

this text intends to establish a space for participation
in which a history experienced as disconnected
is narrated collectively

therefore i recommend for stagings a rather large
at least a diversely constituted chorus
preferably
logically
with as many vietnamese or viet hyphenated members
as in any way possible

choruses are a wonderful tool
to challenge a text
to team up against it
to call it into question
or to assume a position against its blind spots

if such a chorus is not possible
at least half the ensemble
should consist of actresses
from a vietnamese background

if neither of these options is possible
and the text in other ways as well is not used
to produce in the ensemble's politics a
space for participation
in public institutions
it then makes no sense unfortunately
that you stage this play in your theater

sorry

later that night
i held an atlas in my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?
it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere

warsan shire—what they did yesterday afternoon
to carry it over or to translate

a contract worker, who has reappeared
her mother, who has returned
her daughter, at an airport
a contract worker, a translator

music

tim hecker—in the air I II III
deru—i would like
oneohtrix point never—chrome country
brian mcbride—overture (for other halves)
grouper—the man who died in his boat

heartfelt thanks for the discussions
the time the memories
to all the interview partners
in leipzig

tôi đã gắng hết sức mình để tái hiện thời gian chính xác¹

¹ i did my best to reproduce the time exactly

those who were lucky landed on internment islands
like pulau bidong

luck meant
to have survived not to have been
murdered or raped by pirates

luck meant
to land on an uninhabited island of about
a half square mile where
40,000 people are crowded together

luck meant
standing room in hell a
tropical prison

he said
you are a first class
gook

// we start together
chúng ta bắt đầu cùng nhau² //

what does it actually mean

to fall out of time

to fall out of time why not
to stumble out of time why not
to plunge out of time why not
to be pulled out of time why not
to be snatched out of time to be
deprived of time what
does that actually mean to fall
out of time and who
is even allowed to fall
out of time and can you then
return to the time from which
you plunge fall slide slip or
are you then forever timeless

timeless actually was
always the promise
of having no time

well but
having no time is now
not necessarily promising

instead belonging to
no time
fair game time

must you fall out of time
to be released from time or
must you belong to the right time to
the time that might continue

² we start together

time in general once
you begin to think about it

or time that
simply has fallen out of the world is time
that now no longer will have been correct time time
that will simply have disappeared what does it mean
to fall out of time who
falls out of whose time and which time
actually counts more that
out of which you fall or that
into which you fall

and then in the end always the story that
puts time in order something
time itself just does not manage to produce an
order time always creates disorder which the
story then must clear up in the end and who
decides then actually which time
in which story actually

actually
actually
actually
actually
actually

in general may occur to whom
does time belong who owns it in the end who
in general today actually has a time

// tân sơn nhất international airport
between the places between the times //

delay
or
time suspension

or

cross your hands please
stand still three seconds thank you from
your bag yes the
smartphone from your bag also
empty everything empty everything empty everything
the camera out indeed open
the inside pocket please coat thank you
watch sun glasses gloves
remove liquids please fear
has made this continent into
what it is today also the shoes
remove the boots fear
of losing what they've become also
high-heels no
high-heels stay on high-heels are okay
only the boots please legs bags hands the
security officer who is also only doing his job that
is what everyone here says i'm
only doing my job you live work and
have shift changes at the international hub and
next please just
go through exactly raise your arms stand still three two one
thank you just a short test
we must do still for
explosives with the
brush here one time
exactly open the zipper
slip in the brush freedom
pure routine freedom
pure routine i'm
only doing my yes
who knows in the end you didn't
check one time everyone
is a threat freedom if you
remove all surfaces
only terror remains what
do you think
remains of someone if
you break him down a
single threat stand still thank you back there

is a drugstore everything is reduced on
sale hands in the air thank you over here
the belt please thank you showcases
full of souvenirs wide open longing
in the glass façade but the runway exhausted
wings lifeless battery half empty
overcrowding breeds loneliness perfumes
underwear hamburgers starbucks and
in between always suddenly somewhere
towering high really always a
toblerone pyramid yes
come here briefly please just
the belt can you take it and the jacket
the sweater also please in the box
raise your arms thanks you
can get used to anything toberone at some point
you get used to anything also
to swiss imperialism

staring at my smartphone still
no improvement in the situation black
it looks at me tells
me nothing at all i

stand before the painting casket
bearers with steel helmets open
mouths screams human pile

delay the display says
nothing else delay nothing else

here is this
cycle dealing with
the paris commune i

stare at the officer who
stares at me who is staring
at who here if
you stare at an officer long enough
then you become one yourself he checks my
papers he looks at me again he takes the

stamper
a warm welcome comrade

here is this cycle of paintings functions like
a huge historical panorama i

see the boat
in the middle of the night boat
is an exaggeration it has two rudders and
is made of wood okay wood is probably also
an exaggeration it is floating let's leave it at that it
floats i

i ask myself
were there a logic to history we
would not have to keep telling it anew to ourselves

staring at the officer he
says lucky
that you were in the army i
say lucky
that the army won we

forget again and again where it
once went
history really where it
once went
forgetting i

see the boat but
not the water i
hear it only pitch-dark
i think to myself pitch-dark
I think aloud to calm myself pitch-dark i

think to myself were
there no forgetting there would be
no history i

count up those in business suits sitting here maybe
i can then sleep i

don't turn over it
wouldn't help anyway waves
wash up against the boat i

think to myself no nonsense because
we forget we must always repeat
everything

when the boat takes off everyone
becomes silent

here it is written
were there a meaning to history we
would know how it will have continued in between
bayonets banners five yards long the
battle panorama

before excitement bags chaos then
silence

i think to myself rats
learn to avoid poison they
cannot pass their knowledge on
however i

stare at the display a
single computer mistake and
everything stops delay says the display delay
at the international hub delay i
stare at the display i

stare no more even at the water i
stare no more at the beach i
stare no more at the painting the streets fog i
stare no more at the pre-fab opposite i
stare no more out the window i
stare no more through the glass façade at the hub
at the international i
even stare no more outside

