

TRIPWIRE 9

TRIPWIRE 9

in translation a collectivity
takes place in shadowboxing

HUGO GARCÍA MANRÍQUEZ

¿Esto no sigue siendo Europa? ¿Esto no es Latinoamérica?

VIRGINIA LUCAS

Hanky yanky, are you frayed?

DON MEE CHOI

OAKLAND : 2015

TRIPWIRE
a journal of poetics

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Submissions: please send proposals or inquiries to tripwirejournal@gmail.com. Looking for essays, reviews, interviews, translations, black and white visual art, etc. No unsolicited poetry, plays or fiction, please.

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DIVYA VICTOR

Laundry List

On April 13, 1919, British Indian Army soldiers under the command of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer opened fire on an unarmed gathering of men, women, and children picnicking in an enclosed urban garden called the Jallianwala Bhag. This garden is located in Amritsar, India. Amritsar is home to the Sikh holy site The Golden Temple and the Sikh parliament. During the massacre, the firing lasted about 10 minutes. 1650 rounds were fired. 33 rounds per British soldier. There were at least 400 fatalities and 1500 wounded Indians. The urban garden was bounded on all sides by houses and buildings and had few narrow entrances, most of which were kept permanently locked. Since there was only one open exit, except for the one already blocked by armed British troops, people desperately tried to climb the walls of the park and fell to their death. Many jumped into a well inside the compound to escape from the bullets.

Later, rescuers said that 120 corpses were plucked out of the well.

Speculative Laundry List of Outfits Left Behind by Corpses at the 1919 Jallianwala Bhag Massacre if all Victims were Female and British, Instead of Indian Women, Men, Children, and Infants

6000 Calico nightgowns not stained with mud
6000 Silk or wool nightgowns not covered in blood
6000 Calico combinations not damp with well water
6000 Merino vests not splattered with blood
6000 Spun silk vests not stained by rust
6000 Trimmed muslin bodices not ripped by gravel
6000 Calico slip bodices not shredded by thorns
12000 Paris tan stockings not smeared with mud
12000 Lisle thread stockings not speckled with blood
6000 Strong white petticoats not drenched with well water
6000 Lace trimmed petticoats not splotted with clay
2000 Flannel winter petticoats not dripping with well water
3600 Cotton pocket-handkerchiefs not specked with burrs
2000 Evening handkerchiefs not stained with loam
2000 Winter morning dresses not rent by gravel
2000 Summer afternoon linen dresses not torn by thorns
2000 Tennis dresses not ripped in flight
6000 Summer tea gowns not ripped in flight
1000 Riding habits not ripped in flight
1000 Sun jackets not ripped in flight
1000 Ulster capes not ripped in flight
2000 Sunshades not ripped in flight
1000 Mackintosh jackets not ripped in flight
2000 Pairs of Mackintosh boots not shot through
1000 Pairs of tennis shoes not shot through

2000 Pairs of evening dress shoes not shot through
4000 Pairs of house shoes not shot through
2000 Pairs of work and gardening shoes not shot through
1000 Pairs of leather riding boots not splattered with blood

The stockings would have been neither open-work nor black in color, the dresses would have been of washing material and of the sort requiring little starch. Summer cashmeres, delaines, and washing silks would have been suitable, as would have tweeds and warm shrugs. Gloves would have been rolled up in flannel and bottled in prune jars to keep them from becoming soggy in the humidity, along with the flowers, the ribbons, and the neck scarves. Leather goods would have been wiped weekly and the dresses aired. Needles would have been sealed in court-plaster and camphor would have been added to all chests to keep away mold. Gauze and tulle dresses would have been disastrous, as the damp makes them drop to pieces, as the damp makes them drop to pieces, as the damp makes them drop to pieces.

SEAN BONNEY

Corpus Hermeticum:

On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres

News blackouts etc. This really happened.

Every Thursday mayhem in weather systems.

Imaginary battles in science and strike actions. The bastards had won
as in Vision overload, fascist analysis of human beings
and a slightly less comfortable suburb. Arts and that.

Or science. Black mirrors. Seven dials. Black mirrors. Seven dials. Prisons.

We're blocking central London. Riot as, in relation to this past

I don't need a wound. We wanted going fucking mad. Too many racists still breathing
and strange convulsions, I felt it, me and the devil
at first repression and counter-acts, overload Malediction, tried to chart strikes
as Noise, they were still dead. Their galaxies, spinning faster.

Mercury unsuitable for making coins.

February 17th 1600, burned, “his tongue imprisoned because of his wicked words”

*for water say plague i.e. the language of judges, the infinite vowel
for water say fire i.e pulsars and mace. For water say yellow fire
i.e. the fascist microbe in every drop of rain. For water say dust
i.e. negative flames, soluble dust, chemical burns, scars and skies*

Forget psychogeography. All its ever been is a ring of protection, a police-thing's joy, at its centre that bitter knot of strings that Brecht called 'prophecy', spy-rings. String One: we were smashing up the Ritz, March 2011. String Two: shit was talked about immigrants, about dole scroungers. String Three: not an ATM a bright metallic wind or real-time alignment of the patterns of non-affordable housing scattered throughout the city and the stereo-optic beating of police hearts. Beat one. Cancellation of Europe and Mercury. Stone circles are police kettles, you can't tell me different.

*for yellow fire say fuck the police
kill fear say fire say fuck the police*

For example, take Newgate. Built 1188, directly into the walls, London's eastern gate. Beat Two. We don't recognise ourselves there. Beat Three. The debtor's jail, the throat the muzzle of the city. July 10th, 1790, burned. Robert Peel built cops from the ashes. Beat Four. Debt is bone. Versions of bone. Version One. Spare change. Version Two. Lock the bosses out. Superglue them. Out. Version Three. Debt One. Those nobility who entered the city from the east would pass through a wall packed with the tortured, the scraped and wheezing dead. London a cursed city, is beautiful in the smouldering spring.

We're not underground we're invisible. — Bernardine Dohrn.

remember Theresa May, that guillotine

Unemployed families were slaughtered
remember Theresa May driving thru London in crackling human Tar
about legal channels, hot pink and petrol flare
Awake at night, in strike actions

or the protests did what in relation to Fucking realism
stuck it out inside all noise, inside David Willets and Abeizer Coppe
bounded by law, David Willets, gored by magpies and glass
Victory to dole scroungers. This really happened

inside Normal matter such as atoms and electrons, orphanhood.

Check the extent of police lines. 1829, Robert Peel invented 1000 pigs to
circle the city as walls or gates as cordons. This happened. Those 1000 pigs
as calendar, the working day a pyramid as razor the police recuperation of
the sun. It was dark and the barricades were burning.

Tiresias the birds. Tiresias who sees what only a child could see, who blunders up from hell and hell is not underground. Says riots are a work of vast and incomprehensible mourning, a border a burning weird as even the fear felt by Charles and Camilla, that crow-bait, 2010, off with their heads - this really happened we have no fucking demands and Tiresias summoned voices of the vast dead charts of incomprehensible bird flight, everywhere we are those birds and it don't mean shit the cops don't know this.

We're not all white and we're not all men — George Jackson Brigade Communiqué, 1976

Robert Peel still peers down from Broadgate wall and is a blockade, Newgate torched. Police moved in smashed heads in counter-time, a silent musical fixture separates a human being from a cop. It is vital to recognise, to insist on that difference, that fixture - to locate with precision where that separation first appears in the 'continuum' where the entire pack of errors, superstitions and blood-stained bullets ram the solar throat of every cop in this town with vile psychic music and we live there, have organised noise. Studied strikes. Cop lives don't matter.

We must cry out in anguish now
to know the wound
to understand its nature and extent . . .

—anonymous Weather Underground poem, circa 1975

*for “I love you” say fuck the police, for
“the fires of heaven” say fuck the police, don’t say
“recruitment” don’t say “trotsky” say fuck the police
for “alarm clock” say fuck the police
for “my morning commute” for
“electoral system” for “endless solar wind” say fuck the police
don’t say “I have lost understanding of my visions” don’t say
“that much maligned human faculty” don’t say
“suicided by society” say fuck the police, for “the movement
of the heavenly spheres” say fuck the police, for
“the moon’s bright globe” for “the fairy mab” say
fuck the police, don’t say “direct debit” don’t say “join the party”
say “you are sleeping for the boss” and then say fuck the police
don’t say “evening rush-hour” say fuck the police, don’t say
“here are the steps I’ve taken to find work” say fuck the police
don’t say “tall skinny latte” say fuck the police, for
“the earth’s gravitational pull” say fuck the police, for
“make it new” say fuck the police
don’t say “spare change”
say fuck the police, don’t say “happy new year” say fuck the police
perhaps say “rewrite the calendar” but after that, immediately
after that say fuck the police, for “philosopher’s stone” for
“royal wedding” for “the work of transmutation” for “love
of beauty” say fuck the police
say no justice no peace and then say fuck the police*

GELARE KHOSHGOZARAN

Airgrams

1. IN

The U.S. Embassy in Iran used strip-cut paper shredders to reduce paper pages to strips before the embassy was taken over in 1979 (though not entirely successfully). After Colonel Oliver North told Congress that he used a Schleicher Intimus 007S cross-cut model to shred Iran-Contra documents, sales for that company increased nearly 20 percent in 1987.

Anticipating the takeover of the embassy, the Americans attempted to destroy classified documents with a burn furnace. The furnace malfunctioned and the staff was forced to use cheap paper shredders. Skilled carpet weaver women were later employed to reconstruct the documents.

The millions of strips of paper were put back together to create an archive of some 2,970 documents collected, translated, and preserved by the Iranian government, most of which are available for download in PDF format.

2. T

Two responses from the former members of the *Muslim Students Following the Line of the Imam* involved in the occupation of the U.S. Embassy, regarding the reconstruction of Iran-contra documents:

2.1. Hossein Sheykholeslam, former Member of Parliament, Islamic Republic of Iran:

Do you remember the first American (at the embassy) that you talked to?

I don't remember. But I can tell you the most important American figure I talked to was (Thomas L.) Ahern, who was the CIA station chief. Ahern and I used to talk a lot. He was a philosophy teacher. He was in his sixties and he had been a CIA operative in Vietnam for eighteen years. Obviously we learned about all of this later.

How did you find out he was the CIA station chief?

By questioning the other hostages. When you entered the main building (of the embassy) there were separate parts. The people on the first floor were not allowed on the second. Those on the second floor were not allowed to enter the two sections at the end of hall. Those two sections were secured vaults with locks, and no one could enter them. If you entered the building facing north, the middle door on the upper floor would be the ambassador's room. At the end of the hall, on the right, would be the communication vault, another very important section. At the end of the hall on the left was the CIA section.

They kept the documents in both of those two vaults; the CIA kept its own documents and the other sections kept theirs.

The Americans were very alert because it was a revolutionary time in Iran. The Den of Espionage had already been once invaded by the Iranian People's Fedai Guerillas. So the Americans had been sending their less talented agents over, except Ahern who was well experienced and less recognized as a CIA operator, and the CIA had chosen him to go to Iran. Mr. (William J.) Daugherty was in charge of the destruction of the documents. He was not very experienced and did not know much about working with disintegrators.

When he realizes our guys have stormed the embassy he panics, and instead of putting the papers in the disintegrator two or five sheets at a time he stuffs them in piles and causes the machine to jam. Their backup for that disintegrator was a (cross-cut) paper shredder. They also had a rule for

destroying documents. They were supposed to first get rid of the microfilms. Later we found the tiny particles of microfilms. I have a brother who is a physician and he was there at the Den. He worked on the documents. He helped put the strips back together. We found some very significant CIA documents there.

2.2. Reza Seyfollahi, former Chief of Police Force, Islamic Republic of Iran:

How did you come to realize that the shredded documents were salvageable, and who ended up putting them back together?

One of the peculiar memories (of the occupation) is that of the strips. When we found the safes with layers of protection and the vaults where the activities of grinding, shredding and burning documents took place we thought of reconstructing them. Some of the documents like microfilms had been already destroyed. It was obvious that the documents that had been disintegrated were of high confidentiality and it was impossible to reconstruct them. Reconstructing and reviving the documents was the result of the iron will of the students. It was equally possible that because of one wrong decision, they would load the trucks with “garbage” and discard them. However, thankfully in the end, we decided that we would do what we had in our power to reconstruct, at least, parts of these documents.

Once that decision was made it became clear that we needed patient manpower that could read English and commit to working around the clock. The *Students* themselves were a part of that manpower. Others were summoned and selected from among highly talented high school students. How much time, patience, nerve and energy did it take them to reconstruct these papers from the scattered strips based on the tone and quality of paper, page number, font, text size and color; documents that later got translated and published to reveal the nature of the American manipulations in the country's affairs, what strategies they deployed and who was spying for them.

Were you yourself involved in the putting strips back together?

I stopped by there a few times to observe the process and to see if I could offer any help but soon I realized it was a process way beyond my patience and attention span.

Do you remember who did the task?

Like I said, a group of students and a group of (university) students who were members of the (ad hoc) *Committee for the Reconstruction and Preservation of the Documents* assigned by the Committee of the Den of Espionage.

3. I

In 2009 I was admitted into the University of Southern California's MFA program and decided to move to Los Angeles. Since the occupation of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iranian citizens seeking a non-immigrant U.S. visa have to visit a U.S. embassy or consulate in another country for an interview. Once I realized that appointments were not available at any of the U.S. consulates in Istanbul, Ankara, and Dubai, I learned through ApplyAbroad—a Wiki-style forum by and for Iranian students who want to continue their studies abroad—that the U.S. Baku consulate had just started accepting Iranian applicants for student visa interviews. In June—the next available visa appointment I could make in March, 3 months in advance—I traveled to Azerbaijan for an appointment at the U.S. Embassy in Baku.

After briefly studying my application and asking a host of questions the consul concluded he could not approve my visa because 1) my English was too good; 2) my brother was already a doctoral student at USC and lived in the States; and 3) compared to more marketable professions, such as

engineering, there were going to be more work opportunities for an artist in the US than in Iran. Looking at him through the bulletproof glass I thought to myself “after all that I’ve gone through!”...

Iranians, along with citizens of Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, are required to undergo what is referred to as the “administrative process,” “background check,” or “clearance”. Once (and if) the visa gets approved they are given an alphanumeric case number and a web address to check the status of their case. The process is supposed to take a nominal sixty days. Some individuals get cleared overnight, some never do. Other cases take one or two years. As any other “standard security measure” it is a completely arbitrary process. Nobody really knows what the criteria are that determine if the application is accepted, and for how long it will take to be processed. Once “cleared,” they make another appointment at the consulate or embassy where they originally had their interview. They drop off their passports and return in a few days to retrieve the passport, along with the visa. I went back to Baku on August 4, 2009 to pick up my visa.

4. M

In 2011, after finishing my MFA, I was granted the Neely Macomber Travel Award. My original proposal was to travel to Bosnia to conduct research on the embassies of Iran and the U.S. in Sarajevo. At the time I was awarded the travel grant I already had been granted a yearlong extension for my student visa, otherwise referred to as Optional Practical Training (OPT). If I wanted to leave the U.S., I would have to re-apply for a visa; if re-admitted, I would have to redo the “administrative” process; and if I were cleared in time, I could return to the U.S. to work on my project and exhibition.

The risk of getting my visa application rejected was not one that I could afford to take. However, were I to return to Iran, I did not know what persecutions to expect, considering that many of my friends had been persecuted in the aftermath of the post-election uprisings in 2009.

5. US

I had to modify my original research proposal because of the limiting absence of a U.S. embassy in Iran and the restrictions of my student visa in the U.S. I decided to travel instead to Washington D.C. and visit the abandoned former Iranian Embassy there. I used the travel grant to inquire into the status of former Iranian and U.S. embassies and the way that it had affected my own mobility, and consequently my project as an artist.

The main sources by which I gathered empirical information for my project was through visits to D.C., and from what I could recall of Tehran, in addition to research in both English and Persian about the hostage crisis. Unsurprisingly, the Persian and English-language sources were at times incompatible with one another.

Among the pieces that I made for my exhibition in 2012, *The Flirtatious Pirouette of the Artist Around His Subject [sic]*, was a five-volume book entitled *AIRGRAMS*. The books had been selected and printed from the PDF archive of the reconstructed shredded documents. The title of each volume, if placed in order, spells out the name of the cross-cut shredder originally used to destroy the documents. INTIMUS: the innermost, the most secret, the most intimate.

PAGE 3: FR/PHILADELPHIA 11226 S E C R E T

6. ADDITIONAL REPORTING ON B/1-RENSKLEY 11 SEPT MEETING
BEING FORWARDED BY TELEPHONE. REPT REQUIREMENTS FOR G E WIT
B/1 ARRIVED TOO LATE FOR 11 SEPT MEETING AND WILL BE PASSED
ALL NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED 10/1 24 SEPT IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO
B/1'S PLANNED TRAVEL TO EUROPE.

7. FOR HCS: QUERY IF GUMINSKY AVAILABLE 24 SEPT FOR
PLANNED MEETING WITH B/1 AND RENSLEY IN PHILADELPHIA HOTEL
ROOM, STARTING 1202 HOURS

B. FILE: 201-361587. RWV 13 SEP 98 DRW D9G1.

S E C R E T
BT
746

SECRET 151400Z SEP 79 TAF

FR PH/PHILADELPHIA 11927

THREAT.

UNTIL ALMA TURNS TRACE

FR/PHILADELPHIA 11928

END - MANDITREE NIKPOUR
13 SEP 99 121 2001.

SECRET

SECRET 191347Z SEP 79 STAFF
CITE DIRECTOR 216132

TO: FR/PHILADELPHIA INFO TEHRAN

WMINTEL AJAJA FORBES SHEEP

REF: FR/PHILADELPHIA 11926

1. APPROPRIATE REF INFO ON GDBER/A (B/A) LINES TO MADARI (S-M). FOR PRESENT WISH TAKE NO ACTION ON CONTACT WITH B/A FRIEND BUT WE SHOULD REMAIN WILLING LISTEN TO WHAT B/A WILLING PASS ALONG RE S-M. FYI, TEHRAN STATION HAS BEEN IN CONTACT FOR A NUMBER OF MONTHS WITH FOLLOWERS OF S-M WHO HAVE PUT INTO QUESTION KM DIRECT TOUCH WITH S-M. AS YET, BECAUSE OF CURRENT SECURITY AND POLICY PROBLEMS, WE HAVE NOT ESTABLISHED A DIRECT CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH HIM. IN FACT WE ARE NOT COMPLETELY SATISFIED HE ACTUALLY WANTS A DIRECT LINK WITH US. TEHRAN STATION IS MOVING TO DETERMINE THIS.

2. GUMMISKY WILL PLAN TRAVEL PHILADELPHIA FOR REF MEETING ON 21 SEPT VIA METROLINER DEPARTING WASHINGTON 0600 AND ARRIVING PHILADELPHIA AFTER 1800. REQUEST RENSSELY MEET AT 30TH STREET STATION SHORTLY AFTER 1800. REQUEST RENSSELY MEET AT 30TH STREET STATION 10 MINUTES BEFORE 1900. GUMMISKY IS 5'10" TALL, 150 POUNDS, LIGHT BROWN HAIR, WILL BE WEARING A GREY FLAID SUIT.

3. WE TRACKS SHEEP REF.

FILE 201-261387. RUV 18 SEP 79 RUV D9C.1 ALL SECRET.

SECRET 191232Z SEP 79 STAFF

CITE TEHRAN 54251

TO: DIRECTOR.

UNINTEL ORBOLSTE, SOJANUS

REF: DIRECTOR 508529

1. HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ACT ON HQS APPROVAL OF MEETING ZANJANI BECAUSE OF SOJANUS' UNAVAILABILITY. HAVE BEEN CALLING HIM, PER HIS INSTRUCTIONS, AT HOUSE OF HIS FRENCH-SPEAKING FRIEND, BUT HE NEVER THERE WHEN CALLED, AND FRIEND HAS SAID ONLY THAT HE THOUGHT JY13 CONSIDERING A TRIP.

2. AT OUR LAST SESSION, WE GAVE JY13 NUMBER OF STATION DIRECT LINE; HE HAS NOT USED IT.

3. WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS TO REACH JY13, AND WILL ADVISE RESULTS.

4. FILE: 201-1408661 HW4 29 SEP 99 DRW DPC.1. ALL SECRET

SECRET 142152Z AUG 79 STAFF

CITE DIRECTOR 43418Z.

TO: TEHRAN

MINTEL SQUADRON STEELSTER

REF: TEHRAN 30559

1. TEHRAN 52969, 7 MAY 79, REQUESTED TRACES ON SAID FARID WHO IN PUBLISHING BUSINESS IN N.J. DIRECTOR 43621Z, 11 MAY 79, REPORTED THAT ONE MOHAMMED SAID FARID WHO WAS STUDENT AT NYU IN 1965 AND ACTIVE IN TUDEH WAS SUBJECT 201-778091. TEHRAN 53856, 11 MAY 1979, REPORTED BACK THAT FARID WAS SON OF AYATOLLAH ZANJANI KZANJANI. HQS HAS REVIEWED 201-778091 AND RUN TRACES ON AYATOLLAH ZANJANI. RESULTS OF WHICH FOLLOW.

2. SUBJECT 201-778091, MOHAMMED SAID FARID, WAS REPORTED IN JUNE 65 AS PART TIME STUDENT NYU AND ACTIVE IN TUDEH. DPOB: 30 JULY 1936 (OR 1932), ZANJAN, IRAN. EMPLOYED LANA KNITWEAR INC., UPPER MONTCLAIR, N.J. IN 1967. ADDR: 380 UPPER RIVER DRIVE, APT 4H, PASSAIC, N.J. ONT. IN SAID FARID WAS LISTED AS VP IN CHARGE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OF ISA OF THE U.S. (ISAU) AS OF SEPT 1966. PER NITA-15130, 21 JUN 1965, M. SAID FARID, REGISTERED AS PART TIME STUDENT AT NYU, AND FATHER AYATOLLAH SEYED FARID HAVE RECORD OF TUDEH ACTIVITY IN IRAN. STATE DEPT INFO 7 OCT 67 REPORTED MOHAMMED SAID FARID, DPOB AS STATED ABOVE, ARRIVED U.S. 1959, APPLIED FOR PRA DEC 65, EMPLOYED LANA KNITWEAR, RESIDENCE PASSAIC, AS STATED ABOVE. FULL NAME WAS GIVEN AS MOHAMMED SAID FARID ZANJANI. NITA 1521, 15 SEP 67, WHICH REPORTED ON 14TH ANNUAL ISA CONGRESS SEATTLE. MOHAMMED S. FARID AS VP OF SAN (SEIC) AND LEADER OF SEATTLE BRANCH GROUP OF N.Y. CHAPTER WHICH FORMER N.Y. CHAPTER IN PASSAIC.

3. AYATOLLAH HAJ AGHA REZA ZANJANI AKA REZA ZANJANI AKA MULLAH SEYED REZA ZANJANI IS SUBJECT 201-106054, WAS ENCRYPTED IDENIA DOB CIRCA 1925. LONG-TIME AND CLOSE FRIEND OF FORMER TEHRAN ASSET SORDEP1 WHO KEPT STATION ADVISED OF HIS ACTIVITIES. SORDEP1 WAS SOMETIMES RELUCTANT TO CONTACT ZANJANI BECAUSE OF

PAGE 2 DIRECTOR 494965 SECRET ZANJANI RETAINED A WATCH ON HIM (ZANJANI) BY SAVAK. ZANJANI MAINTAINED A SPORADIC WATCH ON HIM (ZANJANI) BY SAVAK. ZANJANI MAINTAINED A WIDE CIRCLE OF CONTACTS THROUGHOUT IRAN INCLUDING THE DISSENT POLITICAL AND PROMINENT NON-MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. ZANJANI INCLUDING THE HAZA IL WAS STRONGLY AND BAKHTIAR BY DR. MOHAMMED HAD BEEN APPOINTED WITH BAKER KAZEMI AND BAKHTIAR BY DR. MOHAMMED MOSADE TO A THREE-MAN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TO OVERSEE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NEW THIRD NATIONAL FRONT WHICH WAS BEING FORMED BY KAZEMI ON MOSADE'S INSTRUCTIONS. NITA-19130, 21 JUNE 1965, REPORTED THAT ON MOSADE'S CONTACT JALAL MAZDI (ENCRYPTED IDEN B, 201-78212) STATION IN NIOM (INTRODUCED STATION OFFICER MADENSKY) TO HIS ENGINEER IN-LAW WHO WAS SON OF AYATOLLAH ZANJANI. BROTHER-IN-LAW BROTHER FARID WAS NAT. U.S. CIT. AND MARRIED TO U.S. C. FOUR S. RAHMAN. STUDIED SETON HALL UNIVERSITY, N.Y. ADDR: 10, BOX 108, CHILDEN, INDIANA, U.S.A. (GENERAL SURGEON) WAS ASSIGNED 201-778292. BRAZIL, INDIANA, U.S.A. (GENERAL SURGEON) WAS ASSIGNED 201-778292. HIS YOUNGER BROTHER WAS 201-778291. TEHRAN 6283, 29 SEP 66, REPORTED WHO WAS ASSIGNED 201-778291. TEHRAN 6283, 29 SEP 66, REPORTED OFFICIALS OF SYRIAN LEGATION TEHRAN WERE IN TOUCH WITH NATIONAL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT (NRM) THRU SEYED REZA ZANJANI. THE PASSING TO SYRIAN MATERIAL RE IRANIAN PUBLIC ATTITUDE ON SUEZ FOR BROADCAST ON RADIO CAIRO.

4. FILE REVIEW DOES NOT SUBSTANTIATE ALLEGATION THAT ZANJANI CLOSURE TO SHARIAT MADANI, BUT OF COURSE NEITHER DOES THIS EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY. SINCE THERE IS APPARENT LANGUAGE INCOMPATIBILITY WITH ZANJANI AND IT COULD BE NECESSARY TO DEAL THROUGH SON FARID, MUKHOMED WOULD DEPEND ON DURATION FARID'S STAY IN TEHRAN AND STATION'S ASSESSMENT HIS SUITABILITY/RELIABILITY. ON BALANCE WAS DISINCLINED PURSUE THIS LEAD.

5. COMMENTS ON OTHER ASPECTS FOLLOW SEPARATELY.

FILES: 201-149066, 201-778291, 201-106654, RW 13AUG69
ALL SECRET.

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

SECRET 061200Z MAY 75 STAFF

CITE TEHRAN 32947 (GLEGOR ACTING)

TO: DIRECTOR

MMINTEL SOVALID ORDOUSTE

REFS: A. TEHRAN-32799

B. DIRECTOR-42223

1. SOVALID1 REPORTED A MAY THAT HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN AN AUDIENCE WITH SHARIATMADARI IN ROOM 50 APRIL. VJI WAS ENTHUSIASTIC OVER RESULTS OF THE SESSION, WHICH WERE CLEARLY BEYOND HIS EXPECTATIONS. WHILE THERE IS SOME THIN INTEL TAKE FROM THE MEETING TIME ATMOSPHERICS ARE MORE INTERESTING THAN THE INFORMATION PASSED. FOLLOWING IS VJI'S ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING.

2. AFTER SHARIATMADARI HAD ACKNOWLEDGED KNOWING VJI'S FATHER AND FAMILY, VJI EXPLAINED HIS PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND SAID THAT HE WAS BRINGING A MESSAGE OF GOOD WISHES TO SHARIATMADARI FROM HIS IRANIAN AND AMERICAN FRIENDS IN THE U.S. VJI SAID SHARIATMADARI WARMED TO THIS, AFTER WHICH VJI SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO ASK SHARIATMADARI A FEW QUESTIONS.

