

*Tokonoma*

*Also by José Kozer at Shearsman Books*

Anima

José Kozer

*Tokonoma*

*translated by Peter Boyle*

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2014 by  
Shearsman Books  
50 Westons Hill Drive  
Emersons Green  
BRISTOL  
BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office  
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB  
(this address not for correspondence)

[www.shearsman.com](http://www.shearsman.com)

ISBN 978-1-84861-374-4

Original text copyright © José Kozer, 2011.  
Translation copyright © Peter Boyle, 2014.

The right of José Kozer to be identified as the author, and of Peter Boyle  
to be identified as the translator, of this work has been asserted by them  
in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Tokonoma* was first published by  
Amargord Ediciones, Madrid, 2011.

## CONTENTS

Wo	9
I	
The Concentration of Chang Hsu	13
Concentration of Chu Hsi	21
The Concentration of Tu Fu	25
Concentration of Wang Wei	31
Concentration of Master Kuan Hsiu	37
Concentration of Master Ning	43
Concentration of Go Toba	49
Concentration ('In the sky Sagittarius')	59
Concentration ('He leans')	61
II	
Meditation ('The monk Noin')	65
Meditation ('Cowbell')	69
Meditation ('For a year now')	71
Meditation ('The/ attention')	79
Meditation ('With the utmost care')	81
Meditation of Kiyowara Fukayabu	85
III	
Contemplation ('During the worst snowfall')	93
Contemplation ('The window. From the bed')	97
IV	
Satori ('Hsin, of the Shingon sect')	107
Satori ('Hui-neng, tegument')	109
Satori ('Hui-neng, sixth patriarch')	117
Satori ('Noin contemplates')	121
Satori ('The rollcall of the Masters')	127
Satori ('The arhat knows')	135
Satori ('Ducks/ come')	141
Satori ('The entrance to the Temple')	147
Satori ('Po Chu-I has set down')	153

Satori ('Elegance of Fujiwara no Teika')	159
Satori (Ryokan)	163
Satori ('From/ the peg')	169
Satori ('The marigolds that adorned')	177
Satori (Ma Non Troppo)	183
Satori ('He imagined')	193
Satori ('He walked thinking')	197
Satori ('He adjusts his step')	203
Satori (Overnight/ my pubic hair)	211
Satori ('Under the hundred year old...')	213
Satori ('The/ monk')	217
V.	
Satori ('The/ worm')	225
Satori ('I'm/ going/ to be born')	227
Portrait of a seventy year old and an adolescent	235
Índice	240



# Wo

El filósofo Mo Tse enseña: refutarme es como  
tirar huevos a una roca.

Se pueden agotar todos los huevos pero la roca  
permanece incólume.

El filósofo Wo agota los huevos del mundo  
contra una roca  
y la conquista.

Primero, al hacerla memorable.

Segundo, porque en lo adelante y dada su  
amarillez excesiva  
quienes acuden a la roca  
confunden la luna y los caballos.

Y tercero, aún más importante: un veredicto actúa  
sobre otro veredicto,

anula la obsesión de sus palabras.

# Wo

The philosopher Mo Tse teaches: refuting me is like  
firing eggs at a rock.

You can use up all the eggs but the rock remains unharmed.

The philosopher Wo uses up all the eggs of the world  
against a rock  
and conquers it.

First, to make the rock memorable.

Second, because in the future, given its  
excess yellowness,  
whoever approaches  
the rock confuses the  
moon and horses.

And third, even more importantly: one verdict  
acts on another  
verdict,

cancels the obsession of its words.



|

# Concentración de Chang Hsu

Quitarse la camisa requiere mesura.

El acto de la defecación implica al sistema  
respiratorio, incumbe  
todos los pormenores  
del organismo.

Situarse en la silla a primeras horas de la  
mañana ha de concebirse  
como un momento  
trascendente, fácil  
de perturbar: exige  
temple (soltura) a  
una vez la concentración  
se desplaza de las rodillas  
a las ingles, situar de la  
cintura para arriba la  
postura del cuerpo.

Chang Hsu nos transmite otras normas (se  
han contabilizado más  
más de un millar): sus  
palabras, registradas  
para la posteridad (Chang Hsu reía  
rodeado de los  
Inmortales del Vino  
y llamaba posterioridad  
a la posteridad) dividen  
la materia, y la madeja  
de la materia, en sensata  
e insensata: Chang  
identifica la sensatez  
con las tareas del

# The Concentration of Chang Hsu

Taking off your shirt demands measure.

The act of defecation involves the respiratory  
system, concerns  
every detail of  
the organism.