// leipzig late 80's
he translates //

so

everyone please line up next to each other here one
by one briefly the rules first of all so that
they are all let's see
or briefly first i
am your and he there
is our translator mr le

i said it

a warm welcome dear
comrades who thanks
to the warsaw treaty on friendship
cooperation and mutual support
were able to accept to advance far
from their home here with us the
internationalization of the
socialist idea

i said it

we are happy that
so many of you
from our very distant sister state which
defeated the american invaders not
without serious casualties

i said it

came here

that i did not say

came here to us

that i did not say i

said

it is nice that we get to know each other

did you say that to them

yes

so please feel
almost at home in
your lodgings which
generously were newly built for you
partially with funds to internationalize the
productive forces here you are
separated into two shifts one in the morning one
in the afternoon briefly the rules are important the apartments
connect to the factory so that the
distance from the bed to the machine is not so far the
apartments of course pre-fab
to the highest standard newly built progress
in all parts additionally as explained three
rooms for four comrades in solidarity stay
please in this communal space after
ten at night in the
dormitory you are among your own if
you need something ask a translator for each
floor at least for each dormitory we try to assign one
the separate apartments as
explained 325 square feet to
the highest socialist standard for four of you that
makes almost 55 square feet
per comrade in a prime location
next to the machines please always show your
id card when exiting or entering if
visitors then please register them pregnancies but
that only in passing lead to breach of contract and
then to returning home just like
for sickness injury or other
causes of reduced productive energy so much for that good in
the apartments
i will now read that briefly aloud it

always confuses me for each four
hand towels two light two dark dishes a
cup a saucer a glass two
plates one flat one deep additionally for each room
one ash tray

that i also did not say i
said

watch out that i don't catch you after
ten at night
sewing jeans in the dormitory additionally
i say
the two dormitories for the female comrades right
there down the street
i say
and that dogs which bark and comrades who read from
notes don't bite

so i think
we're done i
think everything or
have you

translated everything

why are they laughing

don't know

well with a good mood comes progress

// leipzig late 80's
she lands //

after our arrival we were allowed a
settling-in period
four to twelve weeks of
labor-related training in basic methods
two to three months a language course

to understand during the workday what
was required we worked then
in shifts we lived on dormitory floors
we slept in bunkbeds communication
didn't happen we were tolerated
in the sense of progress and development for
a limited time if satisfied a chance of
extension if sick deportation we
were placed at the old machines nonetheless
on arriving there were
sashes and fanfares
at least one time when the photographers were there to
propagate sister-state reciprocity i
arrived in an airplane with about a hundred others
on a foggy very cloudy morning upon
awaking only clouds then joggled some laughed i
looked out the window waited water drops ran
down the glass then
one car two a field a city a
barrier somewhere in the fog everyone
wanted to go to germany who
wanted to go to bulgaria or romania anyway when
i learned it would be germany i decided
to stay i
will stay here
i said

// at the hub a canned
memory //

i hesitated a long time climb in
not climb in climb in not
climb in climb in not climb in then
the last boat cast off and i was in it

// he remembers //

of course to the rich sister state who
wanted to go to hungary i

have a friend in an official position we
were together in the army in the
jungle we
went to saigon together he
arranged it for me i
never saw him again he
smiled when he gave me my documents

two days later i was gone i
wanted to see the world
and landed in the factory

// tân sơn nhất international airport
a daughter giữa các lần giữa các nơi chốn³
an old voice wants to hear no more about it all //

delay

already ten hours delay because
a volcano blew enough ash
into the air to
paralyze the entire international air traffic
for hours it
could last for days

delay

no one knows anything each
path to the info desk a
mutual disappointment we
cannot help you right now yeah yeah
thanks on the display also nothing new black
gleaming i
check the news nothing every
two minutes no
news according to social media
the world is soon going to
collapse one

³ between times between places

headline chases the next always
something else is happening at the same time
nothing feels new
about it you
are anxious resignation
scandal hype madness excitement that
this world still exists that should
actually give us something to ponder a
live video from the lowest point on
earth never
was anyone so deep i
watch for ten minutes hearts
race across the display a
fish stares into the darkness then
i scroll down skim
what is happening every corpse
on mount everest was once
an extremely motivated person
i read i scroll further two
cappuccinos later in the international
transfer area between two
crisis meetings in the waiting area by
macdonald's someone attempts the
deal of his life nothing
has landed here
for days now strange
notion the skies empty only
ash in the air
only ash in
the stash the photo again with
address after landing through the streets
of hanoi horns tourists
nameless streets everywhere
motorbikes my
god everything always must look exactly how
it just simply appears the
next day to the address with
the photo in my hand

do we know each other

no

what can i do for you

i'm looking for a woman who
lives here

why

let's say i work
for a german newspaper and
research the history of pulau

unfortunately i can't tell you anything about it

wait your
name appears on a list

my name

a woman who lives here
on the list

she was flown out to germany wait
bonn i think

the ugliest airport in the world

you know it

what list

this woman was part
of a refugee contingent from
pulau bidong

and what else

she didn't
stay very long in germany

sounds pleasant

and many years ago came back here

what list

a list with survivors from pulau bidong but
actually i would need to clear this up with the woman

i don't know her

wait maybe
in this photo

where
did you get this

do you know her

the photo from where

from an archive you
know her

i know the photo from where

only with this woman can i can you
help me find her

no unfortunately
i don't know where she is

but i was given exactly this address

it was hers yes she
used to live here until
two years ago three

do you maybe know

no idea

something

politely she closed the door an
announcement the planes will remain for forty-eight hours
on the ground an announcement somewhere
a suitcase is going to be disposed of promptly an
announcement a passenger is being sought why
i wonder why and then
someone stands up goes over to the window with the panorama view
the runways all full
of airplanes ashes
nowhere

// leipzig, late 80's
she speaks he remembers
chúng tôi đã gặp nhau như vậy đó⁴ //

you sat with this message in the
waiting room and read

we were told the following that according to
this message well that

sister-state reciprocity a centerpiece of
internationalization that
sister-state reciprocity new roads to socialism that
sister-state reciprocity a greater understanding that
sister-state reciprocity against imperialism that
the sister-state road and the sister-state
community that sister-state
solidarity and sister-state i
read heard went along in a sister-stately way
and thought get out of here as if
the sister-state meant anything to me you
always accept the story of where you're born
the one just being explained you can't
choose your story on