3. SHARIATMADARI'S RESPONSES TO VJI'S QUERIES DID NOT, FOR THE MOST PART, ADD ANYTHING TO WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED IN THE PRESS AND STATE TRAFFIC ABOUT SHARIATMADARI'S POLITICAL POSITIONS. SHARIATMADARI TOLD VJI THAT HE HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED WITH BAZARGAN WHO HE SAID LETS HIMSELF BE USED BY OTHERS. HE DID SAY THAT FROM AMERICAN FRIENDS TO KNOW WHERE HE STOOD ON ISSUES. THEY SHOULD READ TEXT OF THE CABLE HE SENT TO AYATOLLAH SHAYKH MUHAMMAD KHAGANI KHUZESTANI'S TOP CLERGYMAN. IN LATE APRIL WHEN THE LATIER WAS THREATENING TO QUIT IRAN UNLESS WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES WERE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. (STATION TRYING TO LOCATE NEWS STORY ON CABLE AND GET TRANSLATION.) SHARIATMADARI SAID THAT WHILE KHOMENI AND TALEGHANI WERE APPEALING TO KHAGANI NOT TO LEAVE IRAN AND WERE INVITING HIM TO COME TO SOM FOR TALKS, SHARIATMADARI HAD ADVISED KHAGANI NOT TO LEAVE ABADAN AT ALL, EVEN TO GO TO SOM, SINCE THE COUNTRY NEEDED HIM THERE.

PAGE 2 TEHRAN 220415Z APR 68
V/I INQUIRED ABOUT SHARIATNADARI'S VIEW OF DRAFT CON-
STITUTION. SHARIATNADARI SAID HE HAD BEEN SHOWN THE DRAFT DRAFT
ERROR DO ITS PUBLICATION AND HAD BEEN ASKED FOR HIS COMMENTS. H
THEN SMIRKED AND TOLD V/I "WE HAVE ADDED OUR COMMENTS, BUT TO DO
SO WE HAD TO APPEND SEVERAL NEW SHEETS OF PAPER". V/I HAD IM-
PRESSION THAT SHARIATNADARI THOUGHT CONSTITUTION LEFT A LOT TO BE
DESIRED. HE TOLD V/I THAT HE FORESAW THE CONSTITUTION BEING
APPROVED IN ABOUT THREE MONTHS, BUT THAT IT WOULD TAKE SIX OR SEV
MONTHS BEFORE ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD.

5. V/I TOLD C/O THAT SEVERAL TIMES DURING MEETING HE THOUGHT
HE HAD OVERSTAYED HIS WELCOME WITH SHARIATNADARI, BUT THAT TWICE
WHEN HE TRIED TO LEAVE, SHARIATNADARI HAD INSISTED THAT HE NOT
WHEN V/I ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO SEE HIM AGAIN.
SHARIATNADARI RESPONDED "COME ONCE TWICE, AS OFTEN AS YOU LIKE".
V/I SAID OTHERS WAITING TO SEE SHARIATNADARI THOUGHT V/I HAD A
SPECIAL "IN" WITH HIM, AND ASKED HIM ON WAY OUT TO ACT AS INTER-
MEDIARY FOR THEM.

6. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT HOW EARLY V/I WANTED TO SUCCEED IN
THIS ASSIGNMENT AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR EMBELLISHMENT, V/I'S
REPORT IS STILL CONSISTENT WITH RECENT INDICATIONS THAT SHARIAT-
NADARI MAY WANT TO DEVELOP SOME WORKABLE CHANNEL TO THE U.S.G.
(SEPARATE MESSAGE REPORTING SDJANUS/15 PROPOSAL IN THIS REGARD
FOLLOWS.) BELIEVE IT MAY BE WORTHWHILE TO SEND V/I TO COME AGAIN.
ONCE WE DECIDE IF AND HOW TO PURSUE THIS OPERATIONAL POSSIBILITY.

7. FILE# 201-559511. ALL SECRET.
S E C R E T

SECRET 211030Z SEP 79 STAFF

CITE TEHRAN 74249

TO: DIRECTOR

UNINTEL INTEL

1. SDPROBE/1 PROVIDED THESE FRAGMENTS ON 201 3053,7341

A. YAZDI, SABBAGHIAN, CHAMRAN, AND TABATABAI HAVE COMBINED TRY TO IMPROVE THEIR COLLECTIVE POWER POSITION. THEIR INTENTION IS PRESUMABLY TO GUARANTEE THEIR PRESENCE IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THIS COMBINATION HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF RUMOR, BUT THERE IS ALSO SOME DEFINITE EVIDENCE WHICH PARTIALLY CONFIRMS IT. (COMMENT: WE WERE UNABLE TO LEARN WHAT THIS EVIDENCE IS.)

B. TALEQANI MUST IN FACT HAVE BEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH. THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE. (COMMENT: SDPROBE/1 ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD NOT KNOWN, BEFORE TALEQANI'S DEATH, OF HIS PRESIDING OVER THE COUNCIL.)

C. THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE A FAIRLY STABLE MEMBERSHIP, MEETS TWO, OFTEN THREE, TIMES A WEEK AT THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING. (COMMENT: SDPROBE/1'S IMPRESSION OF A STABLE MEMBERSHIP IS BASED, AS FAR AS WE COULD LEARN, ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT SOME WEEKS AGO OF THE ASSIGNMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEMBERS AS MINISTERIAL UNDERSECRETARIES, AND OF THE SIMULTANEOUS ELEVATION OF SEVERAL PEOI MINISTERS TO COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP.)

2. NO FILE, RVN 21SEP99 DRV 09C.1.
SECRET

REPORT CLASS SECRET -- UNINTENTED -- INFORM -- AND CONTRACT

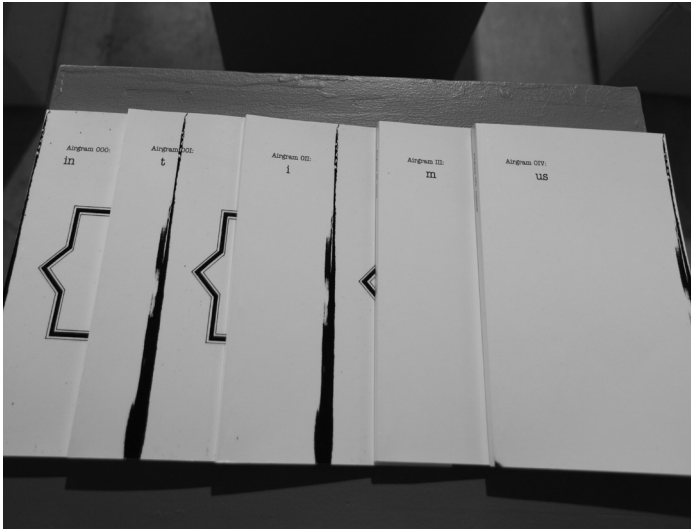
COUNTRY: IRAN
SUBJECT: STATEMENTS OF AYATOLLAH SHARIAT-MADARI ABOUT HIS
INFORMATION TO THE GOVERNMENT ON THE MAHABAD SEIGE, AN
EMIGRE AND INTERNAL OPPOSITION POLITICS (OCTOBER 1979)

SOURCE: A LIBERAL POLITICIAN WITH GOOD CONTACTS IN POLITICAL AND
GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES. HIS REPORTING RELIABILITY HAS NOT
BEEN ESTABLISHED. HE ACQUIRED THE INFORMATION FROM A
SOURCE WITH EXCELLENT ACCESS.

1. AYATOLLAH KAZEM SHAHRIAT-MADARI SAID IN LATE
OCTOBER 1979 THAT HE HAD INTERVENED TO BRING AN END TO THE GOVERNMENT
SEIGE OF MAHABAD IN WEST AZERBAIJAN. HE SAID THAT HE HAD SENT
AN EMISSARY TO INTERIOR MINISTER HASHEM SAHBAQI AND DEMANDING
THAT THE SEIGE BE LIFTED. SHARIAT-MADARI SAID HE HAD INSTRUCTED THE
EMISSARY TO SAY THAT IF THE SEIGE CONTINUED, HE WOULD MOBILIZE
AZERBAIJANI TURKS TO LIFT IT BY FORCE. (SOURCE COMMENT: SHARIAT-
MADARI DID NOT SAY WHEN THE ultimatum HAD BEEN DELIVERED.) (FIELD
COMMENT: SAHBAQI IS ONE OF THREE MEMBERS OF A GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
RECENTLY APPOINTED TO TRY TO DEVISE A SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH
REBELLION. THE TEHRAN TIMES HAS REPORTED THAT THE SEIGE OF MAHABAD
WAS CONTINUING ON 28 OCTOBER, BUT HAD BEEN PARTLY LIFTED ON 24
OCTOBER.)

2. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, SHARIAT-MADARI VIGOROUSLY DENIED ANY
CONNECTION WITH EXILED FORMER PRIME MINISTER SHAHPOUR BAKHTIAR.
HE SAID THAT BAKHTIAR HAD MADE ONE INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT,
BUT THAT THERE IS NO COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THEM. SHARIAT-MADARI
EXPLICITLY DENIED THAT HE HAS MADE OR INTENDS TO MAKE ANY COMMITMENT
TO SUPPORT BAKHTIAR.

3. SHARIAT-MADARI SAID THAT HE IS ADVISING THE MUSLIM PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC PARTY (MPRP) TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION WITH AYATOLLAH
RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI AND THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP. (SOURCE
COMMENT: SHARIAT-MADARI WAS SPEAKING IN THE CONTEXT OF KHOMEINI'S
JENUNCIATION OF THE MRP'S PUBLIC MEETING OF 19 OCTOBER, AT WHICH
THERE WERE CALLS FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF EXPERTS.)
SHARIAT-MADARI PERCEIVES KHOMEINI'S AUTHORITY TO BE DECLINING,
AND THAT HE WILL BECOME POSSIBLE, PERHAPS WITHIN TWO OR
THREE MONTHS. OPPOSITION GROUPS TO NOTICE THEIR CRITICISMS MORE
EASILY.



DON MEE CHOI

Failfail

Pinkbox

지금 막 도착한 핑크박스, 뚜껑이 열리길 기다리는 핑크박스, 이것을 껴안아보면 멀리서 온 것의 냄새가나. 그러나 한번 몸을 들여놓으면 그 누구도 여기를 나가지는 못해. 아아 귀여운 핑크박스. 나의 첫 아기 핑크박스. 까꿍 핑크박스. 요람에 넣고 흔들어보고픈 핑크박스. (참고로 말하지만 하나님은 네모난 것은 만들 줄 몰라.)...

떨어진 핑크박스, 던져진 핑크박스, 찢어진 핑크박스, 차라리 지평선을 끌어안는 게 낫지. 멀리 헤어져 껴안아볼 수도 없어. 더러운 핑크박스, 냄새나는 핑크박스, 구겨진 핑크박스, 흘러내리는 핑크박스, 뭐라고 뭐라고 이름이 적혀 있던 글씨도 이제는 알아보기 못하게 흐려진 핑크박스, 더러운 핑크, 낡은 핑크, 열린 구멍 핑크, 너덜거리는 , 머리칼 늘어진 핑크. 카메라처럼 당신을 담았지만 필름 꺼내지자 아무것도 없는 핑크, 다시는 여기 돌아오지 못하게 해. 겨우 더러운 종이 주체에. 이 박스를 태워버려.

Pinkbox that has just arrived. Pinkbox that waits to be opened. When I embrace the box, it smells of a faraway place. But no one who goes inside can escape. Ah adorable pinkbox. Pinkbox, my first baby. Hello, pinkbox. I want to rock pinkbox in a cradle. (For your information, God doesn't know how to make anything rectangular.)...

Fallen pinkbox. Torn pinkbox, pinkbox cast away, it might be better to grab onto the horizon. Can't embrace it since it has parted far. *Dirty pinkbox, smelly pinkbox, crumpled pinkbox, flowing pinkbox.* Pinkbox covered with faded writing, dirty pink, old pink, open hole pink, flapping, its hair down pink. Like a camera, pink captures you, but there is nothing after the film is taken out. Don't let the box return. It's just dirty paper. Burn this box.

—Kim Hyesoon. from “Pinkbox” in *All the Garbage of the World, Unite!*
(Action Books, 2011)

*

Freely Frayed

I'm not afraid, Free Trade! Kim Hyesoon dressed in pink, from top to bottom, took part in the massive candlelight protests in Seoul, in May and June of 2008. She sounded ecstatic in her emails, telling me about the spontaneous convergences of crowds, picnicking, playing music, dancing, singing against the lifting of the ban on U.S. beef as a pre-condition for the KORUS talks to begin again. This was not only about the safety of mighty U.S. beef, but also the dictatorial policies of the current government designed to appease its elites and the empire's demands. But it's all good, all good for the American shareholders. Even American shit is good, I hear. Tonight we'll line up to buy nutritious food scraps from the American bases. American lard melts then sizzles—we're making potato fritters for Papa's return from Vietnam. Tang Tang, we want Tang! Hey there, KORUS pokus, are you frayed? Pinkbox pinkbox, are you frayed? Hanky yankee, are you frayed?

See You Later Translator

No, I'm not an agitator. It turns out that I'm a mere imitator of the lowly kind, which is none other than a translator, a mimicker of mimetic words in particular. Doubled consonants or certain parts of speech that are repeated on certain occasions, which can be said to be nobody's business, but they are since everything in English is everybody's business. *Farfar swiftswift zealzeal stuffstuff waddlewaddling stickysticky cacklecackled draindrained flowflow yelllyell swishswish*. I've just been instructed to get rid of them by an evaluator, Why double up? No, I'm not a collaborator. I'm actually very frail, frailer than a Thumbelina in the world of everybody's business. In my world of nobody's business I twirl about frantically frequently farfar to the point of failure feigning englishenglish.

Pigspigs

Kim Hyesoon's animals are radical. They are given allegorical roles like the roles many animals have in Korean fables. According to many stories I heard as a child, a hundred-year-old fox can turn into a human or in some cases a fox that devours one hundred humans (some aim for human livers) can transform into a woman. These fox-women often trick children and seduce men in order to consume them. Men often encounter them at night during their travels away from the safety of their villages. The fox-women stand for evil women who are not fit to be dutiful wives, the fear of falling into danger, violence, and ingestion of bodily parts. In Kim Hyesoon's poem "Father is Heavy, What Do I Do?" a woman poet plays the role of a fox and *devour[s] one hundred fathers/ and become a father. And Father became a father because he'd killed father, his father's father.* The margin consumes the center and becomes the center. Kim's rats feast on human babies, adorable white rabbits, and also on one another and become rats again. In "Seoul's Dinner" Seoul is given the functions of ingestion and excretion: *Pigs enter. The pigs oink and suck on Seoul's lips.... Seoul, which is simultaneously a mouth and an anus.* Everything in its landscape enters and exits Seoul. Hence Seoul is always in the flux of becoming itself. In Shohei Imamura's film *Pigs and Battleships* (1961) local thugs, raising pigs for the GIs in Yokosuka where US naval ships are stationed, are eating a cooked pig. The pig had previously consumed the body of a man the thugs had killed and disposed of at the pig farm. So when Imamura says he wanted to show the "power of pigs" by releasing hundreds of pigs into the GI streets of Yokosuka, the pigs become powerful pigs. They fill every alley, crushing everything in their way, and the thugs who have eaten the pigs are pigs, and the women in prostitution who prepare pigs for their Japanese male customers and GIs and eat pigs are also pigs. Yokosuka becomes a pig town. Kim's and Imamura's animals both instruct us how to subvert the order of power.

Hailbail

I think of Kim Hyesoon's poems as being played out on a theatrical stage that has no regards for the conventions of linear narrative time. Her time is radical. There is no before or after hell. Every minute is hell. Every minute piles up like *teeth with teeth, fingernails with fingernails*. Kim's hell is rooted in the Korean shaman narrative, *The Abandoned*, in which a daughter is abandoned for being a daughter—the seventh daughter to be born in a row to a king. Princess Abandoned goes on a journey to the realm of death and returns to her place of origin to save her dying parents, becoming a spirit who guides the dead to another realm. Kim's feminist reading of this narrative is that Princess Abandoned's realm of death is not an oppressed space but a counter-patriarchal one where a woman can redefine herself. In this place, *a woman, the empty darkness, does not follow the logic of ownership*. Princess Abandoned's hell is a black mirror. Kim's hell extends from this *black mirror*, remaining counter-patriarchal, possessing nothing, reflecting and resisting *Mr. Military Officers with black ink*. Hence, *the darkness inside Seoul's intestines is dense*. Forever empty, Kim's miniature stages stack up and shatter with their weight of emptiness the militarized borders. It is August 6, 1945. The time is 8:14 AM. Hair hails down. Hairy hell. In Shohei Imamura's *Black Rain* (1989) time never really moves beyond the time of the Hiroshima atomic bomb explosion because the image of the clock persists throughout the film. This is how we know the black rain is still falling inside the survivors, and this is why translation must also persist like Imamura's clock to remind us of the hell within and outside of the U.S. empire. Oh, wait, let's hail, *teeth with teeth, fingernails with fingernails*.

Failfail

One August, I interpret for a woman at a shelter, downstairs from where I teach. She'd come from South Korea four months ago. She stayed in Los Angeles for two months and when she could no longer pay her \$350 a

month rent, she took a bus up to Seattle and began living on the street. She is not certain if she has ever been arrested. She remembers that she shouted something loud on the street in Los Angeles and was approached by a police officer. She is not certain if that means she was arrested. She is surrounded by people who are given orders to stalk her by someone hiding in the darkness. Whenever she decides to do something, the people who follow orders prevent her from doing what she wants to do. She says they have no basic knowledge of being human. She feels they are capable of doing something harmful. Her parents are deceased and her siblings have their own lives and families. She used to work in factories. She is divorced. She would like to enroll in a school to study ESL. She would like to know if she can really start studying English soon. As a translator I am preoccupied with home—my first home, South Korea—and things that are dislocated from home. For me, translation is a process of perpetual displacement, one set of linguistic signs displaced by another. And this displacement takes place under specific historical conditions, sometimes acting out the orders from the darkness. My translation takes orders from Kim Hyesoon's hell that defies neocolonial orders. The displaced poetic identity persists in its dislocation, translating itself out of the orders of darkness through the translator, another displaced identity. We have no choice but to *failfail*. *Failingfailing*, it's painful becoming a translation, becoming an immigrant. One August, I find the woman in the lunchroom of the shelter. She is very troubled by the people who follow her. She has told them they are worthless beings, yet they don't react at all. She doesn't understand how they could be so indifferent to such a remark. She repeats, "Worthless beings? Worthless beings?" When translation fails, displaced identities easily become worthless beings.

*

So what makes Kim Hyesoon a radical poet? Prior to the early twentieth century, Korean women's poetry existed primarily within the oral tradition. Women were restricted from learning the written language, which was

then classical Chinese, except for Korean script, *hangŭl*, a writing system promulgated in 1446 for women and commoners. The written literary realm was dominated by men and still is. Women poets of the 1920s were able to publish their poetry for the first time, but for many decades—five decades to be exact—Korean women’s poetry was characterized by a language of passivity and contemplation that was predefined by men. It wasn’t till the late 1970s that a women’s poetry energized by feminist consciousness and innovation began to challenge the status quo. Kim Hyesoon first published in 1979 in a prominent journal called *Literature and Intellect*. And her first book of poems, *From Another Star*, was published in 1981. So this is why she is often referred to as a poet of the 80s. She also belongs to the *hangŭl* generation, a generation that was educated in the Korean script. An older generation like my father’s was educated in Japanese and his father’s generation in classical Chinese. Kim, along with poets such as Ch’oe Sŭng-ja and Yi Yŏn-ju (the two other poets I translated in my anthology, *Anxiety of Words*), challenged and resisted the prescribed literary conventions for women.

Sunsusi (pure poetry) and *ch’amyŏsi* (engaged poetry) are the two trends that have dominated modern Korean poetry, and Kim Hyesoon was the first woman poet to receive the *Kim Su-yŏng* and *Midang* poetry awards named after poets who represent the two dominant trends. Radical is not the word Koreans use for Kim Hyesoon. Korean critics (but not all—many still dismiss her poetry) are very well aware that she is radical in her poetic, linguistic innovations, but she is simply referred to as a “modern” poet. And her poetry is not often perceived as political. To be perceived as a political poet you must have been associated with *minjok* or *minjung munhak* (national/people’s literature), which dominated the literary scene during the dictatorship of the 70’s and 80’s. The only organization Kim has belonged to is *Another Culture*, a feminist organization that was primarily responsible for establishing women’s studies in South Korea and for the publication of feminist criticism. So Kim Hyesoon finds it very amusing, when she reads certain reviews written by US critics, that her poetry is perceived as being

political. This is partly due to the way I have framed her poetry. And I will continue to do so because her poetry and translation of her poetry take place within the neocolonial context of South Korea and US. We are always at the risk of becoming worthless beings or radical *failfail*.

—an earlier version of this essay was presented at the 2014 AWP panel
“For Translating Radical Women Poets”

HARRY GILONIS

Ch'iu Chin (1875-1907) and Chinese/revolutionary poetics

The below piece was written to be delivered out loud, at the May 2012 Poetry and Revolution International Conference in London < www.bbk.ac.uk/cprc/events/Poetry_and_Revolution >, and was intended not to be academic (I am neither an academic nor a Sinologist, though I am an historian by training). I thought it best to preserve the flavor of oral delivery, whilst adding some material—particularly the character-based close reading, but also some caveats and qualifiers—which would have been impractical or inappropriate for the occasion. I have also added to the ‘Wade-Giles’ versions of the important Chinese proper nouns some [bracketed] pronunciation glosses, based on the ‘Yale’ system, which was specifically intended to be at least approximately-accurate to the untrained. (I have not made use of the currently in-vogue pinyin; devised by Romanian Sinologists, it is in my opinion only intelligible to Romanian Sinologists.)

I'm here to talk about Chinese poetics, revolutionary Chinese poetics, as exemplified by a Chinese revolutionary poet, an armed rebel against the imperial dynasty. Before I turn to her, however, a little context is necessary.

China unified *before* it was a country. This sounds paradoxical; but is straightforwardly materialist. For reasons to do with the control of irrigation and the prevention of dust-bowls there was a huge geographical-slash-political imperative from very early on towards centralization. China thus centralized early; before 200 BC a dozen or so statelets in the heartlands had fallen under the sway of the self-proclaimed ‘First Emperor’, the terracotta-armed Shih Huang-ti [*pron.* ‘Shr Hwang-di’]. I'm *not* going to zip through the history from Confucius to the Gang of Four; but, at the risk of resurrecting the dread ghost of that great Marxist heresy the ‘Oriental mode of production’, there were good historical reasons why China developed rapidly—and ossified rapidly, too.

Whether static or just very slow-moving, China received a rude awakening after its defeat at the hands of the English in the Opium War of 1841-42, which began with redcoats with rifles and cannon landing on the coast of Chekiang [*pron.* 'Jejyang'] in southeast China—and being opposed by conscript troops armed with swords and spears. A culture which thought of itself as the centre of the world found being on the losing side hard to take. And things got worse for the half-century following, up until the 'Boxer' rising of 1900, which the Ch'ing [*pron.* 'Ching'] court grudgingly supported. The combined forces of Japan and seven European powers, facing a threat to their 'treaty ports' with their immensely lucrative commercial concessions, acted, brutally, to suppress the 'Boxers' and impose punitive penalties on the imperial regime. China appeared so enfeebled that some foreign powers talked openly of partitioning it amongst themselves.

What complicates matters considerably is that at this time China was ruled by a dynasty, the Ch'ing, who were *not* native Han Chinese but Manchus, from—as their name implies—Manchuria, to the north of Korea. The Ch'ing by this point had ruled China for a couple of centuries, and had gone thoroughly 'native', completely adopting, as well as court ceremonial, the reluctance felt by many earlier dynasties to adopt any sort of innovation, however potentially useful.

There were of course attempts at modernisation, and indeed the last legitimate adult ruler, the Kuang-hsü Emperor [*r.* 1875-1908] began in 1898 a range of reforms. However these were, within a 'Hundred Days', brutally counteracted by the Dowager Empress (Tz'e Hsi) who forced him into retirement, and the two principal politicians involved went into exile in Japan—which was presumably happy to offer a haven to people embarrassing to the Chinese state. In essence the weight of historical inertia was heavy, and the situation remained 'desperate, but not serious' until 1911 and the end of the imperial era. The plight of Chinese reformers was difficult; they were influenced by ideas from the

West (from Rousseau to Herbert Spencer), but the West was also an *active* agent of oppression in China. They might in *theory* have looked to the great successful Asiatic power, Meiji-era Japan, still itself in the process of modernizing; but Japan, too, was busy seizing territory and demanding concessions from the enfeebled Ch'ing regime. Even wishing to overthrow the Manchu was a potentially chauvinist if not backward position—why should a *Han* absolute monarch be an improvement on a Manchu one, especially confronting key issues like the abolition of foot-binding and improving women's education? Had there been a political party with a clearly superior political analysis, that might have helped matters; but there wasn't. It is an index of this that even as late as 1919 a politico as astute as Mao saw Marx as a lesser side-kick of Kropotkin. The academic Michael Gasster catches the flavor of the Chinese revolutionary movement well: made up of

dedicated traditionalists, violent anti-traditionalists, [...] secret society members [and] men who were trained abroad; older men and young, bibliophiles and assassins, women on horseback and women [...] who shared and shaped their husband's careers, overseas Chinese who had never seen their homeland and others who never left their ancestral homes, sons of Confucian scholars and sons of peasants, wealthy businessmen and struggling students [...].

—[M. Gasster, *Chinese Intellectuals and the Revolution of 1911...* (Seattle, 1969)]

Our poet-protagonist, Ch'iu Chin [*pron.* 'Chyou Jin'], is situated precisely across several of these dichotomies. She was born where the West first impinged on China, in Chekiang [*pron.* 'Jejyang'], in the town of Shao-hsing [*pron.* 'Shau-sying'], in 1875. It would take a book to characterise her milieu; I will rest content with quoting Marie-Claire Bergère on the Chinese *bourgeoisie*: "a class that was economically dependent, small in numbers, socially heterogenous, and not yet fully differentiated" (*La Bourgeoisie Chinoise et la Révolution de 1911* [Paris, 1968]). It is likely that Ch'iu [to use her family-name] was subjected to a mild form of

foot-binding; she certainly had an arranged marriage. Daughter of a well-educated woman from the 'poetry-mad' south-east where, bizarrely, being a poetess was held to enhance one's dowry-value, she was literate, and encouraged to be so. Here are my (decidedly free) versions of three of those early poems:

azalea allegory

flower-blossom expenditure
cuckoo-cliché springtime
"but you can't *always* live in spring"
there's midnight, the cold, the poor...

begonia allegory

planting an initial kindness
("how the blossoms will vary!")
but *it* needs no sun nor spring
thrives on struggle, cold and dark...

chrysanthemum allegory

mountain: the emperor of ice-cold
add layers - still zero degree
chrysanth arrogant in the face of snow
- the icy glare of those stuck in *alt*

(These are early genre poems, and such politics as they have is only *implicit*.)

Her education had other anomalies; she was taught to ride a horse, fence, and fire a rifle. In 1896 she was married, aged 21, to a younger, more traditional man (Wang Tzu-fang). The marriage was not a success, and the poems coming from this period display dissatisfaction and disappointment. They had two children (in 1897 and 1901); her husband bought a post in the imperial bureaucracy, and in 1903 they moved to Peking. Shortly afterwards he declared his intention of taking a concubine. This emboldened Ch'iu to pursue further her tentative contacts with liberal and literary circles. Her poems are split between detailing her detachment from her husband and celebrating her introduction to this new social and political environment.

red river (written to a tune by General Yüeh Fei)

Capital city!
Bank holiday looming.
Hedged here / gold flowers,
new-broom clean.
Once, strategy toppled empires;
now: fancy eating, far from home.
Miserably forced into femininity
– *inescapably?*

There's no joining
ranked men
but my heart -
ardent as any.
Lifelong I've had guts
to fight for others.
What vulgar man knows my mind?
Heroism is hardship: road's end, rope's end.
Living on this red earth, I know the score.
Filly dress, soaked with tears.