Positioning yourself in a chair in the early hours  
of morning must be  
considered a transcendental  
moment, all too easily  
disturbed: it requires  
character (agility)  
all at once your  
concentration  
shifts from knees  
to groin, adjusting  
the body's posture  
from waist upward.

Chang Hsu transmits to us other rules (more  
far more than a thousand  
have been counted): his  
words, registered  
for posterity (Chang  
Hsu surrounded by  
the Immortals of Wine  
laughed and called  
posterity posteriority) his  
words divide matter, and  
the skein of matter, into  
what makes sense and  
what does not: Chang

campo, la vida de las  
aves, el modo de  
afanarse (con soltura)  
de los insectos: sobrios.  
La insensatez queda,  
claro está, para el  
bimano.

Corregir la insensatez corresponde a las normas:

pueden reducirse a dos o  
tres leyes que son una;  
o pueden estudiarse y  
llevarse a la práctica,  
durante una larga  
vida, una a una, día  
a día, desde la precisa  
proliferación de las mil  
y una reglas tendientes  
a sostener y volver a  
sostener con tersura,  
con firmeza, el hilo  
conductor de la  
atención, afluente  
de dichas.

Chang Hsu no es modelo de nada, ni emuló, ni  
jamás consideró debía ser  
emulado. Se desprendía  
de la camisa del calígrafo,  
revisaba su pensamiento,  
asistía imperturbable a  
las abluciones matutinas,  
y se sentaba sobre una  
estera de esparto, a solas  
con los Inmortales del  
Vino: vino de arroz,  
casero, fermentado

identifies good sense  
with working in the fields,  
the life of birds, the insects'  
(comfortable, relaxed) way  
of busying themselves:  
modest creatures.

The absence of good sense  
remains, obviously, for  
those with two hands.

To correct the lack of good sense corresponds to the rules:

these can be reduced to two  
or three laws that are one;  
or you can study them  
and put them into practice  
over a long life, one  
by one, day by  
day, from the precise  
proliferation of the thousand  
and one rules aimed  
at, smoothly, firmly,  
sustaining and continuing  
to sustain the guiding  
thread of attention, a  
tributary source  
of happiness.

Chang Hsu is not a model of anything, emulated no one,  
never considered he should  
be emulated. He got rid of  
the calligrapher's shirt,  
revised his thought,  
imperturbably took part  
in the morning's ablutions,  
and sat on a hemp  
mat, alone with  
the Immortals of Wine:  
house wine, fermented

cinco años en barricas  
de estaño: un día bebía  
vino destilado, al día  
siguiente vino turbio.

Llamarada, abre los ojos: el mismo gallo a la misma  
hora, trasiego de unas  
alimañas entre la paja.

Chang Hsu se desocupa. Primer ideograma  
(rapado)  
la túnica de color negruzco.  
Segundo ideograma (la  
cabeza, inclinada) un  
solo ojo. Segunda taza  
de vino, Chang Hsu  
aligerado (anoche, entre  
risas, les espetó, a solas,  
a los miembros de la  
Comunidad del Vino  
que él no bebía mitos,  
sólo vino y sólo agua)  
(agua, señaló, esa otra  
calma). Tercer ideograma,  
ideograma por ende del  
agua. ¿Fueron horas, días,  
diagramas? Chang mira  
apoyado al marco de la  
ventana el cantero de  
pamplinas invasoras,  
se percata de su floración,  
considera que habrá que  
acercarse a mirarlas con  
todo detenimiento cuando  
baje el sol: al más ínfimo  
yerbajo le incumbe una  
determinada inflorescencia,

(from rice) five  
years in pewter  
barrels: one day he'd  
drink distilled wine,  
the next clouded.

A lightning flash, he opens his eyes: the same rooster at  
the same hour, some rats  
stirring restless in the  
straw.

Chang Hsu lets go, is empty. First ideogram (head shaven)  
a blackish coloured tunic.  
Second ideogram (his  
head inclined) one  
eye only. Second cup  
of wine, Chang Hsu  
now lighter (laughing,  
all by himself, blurted  
out to the members of  
the Community of  
Wine last night that  
he didn't drink myths,  
only wine and water)  
(water, he pointed out, that  
other form of calm). Third  
ideogram, the ideogram then  
of water. Were these hours,  
these days, flowcharts?  
Leaning on the window sill  
Chang looks at the flowerbed  
of invasive chickweed,  
notices its flowering,  
considers he will have to  
come closer to inspect  
them thoroughly when  
the sun goes down: the

a las pamplinas el auge de  
un ideograma, dos tazas  
(más) de vino de arroz,  
aligerar el cuerpo de  
mañana.

most insignificant wildflower  
requires a specific inflorescence, the  
chickweed require the cusp  
of an ideogram, two cups  
(more) of rice wine,  
to lighten tomorrow's  
body.