⁴ we met each other like this

arriving the feeling i now am writing
my story anew then
the first examinations the first
checks the first restrictions on entering the
first restrictions on leaving the
first strange looks on
the street the
sister-state road what
a farce and every first wednesday of the month
health checks with the physician because the
sister-state road is also just a survival of the fittest because
sister-state reciprocity demands fit bodies the
translator greets me the female physician
spells my name the
translator says

excuse me i'll
turn around actually
a female translator is scheduled here but
she is sick right now so
i'm sorry

i laugh say thanks the
physician asks something

the translator interprets competently with
his eyes on the ceiling where a
ventilator moves in silent circles under panels
how
long have these panels hung there he asks himself the
translator while he translates sentence for sentence the
medical inquiry after the arrival in the sister state

good thanks
i say during
the landing rain from
above this country looks somewhat
lost but
i like losers

the translator she says

she feels in general quite good and
is pleased to be here

the physician listens takes notes understands she
points to the bed i
sit down she
examines me are
you pregnant pains homesick do you feel alright

i don't know i
don't think so the
translator while looking at
the ceiling repeats what she says and
also he says

where do you come from

how long have you been here

where do you live now

where do you work

and well why
haven't we met before now

i laugh

the physician asks what's the matter

the translator immediately says
something lengthier he
says it with many details the
physician nods sternly then
continues

don't laugh he says
what's your name

thank i say she
takes my pulse whether

the work is strenuous how
much i eat

i hate the work but
don't tell her that in the
dormitory they smoke in the evening
it stinks because the exhaust fan doesn't function
also i can't sleep because two of my
roommates are always sick but
don't tell her that tell her
i sleep very deeply and have good dreams

i'll tell her you would like to work more

no

the physician notes down figures blood pressure
pulse age height mood the
translator says something to the physician she
looks at me displeased
i shake my head the
physician turns around doesn't understand i
shake my head he says something again the
physician takes more notes examines

what is your name
i ask him what

is that important

he says and then
the physician says
you are in great health and then
he asks when
we will see each other again

// at the hub an old voice
bàn chân biến mất trong nước⁵ //

⁵ the feet disappear in the water

i didn't look at the bottom where
your feet slowly sank under the water i
didn't turn around for the cries
around us in the water didn't
think about what was swimming under us what
was floating beside us i
saw a strand of hair on your neck i
searched for your eyes which
followed the cries i
searched for your eyes to
hold on to them and said don't look at the
bottom don't touch the water don't look
to the side look here hãy nhìn đây⁶
look over here here look over here nhìn đây
look over here look here

// leipzig late 80's
she remembers he recalls something as well
những hình ảnh kể về các kỷ niệm của chúng tôi⁷ //

I still know you
stood in front of this painting

the paris commune cycle

and outside meeting again in
the churchyard and discussions and
they want to form
a unity and they want to
be one people again
going home often they go
by those who are standing there silently who
look at me then

paris commune cycle about the finally discovered
political form

⁶ look here

⁷ images that tell about our memories

and you read aloud
about the finally discovered political form

and outside in the
churchyard they stood
silently and waited in the rain
some spoke still and
you continued to read aloud

about the finally discovered political form

cycle about the finally discovered political form
under which the economic emancipation of
labor could be accomplished

and you read aloud and i
felt sick

there are my paintings
says the painter
they are not historical paintings they
are paintings that
with the help of history
express themselves
in the present

and
the gatekeeper observed us the whole time
because actually we
were not supposed to be here

but he was also worried about the demonstration
outside everyone
was overwhelmed since the summer and
in front of us the painting the
paris commune cycle and
everything full of cries everything full of the dead a
battle triptych hanging there on which
the times collapse on each other like
fallen soldiers the
tragedy a bayonet on which

someone scratched freedom the
tragedy a
battle triptych with the
main focus on
the tragic side of the
commune its timelessness
despite defeat maybe
only ghosts can ever
win against time

maybe time is a
particularly german problem

you said

because for them the verbs always
specify the time yet
the time is never right

you said

it always must be negotiated anew in
vietnamese the context of words determines
the time and the germans
have an endless problem with time
because they want to enforce it with
their grammar or

and then you briefly
silently looked at me
an old man in the painting with
bayonet and a
naked woman with scarf a
speaker puffed up screaming behind
somewhere at the painting's edge
a cross time is never right
the images can assert whatever
they want in the end there remains
nothing but an assertion about
time and subsequent times
remember

with the help of these false images
pasts which
never happened in this way but
even if they had happened differently it
wouldn't matter at all
for subsequent times you
just take the time that
you're handed why
is that asshole staring at us
the whole time like that

hence they have a right and a wrong
a planned and an unplanned an
allowed and a disallowed all
a grammatical problem they are
as bureaucratic as their grammar

which you said

and you continued
to read aloud and i
felt sick

because we are just not planned here

but we are here so now there is
nothing to be done i mean what's the deal then
the talk about reciprocity come off it sister state
behind it all nothing but economics in the end

of course what else

yes not what else why
do they tell us then we
are working for progress we
can't go out we
should avoid public places you
should have no contact with the women comrades
as if it would be a question of sister-state
reciprocity whenever
a state is behind something the person counts for shit

whatever is written on the posters
whatever is written in the pamphlets in the end it's all about
economics everything
is in the end economics that shitty
paris commune a
question of economics vietnam a
question of economics the tragedy a
question of economics the battle triptych a
question of economics time as a whole a
question of economics outside those
in the churchyard a question of economics

yes of course all
life is economy economy is
risk life is risk

and i still felt sick

the gatekeeper came closer

i thought then to myself he
should just come closer i'll throw up at his
i am pregnant and you
completely irritated

no not a bit i just didn't know
what i now what you do i mean
everyone knows
what it means

and the gatekeeper stared at us and then
those outside again in the rain there were
not a lot at the start they said later there
were more and more