By June 1904 her marriage had collapsed, and Ch'iu passed her children into the care of her mother, pawned what of her jewellery her husband had not purloined, and left China for Tokyo. This was most unusual; China's population was 400 million in 1907, but a mere hundred of these had travelled to Japan as students in 1901, and even though the numbers had gone up to 1,500 by 1904, very few were women. Obviously, those women who did make this enormous leap were characterful, determined, and extraordinary:

poem (in) response

man, you say women aren't heroes?
I kissed the wind, riding 10,000 miles
a sail on the open sea my page
travelling as I'd dreamt under the moon
leaving the statuesque, the ruined, the thorny...
I've sweated blood
wounded by my wounded country
— how can I enjoy *spring airs*?

Ch'iu clearly saw her politics as of a piece. In a letter to her brother, she said that all Chinese were slaves to the Manchu, but she was a slave to her husband. (A friend and fellow-exile in Japan, T'ang Ch'un-ying, became a major activist for women's suffrage in China, as well as the first female member of the T'ung Meng Hui [*discussed immediately below*].) As well as participating in feminist and anti-Manchu activity, Ch'iu joined both the significant revolutionary groups of the moment, the Restoration Society (Kuang-fu hui) and, rather less consequential at the time, Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance (T'ung Meng Hui); their aims—restoration *and* revolution—pointing to the irreconcilably Janus-faced nature of their shared enterprise. However, this activity was not *all* bluster; for example, Ch'iu attended a secret bomb-making workshop—a skill she was to pursue again later. In 1905 she returned to China, and was involved in grass-roots

revolutionary activity in Shanghai and Chekiang. Shortly after her return, Ch'iu had her photograph taken and wrote this on it:

self-portrait

Who is this - dignified, serious, forward-looking?
Brave bones reborn in female form!
What *was* (my generation, my world, my life): fantasy.
The to-come is brilliant and true.
I met the real me late, but passionately;
if I look around, I'm roused to anger.
If someday you meet my friends of yore,
tell them I've already cast aside this trashiness.

Ch'iu was involved in the founding of, and edited and contributed to, the 'Women's Monthly Journal' (*Chung Kuo Nü Pao*) which published two issues before her death. It carried articles on women's education, moral philosophy, and like subjects; Ch'iu translated a piece from the English for one issue, and also produced agitational poetry in a traditionally feminised verse-form, *t'an-tz'u*. This might all look a bit tame, but the Chinese critic Siao-chen Hu said that "female revolutionaries like Ch'iu Chin [...] revived [...] the political potential of *t'an-tz'u* [...] as a means of educating women to think in new ways", that last phrase subsequently glossed as "the new message of nationalism and feminism" (Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Traditional China* [Cambridge, Mass., 2004]). In her prose in the Journal, as well as the traditional *topoi* of writing against the Manchu and against foot-binding, Ch'iu forcefully—and unusually—stressed the need for Chinese women to acquire economic independence, not only so that they would no longer be a 'burden on society', but also to achieve proper independence for themselves. (There are significant selections from this material in Idema & Grant's *The Red Brush*.)

Some prominent reformers and radicals at the time set up private schools, both for the transformative, if long-term, political value of education and also as a front for more immediate radical activities. Ch'iu was involved in setting up, and taught at, a Restoration Society front organization, the Ta-t'ung School [*pron.* 'Da-tung'], in Shao-hsing ['Shau-sying']. (This school is considered by some to have been the main base for the Restoration Society's activities.) Ch'iu recruited amongst the school's military cadets for a 'Restoration Army'; she also made use of her access to junior military officers, and made determined efforts to liaise between them and local, ubiquitous 'secret societies' (mysterious entities which resist traditional sociological mapping, being, paradoxically for 'secret' organizations, very large in scale, but also being neither class-based nor exclusively criminal). In the absence of proper revolutionary parties, the secret societies provided the only ready link between such 'professional' revolutionary groups as there were, radical students, and the broad mass of the peasantry. Ch'iu wrote inspirational songs for her recruits, with titles like *We Envy the Peoples of Europe and America*, clearly modernizing in tone, or the more conventionally anti-Manchu *Song of China Expelling its Demons*. During this busy time she injured her arm in an accident in a new bomb-making workshop, but kept writing poems and revolutionary songs. She is also reputed to have read Byron in English, intriguing reading-material for a poet-adventurer with damaged feet!

In late 1906 the Yang-tse flooded, and the consequent famine hit Chekiang ['Je'yang']. This perhaps led Ch'iu to decide upon a local rising. This was not wholly adventurist; many leftist intellectuals at the time felt that a decisive, dramatic event would dispel the sense of decadence and indecision that seemed to pervade the country. Nor was the enterprise necessarily foolhardy; a coordinated rising was to take place in the inland town of Chin-hua [*pron.* 'Jin-hwa'], and when troops from the provincial capital Hang-chao [*pron.* 'Hang-jau'] had been sent to quell this, then the 'Restoration Army' would march on the undefended city.

In March 1907, some months before the date set for the rising, Ch'iu and her friend Hsü Tzu-hua [*pron.* 'Syu Dz-hwa'] visited a nearby beauty-spot, West Lake. They were ostensibly visiting the tomb of a famous patriot general, Yüeh Fei [*pron.* 'Ywe Fei'], but took the opportunity to put together a map of the approaches to the city of Hang-chao for use in the proposed rising. Hsü asked Ch'iu, nervously, if Ch'iu would like to be buried, should it come to it, by West Lake, near the patriot general's tomb; with which proposal Ch'iu agreed.

The rising had been set for the 19th of July, but prior arrests made in Chin-hua doomed it to failure. When this became known, most of the young Ta-t'ung radicals fled before the Manchu soldiery arrived. The numbers appear not to be clear, but several troops and radical students were killed in the brief gun-battle. Ch'iu surrendered, having previously written her last full-length poem, bemoaning that she had not had the chance to prove herself:

penultimate poem

one shining moment for action – over
heroic heart not called for – regrets!
we lashed the wide ocean to get it to move
lifted blades against heaven, made it our whetstone
but iron horses came through the passes
and the ravens refused to leave the tower...
body, bones, ground, dust, workaday, banal
– can such animal sacrifice benefit the state?

(written on 12 July 1907, the day before Ch'iu's arrest,
3 days before her public execution)

Subjected the next day to what one academic has called 'mild torture', Ch'iu refused to speak. Handed a brush in order that she could sign her pre-prepared confession—a legal protocol of the time—she wrote the first

character of her name, her family-name in the Chinese mode: *Ch'iu* [秋], which means, literally, 'autumn' or 'harvest-time'. She followed it, however, with another six characters, thus composing a standard Chinese poetic line, which can be literally translated as "autumn-rain and -airs bring things sadly to an end".

final monostich

Ch'iu's fall: *autumn airs* come to an end

'Air' [*Feng*, 風] has the sense of both 'song' and 'wind', as in English, but means also 'breath'; this externalised breath-as-song is held to be social rather than individual, and specifically to be able to move hearers. In Chinese, private poems can be *social acts*.

Ch'iu was publicly beheaded at daybreak in a main street in Shao-hsing in the small hours of the morning of the 15th of July 1907, in the height of summer. Her body was buried next to her husband's, who had pre-deceased her; but in the following year, at some risk to herself, Hsü Tzu-hua exhumed it and re-buried it near general Yüeh Fei's tomb, as Ch'iu had wanted; and there she still is.

*

I've included above some loose versions of some of Ch'iu's poetry; there is plenty more, awaiting more professionally-equipped hands and eyes. For the monoglot, there are significant selections in the two *very* substantial anthologies of women's writing from China [see 'further reading' at the end], but there hasn't been a stand-alone English-language publication on Ch'iu or her work since 1917. I hesitate to try and sum up Ch'iu's poetry.

It would, I think, be fair to say that some is *pre-revolutionary* and generic (occasional poems about outings to beauty-spots), whilst some is generically *revolutionary*—sometimes rather extravagantly so (songs to her sword, with which she famously had had herself photographed). There are features of her work which mark it out as very contemporary—particularly the use of neologism, of which I regret I am not competent to speak. However, I suspect many people would assume that the modes in which it is written—fixed-metric and rhyme-schemes (**self-portrait**), traditional modes of allusion (**penultimate poem**), poems written as if set to the same tune as an existing song, a convention by now a good millennium old (**red river**)—would doom her *œuvre* to being outmoded, if well-meaning. Although the new broom of the 1911 revolution was paralleled by a literary fresh start, that, curiously, turns out to have been in part a backwards leap. *Traditional* Chinese poetics, of the sort in which Ch'iu Chin must have been almost the last to be schooled, turns out to be immensely radical; as I've said elsewhere, probably the most radical poetic period before the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets is T'ang dynasty China, well over a thousand years ago. Because this sounds spectacularly contentious, I'm going to give you the argument in a few brief quotations from recognized authorities. Here's an American translator on Classical Chinese:

[I]ts grammatical elements are minimal in the extreme, allowing a remarkable openness and ambiguity that leaves a great deal unstated: prepositions and conjunctions are rarely used, leaving relationships between lines, phrases, ideas, and images unclear; the distinction between singular and plural is only rarely and indirectly made; there are no verb tenses, so temporal location and sequence are vague; very often the subjects, verbs, and objects of verbal action are absent.

[David Hinton, *Classical Chinese Poetry: An Anthology* (New York, 2008)]

And here's a *Chinese* translator, ditto:

Classical Chinese, as it is used in poetry, is syntactically flexible. For example, although [it] has articles and personal pronouns, they are often dispensed with in poetry. This opens up an indeterminate space for readers to enter and re-

enter [...] rather than locking them into some definite perspectival position or guiding them in a certain direction. Then there is the sparseness, if not absence, of connective elements (prepositions and conjunctions), and this lack, aided by the indeterminacy of parts of speech and no tense declensions in verbs, affords [...] readers a unique freedom [...].

—[Wai-Lim Yip, *Chinese Poetry* (Durham, North Carolina, 1997), p. xiii]

I will add, just to establish a useful parallel, another contemporary Chinese critic-translator, writing in this instance on English-language poetry, but aware of local conventions and modes:

[T]he poem is not an object but an activity. Meanings are assembled, processed, and re-created rather than being already given and fixed before reading, or even before writing. And the poetic is precisely the experience of something very active by both poet and reader in the very process of writing and reading.

— [Xie Ming, 'Realising the Unfigurable: Difficulty and Resistance in Translating J.H. Prynne' (*Cambridge Quarterly*, Vol. 41 no. 1, 2012)]

As to how this theoretical construct might display itself in actuality, here's a few lines from a poem of Ch'iu Chin ["In this ugly and dirty world...", <骯髒塵寰> <http://digital.wustl.edu/r/red/browse.html#16>], in the three (traditional) translations I know of:

醉摩挲長劍作龍吟
聲悲咽

醉 tsui [pron. dzwei]: intoxicated, drunk [Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary M.6862]

摩 mó [pron. mwó]: rub; feel with the hand; grope for [M.4541]

挲 sǎ [pron. swó]: to feel; to fondle; to finger [M.5456]

長 cháng [pron. cháng]: long (of space or time); length; forever; always; constantly [M.213]

劍 chièn [pron. jián]: (double-edged) sword [M.849]

作 tsò [pron. dzwò]: to do; to make; to act; to write [M.6780]

龍 lúng [pron. lúng]: dragon; an emblem of inspiration [M.4258]

吟 yín [pron. yín]: to moan; to hum; to sigh; to stutter; to intone [M.7425]

聲 shēng [pron. shēng]: sound; voice; tone; noise [M.5748]

悲 pēi [pron. bēi]: sad; sadness; sorrow; grief; to lament [M.4992]

咽 yān [yān]: throat; or yàn [yàn]: to swallow. to gulp;

or (read yèh) [pron. yè]: to choke (in crying); to swallow; to block up [M.3066]

Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung:

“The wild strokes of their swords / whistled like dragons and sobbed with pain”

Women Poets of China (New York, 1972)

Li-Li Ch'en :

“When drunk, I stroke my sword and hum like a dragon: / my voice chokes with grief”

in Kang-i Sun Chang & Haun Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*
(Stanford, CA, 1999)

Wilt Idema and Beata Grant:

“Tipsy, I stroke my long sword, which cries like a dragon, / its voice stifled by sadness”

The Red Brush: Writing Women of Traditional China
(Cambridge, MA, 2004)

Every aspect of agency is re-cast between these readings. And each is equally valid.

There isn't, alas, time/space to go here into the *minutiae* of literary history, but in 1913 a young Chinese student at Cornell, Hu Shih [pron. 'Hu Shr'], read Pound's 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', saw it as applicable to Chinese poetry, and in 1917 published a manifesto, 'Tentative Proposals for the Improvement of Literature'. As Eliot Weinberger puts it, "Its clarion call for a new writing in the vernacular and a new literature for a new China flowed into the larger currents of the nationalistic, anti-imperial, and iconoclastic May [the] Fourth Movement of 1919. Hu Shih found in America what Ezra Pound had found in China" [Weinberger, *The New Directions Anthology*

of *Classical Chinese Poetry* (New York, 2003)]. Xie Ming fleshes this out, saying that from 1915 to 1935 Chinese poetry went through a “frenzied succession” of Western schools—English Romanticism, Anglo-American Imagism, French Symbolism, as well as attempts to process wholesale Goethe and Rilke...

In a text published while I was writing this, the exiled Chinese poet Yang Lian confirmed that, for his generation, “Our poems [...] completed an aesthetic journey via Ezra Pound’s ‘Imagism’ back to the soul of classical Chinese poetry” [‘Introduction’ to W.N. Herbert & Yang Lian, with Brian Holton and Qin Xiaoyu, *Jade Ladder: Contemporary Chinese Poetry* (Tartet, 2012)]. The necessary journey is, I think, in the other direction; for a start, to abandon all and any fondness for etiolated, pastel, minor-key, passive-voice, dreamy, impressionist, wishy-washy sub-*Chinoiserie*. It is perhaps only now, with more radical models for translation and original writing, not to speak of the fusion of the two, that we might be able to build on Chinese revolutionary poetics with a revolutionary poetics of our own. (I’ve made a tentative stab at this with my books *eye-blink*, which is available from Veer Books in London, reachable c/o Birkbeck College; *Wheel River Poems*, forthcoming from Contraband in Guildford, Surrey; and a chapbook available *gratis*, while stocks last, from ‘Free Poetry’ in Boise, Idaho. The first and last of these contain further discussion—necessarily brief—of radical Chinese poetics in their front-matter.)

Wai-lim Yip is adamant about the necessity for this move:

“When William Carlos Williams writes ‘unless there is / a new mind there cannot be a new / line’, he also means ‘unless there is / a new line / there cannot be a new / mind’. Until we disarm the tyrannical framing functions of the English language, the natural self in its fullest sentence cannot be released to maximum expressivity.” (‘Preface’ to *Chinese Poetry*)

Forward with the new line!

what I read/some stuff I didn't (further reading...)

The Cambridge History of China, Volume 11: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, part 2,
ed John K. Fairbank & Kwang-Ching Liu (Cambridge: CUP, 1980)

ed Kang-i Sun Chang & Haun Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China* (Stanford, CA, 1999)

Amy D. Dooling and Kristina M. Torgeson, eds, *Writing Women in Modern China. An Anthology of Women's Literature from the Early Twentieth Century* (New York, 1998)

Michael Gasster: *Chinese intellectuals and the revolution of 1911: the birth of modern Chinese radicalism* (Seattle and London, [c. 1969])

Lionel Giles: *Ch'iu Chin a Chinese Heroine* (London: East & West Ltd, 1917)
(rp. in *Nine Dragon Screen, being Reprints of Nine Addresses and Papers Presented to the China Society 1909-1945*. London: The China Society, 1965)

Lionel Giles: 'The Life of Ch'iu Chin', *T'oung Pao*, second Series, Vol. 14, no. 2 (1913).

Yan Haiping, *Chinese Writers and the Feminist Imagination, 1905-1948* Abingdon: Routledge, 2006. Ch. 2, "Qiu Jin and Her Imaginary," pp. 33-68.

F. Hong & J.A. Mangan, 'A Martyr for Modernity: Qiu Jin, Feminist, Warrior and Revolutionary', in *The International journal of the history of sport*, Vol. 18, no. 1, 2001

Wilt Idema & Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Traditional China* (Cambridge, MA, 2004)

Lee Gong-Way: 'Critiques of Ch'iu Chin: A Radical Feminist and National Revolutionary (1875-1907)' in *Chinese Culture* Vol 32 no. 2 (1991)

Dorothea A.L. Martin, 'Qiu Jin: A Female Knight-Errant, A True Woman Warrior Introduction' in *Chinese studies in history* Vol. 34, no. 2 (winter 2000)
Ono Kazuko [tr. Kathryn Bernhardt et al.; ed. Joshua A. Fogel]: *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950* (Stanford, Calif., 1989)

Mary Backus Rankin: *Early Chinese revolutionaries: radical intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971)

Mary Backus Rankin: 'The Emergence of Women at the End of the Ch'ing: The Case of Ch'iu Chin' in Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke (eds) *Women in Chinese Society* (Stanford, Calif., 1975)

Stuart R. Schram, 'Some Recent Studies of Revolutionary Movements in China in the Early Twentieth Century' in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1972) - a bibliographical overview; source and translator of my quotation from Marie-Claire Bergère.

Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), pp. 50-60 (populist but very good)

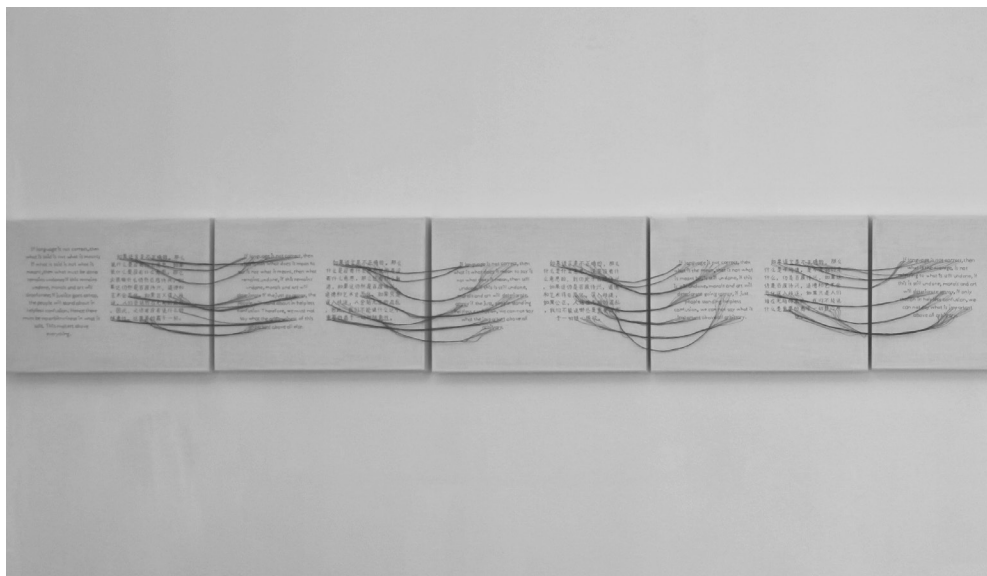
Tao Cheng-chang, *The Life of Chiu Chin* [tr. Lionel Giles] (Leiden, 1913)

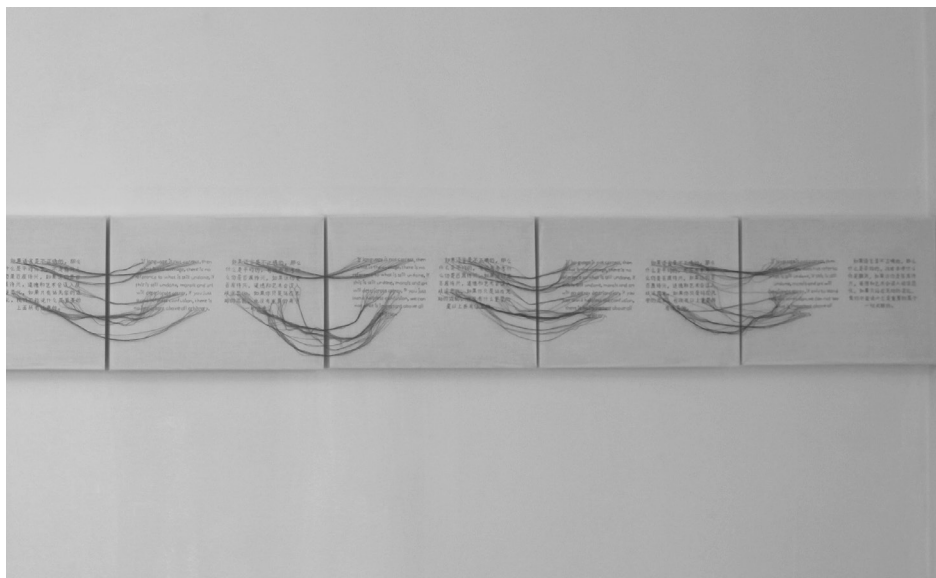
Lingzhen Wang, *Personal Matters: Women's Autobiographical Practice in Twentieth Century China* (Stanford, Calif., 2004) - see Ch. 1, "Woman, Writer, Martyr: Qiu Jin's Life and Autobiographical Work at the End of the Qing Dynasty".

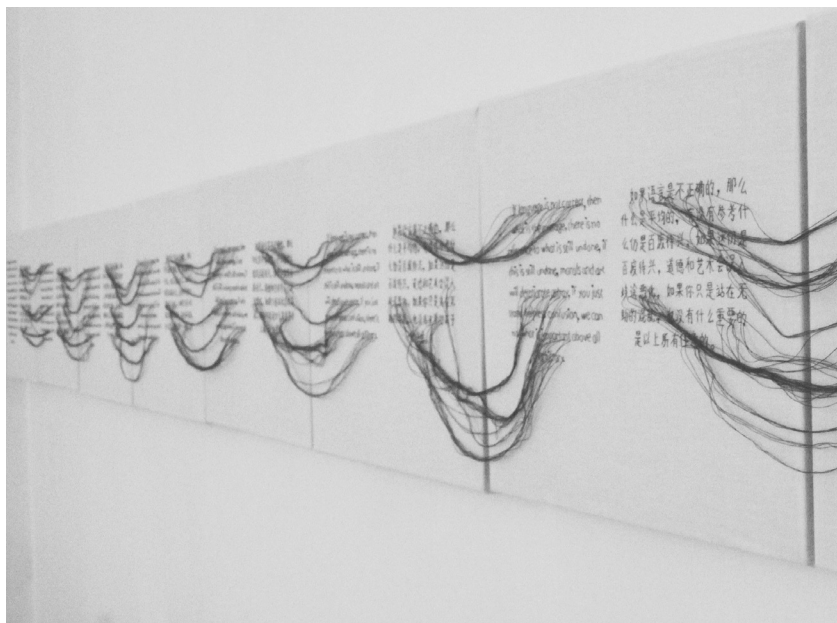
Mary Clabaugh Wright (ed.) : *China in revolution: the first phase, 1900-1913* (New Haven and London, 1968)

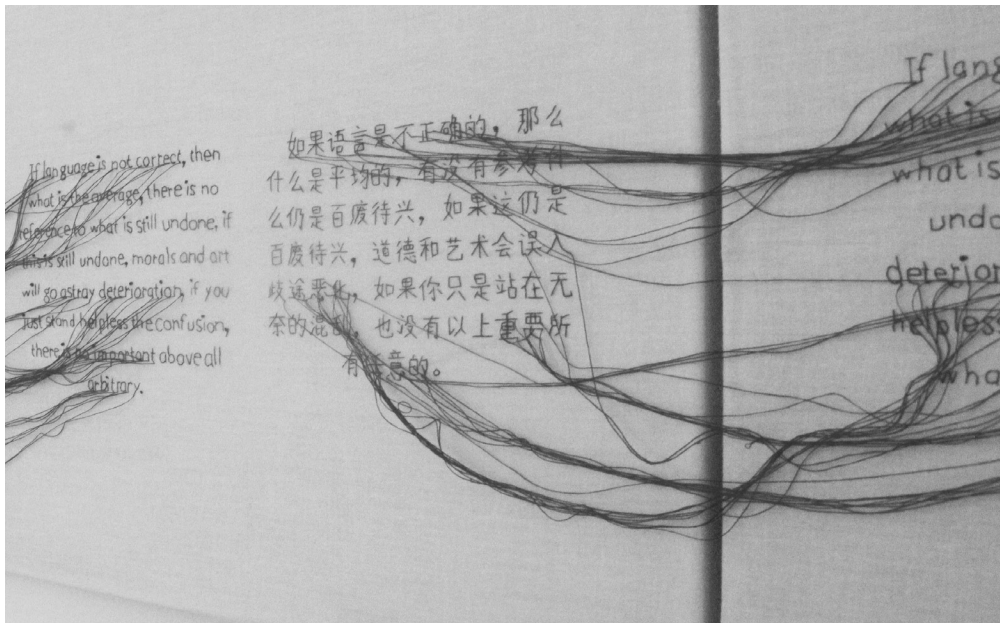
JESSICA TANG

Google Translate: Confucius Says
Embroidered fabric on canvas. 2013.