## Concentración de Chu Hsi

El Maestro Chu Hsi recomienda tomar siete palabras al azar (¿del diccionario?) (bueno, está bien, del diccionario) para conocer el Destino.

(¿Nacemos? Anjá. ¿Morimos? Anjá. ¿Y luego? ¿Cómo que luego?).

(Maestro Chu Hsi cruzado de brazos, brasero, unas ascuas medio frías, dos boniatos, bosta encendida, *chu* (candil) salud: la taza de vino golpea en seco sobre la estera (seis palmos) fabricada con junco de Indias entrelazado).

(Acerola (cacerola no, acerola) henil garlopa carabao sándalo zueco apenas).

(Ah, el Azar. Discípulo Chu Shu-chen estudia su destino hace veinticinco años, donde dice garlopa se reordenan unas virutas, carabao lo reanima día a día a la labor).

(La humareda del sándalo lo trastorna hace un mes, lunar o solar no

## Concentration of Chu Hsi

Master Chu Hsi recommends taking seven words at random (from the dictionary?) (well, ok, yes, from the dictionary) to know the future.

(We are born? Yeah, sure. We die? Yeah, sure.  
And next what? What do you mean,  
next what?)

(Master Chu Hsi arms crossed, a fire, a few half cold embers, two sweet potatoes, burning dung, *chu* (candle) cheers: the cup of wine suddenly strikes the mat (six palms wide) (made from woven rattan).

(Acerola (not casserole, acerole) hayloft carpenter's plane carabao sandalwood scarcely clog).

(Ah, Chance. Disciple Chu Shu-chen has studied his future for twenty five years, where it says carpenter's plane a few shavings gather, carabao day by day inspires him to work.)

sabría decir. El par de zuecos, sucios todavía de tierra renegrida, al pie del lecho de muerte, pertenecieron al Maestro Chu Hsi).

(Chu Shu-chen calcula conocer por anticipado su Destino, o al menos trasponer el sentido oculto de la palabra zueco en menos de tres lustros. ¿Y luego? Ah no, ¿cómo que luego?).

Apenas transmitir a sus siete discípulos la idea de que una palabra como la palabra apenas puede apenas transmitir la noción de Destino: a sus sesenta años recomienda sentarse al aire libre teniendo presente la palabra apenas cual si fuera un risco que no siendo eterno habrá en su momento de desmoronarse (ah en su momento, exclaman al unísono los siete discípulos).

(Sandalwood smoke drives him mad for a month,  
lunar or solar he  
couldn't say. The pair  
of clogs, still dirty from  
blackened earth, at the  
foot of the deathbed,  
belonged to Master  
Chu Hsi).

(Chu Shu-chen imagines he can know his Future in  
advance, or at least  
go beyond the hidden  
meaning of the word  
clog in less than three  
lustra. And then?  
Ah no, what do you mean  
and then?).

Scarcely transmitting to his seven disciples the idea  
that a word like the  
word scarcely can  
scarcely transmit the  
notion of Future: at  
sixty he recommends  
sitting in the open  
air holding present  
in mind the word  
scarcely as if it  
were a cliff that not  
being eternal must  
in its own due time  
crumble (ah in its  
own due time,  
exclaim the seven  
disciples in unison).

## Concentración de Tu Fu

Tu Mu le dijo a Tu Fu que estaba desorientado.

Aquí en la montaña no hay caminos, sólo  
contamos con un árbol  
que gusta de los macizos,  
los claros y las florestas  
(sotos) se reproduce y  
modifica la especie para  
que el único pájaro que  
existe, en todas sus  
mutaciones (que no  
son más que un asunto  
del aire) tengan donde  
posarse, según una ley  
que jamás se cumplió  
(la oropéndola fue  
hecha para anidar en  
el sauce, así como el  
herreruelo sólo debe  
cantar sumido en la  
enramada del nogal).

Tu Mu no deja de rascarse la cabeza mientras  
Tu Fu discurre.

Huashan, cumbre sagrada, con esfuerzo la  
cumbre es accesible,  
lo inaccesible suele  
ser lo sagrado. Tu Fu  
explica a Tu Mu  
(quien no dejará  
jamás de rascarse  
la cabeza) que el  
afán conduce a  
desorientación.

## The Concentration of Tu Fu

Tu Mu told Tu Fu he was disoriented.

