

MARTIN KOVAN

Cerberus

A decade of war—give or take those years in which its promise was a usury neither paid up nor defaulted. The interest just kept on growing, and we all of us with it, came of uncertain age.

A lone stray circles under a weak streetlamp, sniffing out succor. It's long past the hour of largesse, now, despite the gushing oil and those other dogs of war still straining at the master's leash. This one goes, hobble-legged, skewed into the shadows. Yesterday's offering left on the ground, untouched where it fell. An irony of more waste, in the spendthrift blood-economy. Well, get thee gone then, Cerberus.

You were in California in the anthrax days, or was it Madrid, or Mumbai. All the protest marches we stumbled through and didn't see our faces on the news, and kept on catching planes across the burning world, hedging bets on a perfect storm, throwing the I Ching in a thousand transit-lounges, always half-ready for a fall. The late punchline that it caught up long after the credits rolled, an accelerated gravity that brings it down hard now. A two-headed Cerberus, survival and its hubris snapping at the other's neck, not seeing it is the one they share,

with the same circling lifeblood. Or take that other conjoined twin, call it MH370 and MH17, wagering a pledge between chance and his sister fate, how one is really the other and accident invariable on its perfectly readied flaw. Surviving just in order to ensure its betrayal. So, poor Cerberus—another war.

This is what we know now, the same faultline that runs through a dozen years, and how many more. Not a climax, just a way-station to more of its deferral, debt dragging all the way. This is what is paid between then and now, that can never be repaid in loss or gain. The years are gone, and those not lost, but taken, with them.

We are still here—
alive with our three-headed dog, guarding the inbetween, and whose third head is blind. Come here, Cerberus, come to your master.