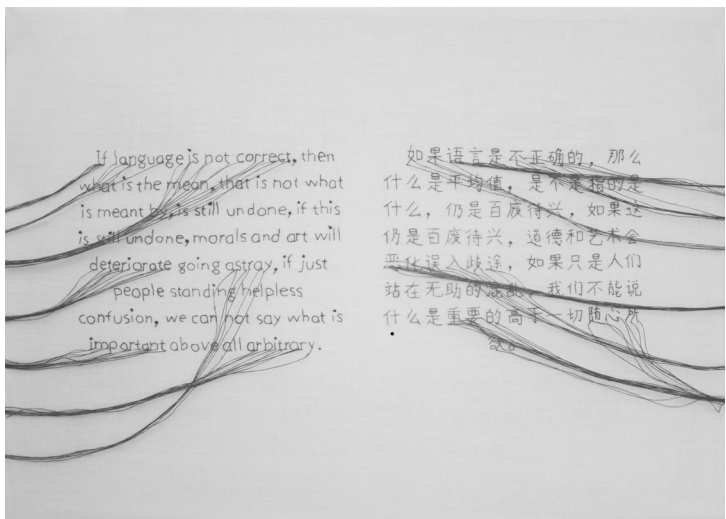
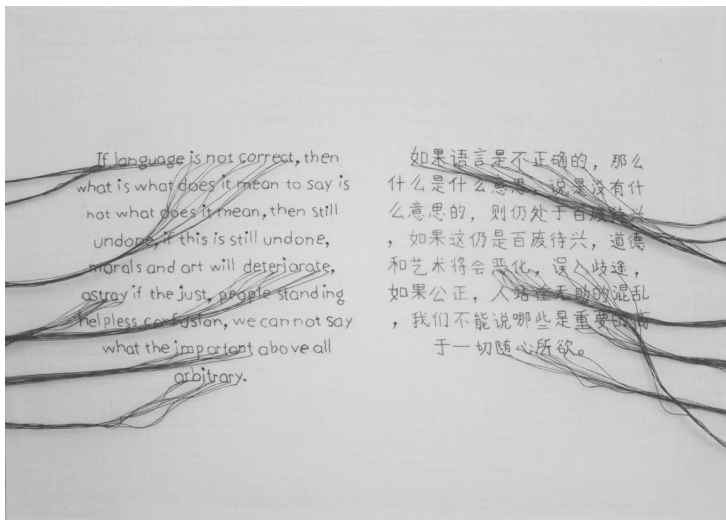
如果语言是不正确的，那么
什么是平均的，有没有参考什
么仍是百废待兴，如果这仍是
百废待兴，道德和艺术会误入
歧途恶化，如果你只是站在无
奈的混乱，也没有以上重要所
有注意的。

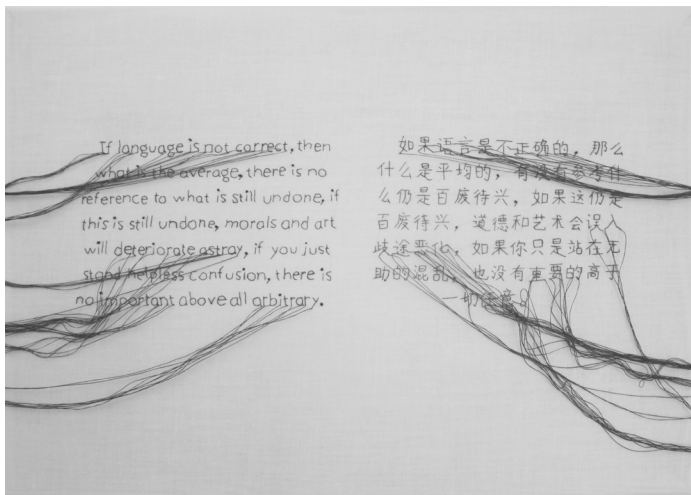
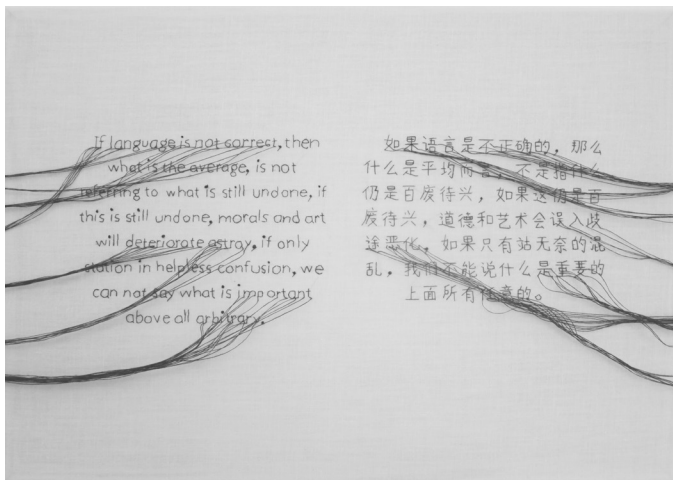
If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what must be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.

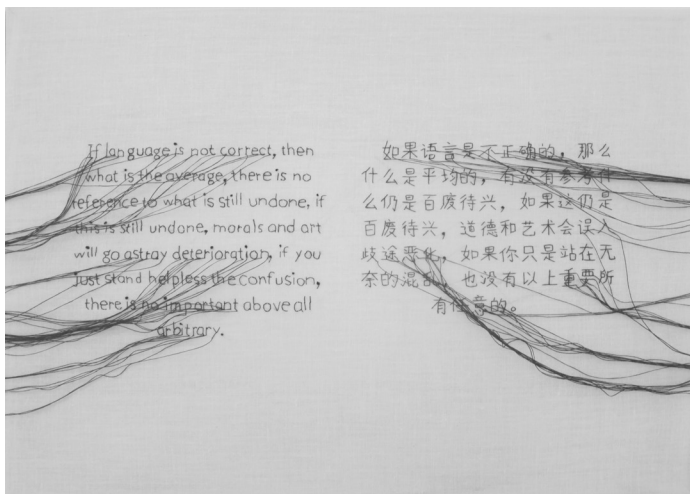
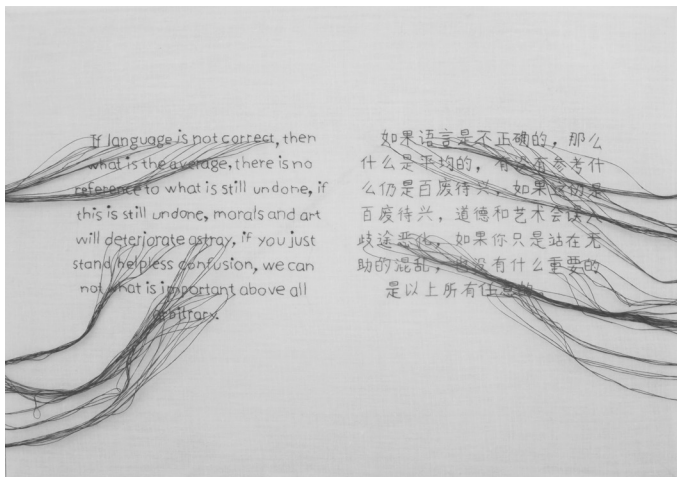
如果语言是不正确的，那么说什么是没有什么意思，如果说什么是没有什么意思，那么必须做什么仍然百废待兴，如果这仍然是百废待兴，道德和艺术会恶化，如果正义误入歧途，人们会站约在无助的混乱。因此，必须有没有说什么的随意性。这重要的高于一切。

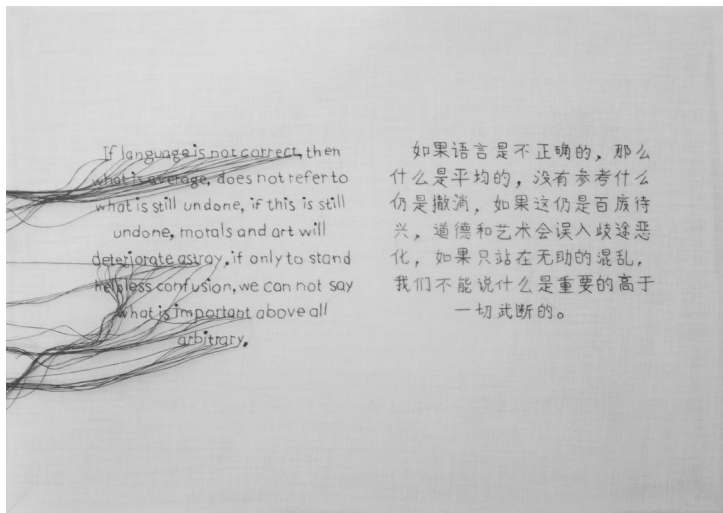
If language is not correct, then what is not what does it mean to say is not what it meant, then what remains undone, if this remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate if the just go astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion Therefore, we must not say what the arbitrariness of this important above all else.

如果语言是不正确的，那么什么是没有什么意思说的是没有什么意思，那么还有什么撤消，如果这仍然是百废待兴，道德和艺术会恶化，如果只是误入歧途，人会站无亲的混乱，因此，我们不能说什么这个重要的高于一切的随意性。









If language is not correct, then
what is average, does not refer to
what is still undone, if this is still
undone, morals and art will
deteriorate as they stray, if only to stand
helpless in confusion, we can not say
what is important above all
arbitrary.

如果语言是不正确的，那么
什么是平均的，没有参考什么
仍是撤消，如果这仍是百废待
兴，道德和艺术会误入歧途恶
化，如果只站在无助的混乱，
我们不能说什么是重要的高于
一切武断的。

METTE MOESTRUP

Love and Mathematics

I drank jasmine tea one January morning in 2004.
I was thrown for a loop and 34 winters.
I felt I was speaking in numbers.
One voice inside me tried to recall an approximately 500-year-old
Korean love poem by Hwang Chin-I (1506-1544),
while a second voice tried to make sense of § 1,1
in the Act to amend the Aliens Act of December 27, 2003.
The first voice asked: What does Hwang Chin-I have to do with § 1,1?
The difference is enormous, said the second,
like that between love and mathematics. Hmm, said the first voice
and whispered *I divided a long January night in two
and laid the one half under the rug*. But the second
called the Ministry of Integration at 33923380,
and an employee, let's call her Alice Mortensen, said that § 1,1
was a "relaxation" of the affiliation requirement for all those above 28
possessing citizenship from birth (and in Denmark *I* was born in 1969).
The rug is *flowery and aromatic as a spring breeze*, but how does the next verse go?
whispered the first voice. But why is there an age limit of 6 years
for children adopted outside Denmark in § 1,1? the second
asked Alice Mortensen, who said that the act treated adopted children from 0-6
years
the same as persons with Danish citizenship from birth (for ex., from 1969)
with regards to residency permits and family reunification. Something about a half,
the beloved and the rug ... *and when he arrives I fold the one half out
inch by inch to prolong the night*, the first voice whispered, and the second
politely said goodbye to Alice Mortensen and read a passage in appendix 21:

*the younger the foreign adopted child is when arriving in Denmark,
the less affiliation with and memory of the child's land of origin the
child will be considered to have.*

Well! So maybe that's why children adopted after they are 6
are included in the "relaxation" of the affiliation requirement not when they turn
28,

but first, as I understand it, when they turn 34.

$28 + 6 = 34$!

—that's absurd mathematics! shouted the second
and the first voice whispered the nearly 500-year-old
poem by Hwang Chin-I (1506-1544)

I divided

*a long January night in two
and laid the one half under the rug,
flowery and aromatic as a spring breeze.
And when he arrives I fold the one half out,
inch by inch, to prolong the night.*

See, now that's mild mathematics, sighed the second,
and squirmed and shouted: How incredibly absurd! Hwang Chin—I was 38
when she died, so if ... if she had been adopted as a 6-year-old
and loved an un-Danish, a Korean man for example, the spring night according to §
1, 1

was shortened to ... a fucking 4 years!

Shh. What does Hwang Chin-I have to do with § 1, 1?
said the first voice.

Oh, nothing, the second sighed, but there is something wrong with § 1, 1.
To adopt means to choose, and it's not the child's choice, no matter if its age is 0 or 7.
Don't go whispering about the fragrance of a flowery rug. Yell no to the age limit!
NOW!

But I would rather whisper about jasmine and *love*, whispered the first voice,
and the second shouted: *love* is spelled the same way as *laws* in Danish,
and § 1,1

is an example of ill-concealed *love-love*! (And the clock struck 12.)

In other words a law of love, the second continued, just like the 24-years-old regulation, and the first voice whispered 3 times: Shh, shh, shh, as the clock bonged 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
= 24.

Is that supposed to be a sum?

No.

It didn't add up.

Sorry. I was dizzy with
love.

And the jasmine tea had turned so bitter and cold,
which, I said to myself, I would never be.
It wasn't too late, it's never too late
to put a beautiful dress on
and go to a party at midnight.

After Having Dreamt of Manna and Napalm

The catalog of all
 religions' flora, a dream.
The photographs, the source criticism,
 the comparative note system.
The overwhelming, all-encompassing,
 thoroughness of it.
War as day residue.
 The image of manna
as light green elm fruit,
 an unconscious error.
A night of rain.
 The cry "what is that?"
the next morning.
 Some delicate, dandruff-like
thing, something dainty.
 Like swollen hoarfrost,
pea-sized coriander seed.
 Mount Sinai's red dust.
Feces proportional
 to the number of pilgrims.
And later, the oasis – mint tea,
 cardboard, goat's milk, etc.
A desert that
 suggests its own name.
A desert that virginally
 consumes land.
It could very well be.
 Manna that melts
in your mouth. Manna that melts

when the sun is scorching.
A rain of fire.
Sticky jelly as link
between manna and napalm?
Napalm that clings
and burns. Napalm that melts the
mouth. Multicolored
matter. Corpses
with unusual injuries,
clothing intact. Categorical
denials, admissions
with qualifications. Not napalm,
but Mark-77. Not polystyrene
and gasoline, but polystyrene
and petroleum. The difference
less than the similarity. Between
napalm and manna: no similarity.
The difference between sticky
jelly and sticky jelly. Not
coherence: collapse.
The incidental
with faith and war. The good
working relationship. The clothing intact.
Grab your coat on your way out. I dreamt
I grabbed my coat on my way out.
I dreamt it continued, no comparison,
as white phosphorus
dissolves fat and burns.
As long as there is oxygen.

JÈSSICA PUJOL DURAN

Translating Lisa Robertson: an interview

The following interview took place in February 2013, as I was translating Lisa Robertson's *The Weather* into Catalan. I first met Robertson in October 2012 in London, when she was a Visiting Fellow at Queen Mary University. I had been reading her work with enthusiasm and began to translate *The Weather*, but chatting with Lisa over coffee helped me to understand the extent of her compositional polysemy in the book. We had an interesting and suggestive talk and her thoughtful email responses to my further questions are something I wanted to share.

JP:

While talking about your poetry with Carmelo Militano you asserted that “any reading, any interpretation, adds its particular life or grain to the movement.” You were referring to the sensual movement of language in a poem, which does not determine a field of meaning but opens up a complexity of conceptual and historical textual interpretation. Translating *The Weather* (2001) into Catalan I might have contributed to that movement, although my reading/writing has been probably tainted by contextual interpretation. Do you think this contextual conveyance also adds to the movement of the poem?

LR:

I can't think of interpretation as a tainting but as a necessary and living addition, which does add to the poem's movement, yes. In a sense it initiates the poem's movement. The poem is nothing if it has no reader, no interpreter. For me one of the pleasures, and reasons, for publishing a text has to do with its exit from my own determination and intention, and its entry into the fields of always unknowable agencies and intensities of others, of readers. These agencies would include translation, or even the most fleeting reading, appropriation, rebuttal. The subjectivity of a text becomes social subjectivity.

JP:

No matter how immersed one is in the culture of origin a 'faithful' translation can always have 'unfaithful' transferences. To what extent is a translated poem a 'creator of experience' in its readers rather than a 'record' or 'copy' of that original text? Do we live in 'the golden age of untranslatability'? Is that a good thing?

LR:

I think that the fidelity of translation doesn't necessarily have to do with representation or mimesis. I'm interested in Henri Meschonnic's insistence on the meaningful vitality of rhythm as a motivator of translation. For Meschonnic, rhythm doesn't mean measure, beat, it means the living transmission of the historicity and subjectivity which speak language, which speak across languages. I think texts are translatable, where we don't view translation as being a measurable transfer of signification, but as a living distribution of semantic intensities.

JP:

In *Nilling* (2012), you wrote that "the codex acts out an inaccessibility, the failure of transparency, and it figures this inaccessibility not only as a generative aesthetics, but also as the motive agency of perception, where perception disperses identity in a movement towards unknowing." Does this inaccessibility test the generative aesthetics of translating? Would a good translator be the one who could transfer that dispersion?

LR:

I feel the need to reject the judgement "good". Maybe a disobedient translation could be more important than a good translation. The text is not a law to be obeyed and transferred in its unchanged entirety. The text is a circulation of intensities. In that sense, yes, the transfer of a dispersal would be an energetic way of thinking about what translation enacts.

JP:

Language, like weather, is geographically produced. Is the language of *The Weather* related to living in the UK? To what extent was the writing affected by the time you spent researching in Cambridge and your readings there?

LR:

The writing was entirely affected by my time in Cambridge. I had no conception of this project until after I arrived there. I tend to refer to *The Weather* as a site-specific project, in the sense that Robert Smithson's work was site-specific. The specificity of my own foreignness within English, and Cambridge culture, and my access to the rare books collection, to social conventions of conversation, as well as to specific conversations—with Jeremy Prynne, with Drew Milne, with Geoff Gilbert, with Denise Riley, with Keston Sutherland, with Andrea Brady and others—made it possible, and desirable, to do this research.

JP:

You talk about “beds of chalk”, a distinguished trait in the geological formation of this island. Do you think you soaked up the British ‘geographical weather’ in your poems?

LR:

I was soaked in texts. My site was the archive. Maybe the archive stood in for the island. The beds of chalk are specifically those noted in William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*.

JP:

For Catalans the weather is *el temps*, which, literally, means ‘the time’. Time like cirrus is in constant permutation. In the poem “Tuesday,” particularly, the caesura establishes the rhythm: short lines that are dense and imaginative; was your aim to capture ‘the time’?

LR:

Time is always a problem in writing, in the positive sense of the term problem. Language IS time. Language and weather have this in common. A structural fixing of either can only be provisional, metaphoric. I think my feeling was more towards composing time than capturing it. I was interested by the scientific paradigm called 'toy weathers'. In toy weathers a small-scale, provisional model of temporality is set into motion, in order to observe patterns of determination and indetermination or swerve.

JP:

"Our skies are inventions, durations, discoveries, quotas, forgeries, fine and grand." Space is paramount, the structure in which the weather moves. How did you arrive at that structure?

LR:

I was reading the meteorologist Luke Howard's descriptions of cloud formations, as well as the painter John Constable's written descriptions, on the back of his oil sketches of skies. I noticed that the descriptions performed real time enactments of the transitory time of skies. Writing was then (the early 19th C) the only time-based representational medium. Description took place in the real time of observation. The elliptic, prolix rhetoric of that description became my stylistic model.

JP:

In Catalonia there is an obsession with the weather. On the news they spend lots of time explaining the particular manifestation of today's weather and the scientific rationale behind it. We are weather-educated; to the extent that words like atmospheric pressure, cumulonimbus clouds, and wind names, are parts of everyday speech. Meteorology is a science that is known, perhaps one of the few scientific specialisations that approach the everyday. Do you think that your poetry wishes to approach the quotidian in a similar manner?

LR:

That's a good way to think of it. The sequestering of specialized languages is an unreal flattening of the complexity of the quotidian. The everyday life of language and communities is already maximally complex. Everything is incipient there. That's where I want to be working, paying attention.

JP:

Following on from that question, is there an element of community in your poetry that is associated with that process?

LR:

Definitely. Language is thoroughly communal, historical. Writing for me is the work of discovering and inventing formal tactics that can frame or annotate this communal nature, this collective subjectivity, in passing.

JP:

By translating your poems I feel I comment upon the weather with you, though we could be looking at very different shades of that big cumulus. Does translation necessitate intimacy? Can you comment on how you see translation working in this direction?

LR:

I think that you are right—translation is a work of intimacy. The writer and the translator are sharing a time experience. In other contexts this might be called love. In this sense, translation is a completely necessary historical process, a political work. Could we imagine translation as the opposite of war?

LISA ROBERTSON

from El temps

Diumenge

Aquí. Pels volts d'aquí. En aquesta terra. Les coercions són subtils. Potser ennegrides i brillants, arrugades. Un cel marbrejat de fracassos. Una revisió estampada. I va arribar aquí a la una en punt. I va arribar calat fins als ossos. I en aquest indret també hi ha cases, aquí i allà. I sort, també, quan passa. I aquí va experimentar els beneficis. I aquí es van repetir els vestigis. I aquí va adquirir un coneixement genuí. I aquí es va endinsar en allò salvatge. I en aquest indret, també. I va arribar aquí a les dues en punt. Aquí, on sols hi ha terra. Sobre un llit de guix. Aquí on cau l'aigua fresca. Hi ha grups d'arbres majestuosos. Diccions del dèficit. Potser enuig. Aquí va arribar a una conclusió. S'ha fet tot aquí. Tots els sistemes s'han estripat o s'han pansit. La superfície és discontinua. A tot arreu inclinem el cap, dividint i limitant. Va venir a treballar aquí, dividint i limitant. Va venir a esmorzar aquí. Va venir a dormir aquí. Aquí un raig de llum, allà un raig de foscor. Aquí i allà una casa. Aquí hi ha totes les causes. Potser una pell reversible. Aquí hi ha granges i cases pairals i mines i boscos i boscanyes i cases i carrers. Aquí hi ha turons i fondalades. Aquí hi ha turons, fondalades, aigua, prats,

boscós. De rengle en rengle, el revolt i la sort. Aquí hi ha nous recintes. El guix i la sorra. Aquí n'hi ha dues. Aquí, de llengües. Aquí sigues anònim. Aquí s'ha produït malbaratament. Aquí hi ha hagut feina. Aquí tanquem el dia. Aquí, al límit. Aquí hi ha una conca. Un canal. Una església. Aquí hi ha una església. Aquí hi ha una marga enfonsada en el guix. Aquí hi ha un turó. Aquí hi ha una casa. Aquí hi ha un sistema. Li brolla el temps per la boca. El dissenyem en un obrir i tancar d'ulls. Aquí hi ha la seva desolació. Per aquí creua. Aquí, finalment, cau. Aquí obté plena satisfacció. Aquí sobre les restes que encara es poden veure. La primera. Potser aquesta mirada. Aquí, esperant. Aquí va creuar. Aquí, a prop. S'abandonen algunes causes. Aquí, llavors. Aquí eren un conjunt. Aquí n'eren dos o tres. Tan exquisidament alternatives. Aquí hi haurà un intercanvi de causa i efecte. Aquí, com a tot arreu. En aquest indret tranquil. Aquí, Pete. Delicades articulacions de metacrilat. Girant i passant de llarg. Amunt, per aquí. Aquí va menjar. Aquí va venir. Va arribar aquí passades les desviacions. Va arribar aquí a les nou en punt. Va arribar per quedar-se. Potser estàvem espantats. I llavors va tornar. Aquí tota l'estona parlem des de la memòria. Quan passa. Des d'un eix. Sense conclusivitat. Va parar aquí i allà. Esforçant-se. Aquí s'ha mencionat. De fet, aquí no. Potser vam refutar teories. És un bonic llit de terra. És per tot arreu. És impossible no recordar. Era aquí. Cap a l'oest. Cap a una zona letàrgica. Cap al preciós fris de la classe lírica. Cap al fris de l'organisme que està per fer. Cap a la modernitat. Potser a l'ombra. Aquí no hi ha grans coses. Aquí no se'ls tracta durament. La gent ha de ser feliç.

S'hi viu tan bé aquí. Potser hi ha alguna decaiguda. Alguns gaudim de la seva bellesa ordinària i a voltes accidental. Brollen rierols aquí i allà. Les corrents divideixen, limiten, fracturen i creen lligams o núvols. Encara hi ha alguns indrets aquí i allà. Aquí estancats. Per aquí tots els llocs són així. Aquí la cosa no està acabada. La cosa no es detindrà. Allà passa com aquí que corrents, divisions, límits, fractures, lligams, giren, passen de llarg i també romanen. L'hora arriba al seu punt àlgid. Allà, essent aquí, hi ha una espècie de fondalada. Aquí ha plogut. Potser de forma incisiva i amb esllavissades. Aquí hi ha una llei, lànguida i laxa. Aquests són el tema de conversa. Aquí han començat a confiar-se. Passant de llarg i romanent i esperant. Ha sigut una temporada trista per aquesta terra, tot i que hi ha hagut una luxúria selectiva. Els arbres són gairebé tan grans aquí. Dues branques es troben. Molt poques vegades per aquí. Aquí, sobre un llit de guix. Va arribar cap a les tres en punt. L'atmosfera estava alterada. Quina cosa tan preciosa.

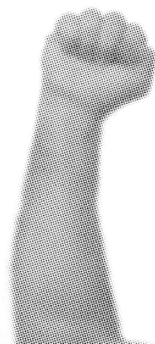
ALI DADGAR

Radiant States: Reflections on Solidarity

“Radiant States” centers around the arm raised in protest as perhaps the most iconic image of solidarity. Searching online images, I started to focus on this powerful, yet vulnerable gesture across different cities, including Cairo, Oakland, Tehran, and Damascus, where protesters disseminated their own footage. In isolating, extracting, and processing these upraised arms, I want viewers of my work to feel in the pixelization of the image its deterioration, its falling apart, its loss of color and density. This deterioration is, for me, a radiancy.



Beijing, 2011



Berkeley, 2011



Cairo, 2011



Gaza, 2011



New York, 2011



Oakland, 2011



Oakland, 2011



San Francisco, 2011



Syria, 2011



Tehran, 2010



Tehran, 2009



Berkeley, 2011

JULES BOYKOFF
Calling Tonya Harding

O Canada!

those cops
are so nice
to each other

hitherto mythical five-ring circus

Haymarket value
another guano economy

ranch-style homes always already

all luge-like and lovely

a glossary of twitches and blinks

O Canada!

Our home and native land.

Tell the truth, but

the illusion of exemption

metronomic regularity

a real triple-axle asshole

“Those who believe
in capital punishment
should be shot.”

Jacques Rogge is a yachting champion

Stalin was from Georgia

That’s why we call them “flood lights”

Feeling kinda Teleprompted tonight

Walk the proud land, my friend.

L’équipe Olympique des États-Unis — that’s when I got my first clue

We learned about
our heritage
industry sources
say *We stand*
on guard for thee.

Like trying to prove something that didn’t happen.

Dimitrios Vikelas was from Greece
(Baron) Pierre de Coubertin was from France
Henri de Baillet-Latour was from Belgium
J. Sigfrid Edström was from Sweden
Avery Brundage was from the United States
Michael Morris (aka Lord Killanin of Dublin and Spittal) was from Ireland
Juan Antonio Samaranch is from Spain
(Count) Jacques Rogge is from Belgium

Sabe lo que digo, amigo?

boom bust bwoy bwoy doing geometry

I asked my doctor to prescribe me a placebo.

O Tonya Harding!

silence more startling than noise

remember when
we called them
durable goods?

adversarial or symbiotic?

“You’re either with us or you’re with the Kerrigans.”

Get out the hammer! Sharpen up the sickle!

Festooned and perishable Crash coursing, veins on display

So, Harper can do it, but Harding can’t?

C’est un peu agaçante, mais oui, mais oui.

Because
there are
all kinds
of laws
to choose from
you know

ARASH ALLAHVERDI

Decay

I am turning into an onion, sweetie!

This is clear.

I am sorry

that my feet, my socks, my pants and my shoes are getting sucked into my bottom.

I am so sorry.

I liked those socks very much, especially those wool knee-high socks I
bought last year with Ati at Haft-e Tir Square

I'm sorry

time has no doubt come

for my hands and my face

I'm proudly turning into a big fat onion

a fistful of beautiful concentric circles

A foul-smelling big fatty in whose foul smell there is divine wisdom dormant

this impending incident however

is definitely not a divine incident or event

this incident

is a ruling

a ruling issued against me by a judge at a Greater Tehran District court.

this ruling

is acceptable unquestionably

this ruling

is a game

a definite game

is definite

the message got down to us crystal clear

I accept

I am ready
because I have no more interest in my limbs
because I have no more interest in my head and face and mouth
because the sun will never shine on me again
just as the snow
just as the rain
just as the blizzard and hail
just as the spring.

it's late
I'm in a hurry
vein to skin
listen up
today is the day of killing
today is Thursday whereas tomorrow is Thursday
ergo
today is Thursday evening
this is what my room's desert tells me
this is what someone, a familiar voice from my room's desert tells me
a little wind and sand is blowing
everywhere is full of lights and sparks
everywhere is bright and windy
sand
sand
sand all over my body sand
all my hair
all my eyelashes sand
I will never see you
make a sound
talk to me a little
talk to me more.

Why don't you believe any of my words then?

on the desert hills of the room someone talks to me every day
it was he who told me you are turning into an onion, son
and you are aware that an onion is a being and the essence of every being is
its soul and you will turn into an onion undoubtedly

I'm sorry, son

I'm sorry

the voice didn't last, left unseen
nothing's left

“gracious God is left
immaculate God
beautiful God
God of speech
God of murmur
God of wrath”¹

¹ (trans. note) from a speech by esteemed Iranian writer Houshang Golshiri, delivered at the dissident poet Mohammad Mokhtari's funeral.