// tân sơn nhất international airport
a daughter again between the places
an old voice does not want to go to pulau bidong

giữa các lần⁸ //

delay

continuing chaos because of the volcano how
can a single volcano throw so much ash into the sky the
display remains silent about
the interruption wider than worldwide
now silence

i stroll through the
transfer area that
continues to maintain its normalcy very
amusing the duty free shops open as if
there were normal business why
do they open why don't they close it
is apparently more likely that the
worldwide air traffic collapses
than the fricking duty free shop doesn't
open in the morning but
the toblerone has to be sold so
the world ends not
with a bang but with ash dust and a traffic jam

next day once again knocked waited

you again

wait

i don't know where

listen i want nothing

show me the photo again

here

come in

⁸ between times

the door opens she takes the photo points
to the coat hooks goes
into the kitchen what
do you want from me

you were in pulau

maybe why
are you interested in that

because i am researching the island

were you ever there

no i
wanted to collect material first and then

where do you come from

germany like
i said

no originally

east germany and you
why do you speak german

the ugliest airport in the world
you know
what someone said when
we landed welcome
to freedom then
we got a room
pocket money and three weeks later
they had forgotten we were there

why did you want the photo

three weeks later they had
forgotten pulau

why did you want the photo

three weeks later our pictures had
erased the growing number
of victims the question
of a survivor is not why
but who didn't

why did you want the photo

what do you think

you recognize something in it

who wouldn't
it is a picture everyone
recognizes something in it here thanks
i don't know what
became of this women
you're seeking

but you know her

have you talked to others about
pulau

not yet

i wasn't there for long what
do you want to know it stank day
and night it was overcrowded what
else

would you go with me
to the island
pulau bidong

// tôi muốn hiểu thời gian
tôi muốn trải thời gian

tôi muốn nhìn vào thời gian từ mọi phía⁹ //

what then
if there were no time at all
really only
history and
only history forms time

what then if
all time in itself is lost
doesn't happen at all if
only through history
time can be found again

what then if
time in itself is without history
without direction careens from place to place

what if all time in itself
were so free that it hurt if
time in itself belonged to
another freedom which we
can never understand because our time
is simply so
our history is finite

which also hurts

however here it is not the
possibility that hurts but
the impossibility of knowing that
you can always only be part
of a history that
not all time is just
freely available

it also hurts

⁹ i want to understand time
i want to spend time
i want to look at time from all sides

that everything elapses except for
time which
always remains the same
at least behind the
stories in which
we cloth it this time so that we can
endure it because if it were simply
to be so naked in front of us time
in all its silence in
all its ahistoricity maybe it
would be even more painful than
telling a story about it about
this naked indifference of time

// leipzig later 80's
khi cuộc sống lặng lẽ tắt vào ban đêm¹⁰ //

one was sent back because
she broke her arm that
it was actually her colleague who
didn't want it to come out
that she was pregnant by him
that somehow got lost back
in vietnam she died alone

or

one who
pulled it off she
wanted to stay she got up
the next morning as if
newly born
and was permitted to stay another two years then
she was sent back one way or another

or

one was sent back after she got

¹⁰ when life quietly shuts down at night

blood poisoning from
the hanger it
was just lying around
in the room and
it got caught when
pulled out so
it was all taken care of
so to speak then it just got stuck and she
died after a long flight
delay
in the hospital her
legs were shaking before the operation when the doctor
removed his mask she lay there still

or

one
who only helped who
thought while watching how
the metal how that felt
whether it
the metal or whether it
would be better or
how far in
or whether she should hold more firmly or
more loosely or whether
it is at all and
the poster on the wall she
stared at then to distract herself
hanging there for weeks months and
she ignored the jerking arms

or

one was sent back because she
got sick again and again the treatment
in the sister state was too expensive for the sister state the flight
was long and cheap the remaining time
short and nice

or

one was sent back who
didn't want to use the hanger she
sat on the bed her roommate was
holding her another had the
hanger then she stood up and
immediately got on the plane
deported to the sister state no one knew what happened her
trace got lost after the airport

but i
will stay

// leipzig late 80s she is waiting in the pre-fab building
he is running through the fog
à anh sẽ hát cho em nghe khi ngoài kia họ thét gào¹¹ //

from the window
watched how
the fog creeps
through the streets how
the water on the range slowly boils how
the tea brews how
people go out leave
the pre-fab building in the evening
go back inside how
an unease settles over the city
hardly noticeable when
you're constantly preoccupied with how
once again the first ones
talked about the people about unity about
the end about the beginning and
about the people
i was just hoping that we still would be
two three
four five
weeks here undetected that
no one notices

¹¹ well, i'll sing it to you when they scream out there

that i still am still two three
four
five
weeks in your room

maybe
we were lucky that
recently they were so
concerned with themselves that
they somehow no longer noticed us that
they were more about themselves
than us maybe
we were lucky

canine squads in the evenings the
barking seeps into the room human
chains are broken up masses who
call for unity for a
time they no longer
worried about us there
was bureaucratic confusion and
we were
the least of the problems i
hidden in the room boiling
water waiting

there were fewer and fewer
at the machines finally when
the people returned it got tense
during the hours between
the housing block and factory we
were checked questioned suspected i
was interrogated several times grilled
there were eyes everywhere in
the last weeks at
the machines there was talk
again about the people
someone explained to me that
they wanted one
people again a

national unity again that
i would not really be able to
understand sure
i thought north south west east the
world is only to be
imagined as divisible

from the window watched later how
things became tenser the
whispering increased how they began
to go out how
the streets became fuller how
the canine squads grew larger how
the human chains became ever longer how
the churchyard was no longer adequate

someone
explained to me that they
wanted one people again a
national unity that
finally should be restored someone
explained to me that
they were yearning ultimately for
such a unity that
blooming landscapes were
already standing by and
just waiting to
burst out here into the churchyard in the rain

and i hoped it would happen i
hoped it would happen maybe
then we can just stay

from the window watched how
the streets first grew quieter then
ever fuller I thought why
would they be interested
now in a child they
now have too many other problems they
are losing their state no
wait they are just scrapping it that

