang d'un veau
et derrière est la mer

la rampe de l'espace-lumière
le monde qu'onques on ne
touche

sinon d'un jet shooté
quand on s'appuie le poing
sur les yeux - fort

V, 1

A couple uncoupled
on the water
Oh the broad water

helm raised from the waves
roots of heavens

the sky spurts
celestial jism on
their skulls

and still the flat calm

clouds bird peckered clean
except for (on the coal
sky)
the pretty eyeballs popped
by the harsh sun

V, 2

The muscles have flubbed
off / all
between bones and the butcher stall
hangs
the manmeat
hung
by the fang

one leftover leg
the crude network
the calm of oarless
dinghies

V, 3

Et c'est sur l'os qu'on tombe
du tronc des eaux
à la racine du ciel

les brandes chaudes
sont les choses du Coeur

voilà les chiards
accrochés aux heures

le cul sablé
accablés d'un caca

aux cloques
de l'ossature sacrée
le rhum du bas
brome grabat

- ils l'ont
collé aux mottes
en rhizomes
les hommes
les
paquets d'atomes

V, 3

And one stumbles on the bone
from the trunk of the waters
at the root of the sky

the most desolate wildernesses
are those of the heart

these are the shitheads
hanged by hours

the raspy bung'le
brimming blistered
caca

of sacred ossature
the rotgut rum
bromine flea beds

-they've stuck themselves together
with lumps of clay
into rhizomes
men
atom bundle homes