TRANSLATED BY ALIREZA TAHERI ARAGHI
EDITED BY THADE CORREA

Shitkilling

come
come and do drugs
bring the drugs and do it
drink
drink the water
as if semen drink the water

drink and piss
piss on the office ceramic tiles
don't tell your colleague you pissed
tell him this is orange juice
your colleague will cheer up
and say real friends share drinks
and there are consequences
but don't worry
tell lies
sleep
take lorazepam and sleep in the office
think of hips in your sleep
think of the capacities of hips

ponder
ponder and flee
flee into streets and bazaars
climb onto the curb
stand there and sing
sing and say not

say not I know not singing
speak
and eschew the fellowship of the ignoble and the envious maligner
and be never doleful
and rub my compound elixir of lobster dregs and yogurt
and ergot fungi liquids
on your skin
on your penis
on your hands and hips
so their harm won't befall you
and thou shalt live
so you will harm not even an ant
rub
and bend over
shove your mouth into the ant's ear
and utter to him
there are eight paradises
and seven skies and four gates
where art thou now O ant?

the ant crawled into the hole amazed and mysterious
the four angels rush towards you
towards you
to take hold of your four corners
if you don't believe in paradise
and take you to your father-in-law
and then
you will vaguely see
you will see the same ant reclining next to your father-in-law
"son, if there is no paradise, why do you say there are eight paradises," your
father-in-law will say laughing

you yourself know you have done drugs
you go and read Marx and Benjamin and Blanchot

you feel like it'll kill you to go to work again tomorrow
and your father-in-law doesn't know you did drugs
you will finally die in the office
you know it yourself
and Bahram knows this too
Ensieh knows this
Feo know this
Ati knows this
And you understand these things
and you are afraid your jubilant king will never hear the story of your perishing

but God himself knows

you also know that God himself knows
and he knows that he himself knows
and he knows that the Lord brings thousands of likenesses
forth
and he himself knows that you
are not even one of these likenesses
and he himself knows that you
are only scum, only excrement
and you yourself know that in excrement
—and the excrement knows it itself—
there are a thousand secrets—swear to God—
not even one is in a thousand roses
and death to the nose
and death to the eye that just won't believe

and death to your childhood
and death to your adolescence and youth

he who has no babe must do school
he who has no money
must get accepted at a public university
must not take up drugs and chicks
must become a respectable person
he knows these things
and he who has money
is no shithead to do school
and be a clerk
and not have a non-cultured chick
and death to his nose
death to his eyes
death to his body
death to his penis
and such are the characteristics of the crowds

climb down from the curb

come and do drugs
come and sniff
and be warned that the nose is not just for dying
come and shit
and fix your eyes on your excrement
zoom in
gaze
and place your excrement on a gold platter
caress it

pick it up and put it on your head
imagine you are bringing me a dowry
imagine you are carrying yourself in your coffin
bring it
bring it so a thousand mysteries I will clarify for you

Tehran is hell

and this will be your fate
this neighborhood is hell
and this will be your fate

come and have sex
have sex
do drugs and have sex
get connected

accept
think
touch
rub
get warm
get wet
have sex

get squished
get shit
get composed
get compressed
this is my most prisoned poem
this is my most poisoned poem
this is my most presumed poem

you are entering my Iranian poem
you are violating my Iranian poem
and this is my own fault
I am born of a slit
I have slit myself from before myself
and I slit everything

and every slit deserves a cock
deserves a cock
deserves a violation
deserves an entry
deserves an employer
and this
is my right

climb down from the curb hateful excrement
come let's go do drugs
come
God's guarding us
come

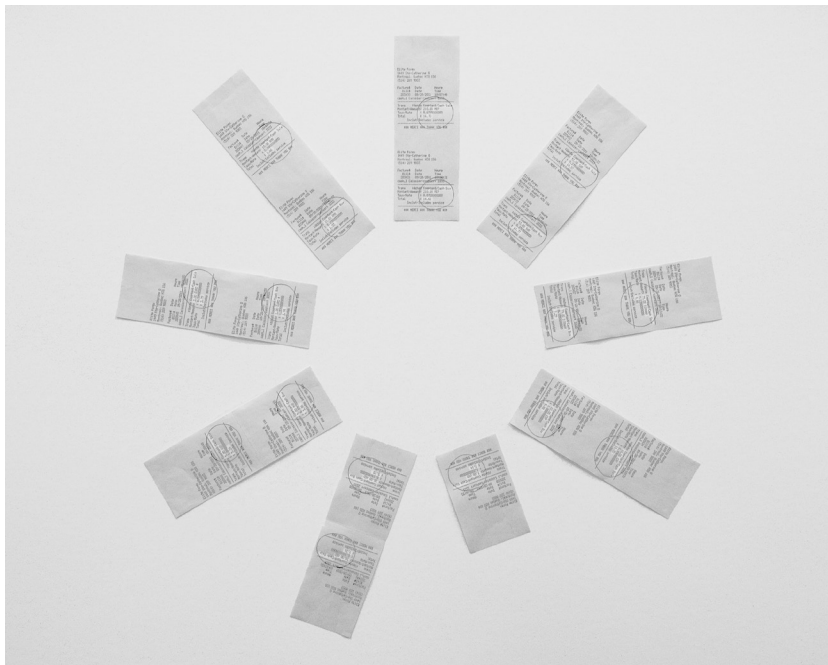
— translation previously published in the January, 2014 issue of *Asymptote*

JUAN ORTIZ-APUY

Lost in Translation I (or Into Thin Air!)

Receipts. 34 in. diameter. 2011.

For this work, I walked into a local Bureau de Change, and exchanged the cash I had at the moment \$16.70, from Canadian dollars into 9 different currencies one after another. The resulting balance after the transaction was \$1.03 CAN.



Elite Forex
 1449 Ste-Catherine O
 Montreal, Quebec H3G 1S6
 (514) 289 9003

Facture# Date Heure
 Bill# 09/28/2011 18:00:00
 203431 09/28/2011 18:00:00
 cash.L Caissier/cahier: 3333

Trans :Achaz Comtant/Cash Buy
 Montant/amount: 10.00 M\$
 Taux/Rate : 0.072000000
 Total : 1.66
 Inclut/Includes service

*** MERCI *** THANK YOU ***

Taux/Rate : 0.072000000
 Total : 16.70
 Inclut/Includes service

*** MERCI *** THANK YOU ***

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Facture# Date Heure
 Bill# 09/28/2011 18:00:00
 203431 09/28/2011 18:00:00
 cash.L Caissier/cahier: 3333

Trans :Achaz Comtant/Cash Buy
 Montant/amount: 210.00 M\$
 Taux/Rate : 0.072000000
 Total : 14.62
 Inclut/Includes service

*** MERCI *** THANK YOU ***

JEN HOFER

Catabolism, Or Translation as a Destructive Metabolism, Or Your Exchange Value

We can take refuge/in something other than the mind for image does/not always follow content.

— Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, from “Catabolism”

Catabolism, according to various online dictionaries, is a metabolic process in which complex molecules are broken down into simpler ones, resulting in a release of energy. It is also called “destructive metabolism.” Energy is released in order to be made available for alternate endeavors, molecules reconstituted elsewhere, otherwise. Translation is catabolism: the parts of a paragraph, a poem, a phrase, a word are broken down into smaller units, releasing energy, the molecules reconstituted elsewhere, otherwise, the energy available for alternate endeavors.

Something becomes something else.

Which is what I love as a reader—and what causes me consternation and joy as a translator—in the work of Uruguayan poet Virginia Lucas, whose work I am currently translating for near-future publication with Litmus Press.

Something becomes something else that is the thing and is no longer the thing: destructive metabolism.

Domíño

Montevideo-Santiago de Chile, Abril

Un travesti nomino como gárgola antigua, en pose pasa,
pasa de mí, NO.MI.No
Un hombre, llamo, nomino como quieta flor, comparo
y pasa ella.
La anciana me parte la mirada la curva de su espalda
las bolsas que lleva arrastra el cuerpo, carga, como el hombre
como travesti (que fue niña)
y recuerda un beso recuerda, la cara de la abuela
sonrisa abierta en pararrayo y piensa:
antes del nombre la nostalgia:
ella pasa, el travesti, el hombre de la niña que fue
y todavía será esto,
(si de la tradición se nutrió y desistió) del cambio en él, en ella
siguió la línea y fue llamado hijo (hoy lo nombran padre)
aunque sea el travesti
LA TRAVESTI NUNCA ESTUVO
me do mi nó el artículo
juego antiguo exorcizando el miedo a nombrarla
(relámpago fugaz, la sonrisa)

Domínion

Montevideo-Santiago de Chile, April

I nominate a travesti as an ancient gargoyle, passes by posing,
passes me by, NO.MY.Nay(te)
A man, I name, I nominate like a tranquil flower, I compare
and she passes.
The old woman splits my gaze in two with the curve of her back
the bags she carries drag her body, cargo, like the man
like a travesti (who was a girl)
and remember a kiss remembers, the face of a grandmother
lightning-rod open smile and thinks:
before the name nostalgia:
she passes, the travesti, the man of the girl who was
and still will be this,
(if on tradition was nourished and desisted) on the change in him, in her
towed the line and was called son (now they name him father)
despite being travesti.
THE TRAVESTI NEVER EXISTED
do me nated me, the article
ancient game exorcizing fear as she is named
(fleeting lightning, the smile)

Dominion, nomination, naming, passing. *A body is not always everything we are taught to expect*, we learn in Tsering Wangmo Dhompas “Catabolism.” Multiple and seemingly contradictory terms might be used to denominate—to modify—a single body. Expectation is present; expectation is defied. The body that defies expectation or the term that defies translation: these are instructive and propulsive gifts. I’m reminded here of *Troubling The Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, co-edited by TC Tolbert and Tim Trace Peterson, published in 2013 by Nightboat Books. I wrote a brief essay after my first very excited reading of the anthology:

A Brief Essay Against Confinement and For Constraint, Or Against Formulas and For Form, Or Against Blurbs and For *Troubling The Line*

The blurb is an empty and formulaic confinement—I steer clear of them. Most blurbs, it seems to me, do nothing more than soothe a too-palpable yearning for legitimation from some more legitimate source, some name to lend its oomph to a book whose autonomous zing might be in question. I often think it would suffice to write simply *BLURB HERE (name)*—serving the purpose the majority of those overwrought sentences seek to satisfy: so-and-so was willing to attach their name to such-and-such a text. The blurb is formula—I *heart this book*—and as such it is too confining, too rigidly corseted by convention to be of any use as a genuine creative-critical engagement with the work in question.

Maybe it’s perfect that I was asked to write about a book I adore boundlessly in a form I find overly constricting. Who better as guides than these gorgeous and courageous and thoughtful writers for traversing, extending, exploding, remapping, blurring, erasing or disregarding altogether the many lines that demarcate, divide, denominate and ultimately dull the immeasurable potential of our existence?

When we need to transform formula into form, to reconfigure confinement as constraint (generative boundary-edges whose friction instigates flares of dazzle and wonder), to trouble the most troublesome lines—and in this all too difficult and all too brutal world, we need nothing more urgently—we require, more than anything, a new syntax, a different relationship to language so as to articulate and inhabit a different world. Adventurous poetry and adventurous genderqueerness have this in common: both invite us into a more purposeful, more attentive, and more radical relationship to language. We cannot take for granted that *this* word can be used for *that* body; we cannot take as a given that we share the same understanding of even (or perhaps especially) the most familiar words.

If poetry is about queering language—and that is precisely what poetry is about, where “queering” has nothing to do with our sexual predilections and everything to do with a joyous refusal to conform to convention’s expectations—then who better to welcome as our models than writers whose articulated syntax and embodied movements through the world are the very territories of their revolution?

This collection is a manifesto. Take nothing for granted. Unhinge assumptions. Question all categories. Refuse tidy answers. Be poetry: in a world where everything is impossible, anything is possible.

And one more thing: I heart this book. Seriously.

I wouldn’t exactly claim translation as a genderqueer practice (though I wouldn’t exactly not claim that either), but I do think that some of the useful unsettlings of expectation that queer and genderqueer bodies and modes of being represent—and particularly their ramifications for language—are congruent with the ways that catabolic translation—especially of radically queered and de-conventionalized language—can usefully unsettle.

I am especially unsettled at the moment by the title of Virginia Lucas's book—and I'm taking suggestions if anyone's read this far and cares to make any (my work email is readily available via google search). The book in Spanish is titled *AMÉ.RICA. Tu valor de cambio*. Based on my own research and on conversation with Virginia and with other native readers/speakers of Spanish, here's my current understanding of the title:

+ Evident to eye and ear: America (or some purposefully bastardized version of that term).

+ AMÉ: first-person past tense (preterite) of the verb *amar*, to love.

+ RICA: rich (as in moneyed), and also delicious (as in good food or good love). "Rica" (as opposed to "rico") is an adjective with a feminine referent or is a noun meaning "rich woman."

+ The period between "AMÉ" and "RICA" denotes a separation between the two ideas, or a resignification after "amé" while still allowing the word "America" to resonate.

+ Tu valor de cambio most directly translates as "your exchange value"; one of the primary impulses of the book is a radically estranged anti-capitalist poetics.

Virginia and I have been in a years-long (non-full-time) conversation about this title. Part of her thinking about the title is this (in my translation): "RICA, in addition to wealth, also refers to a young woman, that is, I loved you young woman, I loved your value, your brashness, what was rich, delicious, expensive for me..." Gender does matter, it's feminine—rica, not rico—and here to break the word with the period divides the unity of the meaning into two parts, in order to fuse them. America is a broken geopolitical unity in the vision of the texts in this book, in the way the various parts are constructed, it's the imaginary unity on which the work centers, the real notion that is attacked by the text.

So far my working title is *Ah!Me.RICH.Ah! Your Exchange Value* but I'm not yet convinced. I've performed the initial step of the catabolic translation—the pulling apart of the various units of speech and signification in this word/phrase. The energy has been released, but is spilling all over the page, not yet gathered in a container that will queer the word “America” the way Virginia queers the word “América.” I remain attached (perhaps overly) to the ways Virginia's title is able to expand exponentially in Spanish, and my desire is to instigate such exponential expansion in English. But perhaps English expands differently than Spanish—certainly it does—and perhaps I need to trade my desire to repeat (to reproduce) for a desire to report (to reverberate, to inform).

— an earlier version of this essay appeared as a post on the Harriet blog

VIRGINIA LUCAS

Analógico

- ¿Pero en qué ciudad se pasea el **San Antonio** de Juan Burgos?
- ¿Acaso San Jorge pueda salirse del cuadro de la abuela y matar al dragón?
- ¿El dragón: protestante, celta o latinoamericano será la última astilla de la agonía de Saint-Jordi en el emplazamiento del **Sacre Coeur**?
¿O el sol precioso de las nuevas camisetas de la celeste de la FIFA tenga en sus rayitos dibujado un dragoncito? ¿O las astillas?
- Cuando el arroyo Carrasco comenzó a quedar chiquito, la inundación dejó al irse en las paredes de las casitas rayitos de sol (e infecciones), y un trajín descomunal entre las mujeres del asentamiento para empezar de una vez a limpiar con jane, el brillo del impacto del agua en las paredes.
- La fuerza de San Jorge, estas mujeres, mi Patria, los PANES del dragón, ¿serán un tango?

Analogic

- But which city is it where Juan Burgos's **San Antonio** is paraded around?
- Perhaps San Jorge might spring from a grandma's painting and kill the dragon?¹
- The dragon: Protestant, Celtic or Latin American, might be the last shard of Saint-Jordi's agony at the site of the **Sacre Coeur**?
Or the lovely sun of the sky blue (FIFA) team's new shirts with their little stripes, tracing a little dragon? Or its shards?
- When Arroyo Carrasco (began to grow larger), the flood let loose as it rose to the walls of the little houses, little stripes of sun (and infections), and a colossal tumult among the women wanting to clean with bleach starting right this second, the gleam of the water's impact against the walls.
- The force of San Jorge, these women, my Homeland, the dragon's PANES² ¿might these be a tango?³

¹ I'd asked Virginia, as I often ask, whether "la abuela" referred to "my grandmother" (the direct object is often used as possessive in Spanish, as in "me duele la cabeza," "I have a headache," or "me fui a visitar a la abuela," "I went to visit my grandmother") or to "the grandmother," that is, any grandmother—it's sometimes impossible to tell from the context whether the direct object in Spanish is a direct object or a possessive in English. Virginia responded that she was referencing a religious image that many grandmothers in the Río de la Plata region have on their walls; she said "It's Christian but is influenced by Afro-Brazilian religions. ...and was used for protection." This particular image is on her grandfather's wall, inherited from his mother. (trans. note)



² PANES: Plan de Asistencia Nacional a la Emergencia Social (National Assistance Plan for Social Emergencies) (trans. note)

³ I wouldn't normally include a translator's note as a footnote (or as part of an author's footnote) but Virginia uses footnotes fairly extensively so the mode seems open to me as well. These versions are working versions—i.e. mid-process, so I'll use the space of the footnotes to expose some of the challenges of this work and my approach to those challenges. (trans. note)

Bipolares

A.

En Tacuarembó mirábamos a Montevideo con nostalgia.
En Montevideo, pensábamos en Tacuarembó, en las vacas, en los cerros,
en el mismo cordón de indecisión del crecimiento urbano,
algo como un tango, tarareamos, todavía.

B.

La materialidad ganó la jugada: “- sí, se me inundó la casa, pero la tele está alta,
sobre una silla, sobre una mesa, seca, en una caja.”

Bipolarities

A.

In Tacuarembó we were looking nostalgically toward Montevideo.
In Montevideo, we were thinking about Tacuarembó, about the cows, the hills,
the same strand of indecision as with urban growth,
something, like a tango, we were humming.

B.

Materiality wins a play:
“yes, my house was flooded, but the TV is up high,
on a chair, on a table, in a box”

*Algo debe cambiar,
es la mañana*

Las luces azules como estrellas aplastadas en el pavimento de la Ciudad Vieja. Domingo en la ciudad de Montevideo, casco antiguo por conocido. Palmeras recién plantadas, jóvenes, luces azules en el empedrado simulando la cartografía de una ausencia... La sorpresa aguarda a la vuelta de la peatonal Sarandí. En las vueltas de la peatonal Sarandí él me dice: -parece, parece Europa... pero le faltan las bananas.

La noche fría, y el pavimento. Marte repetido por el efecto rojo y azulado de las fluorescencias nuevas, instaladas a ras de suelo. Camino en la mañana, la pista de aviación acaba de desaparecer en células fotogénicas. Solo queda entre los huecos del empedrado desalineado un recuerdo de lo sido; y es que también acaban de señalizar las calles. Acaban de señalizar las calles (repito). No sé por dónde circular, pedir el ómnibus, sentirme en esta ciudad, ubicarme por esta ciudad... (ideas de la suizidada querida agitándose): *palomas entre las plazas*. Pero:

¿cómo se articula la dimensión del capitalismo en la producción de subjetividades de la “calle” MVD?

Las acrílicas paradas de ómnibus al pie de la Plaza Independencia. Repito, ¿Plaza Independencia, qué subjetividades genera? ¿Esto no sigue siendo Europa? ¿Esto no es Latinoamérica? El acrílico: dónde surge, quién lo vende, quién lo hace.

Aunque el diagramado de la ciudad, la cuadrícula ordenada por tramos, y estas luces azules, neónicas que no puedo colocar en ningún sitio con menos de treinta años, en ningún sitio, en ningún sitio...¿Quién sitúa? ¿QUIÉN sitúa? Ki krés comprar? QUIÉN no está en ningún sitio. In ventos.¹

¹ P.D. Año 2013, desde el 2007 no hay más paradas de acrílico en la Plaza Independencia.

*Something needs to change
it's morning*

Blue lights like stars squashed on the asphalt of the Ciudad Vieja. Sunday in the city of Montevideo, old quarter so familiar, it's ancient. Recently planted palms, young folks, blue lights against the cobblestones simulating some cartography of absence... Surprise awaits just around the corner from Sarandí walkway. In the twists of Sarandí walkway he tells me: "it seems, it seems like Europe... but the bananas are missing..."

The cold night, and the asphalt. Mars repeating from the reddish bluish effect of the new fluorescents, installed flush to the ground. I walk in the morning, the airstrip just disappeared in photogenic cells. All that's left in the gaps in the uneven cobblestones a memento of what has been; and it's that also, they just put streetlights on the streets. They just put streetlights on the streets (I repeat). I don't know where to transit, to catch the bus, to feel myself in this city, to locate myself through this city... (ideas of swisside my dear girl, fluttering): pigeons among the plazas. But: how do we articulate the dimension of capitalism in the production of MVD "street" subjectivities?

The acrylic bus stops at the foot of Plaza Independencia. I repeat, Plaza Independencia—what subjectivities does it generate? Isn't this still Europe? Isn't this Latin America? Acrylic: where does it come from, who sells it, who makes it.

Though the layout of the city, the grid ordered in sections, and these blue lights, neon lights I can't locate, not in any site less than thirty years old, not in any site, not in any site... Who sites? WHO situates? Whatcha wanna buy? WHO is not in any site. In ventos.²

² P.S. from the Year 2013: since 2007 there are no more acrylic bus stops at Plaza Independencia.

P.P.S. ventos: money in Lunfardo. (trans. note)

P.P.P.S. Lunfardo: street slang specific to Argentina and Uruguay (trans. note).

La nostalgia y la ilusión, no hacen al cambio:

1

*“yo viví violencia en mi casa - dice yaque - y dije: no quiero eso para mí.
No entiendo a mi hermana”*

2

“estoy con hemorragias hace ocho días, pero no voy a ir a la policlínica – si voy, me dejan ahí – y hay que seguir, cuando reviente arranco. Vas a ver que son las pastillas, no me hacen bien, pero si las dejo viene el quinto.”

3

“toy esperando nomás. Como no tenía relaciones con aquel dejé de tomar las pastillas. No hacíamos nada de nada. Yo dormía con las tres más chiquitas y Milagros ¿viste que Milagros siempre necesita a alguien? Y ahora ya está. Yo no me lo saco, no soy como esas otras madres. Ta, fue un accidente y no me lo saco. Es culpa mía, además me gusta, se me agrandan las tetas y como como una vaca”

4

“yo tengo siete, siete varones. Los cuida mi madre cuando salgo. Tuve dos nenas pero no las quise, son un problema, las regalé, y a éstos que son una plaga ya les dije “se portan bien o los largo por ahí”. Es que tengo alergia al diu, no todos querían usar condón, me daban más plata.”

Nostalgia and Hopefulness Don't Create Change:

1

“i lived through violence at home” Yaque says, “and i said: i don’t want that for myself. I don’t understand my sister”

2

“i’ve been hemorrhaging for a week but i won’t go to the clinic—if i go, they’ll leave me there—and i have to keep on, when i lose my shit i start all over. You’ll see it’s the pills, they’re not good for me, but if I stop taking them I’ll have a fifth.”

3

“i’m just waiting, that’s all. Since i wasn’t having sex with the guy i stopped taking the pills. We weren’t doing absolutely anything at all. I would sleep with the three littlest ones and Milagros, you know how Milagros always needs someone there? And now there it is. I’m not getting rid of it, I’m not like those other mothers. Sure, it was an accident and I’m not getting rid of it. It’s my fault, and on top of that I like it, my tits get bigger and I eat like a cow.”

⁴ In Spanish you’d never use two accents in a single word, so I asked Virginia what was up with the accents in “cooperativá.” She said it’s from “cooperá” de cooperar (to contribute or to cooperate) and “ativá” de activar (to activate)—both conjugated in Southern Cone second person imperative. The mixture of the two verbs is to suggest, Virginia says, “a mode of social organization: the social cooperative, which turned out to be a very difficult strategy to implement once the PANES program began. The hope was that people living below the poverty line and receiving government assistance to the tune of \$100, more or less, might organize and work together with others in the aforementioned model. The plans consisted of six month interventions. I worked there with others for a year, setting up the project and then managing it for another year. I devoted my time to reading and writing programs and supported, as best I could, 8 groups of 25 people each as a counselor. This book is a product of that project and its impact.” (trans. note)

4

"i have seven, seven boys. My mother takes care of them when i go out. I had two girls but I didn't want them, they're a problem, I gave them away, and those others, they're a plague, I already told them 'behave yourselves or I'll get rid of you.' It's that I'm allergic to the IUD, and not everyone wanted to use a condom, they would give me more dough."

SARA FLORIAN

“The Polyglot Pride of St. Martin”: an interview with Lasana M. Sekou

Sara Florian: As far as I have noticed, there is a very peculiar linguistic situation in St. Maarten. Would you like to comment about this as an introductory remark?

Lasana M. Sekou: Not only do we have all of the languages of the Caribbean spoken in St. Martin¹ by immigrants native to those languages, but an arguably significant number of St. Martin people, native to the island's core culture, are also bilingual or multilingual, at least functionally so. I say “functional” because there is the question of fluency. I think that the multilingual aptitude, as a cultural feature of the St. Martin people, being able to speak between two to five languages, is due in part to the post-Emancipation period when many of our people emigrated throughout the region, and to European metropolises and US cities, looking for work and education. A number of our people, between the late 1800s and 1963, regularly returned home, bringing new languages, fashion, and music from the countries and territories where they had gone to work, live, and in some instances had been born. Between 1963 and the early 1970s, a number of St. Martiners returned home to retire, especially from Papiamentu-speaking Aruba, and they became very much involved in the society. The wave of immigrants arriving from throughout the Caribbean between the 1970s and 1980s, looking for work in the newly booming tourism industry in St. Martin, included descendants of St. Martiners (both parts of the island) fluent in Spanish and Papiamentu and at times more fluent in Dutch and French than some of their compatriots that they were meeting at home for the first time. The language cross-fertilization is reinforced with English as the mediating or even the median language, because in the work place, living spaces, places of socialization, and business transactions people are in

a normative contact with each other and must communicate, even to the degree that there are of late stress lines relative to that communication, not only between both parts of the island but within each territory that divides the nation. In St. Martin, English as we speak it has been used island-wide since the 1700s as what I would call the “nation tongue.”

SF: So is English the official language in St. Martin?

LMS: English is the popular language, the lingua franca historically of the St. Martin people. In the South, which is a colony of the Netherlands, English is now an official language along with Dutch. That is a development within the last five years, though as a language of instruction English has been used in some of the schools since the 1980s. It is the language of instruction at the University of St. Martin (USM), which was founded in 1989 and is to date the island's only native tertiary institution. In the North, a colony of France, the official language and language of instruction in the schools is French. Nowadays in the North, the schools in particular and generally the official system are reinforcing the language issue and pushing the use of French. Increasing numbers of children speak only or predominantly French with their parents and each other. With regard to the St. Martin nation as a whole this could be seen as a point of division, because it ultimately harbors severe problems of communication for the whole St. Martin people, between families and family friends, neighbors and associates, natives and visitors. There are at least two important government officials of the *Collectivité Territoriale de Saint-Martin* that have publically suggested that the establishment could formally revisit the traditional place of English in the North but there has been no real policy movement in this direction.²

SF: The reinforcement of the use of French in the Northern part of the island looks like a counter tendency against the evolution of the use of languages throughout the Caribbean and in the world in general.

LMS: It is indeed. And to me it looks like and is experienced as a reinforcement of colonialism. Notwithstanding the *Collectivité* as a structural change for the French colony in St. Martin in 2007 and, in the South, the constitutional adjustment of the Dutch “island territory” to a more autonomous territory in 2010, St. Martin had been for the longest while what you would call a neglected island by its colonizers. It was not a trading, military or colonial sub-management center or post in the Caribbean region for any of the European countries that controlled the territory during the post-Columbian period. For example, in the post-Emancipation period the colonial sub-centers in the Caribbean region to which St. Martin was attached were Willemstad, Curacao, for the Dutch part and Basseterre, Guadeloupe for the French part of the island. “There is nothing there,” was what not only the colonialist rulers might have said, but what was also uttered by some St. Martiners who migrated to the western and southern Caribbean and beyond during the first half of the 1900s.