this is possible the
paris commune comes
to mind again a battle triptych
in which the states collapse they
get the state off their back they
are just scrapping it

and the blooming landscapes which
were promised once would yet
appear they
were all sure about that they
would all be like pie in the sky
these landscapes
that were already hanging on
the posters everything
will bloom they
were all sure and after the fall
a spring would be waiting they
were all sure a
shared a national spring and
not even i asked myself who
is meant by that by
the national springtime who
may one day stroll
through these blooming landscapes and
we
they screamed and
we
they called and as one
we
they demanded and this
we
moved through the nights through the
streets this
we
to which we so wished to belong
and this we
never again stopped
speaking out there on the streets in
the nights on the squares this we wanted
finally to come into its own we

have been shut out of history
long enough after all we
saw it the freedom on
the other side we
too want it now
the freedom sellout we
too want it now
the full responsibility finally to be
able to say what we
really think even if
no one likes it we
were oppressed long enough and
we
they screamed and
we
they demanded and
we
want to free ourselves finally over there
at the markets the future
is already waiting
a time that no longer knows
time that just simply lives on mindlessly the
future and that
is what we too
want now we
want to be we again we
nothing else and
we
didn't know who
they now actually meant with their
we but they knew
who they meant with this
we
even the canine squads who
at some point no longer knew how they
were against this we
that they actually were too and
we
they shouted and as one
we
they spoke and as one

we
they moved along below the window on
the street and
i only hoped that
we
are not too visible that
we
now the three of us are
not too visible that we
can just somehow
participate in this
we out there that was
marching straight into the blooming landscapes
which were promised them

// tân sơn nhất international airport a daughter
comes to pulau bidong an old voice would prefer to say nothing
cơn bão vẫn còn¹² //

and still nothing still they stand around
here in these waiting areas
always the same worldwide that
may even produce some calm like
in hospitals the sterile atmosphere here
at the saigon airport trolley case
next to trolley case next
to eyes sunk in the
displays while
time passes by
in between announcements all
flights still delayed what
are they actually waiting for still as if
something would arrive here among
the array of products among
how-to books travel books among
these they allow themselves something they lie
on the suitcases sweaty their
suits sweaty and wait

¹² the storm is still there

dead time the
only true utopia maybe
that we still have
standby time

delay

where previously products were now
someone is standing there makes
out of dead time itself added value status update
my freedom
that too only a quote for the crowd if
even boredom becomes competitive we
want

they said at the recruitment that
you remain true to yourself even
if it means that we must
let you go which
then also happened someone
must be let go because the
spirit
is no longer right someone
is let go because
the true self deep down that
is professed did not
persuade someone
is let go into dead time standby time
outside until you can place yourself once again
product placement of the soul oh well
the dog can shit on it how
often should you repeat that we've known
it for a long time and play along just as
we always play along

delay

i scroll through the photos before
the departure father in the store
among the curtains table clothes which
no one buys anymore

scroll further arrival saigon international airport
people at the airport for me
total strangers the streets which
mean nothing to me the hotel
nothing as well the address on the card
her address her door
in the boat next to her

her face studies furtively to
find something familiar in it she
doesn't know the woman who I seek
no she said she doesn't know what
happened to her what
does that mean what happened to her
her face studies what
happened to her something familiar that
happened to her what
then she spoke at some point

when they came to the city they said you
can all stay they said we
are now finally united
again they said our
division is over what comes
together belongs together the
americans had already left saigon weeks before
what stayed behind was a
frightened city we
cheered on the soldiers once again who
moved through the streets this time
our own while the first boats
had already left the city they said
we had nothing to worry about one week later
the raids began the
interrogations the insinuations the whispers what
is reunification without exile excess without
something they can deport
to create identity those
freshly united must be able
to separate themselves somehow
from the old

must be able to
cast off clean house discard watch
out when getting off the sand
is soft you can
easily sink in here

she looked into the water i
asked her when
she was here last

i never left

she stood up
carefully
looked at me touched
the water on the beach a gull
dismembered a fish

i never left the
first boats came in may
the camp
here was built
for four thousand
perhaps on the first boats
that arrived here there were twenty
thirty people who
thought they would stay only
a few weeks here in august there
were one hundred and three
months later ten thousand

the gull stared at us cocked
its head awry beat
its wings sunk its
beak again why
did the numbers rise when
the war ended

shortly after the end families
were broken up to
gain more control

then came
the summonses to
the reeducation camps you
had three days' time
to report to one of these camps
we heard
about executions forced labor indoctrination and
that was only what they could
talk about when
people returned from the camp
they were silent and
repeated phrases the gaze
mindless focused straight ahead into
the future that was promised if
anyone actually returned

we walked along the beach through
a forest beyond it
cliffs noise nothing
otherwise far and wide on the ground
hardly any traces she said

you can never
even or
imagine how that was here what
this place once

i've seen pictures

pictures
of the barracks here
on the beach

pictures

of the ships
that arrived

everyone always believes the pictures
hold on tight to something with that
they always only overwrite what was

but with the pictures
we finally noticed
something about what actually
was happening here

pictures erase the
truth is found in the story
not in the picture

then you explain

in the end you also
only make a picture again
thanks to the pictures
you once again see only what
you want to see
the photo that you showed me what
do you see in it why did you show it
to me

why not

where did you get it

if you don't recognize anything in it
why does it interest you

it is a nice picture that's
all it reminds me
of this island

why

she laughed

they said the helicopters will arrive soon and
we would be flown out so
we waited for days we
took turns
watching on the beach for survivors some

washed up on shore at night and we wrote down the names
of those who had been on board then
we called out
the names in the camp until
someone collapsed who
recognized one of the names

how long were you here
until the helicopters arrived

then you were flown out
flown out oh please first
journalists were flown in who
stared at us like
backward people in the camps

you yourself explained how
the conditions were here

and these conditions were
exploited several hundred of us
were singled out our misery was documented
with many pictures our helplessness was pinpointed
we were flown out and then our new good fortune was confirmed in
the new world while here
boats continued to capsize mild infections led
to death no more water was available we
were flown out and with us
the responsibility was flown out away
from this island we
were allowed to go so that the rest here or
elsewhere could die in peace

