

Time & Task

to Eliot Weinberger on his LXXV

I.

Madagascar:

“a rice cooking”
(about half an hour)

“a locust frying”
(a split second)

Sioux:

“dies in less space
than a roasting of maize”
(under fifteen minutes)

Burma:

monks trained
in the increments of dawn
(sifting daybreak
through their fingers
like bolts of lotus silk)

Chile:

an Ave Maria said aloud
measures a soft-boiled egg
(earthquakes lasting
two or three credos)

II.

I have aced time

now doth time ace me

I attend to tides

in deathspan

& clock

the rings of trees

once in a blue moon

a cada muerte de obispo

tous les trente-six du mois

nur alle Jubeljahre

I think the hours

might be enough

& it occurs to me

all it takes

is a “pissing while”

for mica to turn

to meerschaum

or love

to dust

who would not exchange

a foot-length of jade

for a sundial’s inch

of shade

—Richard Sieburth