SF: It’s really interesting what you say about polyglossia and fluency in the Caribbean and especially in St. Martin, and this seems to be indicative of a post-Emancipation aptitude: the necessity to communicate in different languages, but also the importance to combine languages and musical rhythms. [But, something was “there.”] St. Martin became the salt island, the island where the main crop was salt, and that is why you often use ‘salt’ as a major metaphor...

LMS: Yes. It should be natural for the salt metaphor to be present in the literature of St. Martin. Salt was the main crop on the island during the unholy slave period. After the 1848 Emancipation there were minor and infrequent salt harvests well until the early 1960s. As metaphor and as material salt has the experience of curing, preserving, healing. There is a connection to life’s sweetness in some cultures. The Yoruba, I am told, have a saying: “May your life be as sweet as salt.” It is also intrinsically connected with the exploitation and human suffering of the enslaved ancestors that toiled away in the salt ponds of St. Martin. St. Martiners created and chanted

work songs and topical *quimbé* songs as we labored in the salt pans.³ Blood, sweat and tears were literally shed in the ponds. News and secrets were shared in the wide salted body of water; *petite marronage* and other escapes and acts of sabotage were planned. Parents and children sold to different plantations on- and off-island would meet in this grueling place of forced labor after long forced separations. Social relationships, in spite of the hard labor, were forged in the Great Salt Pond, sweet social relationships. Because of its size, even while salt was being picked in the other salt ponds, the Great Salt Pond demanded most of the enslaved labor from the island. At times, during peak periods of salt reaping bonded labor from surrounding islands were shipped in. To the extent that the enslaved men, women and children were herded off the plantations from both parts of the island to “pick salt” in the salt pans during the salt reaping season for some 200 years, the Great Salt Pond became the cradle of the St. Martin nation. *The Salt Reaper* poems “salt reaping I” and “salt reaping II” are about this double and layered relationship of salt in the history and culture of the St. Martin people and as a recurring expression of the psyche, even if latently so, at the core of the nation. Both poems are sorts of aesthetic extractions from a conversation, a “relate,” with a rather beautiful woman from Sucker Garden [a district of St. Martin] who worked in the Great Salt Pond as a very young child during the first half of the last century.

SF: I’m thinking of the other islands—Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Cuba—where they basically had plantations of sugar cane, so this metaphor of the sugar and the salt could be a very interesting one. And this ambivalent relationship could be, in my opinion, translated also to the language, I mean between standard languages and Creoles. I cannot speak as a linguist, but I think that some definitions could connect separate languages, and especially in the Caribbean whose poets keep using metaphors and interweave languages: there is a kind of unified conception of the languages used in the different territories. Brathwaite spoke of “nation language,” that’s what poets use to reproduce the language of the people, the language closer to the natural spoken word.

LMS: Indeed, you speak like Brathwaite, he would be proud to hear you.
[laughs]

SF: Well, thank you. [laugh] I guess you also employ “nation language” in your poetry.

LMS: I use the term “nation tongue,” but it is the same concept. In addition to the layered identification with or deconstruction of the European languages spoken in the region, there is too a sweet fluency to the languages that we created in the Caribbean from the disparate and Calibanic tongues. For example, when you hear someone speaking Papiamentu or Haitian it is just a sweet sound, the way it rolls off the tongue, fluent, fluid...

SF: I would like to slightly shift back to the subject of your own poetry. Apart from the subject and metaphor of salt in your work, you also speak of political issues.

LMS: Indeed. The subjects of politics, history and race are consistently and variedly discussed in all of the literatures of the Caribbean. Salt is linked to culture and history in St. Martin in a unique or specific way as we discussed previously. History is both our bane and the bountiful reservoir of our victories. The political issues I tend to prefer to work with or work out in the poetry tend toward liberation politics, national and human liberation processes in the Caribbean: from slavery, racism, colonialism, neocolonialism to the continuing processes in the region's countries to realize full sovereignty and in the still colonized territories like St. Martin to become independent. When I use political terms and discuss certain political ideas in poetry it is not always related to colonialism. Our nation is one of the last remaining colonies in the region, a physical remnant of a history of horror. Our island of 37 square miles is held captive by Dutch and French colonialism through structures and processes based in part on what Edward Said calls “structures of attitude and reference” and what George Lamming terms a “terror of the mind.” Such a terror it is that there

are many among us who believe that St. Martin is not a colony but in the South, an “equal partner in the Dutch kingdom,” and in the North “*est la France*.” For a colonized people, once enslaved by their colonizers, this is delusional thinking on a grand scale.

SF: Does political terminology have much importance in your poetic production? How do you cope with all these different languages?

LMS: The historical and contemporary political realities in the Caribbean are very important to the poetic language that I work with; words and terms are drawn freely from the region’s languages as symbolic of ideals, practices, and manifestation of Caribbean unity—and also as literary devices and elements of exploration of a St. Martin aesthetics. Politics, language, history, religion, and the geographic landscape are just a few of the elements I work with to construct a poetry that would hopefully have meaning in the lives of people. In a five-minute communication event, two people in St. Martin can go through up to five languages, seamlessly. As previously noted, this is more of a functional reality than a matter of fluency, but it is certainly a feature of sophistication of the St. Martin people’s culture. However, relative the stress signs alluded to earlier, this language culture is not yet an official reality, our politicians and educators are not great advocates of the language culture as it is felt, as it should be owned, even as a natural resource. Arguably the polyglot pride of St. Martin is embattled; there are public, vocal stress signs like never before since the beginning of modern St. Martin. The nation tongue is historically English for both parts of the island, and it has been serving as the median language of unity, communication and business for the people of St. Martin for most of the Survivalist Period (1648-1848), for the Traditional Period (1848-1963) and in the Modern Period (1963-). Mind you, this is not to advocate or favor one European or colonial language over another, but the claim of an English derived from the historical and cultural experiences at the very core of the St. Martin identity. This nation tongue or nation language has been historically imparted to folks who have immigrated and contributed to and become part of the

St. Martin nation, even as it is evolving. While the language allegiances of the territorial governments are to Dutch in the South and French in the North, most of the island's media and commerce are conducted in English. The nation's seminal literature is in English but the colonial languages are the languages of instruction in most of the island's schools. The schools in the South with English as the language of instruction have increased significantly since the 1980s, with telling successes. The French educational system has been over a corresponding period, reinforcing French and all things of France in the schools in the North. It should be noted too that as of the late 1980s, boosted by *défiscalisation*, there started what has become a significant settlement of French metropolitans in the North. With that development have also come related charges about racism, language complexes about who is really speaking French, identity issues about who belong in the French territory, economic disparities and displacement between Black St. Martiners and the white metropolitan French, and of late what is for St. Martin an unprecedented tension between *gendarmes* and the youth. All of these, let's call them elements, have been working their way into my poetic production and projection, from *Born Here* (1986) to *37 Poems* (2005). The linguistic challenges have been best articulated to date in Dr. Rhoda Arrindell's book, *Language, Culture, and Identity in St. Martin* (2014).

—This is an updated version of an interview previously published in
SX Small Axe—a Caribbean platform of criticism.

¹ Sekou uses the traditional or what he calls the nationalist spelling of St. Martin to refer to the entire island, instead of the Dutch spelling of St. Maarten for the Dutch part in the South and the French spelling of Saint-Martin for the French part in the North.

² The Collectivity of St. Martin came into being on 15 July 2007 and encompasses the northern part of the island, which is a French Overseas Collectivity, Collectivité d'Outre-Mer. The St. Maarten Territory, with increased autonomy for the southern part of the island, which is a Dutch territory, came into being on 10 October 2010.

³ Topical St. Martin song, sung in a fast-paced singsong without musical accompaniment (sung up to mid-20th c.).

LASANA M. SEKOU

RECONOCIDO_en_QUISQUEYA

*(of the Dominican Republic 2013 law against its Black citizens,
or how to plan for mass murder)*

A genocide poem in the making
for 'the people of the book,'
hailed from the Roman Ghetto on Shabbat
might have looked like a question too)
marked 70 years ago is not so far off
from what tomorrow might bring today
for the scattered&descended people from 'the high place.'
go ahead. i can wait.
on the heated scunt of General Sun's path i can wait.
like a boil anywhere on a barefooted restavek child
i can wait.
wait till Belaguer's Baní black beast question
finds its final solution to '*Mami, ¿qué quiere el negro?*'
but some part of you it is bound to
ask on any given day, at any frightful moment
just when you *ketch yo'self*
wringing a doubt in the blink of an eye
wishing to deny this is happening
in *dese caribbees ah we'z* to 200,000, *y mas*, people
you can, at least imagine, that you know.

y

*"Imagina que el país donde naciste un día te dice que
ya no perteneces a él.*

*Té quita tus documentos de identidad por tu color de piel,
tus apellidos o la nacionalidad de tus padres."*

ak

mi yo yo pral moute.

and

you can imagine,

even if you don't understand all of this and that,

well, *oui*, 'the good people everywhere will rise up'

to stop this! (to head off

the COUNT OF HORROR waiting below)

to at least suffer the little children not

to ask, what could TODAY IN CARIBBEAN HISTORY be,

HOY EN LA REPUBLICA DOMINICANA,

What must it be for Black born citizens?

UNO.To be

made stateless by the law of the land.

DOS.Again

the concentration camps;

army-ordered round-up operation and deportation.

TRES.It is on

to the bloody murder by soldier gun and militia machete

when the resistance mounts.

Poem for the dead

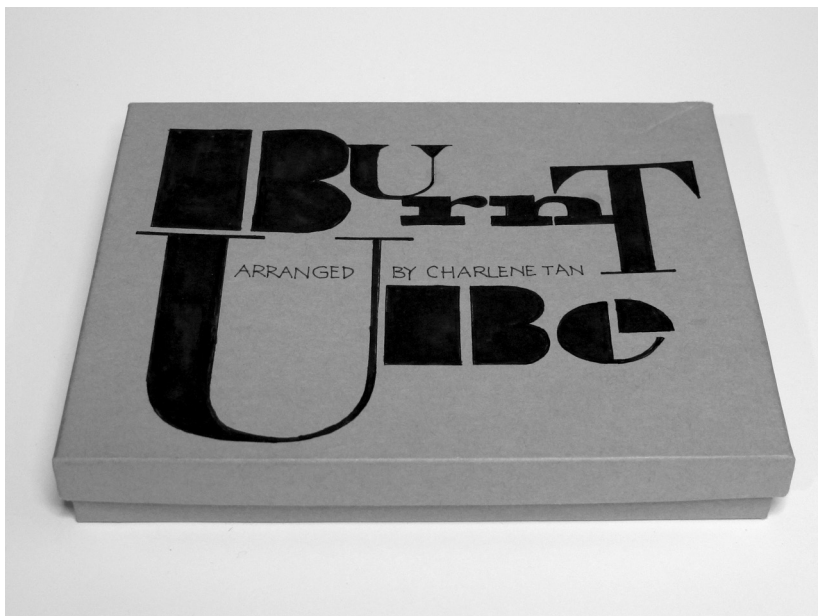
for kamau brathwaite

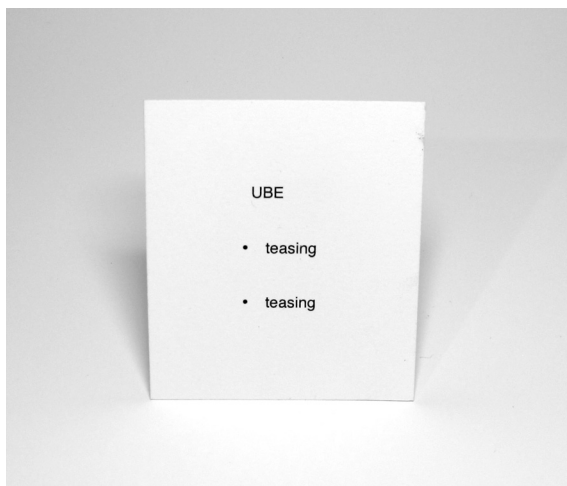
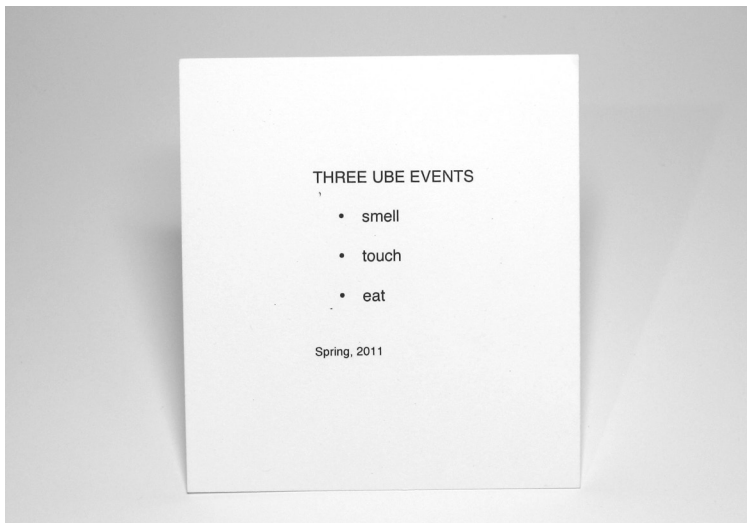
set.sail.sorrow
below.the coffle ark limbos
falls out to sea, fearing nothing
from our portal of benin bight, blight
in its blood wake, it's a mariner's harp, a howwwwwwwwwwwwwl-
ing
along the waves, weaving a bleaching horror
a hymnnnnnnnnnnnnnn, embalming the captives
below.seasoning them for where in the hell ...

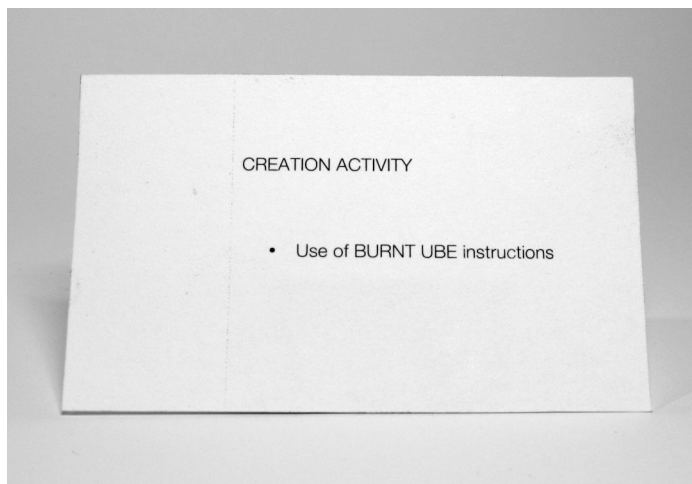
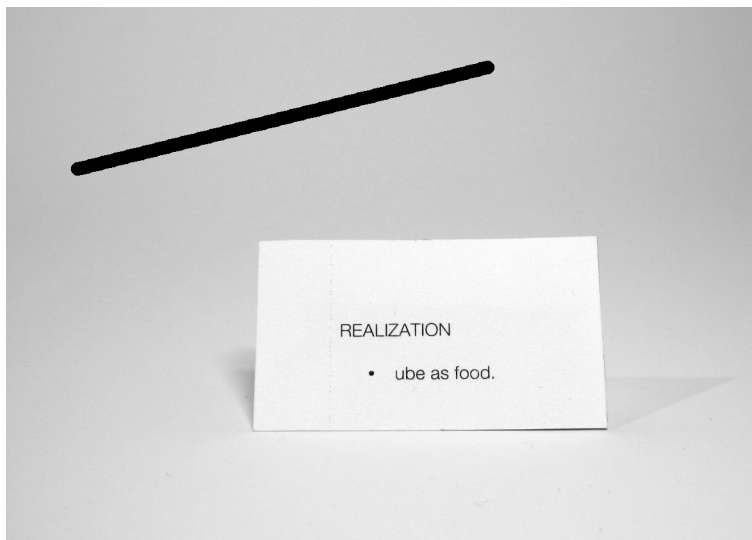
CHARLENE TAN

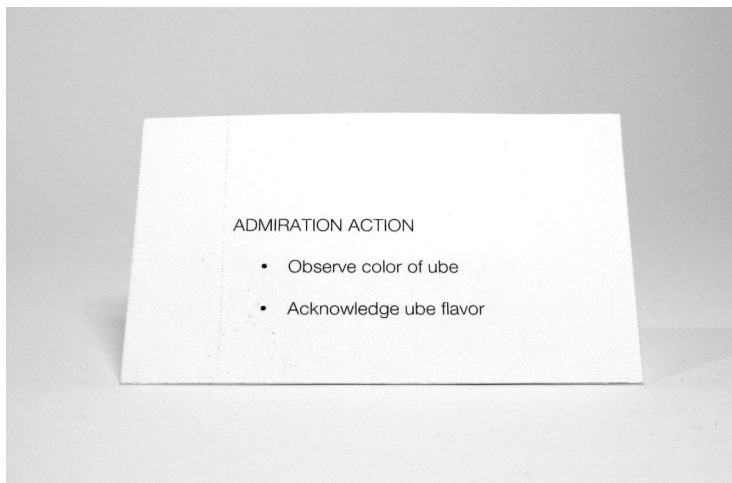
Burnt Ube

Burnt Ube is a twist on Georges Brecht's *Water Yam* (1963), which is comprised of fluxus action-scores that range from actions to instructions. Ube (another word for water yam) is a Filipino staple, violet in color, often used as a main ingredient in desserts and pastry. Ube is a Filipino version of apple pie, so these flux-scores are designed to celebrate and (re)discover the real Water Yam.









TRANSLATED BY LINDA RUGG

IDA BÖRJEL

European waistlines

“We want to say the following, in order to clarify who we are: Sometimes existence itself can feel like a newcomer. Existence can sometimes offer a certain cringing pleasure and beauty. Birdsong, bottles of wine, and the opposite sex in nature are such great gifts that they can be comprehended as newcomers. As a sheer gift there are friendships with big shots and wives of big shots and scholarships. Then nature is good. From all this altogether we demand, we request, to become newcomers.”

— Erik Beckman, *The Newcomers*

A story to grip

I am the strong, well-composed Austrian brain. My thoughts are settled and collected on a regular basis. All surfaces have been monitored again today. Head and thoughts are in place; face and mind are set. The Austrian family is clean, sharply fused together. Will the Danes moisten their faces before dinner? Can the Belgian hand ever become truly clean? Austrian hands are completely clean and precise all over the dinner table. The Austrian mind is strong and clean with no squeamishness about it. The Austrian mind is firm and steady when the bell rings for breakfast, lunch, and walks. The Austrian air is pure, healthy and composed. British air is foggy, Danish moist, Italian sticky with the press of sweat and smutty insinuation. Austrian secrets are kept. One Austrian mind can always trust another. Austrian sons are clean, silent, and good to hunt with. Young Austrian boys have faces with defined features and no blemishes. I am the Austrian stablekeeper and I have everything in place. The Austrian stableboy comes and goes. He is a well-informed sturdy young man who does not shrink from heavier loads. I grease the saddles, the reins, and the halter. I put the bridle in the animal's mouth. The Austrian horse stands ready, vigorous, poised to set out for the forest, over fields, charging away from it all in quest of the shy and evasive prey. Italian people are family-oriented spendthrifts. When French people visit forests they do not know how to hunt any boar. Irish people hunt themselves. Austrians have the ability and the presence of mind to keep an eye on it all. In Austria there is no need for any polished mirrors to confirm that the Austrian face is strongly held together and never will come loose

A story with a trick

Danish people are round friendly thirsty people who have nothing against any dogs. Danish dogs are round friendly creatures with little spots on them. The Danish dog always has a trick to perform in a bar. I am the Danish pubkeeper and my house is your house. Spanish dogs are lazy creatures that get too much sun. Swedish dogs are slim, brushed, and fussed-over creatures with long complicated pedigrees. Swedish dogowners are always talking about comparisons of their dogs' pedigrees and the condition of the fur. The German dog does not have a trick to perform in the bar. Danish dogowners are warm thirsty people who share thoughts and drinking in the bar. The Austrians would not share a thought with their four-legged friends. The Danish dog does not need a leash. Danish dogs follow their owners as an owner follows a dog to a bar. Swedish bars are disinfected powdered places with stooily chairs and watery American music. The Danish pub is a cosy dark place with funny stickers and posters. My Danish woman comes in. She is a warm bright colourful being with good strong laughter. The Austrian woman the Portuguese woman and the Finnish woman do not have a laugh worth mentioning. The Danish woman comes bright and colourful to my bar. Her laughter is strong, good, healthy. The Danish woman turns up with a fine thirst to deal with. The little round Danish dog performs its trick for her at the table in my bar. The Danish woman laughs and raises her glass to all that see her and hear

A story with flesh and emotion

All is body and sun. Spanish people gather at the marketplace in the evening to meet. Spanish people are full of warm pounding blood and strong connected emotions. Italian people are short-lived. Italian people stay strong for a couple of hours but will not last the entire feast. Spaniards last as long as it takes. Finnish people last without a comment. They last but are not worth talking to and feeling. They sit silent and do not move to anything but the Finnish tango. The Spanish move and dance with everyone. The Spanish move is the origin of motions. The Spanish body is the one that dances. The Spanish sun is the sun above the laughter. The Spanish heart is the heart always pounding and the Spanish hate along with the Spanish love is our Spanish reality. We dance everything together I dance in orbit beneath the sun. French people put up an act the Greeks are acting. The Spanish meal is a complete meal, the Spanish siesta is good heavy sleep. The Spanish woman wakes up to dance some flamenco. The Spanish man wakes up to pick the calf among the calves to kill. Blood from the Spanish meat dries up in the Spanish sun. The Spanish sun dries up everything that was and does not leave anything wet for tomorrow. The British sun leaves everything soaked. British people are resentful anaemic people with umbrellas. Spanish people meet up in the evening with warm tanned skin to heat. The Spaniard stays up late and does not give in. All is body and sun. All is heart and sun and blood

A story of cold and heat

Juha comes to see me. It is the morning after, in the fresh raw frosty Finnish air that always holds the body together. Finnish people will not bend to anything. Finnish people are kind-hearted imposing white-haired people with a fine sense of humour to cope with the climate. Juha drinks a little from the bottle to strengthen his blood. He needs it to keep warm and upright. We drive through the green infinity of the Finnish woods. Always good to hide in always good for berry picking and construction. We built the Finnish sauna and maybe we drank something strong. Name the ones standing. No Dutch person would remain standing. No British would keep standing in the Finnish delta with their kind of blood. Look at the Spaniards swaying, the Danish slidings the Greeks to and fro. I am the Finnish woman and I stand straight-backed with pleasure outside the Finnish sauna. Aino passes by. She expresses herself well in a closed form, keeping her eyes to the side. Yes we know contrasts, yes we know what cold is and we know heat. The contrasts urge blood through the aorta and keep us alive. Once I was in Portugal on a vacation. There were no contrasts worth mentioning. I remember Portugal as if it were raining although it was sunny. In Finland the weather never causes any hesitation. We are the Finnish survivors. Who else has anything to mention about survival? The Finnish nature is icy snowy and covered with tall Finnish spruces that go on for now and ever. And somewhere between the trees stands the Finnish sauna by a lake. I step in to sit, maybe drink, and notice how blood twitches with life in the body

A story that passes

All of my sisters my mother and the mothers of my mothers wear short skirts and tiny lace bras. In France everything is smell and language. We do not express ourselves much with words that contain a k. Swedes and Germans incessantly utter words containing k. They are dull boring obeying repressed people with no interesting smell about them. We don't really concern ourselves with h either. The British keep on pronouncing, and the Danes. The Germans start talking with the intention of getting it said. French people speak with strongly lined fascinating mouths in motion. The lips of the French speaker spin a thread to the other's mouth and pull it closer like a kitten. We invented the kiss and made something more out of conversation. Jean-Jacques comes to the café after his lesson. We stay to talk and then. We talk to continue the movement of mouths. Finnish people talk to return to silence. The Austrians speak in order not to commit any wrongs. Swedes talk to agree. The British write to give clues to a riddle. Luxembourgiens would rather not write. Everything is there, in the nuances of the face opposite – a thinly drawn line between incident and lull. Jean-Pierre comes by. French people never cease to happen. French people dare to take themselves seriously, Jean-Jacques does not sweep over the room with a grin. Jean-Pierre draws his words in a bow, I take a few steps into it leaving the subordinate clauses hanging leaving the verbal forms hanging and the punctuation marks in the palate over the kiss

A story with a breeze

The lads come by with their flutes. We take off across the moor. Sheep move about like soft clouds in the valley. The Irish sheep is a good fine thick-woolled sheep with a good sound in its throat. I swiftly send my sheepdog to keep the sheep together. The Irish girl jumps up and down playing with a ribbon in her hand. The Irish girl is a smile and life in itself. Good strong winds sweep through the surroundings. We gather around salted sheep-meat with good chewing-resistance to eat together. A strong warm feeling comes from the sense of the Irish woman. The German woman does not have any sensuality in her. The Frenchwoman has no sense at all. The Dutch woman has altogether too much in mind. Irish people are all in all good waterproof people who would not sell Ireland for anything. I walk over the moor and maybe I bring my flute. Judgments fall the decisions fall. Even the Irish sheep must be political. An evenly strong questioning wind reaches us from the open sea. Then comes the flute and singing. Irish flutes are wilful virtuous instruments with many ideas and games in them. Austrian flutes harbour no winds. French flute-players just suck on the flute, the Swedes break it into pieces. Portuguese people do not play today, they play tomorrow. The Irish flute knows what it takes to get there and to stay. And as the Irish woman starts to sing the wind does not weaken no the Irish people stand proud for everyone with or without a flute to belong together

A story al dente

I bring power and trinkets for my mother. I walk where my brothers can spot me. In the evening I collect my sisters and put them in the house. Italian sisters are big-mouthed sisters who need to be collected. French sisters are sharp-mouthed and are not collected. They are obstinate self-focused people on high heels. The British sister refuses to be collected, she collects herself and stays indoors. Full-blooded black-haired Italian sisters with expressive eyebrows always have something to say. The Swedish sister cannot think of anything to say. She giggles and smiles and lingers in the setting sun. Danish sisters have little needles with them to make me keep my distance. Portuguese sisters are too sleepy to pay attention to any collector. Italian sisters sit up straight on chairs and drink good strong sweetened black Italian coffee straight down. The coffee-habits of others are not worth mentioning. The Swedish people drink coffee but they only drink a lot. The Italian coffee is strong rich and the thing to start the day with. I am big enough to take care of my sisters. I am big; I can take care of them and make sure that they are well. I carefully collect them and bring them to laughter. They let themselves be collected and there is nothing frightening about the sisters then. I collect the sisters. I show my mother I can. She is so gorgeous, she is the ocean and the mountains and the earth as well. She stirs heavy casseroles with a ladle. I collect my Italian sisters with a power to be witnessed. We gather around the table. All members of the Italian family know how to eat and to sit with substance and presence. That is when the Italian mother puts out her pots

A story without fuss

The Luxembourgian borders are easy to survey. We live inside and behind them. Luxembourgians are clean precise people. Luxembourgians have ironed clothes made with seams that will not give way. Luxembourgian people are people without ugly faces names and numbers. Austrian people are not unsoiled enough to wipe away their tracks or features. Austrian people smear themselves in the forest with blood from the flesh of the boar. Luxembourgian people are wealthy educated people with no fuss about them. All the countries altogether keep on fussing outside the Luxembourgian borders. All Luxembourgian homes are clean vacuum-cleaned surfaces to stand on. Greek people walk barefoot on the kitchen floor over the bathroom floor and out in the hall. Luxembourgian men do not walk in any mud and never ever show any filth under their fingernails. Luxembourgian babies are clean white silent. And then we won the Eurovision song contest. I am the nameless faceless numberless Luxembourgier. I sit down at the kitchen table after work with a glass of wine in my hand. The sky expressionless: mute. On the other side of the street in the opposite house a man is sitting. He is probably about my age and looks pretty much like me. We avoid looking at each other. The first thing I check as I sit down after work is whether he sits in front of me or not and I know he does the same. Cars pass by. Sometimes I get up almost straight away, most often I sit a quarter of an hour. The sky immovable, stiff. Quite quiet. Like a lid over thoughts. At times it shall happen that we remain seated for hours, both of us