we are interesting only
as a small number this
just so humanism can still tolerate us
the representatives who they can rescue we
in all the pictures never stood for
the rescued we

stood and stand for those still left behind we
were allowed to go for the war of images for which we
were only extras and the backdrop never
again they said never again
should people drown when fleeing read the caption
under the pictures and
that the west now was committed to those
drowning while fleeing
the west
in all these pictures
was writ large and
never again
they said and in the
camp someone died of blood poisoning and
the family stared apathetically at
the flies on
his eyelids and
never again and
a fraction of these people were
flown out in a storm of pictures and then the pictures were history
then they had the pictures
of the rescue

they tried to help everyone

words

but they said they couldn't
help everyone

of course not come over here there they lie still
years later those
who they stupidly could no longer help

she led me through the forest
up on a hill on it a
shack below on the beach several
gulls were fighting over a dead fish

the barracks stood here
you see

no

of course not nothing
left so what should i explain why
start over again it's enough
when i can't forget the pictures i
saw them from the boat lit up the
barracks while i
flailed around while i
hunted screamed flailed
around here
stood the barracks here
i waited days weeks months
while the boats arrived in an hourly rhythm while one
after the other capsized hopelessly
overcrowded these
boats and i stared apathetically at the sea
where i saw my daughter
for the last time

i tried not to
irritate her remained silent watched
the gulls

these pictures
you can never forget what
do you really know
thanks to the pictures which
long ago sunk into history
and are casually used by
those who make this history their own
the horror the
overcrowded boats that capsized here the
journalists who report on phantom boats that
float around beyond the island did they
see the boats arrive the
bodies in them lying on their bellies in knee-deep water do
these pictures have something that really
accomplishes something sometime

and then i did ask
which daughter

// at the hub silence slow motion memories
tất cả những người này họ đến từ đâu¹³ //

in east germany
i hardly encountered any
racism
because the propaganda machine functioned
so well
but after the fall of the wall
the devils showed
their real faces

most of us
went back but where did we belong
who was responsible for us we
were in limbo for years
forced
to go out on the streets
to protect our existence

and we were there and
waited we
were there and waited we
were there and waited for what
what does it mean
to fall out of time what
does it mean to want to go back what
does it mean to fall out of time
to where do you fall

// leipzig after the fall of the wall
welcome to the present
chúng tôi đã hết thời¹⁴ //

¹³ where are all these people from

¹⁴ we are out of date

but this we but
this we but
this we had no place
at all for us

the first ones were deported
flown out taken away we
we would ask you to leave
this country now that no longer exists
now there exists here
something else in which you simply do not
no simply do not feature in
which within you are not present

although previously still from the sister state
now there were only gooks

although previously still the shared
pre-fabs now there were the investors

because someone had to well these pre-fabs

well someone had to well

these pre-fabs what
do you do with them otherwise who
wants to other than a
few hotels or what do I know

one evening on the way home the
entry door was open our room emptied out we
didn't even have an authorization we
were fair game
the first years nothing nothing
so our beds flew

so our things flew
and i stood below and
watched how the apartment
flew

and we thought life at our risk

and i thought at least my daughter so that she
doesn't like me then
so that she doesn't like me
then so that she doesn't like me
then

so we went underground

first in the direction of provincial halle
for example there we had acquaintances

life at our risk

celle chemnitz everyway there were
enclaves

illegal meanwhile
out there the we found its way back to itself
finally united
again unity again

in the wrong time
born between then and
now between yesterday and today
between future and history

in between lived with friends played
cards in the evening
remembered

back
wherever that once was

they offered money but
no one
wanted to go back

about the sister state
nothing more was heard instead

market economy instead
blooming landscapes instead
the new times
in which this we finally once again
recognized clear boundaries it celebrated
the new times it celebrated
the new we on its own

and we celebrated your first
birthday

secretly because you were not
allowed to be there
secretly because you had
no history at all
secretly because you still
had not even a
name

where to go then
better to sell curtains
table cloths

and you celebrate your second birthday slowly
the sky clears up slowly
you may have your own apartment because
no one else wants them anyway suddenly
we were once again needed buying power
knows no nationality

and you celebrate your third birthday

actually your first

we live at our risk we
live precariously because we do not
exist here in this
post-traumatic story this
love story of a nation that
now finally wants to be at home with itself again we
sell cigarettes and

falsify your birthdate erase three
of your years erase your history erase
your past erase
this time so that you
have a future

// pulau bidong an old voice remembers
tôi không muốn nói nữa¹⁵ //

i climbed in the boat pretty much at the end looked
back time and again and saw how
even more climbed in and even more and how
they fought at the port and that still other boats
also already overcrowded and that
still other boats also already overcrowded and
that still other boats also already overcrowded and
you jumped in the water that pooled
in the bottom of the boat and
more and more climbed in when
the motor already and you
jumped in the water in the boat you
in the water knee deep in the boat you
in the water while the
city in the background smaller while the
city in the background smaller which belonged no longer
to anyone look here hãy nhìn đây
i said and the water rose higher look here
saigon liberated city now forced labor camp flags
were swapped people
replaced that
other boats also already overcrowded and you
are in the water on board while
the city disappeared while
the boat at some point rolled look
here i said look over here over here
hãy nhìn đây while
everyone changed sides while the
captain became more frantic

