

*Outside the Institution*

*Also by Lars Amund Vaage*

***Poetry***

Det andre rommet  
Utanfor institusjonen

***Fiction***

Øvelse kald vinter  
Fager kveldssol smiler  
Kyr  
Dra meg opp!  
Baronen  
Begynnelsen  
Guten med den mjuke magen  
Oklahoma  
Rubato  
Den framande byen. Ein roman om Wilhelm Reich  
Guten og den vesle mannen  
Kunsten å gå  
Tangentane

***Translations***

Lorine Niedecker: Nord sentralt  
Joy Harjo: Å koma tilbake frå fienden  
Tennessee Williams: Katt på heitt blekkta  
Bob Arnold: Sanndrøymd

LARS AMUND VAAGE

**Outside the Institution**  
— *Selected Poems* —

Shearsman Books  
Exeter

First published in the United Kingdom in 2010 by  
Shearsman Books Ltd  
58 Velwell Road  
Exeter EX4 4LD

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-075-0

Original poems copyright © Lars Amund Vaage, 2001, 2006.  
Translations copyright © Hanne Bramness and Frances Presley, 2010

The right of Lars Amund Vaage to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988, and the rights of Hanne Bramness and Frances Presley to be identified as the translators thereof have likewise been so asserted.  
All rights reserved.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author and publisher would like to thank Forlaget Oktober, Oslo, for permission to publish these translations.

The poems first appeared in the following collections:

*Det andre rommet* (2001) and *Utanfor institusjonen* (2006).

Thanks also to Longhouse Publishers of Vermont for publishing earlier versions of some of the translations in the two folder booklets, *The Sheep Farmer Poems* (2007) and *The Institution Poems* (2008)

This translation has been published  
with the financial support of NORLA.

## CONTENTS

### From *The Other Room*

Behind the word there is a shadow	11
Look, you who come walking	12
You who live and can love	13
Behind loss there is another loss	14
You do not need to build	15
Behind the trees	16
My mother cried	18
A woman was near me	19
A woman left me	20
The other room	22
The hayloft	26
The sheep farmer	28
I remember	48
I came down from the mountains	49

### From *Outside the Institution*

The old poet	53
My father has gone	55
Father asks	57
Ivory	58
Night	59
Tourist	60
A dog with three eyes	61
Photos from the war	62
Upbringing	63
Homecoming	67
Finery	68
A turn for the worse	69
Words	71

The ordinary	72
The car ride	74
Invisible	89
I return to the landscape	91
Loss	92
Question	93
To the institution	94
Parting	96
On the way to the car	97
The conference room	98
The blind spot	99
Movements	100
Lunch	101

# **Outside the Institution**



**from *The Other Room***



*Behind the word there is shadow*

Behind the word there is shadow  
Behind the shadow a farm with house and trees  
Behind the trees a bright, green field  
thought cannot reach

*Look, you who come walking*

Look, you who come walking  
You who are alive, you  
who have strayed  
all the way out here  
See the houses, the painting  
so many layers  
You who come so near  
See old boards, the borders of houses  
and rotten handles  
on something that once had  
a name. Something mineral  
An opening  
A door that swings  
on the outskirts of the heart

*You who live and can love*

You who live and can love  
long, untamed and forget  
who you are  
See the meat hanging  
on the wall, drier than twigs

Look further, behind the house  
in a room out there  
in the open, it collapsed  
when you put your foot down

Behind your eyes  
Behind a distance  
dear one  
Far away over there  
Make a leap  
Behind water, reeds  
behind the rooms in the hay  
women rest  
Sleep has chased them  
to Andromeda

*Behind loss there is another loss*

Behind loss there is another loss  
but less distinct  
Under the farmyard is an other farmyard  
not yet excavated  
No one knows  
where the old house stood  
No one hears the dogs  
bite off slivers of bone  
with their canines  
You shall find  
invisible post holes  
under the grass

*You do not need to build*

You do not need to build  
anything for me  
I built these rooms myself  
from nails and snow  
I would rather you shut out the day  
Took rooms away

## BEHIND THE TREES

Behind the trees, shadows  
waver slowly  
from sun and time  
Behind the fence that has fallen down  
lush ferns, sweet peas  
Behind branches, what was  
covered  
needles, leaves  
and further down to a dark room  
of air  
Behind the wind, hills, the horizon  
hollows left by humans  
near crags, cliffs  
There was I  
Behind the curtain that fell  
so unexpectedly  
The applause had silenced  
The wind stilled  
I was on the endless  
back stage, painted black  
so the walls did not show  
Distances did not exist anymore  
I was there  
not in thought  
nor body  
but with the sense of smell, oblivion  
skin  
Detected  
the burnt stench of  
searchlights  
The lamp filaments went cold  
I walked along the wall

groping my way  
reading structures  
synthetic fibre, plaster  
and old wood  
Suddenly I was inside the wall  
I did not cough from the mineral wool  
or dust  
Nothing itched  
or pinched me  
I swam as in a fluid  
I kicked my feet slowly  
swallowing and swallowing  
something soft

*My mother cried*

My mother cried  
in the distance between me and another woman  
My mother cried in the empty space  
not to be understood, not to be reached  
My mother cried hot  
and dry  
My mother cried, I thought, I believed, because  
a woman was with me  
who could not see  
me

O, mother in mist, mother in oatmeal  
mornings long ago  
You placed everything away  
in mountainsides

Mother in twigs, in tassels  
Mother in the sweepings from the winter  
fire wood on a floor. You  
knew less than dust and trash  
thrown around by children  
but you cried

You drew black tree tops against the sky  
with the India ink pens  
I got for Christmas  
once  
You said the light blue  
was not for me