A story

Everything has a function to connect together. You may not always manage but you have to try and do what you can to make people and things function. I am the Swedish farmer and my tasks do not leave a moment to spare from morning until dusk. The Swedish woman is beautiful with soft blond hair on her body like the cornfields. She has blue eyes that make one see if she is lying and she knows it. Most things go on in their usual way. My Swedish woman puts the dinner on the table and at my side a beer is placed. We do not use spice and we do not say much. The Italians the Spanish use too much spice; it is not good for the blood. A spice too strong makes blood rush to the head and that is not a good thing to get involved with. One has to tend one's lot in life and not become a load and a burden. I work the soil, I bend it and turn clods, herd cattle and tell my wife that if she wants to she is free to work naked in the flowerbed. The space surrounds us. The silence. One has to try to take care of oneself and not surrender. But sometimes I feel the weariness of the ground under my feet and the seed does not take root in the mould. Then it may happen that I go to the cows at night. I walk between their deep breaths. I let the calves suck the salt off my hands. And then I can see whether something has become of what I have done on earth

HUGO GARCÍA MANRÍQUEZ

repeat for sense is noise in knowing
fabled minor noises in branches
sycamore braches
like antlers of a mind

morning doves in the commonality of history

like accretion in poems
grieving the health of the West

*

for translation : no muse
especially where apparition means property

: in translation a collectivity
takes place in shadowboxing

fixed in time but not fixed in reception

*

fixed in time but not fixed in reception
ivy follows the protocols of representation
strictly covering all sticky realms of phenomena
a given homeland for the space of trauma
against the fixity of stars

*

in your dream Eros was a concept
a recursive sea
with birds portrayed all over
long half-life forms

a descent from discontinuity

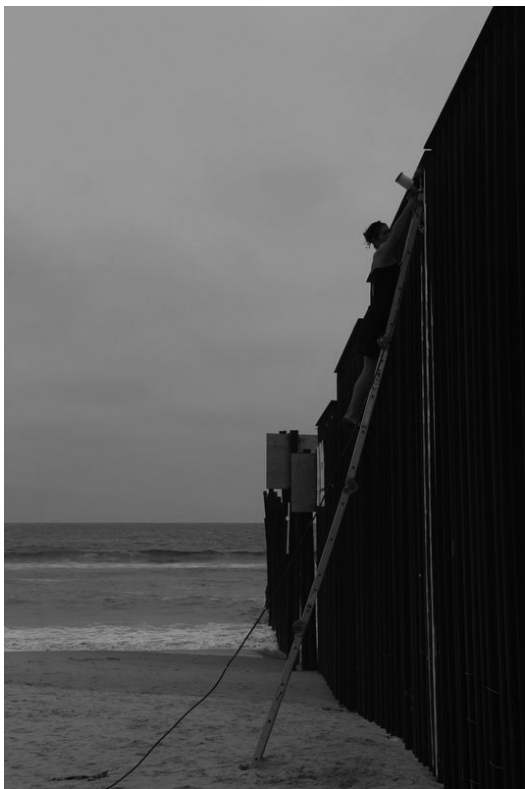
echoic birds & so with predications:

species *spectrum*

ANA TERESA FERNÁNDEZ

Borrando La Frontera / Erasing the Border

San Diego/Tijuana, 2012











Miyó Vestrini

XII (from *Next Winter*)

for Luis Camilo

I get up
I do not get up
I hate
I fuck
I hit a motorcyclist with malice aforethought
I surrender to the Oedipus complex
I wander
I carefully study the differences between dysrhythmia-
psychosis - schizophrenia - neurosis - depression - syndrome - panic
and I'm horny
left alone in the house when everyone is asleep
I buy a magazine that costs six U.S. dollars
they steal my best friend's wallet
they grab me
I push him
I murder him
I remember the umbrella of Amsterdam
and the rain
And the angry gesture
I dedicate myself to drinking to prevent heart attacks
I chew the food fifty times
and I'm bored
and I'm bored
losing weight
gaining weight
losing weight

I give in
I'm not giving in
I sit still and cry
someone takes me in his arms
and tells me "be calm I'm still here"
I stop crying
I hear the wind that blows near the sea, only near [the sea]

I accept that flying cockroaches exist
I find that all my friends treated by psychoanalysts
[have become totally sad totally silly]
I read I Ching and predict I'll have a long life
Life of shit, I say
I join the bandwagon
I throw myself under the bandwagon
I understand for a single trip how much gas is in the tank
they tell me to turn off the light
I turn it off
they ask me, "Is this all right?"
I get crazy
I plead for peace
they fuck with me
I fall asleep up against the bar
I hear the voice of Spanish whenever I shit on god
a guy cries beside me again
they hit me
they hit me hard
there's a full moon
I race down the mountain road
plunder the account
Don't leave me
My chest hurts,
the day is done,
the red win
rien ne va plus

Beatriz

With or without a dick,
there are things that cannot be done
when you start to sweat
or when the prostate hurts.
So Beatriz killed herself
at the age of fifty three.
She did not participate in the grotesque ceremony
of decadent eulogies.
She covered all the mirrors
and put satin sheets on the bed.
She was supposed to die there
neat and fragrant
ignoring the rat who bit her breath away
But she preferred the sofa
where she had fucked the night before
with a professional party boy
rented for the occasion.
She left a list
of mistakes and successes.
Writing is not important, she wrote,
and signed her name in small print,
believing it apocryphal.

One Day of the Week I

When were you born,
in 1938,
Cesar Vallejo died.
When your little head,
your navel,
your virgin cunt,
entered the world
from between the beautiful legs of your mother,
they placed the poet into a hole
they covered it with dirt
and you,
you covered the memory.
You could not choose.
Because if you choose
you live.
and if you live
you enjoy.
But enjoyment is the horrific part of the dream:
sleep will be forever.
There will be a smell of fried peppers,
thundering voices in the bar.
It will be a day of the week,
when furniture change places during the night
and in the mornings,
only the women will speak.
Your nose will be sealed and the right eyebrow
will fall more than the left.
The leveled hips,
bad haircut and body lost
in any shift that hides the fat in your waist.

If you had sad lunatics for grandparents,
it will be reflected in the report
of a responsible official.
They crossed the arms over your chest
and this is fatal,
because you can not
use Afrin
to breathe better.
It was fake that your hugs were convulsive
and your furies unpredictable.
Fake, the glass you burped into as if you were coating it in breadcrumbs.
Fake, your nipples, your red freckles.
Last night you decided:
if I cannot sleep,
I'll choose death.
But you could not have expected the leg of lamb to melt in your mouth,
soft,
milky,
on your tongue.
You could only say:
two childbirths,
ten abortions,
no orgasm.
You took a long sip of wine.
Vallejo also sought a leg of lamb
in the menu of *La Coupole*.
All watched his stupid eyes,
while he could only think in the deaf ears of Beethoven.
He had asked his companion:
Why do not you love me?
What did I do?
Where did I fail?
The sausage in the casserole left grease stains on his shirt.

Like you,
he felt compassion fatigued his body
and I try to guess who will be born on this night,
while trying to fall asleep.
Dying
requires time and patience.

—originally published posthumously, 1991

FORUGH FARROKHZAD

O Bejeweled Realm...

Victory!
Got myself registered.
Decorated an ID card with my name and face,
and my existence took on a number.
So, long live number 678, precinct 5, Tehran.

No more worries, now I can relax
in my motherland's bosom,
suckle on our past glory,
lulled by lullabies of progress and culture
and the jingle jangle of the laws' rattle.
Ah yes, no more worries...

In excitement I go to the window,
breathe in 678 lungs-full of air smelling
of shit, garbage, and piss,
and under 678 IOUs and job applications
I sign my name: *Forugh Farrokhzad*.

What a blessing to live
in the land of poetry, roses, and nightingales
when one's existence is at last noted;
a land where from behind the curtains
my first registered glimpse spies 678 poets—
scoundrels who in the guise of eccentric bums
scrounge about trash bins for words and rhymes;
a land where the sound of my first official footsteps

rouses into lazy flight from dark swamps
and into the edge of day
678 mystic nightingales who for sheer fun
have transformed into old crows;
a land where my first official breath
mingles with the smell of 678 roses
manufactured in the grand Plasco Plastic factory.

Yes, it's a blessing to exist
in the birthplace of the junkie fiddler Sheik Abu Clown,
and Sheik "O-heart O-heart" Tambourine Player—
vagrant son of a son of son of a tambourine player—
in the city of superstar portly legs, hips, and breasts
plastered on the covers of *ART*;
in the cradle of the espousers of "Let it be,
what has it to do with me?"
and of Olympic-style intelligence competitions
where on every media channel
new prodigies blow their own horns.
A land where when the nation's elected intelligentsia
puts in an appearance in adult classes, they tote
678 faddish electric kebab grills in their arms
and wear 678 Rolex watches on their wrists
because they know power comes from
wealth in wallets, not in minds.

Victory, yes, victory!
And now in honor of my triumph, proudly I will light
before the mirror 678 candles bought on credit,
and I will hop on the window ledge to deliver a few words—
with your permission of course—
on the benefits of a legal existence; and I will lift
the groundbreaking axe of my freshly elevated life

and to thundering applause
cleave the crown of my own head.

I am alive,
yes,
alive like the Zende River, which once also lived,
and I will snatch what I can from the world of the living.

From tomorrow on, I can stroll in the city streets
overflowing with nationalistic love,
walk among the lampposts' weightless shadows,
and on the walls of public toilets pen with pride 678 times:
I WRITE THIS TO DARE JACKASSES TO LAUGH.

From tomorrow on, like a bold patriot, I can cherish
and frantically follow the Wednesday afternoon lottery,
hoping for a share in its one thousand *rials* and whims—
a refrigerator, a couch, new curtains, or 678 naturalized votes
bought in the dark and donated to 678 patriotic men.

From tomorrow on, I can snort a few grams
of a first rate product in Khachick's backroom,
consume a few glasses of impure Pepsi,
and after a few *Ya Allahs*, *Hallelujahs*,
whoof whoofs, and *moo moos*,
officially join the ranks of high-minded literati,
intelligentsia's cream of the crop, and the followers
of the oompah oompah school; and my first masterpiece novel
will be officially printed by a bankrupt press
some time in the Tabrizi Solar Year 1678—
the plot noted on both sides of 678 packets
of Genuine Quality *Oshnu* cigarettes.
From tomorrow on, I can with complete confidence

invite myself to 678 velvet-upholstered sessions
of secure-your-own-future Parliament,
or kiss-the-royal-hand Senate,
because I've read every issue of *ART & SCIENCE*—
and every edition of *SCHMOOZING & SUCKING UP*—
and have learned how to “skillfully” write.

Now part of a constructive tide, I've stepped into existence,
one whose amazing technological advances have ushered us
to synthesized clouds and neon lights—
all research, of course, conducted at the chicken-kebab stands.

Now part of a constructive tide, I've stepped into existence,
one that although it pays no bread, yet
it affords us vast, glorious vistas—
to the north: the invigorating green of the Bullet Park,
to the south: the ancient Execution Square,
the skyline stretching to the congested sections
where the Artillery Circle stands.

From morning to night, under the canopy
of a safe and shimmering sky, 678 plump plaster swans
and 678 angels— not just any angels...
ones made of genuine earth and clay—
busily advertise projects of silence and stability.

Victory, yes, victory!
Long live number 678, register of precinct 5, Tehran,
who through sheer will and hard work
has reached such lofty station that she now stands
on a ledge 678 meters high and has the privilege
of deliciously diving down towards her motherland,
without the use of the stairs.

Her last will and testament is only that for 678 coins
his highness Master Poet Ebrahim Sahba honors her existence
by penning an elegy that rhymes with bullshit.

— Tehran, 1964

Translator's Notes

Bejeweled Realm — *Marz-i por Ghoobar*, in Persian, refers to the motherland Iran, and was a term used in the national anthem during the Pahlavi era.

ID card — Iran adopted a birth registration law in 1976 stipulating that all births had to be registered within 15 days. Before 1976, many did not register their children. These children later were obliged to register themselves in order to apply for a passport or for other national services.

678 mystic nightingales who for sheer fun/ have transformed into old crows — Here the poet is perhaps referring to the erudite men who in the early part of the 20th century became members of the newly formed Majlis (Parliament) in order to bring democracy to Iran. As members of the Majlis, these men had to wear suits—an image reminiscent of penguins in the Western culture. However, penguins were unfamiliar to many Iranians at the time and therefore the poet used the more familiar image of crows.

Plasco factory — Plasco was a five story building located in Ferdowsi Square, Tehran. Its first few floors were a factory where plastic products such as sieves, bowls, and watering cans were manufactured. These items had come to replace their copper and china counterparts imported from other parts of the world, and were often sold by wandering merchants who traditionally sold salt or produce from the backs of their donkeys.

Junkie fiddler Sheik Abu Clown — *Abu* means “father of”. The poet is using the word: *kamancheh kesh* which basically means one who plays *Kamancheh*, a stringed instrument which can be likened to a fiddle. But by adding *kesh* to *kamancheh*, she is saying that the musician is an amateur and not a very good one at that.

Sheik “O-heart O-heart” Tambourine Player — Here the poet is poking fun at the sheiks who although they attended religious schools, nevertheless could not get away from their family trade. In this case, the reference is to one of generations of vagrant tambourine players who wandered the streets singing *aye del aye del*, which literally means, “O heart, O heart”. Farrokhzad is also playing with words here. The son of a vagrant music player is often referred to as *bacheh motreb*. The term also means “one who gives ass”—not a homosexual, but a prostitute. Additionally, it was generally assumed that boys who went to religious schools to become sheiks, were sometimes forced into anal sex.

The cradle of the espousers of: *Let it be, / what has it to do with me?* — The prevalent passive tendency of the pacifist intellectuals of the time, who “removed” themselves from their surroundings.

Electric Kebab Grill — Traditionally kebabs were prepared over coal. But these electric gadgets suddenly became the rave in Tehran, and they were advertised relentlessly. Possessing one became a status symbol.

Zendeh River — At one point known as Zayandeh Rood, Zendeh Rood literally means “living river”. It is a snow-fed River on which the Shah Abbas Dam was constructed in the mid-1960. Although the presence of the dam reduced flood damage and provided hydroelectric power for regional industrial development, it also resulted in diminished water flow and in secondary salinization in the lower part of the Basin.

I WRITE THIS TO DARE JACKASSES TO LAUGH — This is a line usually followed by: *gooz-eh kâteb beh reesh-eh khânandeh* which means, “The author farts in the reader’s beard.” Perhaps the point Farrokhzad is making here is that the reader may laugh at what she has written, but it is because the reader does not understand, and she couldn’t give a damn about it.

Khachik's backroom — Khachik is an Armenian name, and at the time many of the liquor stores in Iran were owned by the Armenians. At the back of many of these liquor stores were rooms where the clientele could relax, smoke and drink.

Impure Pepsi — Pepsi with Vodka

Tabrizi solar year — In Persian, *shamsi* means solar, as opposed to *ghamari*, which is lunar. Tabriz is a city in Iran. Farrokhzad is playing with words here, hinting at Shams-e-Tabrizi, the Iranian mystic Sufi who initiated Rumi into Islamic mysticism and was immortalized by Rumi in his collection of poems, *Diwan-i Shams-i Tabriz-i*. She is poking fun at how every writer seems to seek a Shams of his own.

“The plot noted on both sides of 678 packets/ of Genuine Quality Oshnu cigarettes” — A famous and respected Iranian Novelist, Sadeq Hedayat, was in the habit of frequenting Café Naderi with his friends. When inspired, he would write the plot of his stories on the back of cigarette packets.

Plaster swans and mud angels — At the time, there was abundant statuary in Tehran and in this poem they connote silence, as in a place where people are like the mute statues, never speaking against the political and social status quo.

Ebrahim Sahba — A popular poet in the 1960s Iran who wrote in verse and could write rhyming poems on the spot on any given topic. He imagined himself a superior poet to Farrokhzad, but was in fact ridiculed by the literati of the time.

Penning an elegy that rhymes with bullshit — *Kashk* in Persian can be translated as “bullshit.” *Kashk* is salty dried whey to which water is added and is then rubbed until it melts by oozing and forming a thick liquid. To achieve this, much rubbing is required. Another term, not mentioned in the poem but important to understand is *Khayeh māl*. It is a term commonly used to describe one who bullshits or flatters (literally it means one who rubs another person's balls.) So the idea here is not the whey substance, but the act of rubbing.

JOAQUIM DE SOUSÂNDRADE

The Wall Street Inferno

(excerpts)

- 1 (GUESA, having traversed the WEST INDIES, believes himself rid
of the XEQUES and penetrates the NEW-YORK-STOCK-EXCHANGE;
the VOICE, from the wilderness:)
– Orpheus, Dante, Aeneas, to hell
Descended; the Inca shall ascend
 = *Ogni sp'ranza lasciate,*
 Che entrate...
– Swedenborg, does fate new worlds portend?
- 2 (Smiling Xequés appear disguised as Railroad-*managers*,
 Stockjobbers, Pimpbrokers, etc., etc., crying out:)
– Harlem! Erie! Central! Pennsylvania!
= Million! Hundred million!! Billions!! Pelf!!!
 – Young is Grant! Jackson,
 Atkinson!
Vanderbilts, Jay Goulds like elves!
- 3 (The Voice, poorly heard amidst the commotion:)
– Fulton's *Folly*, Codezo's *Forgery*...
Fraud cries the nation's bedlam
 They grasp no odes
 Railroads;
Wall Street's parallel to Chatham...

- 4 (Brokers going on:)
- Pygmies, Brown Brothers! Bennett! Stewart!
 Rothschild and that Astor with red hair!!
 = Giants, slaves
 If only nails gave
 Out streams of light, if they would end despair!..
- 5 (NORRIS, *Attorney*; CODEZO, *inventor*; YOUNG, ESQ., *manager*; ATKINSON
agent; ARMSTRONG, *agent*; RHODES, *agent*; P. OFFMAN & VOLD, *agents*;
 hubbub, mirage; in the middle, GUESA:)
- Two! Three! Five thousand! If you play
 Five million, Sir, will you receive
 = He won! Hah! Haah!! Haaah!!!
 – Hurrah! Ah!...
 – They vanished... Were they thieves?..
- 6 (J. MILLER atop the roofs of the *Tammany wigwam* unfurling the Garibaldian
 mande;)
- Bloodthirsties! Sioux! Oh Modocs!
 To the White House! Save the Nation,
 From the Jews! From the hazardous
 Goth's Exodus!
 From immoral conflagration!
-
- 100 (*Reporters.*)
- Norris, Connecticut's *blue* laws!
 Clevelands, attorney-Cujás,
 Into zebras constrained
 Ordained,

- 101 Two by two, to one hundred Barabbas!
 (Friends of the lost kings:)
 — *Humbug* of *railroads* and the telegraph,
 The fire of heaven I wished wide and far
 To steal, set the world ablaze
 And above it raise
 Forever the *Spangled Star*!
- 102 (A rebellious sun founding a planetary center:)
 — ‘George Washington, etc. etc.,
 Answer the Royal-George-Third. Depose!
 = Lord Howe, tell him, do
 I’m royal too...
 (And they broke the Englishman’s nose).
- 103 (Satellites greeting Jove’s rays:)
 — ‘Greetings from the universe to its queen’..
 As for bail, the Patriarchs give a boon...
 (With a liberal king,
 A worse thing,
 They founded the empire of the moon).
- 104 (*Reporters*:)
 — A sorry role on earth they play,
 Kings and poets, heaven’s aristocracy
 (And Strauss, waltzing)
 Singing
 At the Hippodrome or Jubilee.

- 105 (Brokers finding the cause of the Wall Street market crash:)
 – *Exeunt* Sir Pedro, Sir Grant,
 Sir Guesa, seafaring brave:
 With gold tillers they endure
 The Moor,
 Appeased by the turbulent waves.
- 106 (International procession, the people of Israel, Orangians, Fenians,
 Buddhists, Mormons, Communists, Nihilists, Penitents,
Railroad-Strikers, All-brokers, All-jobbers, All-saints, All-devils,
 lanterns, music, excitement; Reporters: in LONDON
 the QUEEN's 'murderer' passes by and
 in PARIS 'Lot' the fugitive from SODOM:)
 – In the Holy Spirit of slaves
 A single Emperor's renowned
 In that of the free, verse
 Reverse,
 Everything as Lord is crowned!
- 107 (KING ARTHUR's witches and FOSTER THE SEER on WALPURGIS by day:)
 – *When the battle's lost and won—*
 – *That will be ere the set of sun—*
 – *Paddock calls: Anon!—*
 – *Fair is foul, and foul is fair:*
Hover through the fog and filthy air!
- 108 (SWEDENBORG answering later:)
 – Future worlds exist: republics,
 Christianity, heavens, Lohengrin.
 Present worlds are latent:

Patent,
Vanderbilt-North, South-Seraphim.
109 (At the roar of JERICHO, HENDRICK HUDSON runs aground; the
INDIANS sell the haunted island of MANHATTAN
to the DUTCH:)
– The Half-Moon, prow toward China
Is careening in Tappan-Zee...
Hoogh moghende Heeren...
Take then
For sixty *guilders* ... *Yeah! Yeah!*

110 (*Photophone-stylographs* sacred right to self-defense:)
– In the light the humanitarian voice:
Not hate; rather conscience, intellection;
Not pornography
Isaiah's prophecy
In Biblical vivisection!

.....

117 (Freeloves proceeding to vote for their husbands:)
– Among Americans, Emerson alone,
Wants no Presidents, oh atrocious he!
= Oh well-adjudicated,
States
Improve for you, for us, for me!

118 (APOCALYPTIC visions... slanderous ones:)
– For, 'the Beast having bear's feet,'

In God we trust is the Dragon
And the false prophets
Bennetts
Tone, th' Evolutionist and Theologian!

.....

- 173 (WASHINGTON 'blinding because of them'; POCAHONTAS without *personals*:)
— To starving bears, a rabid dog!
Be it! After the feast, bring in festoons!..
= Tender Lulu,
Crying and you
Give honey to 'foes', bee?... and sting poltroons?
- 174 (Guatemalan nose, curved into HYMENEE's torch; DAME-RYDER
heart on the poisoned window-panes of the '*too dark*' wedding pudding:)
— '*Caramba! yo soy cirujano*—
A Jesuit... Yankee... industrialism'!
= *Job*... or haunted cavern,
Tavern,
'Byron' animal-magnetism!..
- 175 (Practical swindlers doing their business; *self-help* ATTA-TROLL:)
— Let the foreigner fall helpless,
As usury won't pay, the pagan!
= An ear to the bears a feast,
Caressing beasts,
Mahmmuhmmah, mahmmuhmmah, Mammon.

176 (Magnetic *handle-organ*; *ring* of bears sentencing the architect of the
 PHARSALIA to death; an Odyssean ghost amidst the flames of
 Albion's fires:)
 Bear... Bear is beriberi, Bear... Bear...
 = Mahmmuhmmah, mahmmuhmmah, Mammon!
 – Bear... Bear... ber'... Pegasus
 Parnassus
 = Mahmmuhmmah, mahmmuhmmah, Mammon.

(1888)

TRANSLATED BY STELLA M. DE SÁ REGO

OSWALD DE ANDRADE

Manifesto of Pau-Brasil Poetry

Poetry exists in the facts. The shacks of saffron and ochre in the green of the Favela, under cabralin blue, are aesthetic facts.

Carnival in Rio is the religious event of our race. Pau-Brasil. Wagner is submerged before the carnival lines of Botafogo. Barbarous and ours. The rich ethnic formation. Vegetal riches. Ore. Cuisine. *Vatapá*, gold and dance.

All the pioneering and commercial history of Brazil. The academic aspect, the side of citations, of well-known authors. Impressive. Rui Barbosa: a top hat in Senegambia. Transforming everything into riches. The richness of balls and of well-turned phrases. Negresses at the jockey club. Odalisques in Catumbi. Fancy talk.

The academic side. Misfortune of the first white brought over, politically dominating the wild wilderness. The alumnus. We can't help being erudite. Doctors of philosophy. Country of anonymous ills, of anonymous doctors. The Empire was like that. We made everything erudite. We forgot ingenuity.

Never the exportation of poetry. Poetry went hidden in the malicious vines of learning. In the *lianas* of academic nostalgia.

But there was an explosion in our knowledge. The men who knew it all inflated like overblown balloons. They burst.

The return to specialization. Philosophers making philosophy, critics criticism, housewives taking care of the kitchen.

Poetry for poets. The happiness of those who don't know and discover.

There was an inversion of everything, an invasion of everything: the theatre of ideas and the on-stage struggle between the moral and immoral. The thesis should be decided in a battle of sociologists, men of law, fat and gilded like Corpus Juris.

Agile theatre, child of the acrobat. Agile and illogical. Agile novel, born of invention. Agile poetry.

Pau-Brasil poetry. Agile and candid. Like a child.

A suggestion of Blaise Cendrars: you have the train loaded, ready to leave. A negro churns the crank of the turn-table beneath you. The slightest carelessness and you will leave in the opposite direction to your destination.

Down with officialdom, the cultivated exercise of life. Engineers instead of legal advisors, lost like the Chinese in the genealogy of ideas.

Language without archaisms, without erudition. Natural and neologic. The millionaire-contribution of all the errors. The way we speak. The way we are.

There is no conflict in academic vocations. Only ceremonial robes. The futurists and the others.

A single struggle—the struggle for the way. Let's make the division: imported Poetry. And Pau-Brasil Poetry, for exportation.

There has been a phenomenon of aesthetic democratization in the five enlightened parts of the world. Naturalism was instituted. Copy. A picture of sheep that didn't really give wool was good for nothing. Interpretation, in the oral dictionary of the Schools of Fine Arts, meant reproduce exactly... Then came pyrogravure. Young ladies from every home became artists. The camera appeared. And with all the prerogatives of unkempt hair and the mysterious genius of the upturned eye—the photographic artist.

In music, the piano invaded the bare sitting-rooms, calendars on the wall.

All the young ladies became pianists. Then came the barrel organ, the pianola. The player-piano. And the Slavic irony composed for the player-piano. Stravinsky.

Statuary followed behind. The processions issued brand-new from the factories.

The only thing that wasn't invented was a machine to make verses—the Parnassian poet already existed.

So, the revolution only indicated that art returned to the elite. And the elite began taking it to pieces. Two stages: 1st) deformation through impressionism, fragmentation, voluntary chaos. From Cézanne and Mallarmé, Rodin and Debussy until today. 2nd) lyricism, the presentation in the temple, materials, constructive innocence.

Brazil *profiteur*. Brazil *doutor*. And the coincidence of the first Brazilian construction in the general movement of reconstruction. Pau-Brasil poetry.

As the age is miraculous, laws were born from the dynamic rotation of destructive factors.

Synthesis

Equilibrium

Automotive finish

Invention

Surprise

A new perspective

A new scale

Whatever natural force in this direction will be good. Pau-Brasil poetry.

The reaction against naturalistic detail—through *synthesis*; against romantic morbidity—through geometric *equilibrium* and technical *finish*; against copy, through *invention* and *surprise*.

A new perspective.

The other, Paolo Ucello's, led to the apogee of naturalism. It was an optical illusion. The distant objects didn't diminish. It was the law of appearance. Now is the moment of reaction against appearance. Reaction against copy. Replacing visual and naturalistic perspective with a perspective of another order: sentimental, intellectual, ironic, ingenuous.