¹⁵ i do not want to talk anymore

while the city disappeared and knee deep
the water pooled on board look here
i said look over here as
the first baggage overboard as
the first cries ceased look here as
the first ones overboard and the ship rolled
in slow motion and you looked over here
and i didn't listen to the cries as
the water rushed in i
didn't listen to the sirens as
the water rushed in i
searched for your eyes as
the water rushed in to hold on to them
and you looked at me and already then
the dead were floating in the sea

already then the dead
clustered in the water and
already then the cries for help sounded bitter already
then they ceased quickly their
mouths full of water their arms pushing
against the current their
hair going down in unison whoever
counted for nothing in life does
not surface in death whoever
counted for nothing in life does
not surface in death whoever
counted for nothing in life does
not surface in death and
who counts anyway who counts anyway who
counts anyway who counts anyway anything

already then
the dead were recorded without being counted

lifeless numbers
next to pictures

and already then the numbers numbed the
world which showed its concern with
bound hands faced with the

rhythm of the current already then
 the numbers counted for nothing who
even counts the distance from bow to bottom who
 even counts the number of fingers in the water
 and you look at me as
the boat rolled to the side and you overboard and
 i didn't hear the cries i
 jumped after you i didn't hear the sirens
 i dove in after you i
grabbed for your hand but there were so many
hands and i held my breath deeper if it must be
 deeper to the very bottom if it must be
 to the very bottom and grabbed at all the hands
one of them had to belong to you and look here all
these hands one had to belong to you one had to be
yours one had to belong to you and look over here
 look here all these hands
 most already cold you had disappeared
 look here i
screamed look over here and i counted the distance
 from bow to bottom i counted the distance
 from bow to bottom finger for finger hand
 for hand and who counts
 these hands who
 counts them i
 held my breath
counted again the distance from bow to bottom but then the boat
 capsized then we plunged into the sea then
 you had disappeared among all
 these hands who counts these hands who
 counts them how many between you and me
from your hand to mine most already cold among
 all these hands who
 counts them even who
 counts these hands
 hãy nhìn đây
look over here look here look here

// pulau bidong she resurfaces
from the water and tells the end

that the old voice cannot know
a daughter takes notes //

someone reached for my hand took me pulled me out again

my mouth full of water someone
pulled me out my
mouth full of water someone
pulled me out I heard
only cries i
heard only sirens my
bag was all that remained this
photo in it among the clothes and
someone brought me back to
the port first and the floor was still wet because
my hair didn't stop dripping when
someone asked for my name and i counted
the drops and i
said how i was called how
my mother called me how you would
call me where
is my mother i asked my
hair wet the floor dripped my shoes in the
water unbelieving one word after another trembling where
is my mother no one answered i was
left with the possibilities i
tried to sift through them all those
years all those possibilities until
i accepted that the
boat capsized the water came the hand
slipped away i
sank counted the
seconds under water opened my eyes blurry
passing me by the luggage and hands and shoes and
a boat upside down I explained how our house looked where
we had lived how
the sky looked in the evening but
no one knew where to put me i
resurfaced only cries one
two three counted the
seconds above water sank again

one two three cries clothing stuttering motors the
pacific is warm at night someone
floats down painlessly until
you hear nothing more one
two three seconds under water one
two three then other boats
came sirens honking cries one
two three and i grasped at a hand
someone brought me to a new family someone
gave me a new name someone
gave me a new history i
accepted all that
what remained blurred pictures
the bag this photo among the clothes i
performed the name performed
what they suggested to me what
they commanded performed
everything in order
to finally get away

// pulau bidong a daughter takes notes an old voice explains //

here were the barracks here
i waited days weeks months
while the boats arrived in an hourly rhythm while one
after the other capsized

hopelessly overcrowded the
boats on the beach
we collected the washed-up clothing
apathetically looking at the sea we noted
the names of those who weren't washed up
apathetically the waves hammered
apathetically i observed the
flow of the currents
apathetically i waited for
you to show up again

until the helicopters came
then we were flown out

they hardly celebrated us
that we landed we
the stranded ones the
rescued ones the
ones celebrated in the storm of pictures
descended from the airplane and
the applause erased our history erased
us the
applause at the airport the pictures for
the world erased us i
saw still the island counted
the waves while
they cheered us i grasped
still in the water somewhere there
my daughter is still floating

why are you so
sure that she
i mean maybe

I saw her disappear i
saw how
she disappeared

but there were numerous boats

I saw how
she in the sea

maybe she was
on another

i am not
the woman
you are seeking

which woman

where did you find this photo

why

what do you see in it

nothing it is yellowed faded you
can hardly recognize anything

why then did you show it
to me

what did you recognize in it

where did you find it

in an archive

in saigon

no why

but then

in some archive

what was this archive was
anything else in it

documents and other photos

what documents

documents memoirs things that
are found in an archive

and who owns this archive

why do you want to know that

you travel here knock on
my door show me this picture and
do not know in whose archive you

have been digging

archival secret

archival secret

yes confidential sources

confidential sources

why is that so important to you

why won't you tell me

it belonged to my mother

i'm sorry

oh please

what

yes what exactly are you sorry about

about your mother

what about my mother

apparently you thought you
would find something here

i never expected that

and unfortunately i cannot help you

i already noticed that

i don't know where
you will find this women who
you are seeking

she probably disappeared long ago

probably

maybe she was here once

maybe

sat on the beach waited
until the helicopter came

what should she have done otherwise
keep searching how long where in saigon
she would probably
have been shot on her return

not accepting

how easily that can be said

she could have searched later

after thirty years

twenty to thirty years what
does that mean anyway

maybe she tried it maybe it
did her in maybe what
do we know anyway

yes that's right what
do we know anyway

maybe she just
wanted certainty

certainty

yes

to tell herself a story that
reassures her yes why not maybe she wanted that
to deceive herself

she maybe didn't know any better

maybe

i'm sorry that i can't
help you further

you know what i always find strange
when i speak in german

what

that the verbs determine the time

that is truly strange

as a child i never
understood never
comprehended that
time can be specified according to a
word in
vietnamese
time is from the context
becomes visible there is
no self-contained time

why do you tell me that

your address was on the envelop
in which i found the photo

maybe just a misunderstanding

maybe

// tân sơn nhất international airport

between the places between the times
tôi lần các ngón tay của mình trên toàn thế giới
và thì thầm đâu có nỗi thương đau¹⁶ //

delay
nothing said
what
should you even say where
would you begin and why

delay
and still
they wait here a few
hours still they say a few
hours until
time continues again until
they lift off from here one
after the other those
travelers constantly
at idling speed here
constantly passing through waiting where
are you all going to where are you drawn

delay
nothing said what
should they have said anyway

delay
some archive or another
some carton some
label document some
trace a story your—
daughter—
lived near you on the
other side
behind the wall