Here in the mountains there are no roads, we  
rely solely on a tree  
that likes mountains,  
clearings and forests  
(thickets) the species  
reproduces and modifies  
so that the only  
existing bird, in all  
its mutations (which  
are only the air's  
business) should  
have a place to land,  
according to a law  
that has never been  
obeyed (the golden oriole  
was made to nest in  
willows, just as the wagtail  
should only sing lost in  
the thick tangle of the  
walnut tree).

Tu Mu doesn't stop scratching his head while  
Tu Fu continues his  
ruminations.

Huashan, a sacred peak, with much effort the peak  
is accessible, what's  
inaccessible usually is  
the sacred. Tu Fu  
explains to Tu Mu  
(who doesn't stop  
scratching his head)

Desorientación  
implica explicación,  
implica estar a la  
entrada del templo  
y ver establos. Oh  
los establos y  
quincallerías,  
hilanderas y  
abaceros, ruecas  
y ábacos; proliferación  
de flautas y jaulas de  
bambú con el pájaro  
que alegrará nuestras  
mañanas (así, Tu Mu,  
jamás despertará a  
la verdad) sin que  
entendamos el  
sentido del canto  
del pájaro enjaulado,  
pájaro presagiando  
las imparables concatenaciones,  
oídlo desde el  
amanecer hasta que  
anochece y cubren  
la jaula con una  
capucha negra de  
tafetán.

Tu Mu entiende (Oh, no es por primera vez) que la  
Unidad abarca a la totalidad  
de los números (por un  
momento deja de rascarse  
la cabeza) y los nombres  
enjaulan: que como bien  
ha explicado Tu Fu no se  
trata de arces ni almendros  
en flor o de pinzones y

that exertion leads  
to disorientation.  
Disorientation  
means reasoning,  
means being at the  
temple's entrance  
and seeing cowsheds. Oh  
cowsheds and corner  
stores, weavers and  
grocers, spinning wheels  
and abacuses; proliferating  
flutes and bamboo  
cages with the bird  
that will bring joy to  
our mornings (like this,  
Tu Mu, no one will wake  
to the truth) unless  
we understand the  
meaning of the caged  
bird's song, the bird  
foretelling the unstoppable  
chain of events, listen  
to it from dawn to  
dusk and cover its  
cage with a black  
taffeta hood.

Tu Mu understands (Oh, not for the first time) Unity  
encompasses the totality  
of numbers (for a moment  
he stops scratching his  
head) and names lock  
us in a cage: that as Tu  
Fu has aptly explained  
isn't a matter of maples  
or almond trees in flower  
or finches and calandra

calandrias sino del Árbol  
y del Ave donde, claro  
está, Árbol es Ave, todo  
a un mismo seno, a sima  
indiferenciada.

Tiembla Tu Mu azogado cuando Tu Fu le planta  
tres  
veces un bofetón en  
las mejillas (Tu Mu  
se habrá llevado las  
manos a la cabeza).

Tu Fu, tras alejarse unos pasos, regresa: coloca ante  
las narices del inquieto  
Tu Mu tres objetos al  
rojo vivo, objetos en  
blanco: hoja de sauce  
llorón; pluma caída de  
una garza al alzar quizás  
espantada el vuelo; y el  
ideograma *shih*. Tu Fu  
indica a Tu Mu que  
concentre toda su  
atención primero en  
la parte izquierda del  
ideograma, ya habrá  
tiempo más tarde de  
hablar del matrimonio,  
las arcas y arras, el  
servicio civil y los  
rangos, el hongo y los  
bosques, habrá tiempo  
de sentarse a la entrada  
del templo a todas luces  
situado a la mano  
derecha (*shih*)  
del ideograma.

larks but of the Tree  
and the Bird where,  
clearly, Tree is Bird, all  
in the same bosom, an  
undifferentiated abyss.

Tu Mu trembles all over when Tu Fu lands a slap  
three times on his  
cheeks (Tu Mu will  
have raised his hands  
to cover his head).

Tu Fu, after taking a few steps back, returns: places before  
Tu Mu's anxious nostrils  
three red hot objects,  
pristine objects: the  
leaf of a weeping willow;  
a feather fallen from a  
heron as perhaps  
terrified it flew away:  
and the ideogram  
*shih*. Tu Fu indicates to  
Tu Mu that he should  
concentrate all his  
attention first on the  
left side of the ideogram,  
later there'll be time to  
speak of marriage,  
ornate boxes with bridal  
coins, the civil service  
and its ranks, mushrooms  
and woods, there will  
be time to sit down at  
the entrance to the  
temple situated  
(evidently) on the  
right side (*shih*) of  
the ideogram.