and no
unification because

¹⁶ i trace my fingers all over the world and whisper no pain

only cracks no
unification because
only new stories no
unification because constantly
at the wrong place where
do you begin what
should you say what

would i say to her

nothing at all

where do you begin

nowhere

again and again from the start
you begin to tell to
explain to remember always
from the start and anyway you arrive
nowhere which crack
can be even can be even
can be even seamlessly which crack

i would have told her that
i always went to the port and to
our house which
someone else now for a long time that
the new family was quite nice that
i plan to go to the sister state

why didn't you
say that to her

i would tell her that i
forgot how she looked that
i forgot how her voice sounded that
i forgot what we last talked about that
at some point it didn't hurt anymore
the forgetting

stories that you
then tell yourself
when you sort things out for yourself where
you had been

stories that
entire states must tell themselves
when they sort things out for themselves

stories
that simply don't want to heal over so
long as you like to tell them the cracks
here everywhere whoever
finds them can keep them

when thinking i always only land
at the cracks

land and am trapped again

why didn't you tell her that

that i forgot why she
wanted to leave with me on this boat how
she looked

why didn't you tell her that

that i had gotten a position that
i had felt like a stranger there that
i would have liked to tell her this and that

always only cracks over which you stumble when
telling almost as if you talk to
distract from the cracks

i would say to her that
i forgot what
i saw under the water that
i was told she was dead

that i saw her sink down
several times in the water

why didn't you tell her that
i never sank that
i went back to the shore then to
the sister state and carried you
into the new world why didn't you
tell her that

one crack after another points the way
through history

why didn't you tell her that

what

that they
lived next to each other until
the wall fell that
they both felt like strangers until
today why
didn't you tell her that
your father now curtains that
he now table cloths that he now
has become silent since
living alone that
he can't bear the photos that
he laughs awkwardly if you ask him about
the past that
he was a good translator that
he now table cloths that he now curtains that
he now has become silent since
living now alone that he remained polite in the hospital
after she stopped breathing that
he visited her every day until
her room was cleared out that he
fell silent for a week in his store
at the city's edge where he now table cloths

whatever that might mean

to establish yourself

living at risk

after he was ignored for years

he barged in again at the
unification at the
we cries at the
we calls at the
we are finally someone again
but he was just an intruder

i would say to her that i
carried you while the
walls went up and down while
we sold cigarettes

i would say to her that in
the rooms
it was hot in the evenings that also
the germans didn't only
start saying gooks when
the walls were down that
they then however said it louder that
they then suddenly did it more openly that
they then suddenly did it enthusiastically that
they then finally were allowed to say we we
loud and they

i would say to her
that i carried you that i
counted the distance which
we ran together foot by foot until
someone said to me that i had only a few more months

pictures who's
interested in them anyway

and the last feet i
counted in slow motion

stories what do they tell anyway

the last feet i took step by step
foot by foot until at some point
i no longer could

the west
what is it anyway
a unification that
will never happen

why didn't you say to her
that you my daughter i her
child that I out of the boat before her
out of time before her but
never out of history

unification what
does it mean when
does it mean

why didn't you say to her that
you her granddaughter that you found her why
didn't you say that to her

i would like to have told her that i
landed in west germany
the ugliest airport in the world that
the sky here is ugly that
the trees here are beige that
i never wanted to stay here but
that i also didn't want to return

what cracks
anyway can be seamlessly

i would have said to her that i
sometimes no
i would not maybe
i would have said to her nothing at all

maybe i would not have known where
to begin

i would have said to her that i
carried her through the city foot by foot
on the boat foot by foot and look here
i would have said again look over here hãy nhìn đây
and held on to your eyes from bow
to bottom foot
by foot among all these hands held on
to your eyes look over here

what does that mean anyway
unification it doesn't mean who
but against whom

why did you only stare at her later
in the boat on the return on the street and
she stared at you why
did you say nothing

both of you stared at the picture and both
of you knew what you were staring at both
of you knew with whom you were standing both
didn't know what to say

yes what

i hope i could tell them
something

yes

I hope they understand now our
history a bit
better i
hope they understand now what
happened here i
hope i could help them somehow

but we understand nothing we

never understand anything we
tell ourselves these stories show ourselves
the pictures and only see
the crack in the stories the
gaps

delay

maybe it was better this way what
should you say anyway

yes thanks now
i understand even less

do you understand something better
now that you were there

what unity means what
we means what
we have become who
we have become how
we have become your
legs still thrashing in the water the
west on the shores already
the waves are rising already
the cracks are straining already
the walls are breaking we
is being cried again no matter
what we tell we
is being cried again no matter
what we heard we
is being cried again as if
there were never a crack

only maybe this we is
just the very crack about which we are talking

or maybe that
i suddenly only a few more months
and time in german a
grammatical trap

you certainly didn't say that to her

or maybe that i
actually wouldn't have known where
to begin that
you can maybe say less
than you think if you
have lost yourself

which cracks
can be even seamlessly

why didn't you say to her that
you next to each other

or that she actually only in
an airplane

whether she simply would like to come along

why didn't you

whether she now simply will
come along

or that the flight only a few hours that
at least you together

that not everyone drowned in the waves

in any case not i

maybe indeed maybe
I drowned there like everyone
just came up again for the pictures
was down there forever

or maybe that the
curtains in your father's store ugly that
it doesn't help that he alone in the past weeks

apathetic and constantly talked about how we
got to know each other

or maybe nothing at all maybe
that is the best nothing at all
maybe that is in the end the only thing that
can be said nothing at all maybe

or yes maybe simply nothing at all

delay they
sit there and wait

outside the ash storm they
say worldwide all planes are down they
say worldwide they're sitting there and stare

delay display
next to display on
which the world rushes by

they say in a few hours it will start again
the talking we
believe in it we believe that it
will start again otherwise what maybe
they will fly again in a few hours maybe
they will then get out of here it
will come the next announcement if it comes it
will soon start again

cảm tạ
tạm biệt¹⁷

¹⁷ special thanks, goodbye