A new scale:

The other, of a world proportioned and catalogued with letters in books, children in laps. Advertisements producing letters bigger than towers. And New forms of industry, of transportation, of aviation. Gas stations. Gas meters. Railways. Laboratories and technical workshops. Voices and tics of wires and waves and flashes. Stars made familiar through photographic negatives. The correspondent of physical surprise in art.

Reaction against the invader subject, unlike finality. The theatre of ideas was a monstrous arrangement. The novel of ideas, a mixture. History painting, an aberration. Eloquent sculpture, a meaningless horror.

Our age announces the return to *pure meaning*.

A picture is lines and colors. A statue is volumes under light.

Pau-Brasil Poetry is a Sunday dining room with birds singing in the condensed forest of cages, a thin fellow composing a waltz for flute and Mary Lou reading the newspaper. The present is all there in the newspaper.

No formula for the contemporary expression of the world. *See with open eyes*.

We have a dual and actual base — the forest and the school. The credulous and dualistic race and geometry, algebra and chemistry soon after the baby-bottle and anise tea. A mixture of "sleep little baby or the bogey man will get you" and equations.

A vision to encompass the cylinders of mills, electric turbines, factories, questions of foreign exchange, without losing sight of the National Museum.

Pau-Brasil.

Elevator-projectiles, sky-scraper cubes and solar indolence's wise flush. Prayer. Carnival. Intimate energy. The song-thrush. Hospitality, slightly sensual, affectionate. The yearning for shamans, and the military airfields. Pau-Brasil.

The labor of the futurist generation was cyclopean. To reset the Imperial watch of national literature.

This step realized, the problem is other. To be regional and pure in our time.

The state of innocence replacing the state of grace that can be an attitude of the spirit.

The counter-weight of native originality to neutralize academic conformity.

Reaction against all the indigestions of erudition. The best of our lyric tradition. The best of our modern demonstration.

Merely Brazilians of our time. The necessary of chemistry, mechanics, economy and ballistics. Everything assimilated. Without cultural meetings. Practical. Experimental. Poets. Without bookish reminiscences. Without supporting comparisons. Without ontology.

Barbarous, credulous, picturesque and tender. Readers of newspapers. Pau-Brasil. The forest and the school. The National Museum. Cuisine, ore and dance. Vegetation. Pau-Brasil.

—*Correio da Manhã*, March 18, 1924

JEAN-JOSEPH RABEARIVÉLO
from Translated from the Night

12

For the paupers
preyed upon by bugs as large as the sky,
for the exiles who wander,
coming from the city of light,
and for the rebels and deserters
of the shadowy army rising from the earth,
what are they after, these surges
of countless palm trees
gleaming like so many shafts of spears
polished with plant oils,
that soar up immobile
and pass beyond all the houses
until their tops,
resonant with the dreams of ringdoves,
reach to the roof of the world?

They undulate there, they push each other,
then shed their leaves,
but do not return among the living,
and gather together in the desert of stars
and become countless huts
for beggars without beds,
for captives clothed in only their bare skin
reeking of dust,
and for all the birds without nests
who will be freed together.

All the seasons are abolished
in these unexplored zones,
which occupy half the world
and adorn it with flowerings unknown
and of no climate.

A thrust of provisional vegetable blood
within an entanglement of dark lianas,
wherein is captive all the élan of living branches.
Rout of birds become strangers
and no longer recognizing their nest,
then wings collide – lightning –
against the crags of mist
surging from the soil
which is neither hot nor cold
like the skin of those who lay themselves down
far from life and from death.

Here

the one whose eyes are prisms of sleep
and whose eyelids are heavy with dreams,
the one whose feet are planted in the sea
and whose glutinous hands emerge from it
laden with coral and blocks of sparkling salt.

She will place them in little piles
by a foggy gulf
and sell them to naked sailors
who have had their tongues cut out,
until the rain begins to fall.

She will no longer be visible then,
and we will see nothing but
her hair dispersed by the wind;
like a ball of seaweed which unwinds itself,
and perhaps as well,
some grains of insipid salt.

You delude yourself,
you who don the air of a little bird
astray in a snowy forest that reaches
as far as the breast of Tagore,
of Whitman and James
who replace the Christ hanging over your bed,
since it isn't the oldness of the world
nor that of day so many thousands of times over
which caresses now its beard white
and thick as oblivion,
like hope and like the haze of torrid mornings
over there, above all the mountains,
an astrologer consulting the stars
and smoking a clay pipe,
it is its youth, O my child,
its eternal youth:
metamorphosis
(perhaps by the grace of songs of the poets you prefer,
who create a religion for you
within this silence without end
peopled with columns and streams,
with the living and the dead)
it is no more than the shadow of all things past
and hears nothing but the sole present.

They are innumerable rusted hands,
– waves, shadows, fumes –
that weed and layer
in a thicket of raspberry bushes,
overrun by grasses the height of giants
from which nothing emerges but blind birds.

What will they reap, once weary?
What will there be between
their fingers of wind?
The soft dark berries
in the prime of their redness
have already become countless mushrooms
on the banks of that river without canoeists
to take on board all these baskets
of nocturnal fruits.

— Antananarivo, 1935

from *Translated from the Night*, Lascaux Editions, 2007.

SHAHRNUSH PARSIPUR

The Blue Spring of Katmandu

The window in my room overlooks a large garden with a well and a green stretch of poppies and petunias. Sometimes I see the owner of the garden pulling the weeds. From a distance he seems old. He wears blue overalls and works on the flowers while wearing gloves. He cuts the hedges, pulls the weeds, and waters the lawn. And when he is done he takes off his gloves, sits on the bench by the gravel road, and looks at the lilies floating in the pond.

My room is a very nice room. It has a big window facing the garden and another opening onto busy crowded street. Everyday the sun is a guest of my room's mosaic floor covering it until noontime. Somehow I have this silly notion that if I sit by the window overlooking the street, I will see lovers pass by hand in hand. Of course, through guess and presumption the condition of being in love can be projected onto passersby. Here people do not kiss each other on busy streets, nor do they walk hand in hand in public. Perhaps they would do so in very narrow and uncrowded streets. But our street, of course, is wide and full of speeding cars. I always think that somehow two blocks away from our house everybody is in love. But, Of course, that is an altogether silly thought.

My room is a very nice room. The walls are blue, and the garden can be seen in the mirror. The ceiling is white, very white, and there are four cherubs, one of which has a broken nose, in each of it four corners—cute, chubby cherubs with no pupils in their eyes. I have put a table and chair next to the garden window, and I eat my lunch and dinner there. My bed is in the northeast corner of the room along the street-side window ... and there is

a corpse in it. He has a regal countenance and skin that has turned amber in death. This man has been dead ever since I can remember. He is tall and broad-shouldered with graceful mustache. He has a copper crown—rough on the surface—its prongs shaped like the parapets of ancient castle. It covers half of his salt and paper hair and part of his high yellow forehead. His clothes are made of satin, his robe of red velvet. The hem of the robe is embroidered with white thread in the shape of lilies. The person who made the robe did not have very good taste. The lilies are not identical, and the hem is threadbare. The dead man has a silver ring with a big turquoise stone. The ring has become black with age. His relatively long fingernails are dirty. The skin of his fingers is wrinkled. And though his face looks fifty, he is much older than that.

I exercise when I wake up in the morning. I stand before the garden window and exercise—light, free, and liberating movements. I take deep breaths, and, when I get out of the shower, the sound of the samovar boiling has already filled the room. Then I drink my tea on the table by my window and look at the flowers in the garden. Sometimes I watch the cockroaches climb up the legs of the bed and disappear inside the man's velvet robe.

I used to sleep next to the man on the bed. But I could never change the bottom sheet; moving the corpse was too difficult for me. He has such a forbidding appearance that one does not dare to touch him. So I could only cover half of the bed with clean linen. Sometimes in the middle of the night, I used to wake up and find myself close to the man with my hand on his chest. It seemed to me that the man was staring at the ceiling.

The cockroaches were the worst. Sometimes one would lose its way from under the man's robe and come to my side of the bed. And when I would move my arm or take a deep breath, it would pause for a moment then flee in haste. I would feel its footsteps for a while on my arm. What an awful feeling! Later I bought leather reclining chair and put by the window next to the table. I have been sleeping there for a long time now.

I feed the canaries every morning and dust the room until it shines all over. But I can't do anything about the cockroaches. Their number increase every day. I bought poison and cautiously poured it under the man's robe. But it didn't help.

So, that is the work I do before lunch time.

Again I sit by the garden window, and while I eat I look at the noontime garden. It looks damp and humid. The idleness of the afternoon begins. Sometimes I take a nap, and other times I walk on my tiptoes around the room. Sometimes I knit, and sometimes I fix the holes in the man's robe. Then, in the afternoon, the newspaper boy comes and rings the doorbell. I know his ring, two shorts and one long one. Immediately I lower the basket down the window, and the boy puts the paper in it.

"Have they caught the murderers?" I ask shouting down to him. "They captured one. The rest haven't been found yet," he replies. The newspaper boy and I both admire the murderers, but we never express it to each other. They say that would not be nice. The newspaper is a real nice thing. One could say that if the paper didn't exist the paperboy wouldn't have existed either, and that if the paperboy didn't exist, neither would the whole world. I don't really know what's going on out there. Sometimes I hear cars blowing their horns. I see people coming and going and cannot even find out if they are in love or not. The newspaper is full of people. People buy stocks. People kiss each other before the cameras and get their photo printed in the paper. A group of them goes to war. With the paper I go around the world, to Chile and Bolivia. In the jungles of Bolivia—to be safe from poison ivy and mosquitoes—I spread the paper on the ground, lie down on it, and watch the sweaty green trees overhead with the yellow sap flowing down their trunks and becoming brown at the bottom. Ducking so as not get shot by bullets flying overhead, I hold the paper in my hand and swim across the Suez Canal. The Canal looks the same as in the poster for the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*. I play on a slide in Siberia,

and in Vietnam I dress the wounds of the injured and cover them with the newspaper. Such is the newspaper. Sometimes I talk to the newspaper boy before I buy it. One day near the end of spring, I remember asking him, "What new in the bazaar?"

"Black cherries have just come into season," he responded.

"Will you get me some?" I asked and threw the money down to him. The boy got me a bag full of black cherries and sent them up in the basket.

"Do you want to come upstairs?" Suddenly it occurred to me to ask. He nodded and walked toward the door. I hauled on the chains connected to the door and started to wash the cherries. As the boy's footsteps were getting closer, my movement grew faster and the samovar boiled harder. Then I saw the boy's shy face through the half open doors. For a while he looked at me with curiosity and timidity, as I watched him and his changing emotions. It had been a long time since I had seen a human being up close. He had a red face like somebody from the mountains, and his plump cheeks were still chapped from the weather a few days ago. His eyes were hazel, and his brown hair covered his forehead. He looked like the cherubs in the corner of the ceiling, the only difference being the blood circulating under his cheeks. This you could see without any difficulty.

"Come and sit over there," I said. Awkwardly he walked toward the chair, sat on it, and with curious eyes looked at the cherubs.

"They look like you, don't they?" I remarked. He blushed and turned toward the garden. Smiling at him, I put the cherry basket before him and sat in a way that would block his view of the corpse. Droplets of water were rolling down the cherries and their bright color had an incredible sheen. As a matter of fact, everything seemed incredible as I began to think that if I could somehow get two blocks away, I would positively find people in love—positively.

“Do you like murderers?” I asked. He nodded.

“Me too, and if they need help I would hide them in my house ... Do you know them?” I asked eagerly. He shook his head and suddenly saw the corpse. He froze, and it felt as if the samovar suddenly stopped boiling. I said, “Perhaps once in the old days, he too was murderer, and if you and I had been around we could have loved him.”

“Forgive me for coming in with dirty shoes...” he said, with his eyes frozen on the corpse.

“It doesn’t matter, now eat some cherries,” I interrupted, pushing the basket toward him. Then I went to the other window to get some damn thing or another and when I turned around, he was gone.

I said all this to explain why one could sometimes feel so depressed. Of course, sometimes nobody comes to visit and one gets very lonely. Some other times one doesn’t want a visitor, but still feel depressed. I sometimes get like that and sit on the couch for hours watching my big toe move, or I pace the room. And I have to confess that even the newspaper can do nothing for me in such an unhappy condition—whichever country one goes to there’s a long and wide street named after the leader of that country and then there’s a big square with a large statue of him in the middle. It is in this way that monotony depresses a person. A depression such as this hit me at the sunset of the day I went to Katmandu. The previous evening I had read something about Katmandu in the paper, something about its temples. Katmandu has so many temples. I went to sleep that night, woke up and cleaned the room in the morning, had breakfast, made lunch and ate it. Then I had a ridiculous, boring afternoon watching my toe for a thousand hours and occasionally wiggling it. Eventually boredom gave way to hallucination, and I went to Katmandu. Katmandu was on top of a tall mountain and from a distance its temples’ towers seemed to touch the clouds. Along with other people, I was hiking up a road. The newspaper

columnist had forgotten to write how long it took to reach the city via the road. In fact, he had completely forgotten about the road. It was a vague, complicated, and mountainous road, for Katmandu is a city in the mountain. It was noontime and very humid. My whole body was sweaty, and the city looked like a mirage in the distance. Then we reached it. It was the same as I could have imagined it to be. I can never pay attention to details. I don't feel like doing that when I'm outside my home. Katmandu had a major street named after the king, and at the end of that street there was a square with his statue in it. The columnist was correct in saying that the city had many temples. I visited a few and then went to a temple with a large stone-paved yard. Grass had grown in between the cobblestones. The temple had a blue dome and a few towers. The people's faces were hazy and unclear. Actually, I didn't enter any temples. I only entered their courtyards. I imagined that they were burning incense inside, and that a man was sitting at a corner chanting and that perhaps a few corpses were sitting, waiting inside the shrine for burial ceremonies. Perhaps there were things like that inside the temple. I lay down on the stone-paved floor. I was very tired, and the newspaper in my hands was sweaty. Above my head there was the blue dome of Katmandu's afternoon sky, the ceiling of my prison and temple. The sky was very blue, and in the west streaks of sunlight penetrated down, and the composition of the blue of the sky and the blue of the temple's domes and the sunlight made white streak that sometimes arched to the middle of the sky. And in such a state I fell asleep in Katmandu.

— Tehran, 1969

from *Tea Ceremony in the Presence of the Wolf* (Nur Roy, 2011)

TRANSLATED BY PIERRE JORIS

HABIB TENGOUR

Maghribi Surrealism

SURREALISM IN THE MAGHRIB
SURREALIST MAGHRIB
THE MAGHRIBIAN SURREALISTS
MAGHRIBIAN SURREALITY
THE SURREALIST REVOLUTION IN THE MAGHRIB
SURREALIST MAGHRIB PRESS SERVICE
SURREALISM IN THE SERVICE OF THE MAGHRIB
Etc.

- Given an audience of intelligent participants
- Into a red chechia without a ponytail place nine ping-pong balls numbered from 1 to 9.
- Shake the chechia for the one minute needed to create silence.
- Draw a ball.
- The number on it determines the title of the essay.
...except that, well, the balls have disappeared.
Which proves that a chechia is as good as a top hat.

The Maghribian, *“that inveterate dreamer, daily more discontent with his destiny, has trouble assessing the objects he has been led to use”* (objects that are not very numerous, one has to add, because a subtle lack surrounds his gaze and turns him away from “real life”), *“objects that his nonchalance has brought his way, or that he has earned through his own efforts, almost always*

through his own efforts, for he has agreed to work, at least he has not refused to try his luck (or what he calls his luck!).” This luck is not a Straight Way: it is uncertainty—like the piece of clothing one no longer takes the pains to mend. However, he values this luck he has awaited at the end of a cold weapon, he hopes for at a border crossing. For its sake he has accepted all kinds of exile. *“At this point he feels extremely modest,”* but nobody should be fooled: it is a loaded silence!

Who is this Maghribian? How to define him?

“The woods are white or black”—despite the gone-to-earth nuances. Today definition impassions because of its implications. A domain for going astray. Political jealousy far away from the exploded sense of the true.

Indeed there does exist a divided space called the Maghrib but the Maghribian is always elsewhere. And that is where he fulfills himself.

Jugurtha lacked money to buy Rome.

Tariq gave his name to a Spanish mountain.

Ibn Khaldun found himself obliged to hand over his steed to Tamerlane.

Abd el Krim corresponded with the Third International.

...

An excessive taste for history and controversy chains him ironically to a hastily exploited hagiography. As to the Tragic, he only grasps its throbbing and banal spark. He turns his back on the sea and mistrusts the sun, knowing its terrible burns. *“The mere word freedom is the only one that still excites him. (...) It doubtlessly satisfies [his] only legitimate aspiration.”*

“There remains madness.” Around here it is common. It circulates. Sometimes it gets locked up, by accident. For the rest of the time one prefers to tame it in order to enjoy it in the margins of the NORM. Because from very early on everyone learns how best to exploit it. Knowing that *“hallucinations, illusions, etcetera, are not a source of trifling pleasure.”*...

I council the reasonable man to go sit by the river and he will see pass by all the madmen he ever wanted to meet; provided that he live long enough.

All Maghribians know the subversive power of madness; their artists (with rare exceptions) know it less well than they do, as shown by the sugary and luke warm use they make of it in their works trying to compel the unbearable limits of a dailyness so difficult to bear.

The madman, the mahbûl, the medjnûn, the dervish, the makhbût, the msaqqaf, the mtaktak, etcetera, belongs to folklore, alas. This reduction reveals the narrowness of the outlook.

It happens, however, that the jerky flood of fire and mud illuminates the word: *Nedjma* bears witness to this just as some of Khaïr-Eddine's bursts carry its disorder.

On the screen, madness remains a moving picture. Maghribian moviemakers—the Algerians in particular—are seduced by the image of the madman: he is thought to speak what had been silenced. In most cases we are dealing with postcard-madmen (colonial exoticism was fond of this sort of postcards), boring and pompous. Zinet's in *Tahia ya Didou* does grab me, maybe because of its naïve clumsiness.

...

Of the dream and the marvelous, the Maghribian knows the weight: it is a nod of the head and a long sigh.

In the morning the one who has dreamed tells someone close: I had a dream. Then shuts up. The other one has to answer: oh well, by the grace of God. Only then does he tell his dream.

I have let many dreams pass by for not having been able to say the hallowed formula in time.

I have also known many Maghribians said to be married to Djinnies or Rûhanies—floaty creatures between the human and the angelic. According to their entourage things weren't any worse than for other couples: quarrels and reconciliations, broken dishes and careful housekeeping.

In the Maghrib the ancestors often visit the living for the sheer pleasure of appearances.

For a long time the Maghribian has been a surrealist without knowing it. Take for example the following statement by Ibn Arabi:

“In what I have written I have never had a deliberate purpose, like other writers. Glimmers of divine inspiration illuminated and nearly overcame me, so that I couldn’t free my mind of them except by writing down what they revealed to me. If my works show any kind of formal composition, this form is not intentional. I have written some of my works on the behest of Allah, sent to me during my sleep or through a revelation.”

But Breton has defined surrealism “*once and for all*”: “*SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.*”

“*ENCYCLOPEDIA. Philosophy. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life. (...)*”

During the twenties, some Maghribians in exile “*performed acts of Relative SURREALISM.*” It was difficult for them to do otherwise: the family was a lack they wept over in front of a post office window, the fatherland a confiscated identity and religion a recognition.

Today the twenties are long gone, drowned in the gaze. The “*fish*” have dissolved and fat rats are enthroned as critics. “*The Magnetic Fields*” lie fallow. Only the battlefields are exploited.

The “*act of ABSOLUTE SURREALISM*” remains to be done.

Premonitory signs announce it.

“

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....”

“*Etcetera.*”

The passing Maghribian is surrealist in Djeha.
Nafzawi is surrealist in sexual revelation.
Ibn Khaldûn is surrealist in intrigue.
Sidi Ahmed ben Yussef is surrealist in cursing.
Mejdûb is surrealist in anguish.
Feraûn is surrealist in Si Mohand.
Kateb is surrealist in the tradition.
Dib is surrealist in the drift.
Mrabet is surrealist in his joints.
Sénac is surrealist in the streets.
Khaïr-Eddine is surrealist in his alcoholic delirium.
I am surrealist when I am not there.
Tibouchi is surrealist in certain verses.
Baya is not surrealist despite Breton's sympathy.
Etcetera.

"I would like to stress this point: they are not always Surrealists (...) because they did not want to serve simply to orchestrate the marvelous score."

This "*marvelous score*" we find it in the game of the boqala, in the threnody of the professional mourner, in the rhymed recitation of the meddah, in the invocations of amorous magic, in blasphemous insults, etcetera. Speech and gesture are not dissociated from the perpetual movement of the natural elements that encumber the waking dream. Superb and indifferent echo, assonances. The lines are established, bent to the severity of chance: there is nothing to prove.

The Maghribian artists, however, are often obsessed by their image, they want to prove something: that they have "*talent*."

A left bank Parisian publisher confided confidentially that he did not like to do business with Maghribian writers because they all think they are Rimbaud.

So what!

It is certain that he, Rimbaud, didn't give a damn about being a Maghribian in the Harrar and that the publisher in question is a slimeball despite his undeniable qualities.

Today this obsession with “*talent*” keeps most Maghribian artists from being “*modest recording instruments*.” Kateb is to my knowledge the only one who denies “*the ‘talent’ which has been lent to [him]*,” but he has lost his resonance. His suicidal position enchants only the drifters closing in on him. I would have loved to hear him exclaim: “*The haste some show to see me disappear and the natural taste I have for agitation alone would be enough to dissuade me from vainly shuffling off this coil*”...

The Maghribian artists have plenty of “*talent*”—but not enough to dare say “*We have no talent, (...)*.”

One had to be rotten through and through with culture and have a moral rigor above suspicion in order to lance the boil. “(Even) *the simplest surrealist act*” demands a considerable subconscious disposition. One does not go “*into the street*” on a whim and, in order to make art fade away one has to be a familiar of its arcana.

We will certainly manage to melt ourselves into the surreality of our space in order, finally, to be.

Right now the “*recording instruments*” are somewhat gummed up.

“*There still exists at this hour throughout the world* (Isn’t the Maghrib the beginning and the end of the world? It is said that Atlas is wearying under his load. It is also said that the world is a miniature Maghrib but that everyone does their best to ignore this fact), *in the high schools, in the workshops, in the streets, in the seminaries and in the barracks young, pure beings who refuse to fit in.*”

One of those “*young beings*” went to Tunis high school. To a French Literature exam question on “*qu’est-ce qu’un beau vers?*” (what is a beautiful verse?) he answered: “*un beau vers est un ver à soie*” (a beautiful verse is a silk worm). But since then he has had the unhappy naivety to take himself for an inspired poet!... This often happens and is, when all is said and done, less problematic than the case of the “pen pimps” who set themselves up as censors of taste. That’s because many “*corpse(s)*” don’t give up the hope of “*making dust*.” I’ll leave them to their sordid haggling, necrophilia not being one of my pleasures.

It is finally into Maghribian Sufism that surrealist subversion inserts itself: “*Psychic automatism in its pure state*,” “*amour fou*,” revolt, chance meetings, etcetera.

The mistrust Sufism inspires and the multiple attempts at recuperating it incite me to be more attentive towards a phenomenon it is wrong to hastily catalogue as retrograde. A judgment based on ignorance!

There always exists a non (?)-conscious smidgen of Sufism in the Maghribian writer who is not a clever faker—just reread Kateb or Khaïr-Eddine, for example.

The Maghribian rarely errs concerning the derailment of his Sufis: in this domain, mystification is not easy. Where the exterior observer sees only heresy, sexual dissoluteness, coarse language, incoherent acts, etcetera, he asks himself:

—Yes?

—Yes!... No.

Its obvious, “*Existence is elsewhere*.”

Thus goes “*belief in life (...)*”...

When the Sufi Master is not present, the initiates don’t dance.

You will have understood, or at least I hope so, that despite my perverse attachment to art, it is “*elsewhere*” that I hope to sojourn.

The Surrealist Revolution is total and “*in matters of revolt none of us can have need of ancestors*.”

—Constantine, March 7, 1981

TRANSLATED BY ANNE BOYER AND GUILLERMO PARRA

VÍCTOR VALERA MORA

You Heroes, Alive

I

When you hear music,
don't silence it.
Turn the dial
to its ultimate consequence
that it may run freely
and slap the walls
of the house and your heart.

Sometimes it's painful
for the unwary who surround us,
but it's necessary, terribly necessary,
to execute these hungry outs.

II

Remember you muted the brushes:
let's see, we'll see.
You have found no way to penetrate
the terrible and heroic colors.
Let's see, again, there is still time
to go out into the field and laugh, laugh a lot,
sign the militancy card of twilight.

We say these things reminiscing about Vincent Van Gogh,
the dead in screams, the maimed inside.
Like any other day
we would be with Matthew
discussing these things and more.

III

The anvil-sculpting voice of the present
has not yet arrived.
Later gentlemen, hurry
to reach the throne of Rimbaud.

IV

We leave this space blank
but for the child of France and Mayakovsky
like two red flags fix
banners of the people in the trenches.

At this long table all the poets of the world
declare like airplanes:
POETRY OR DEATH, WE SHALL OVERCOME!

The poem is an island: CUBA.

—Canción del soldado justo (1961)

from Roman Songs

XII

So there I was
in a German bar in downtown Rome
drinking beer and talking
up a storm about everything that exists with a
Venezuelan on a fellowship when suddenly
she said that nonsense
about “the question of our people
is seen more clearly from Europe” but
her eyes were two bottle rims
so I had my last drinks
alone and far away in Trastevere

XIII

My Roman friend invited me to her house
to eat a pizza she had prepared
On the way she asked me
if I was a Maoist
and then I spoke of the passion
according to Simón Rodríguez
and of the Russian shits
and the news in the dailies
a celestial minister declaring
“it seems China’s relations
with the U.S. were going to get tense”
while the damn Yankee pilots
were ravaging the life of Hanoi

and I left her at the door to her house and left
without eating and with a cigarette and in the fog
I was a Venezuelan raging and thinking
that proletarian internationalism
is a crippled paper ass
and with rheumatism at that

— *70 poems stalinistas* (1979)

TRANSLATED BY GUILLERMO PARRA

Poet's Task

to Ismael Medina

Ethical is the poet's path on this earth
though not he who puts an index finger to his lips
but rather in the tremendous and dazzling
glow of freedom and revolt
because you can't be happy
when you breathe
amidst a bunch of wretches
you have to live aggressively
vindicate the whetstone
when the time comes
for the fierce and beautiful feast of knives

— *70 poemas stalinistas* (1979)

TRANSLATED BY MARTÍN ESPADA AND CAMILO PÉREZ-BUSTILLO

CLEMENTE SOTO VÉLEZ

from The Promised Land

#17

the promised land
is
form that
cultivates
hope of chaotic quickness
or chaos of persecuted acoustics
chaos
desirable with ohs of desire
opening
the secret sphincter of disobedience
with the darkest illumination
that a
verse
gives
another verse
in the revolution of being
towards linguistic non-being
so as not
to bog down
on the plain of elegant words
is
not
the form that
offers

a frenzy of heavenly skies
in ruin
cheating
the action
of
flight
is
not
the metaphor of lamp-lit heights
that
ignores
the darkness of its ivory hand
is
not
the celestial sphere
garroting
the musical exhilaration
of laborers' protest
where the beauty of collective heat
does not
exile
the stellar legs of delight
where the fragrant rose of the heart
gleams
with the greatness
of the worker-creator
for the rose
is
not
fine
unless the worker's hands
cultivate
it

for the rose
that
disgraces
the workers' hands
abandons
the purpose of its perfume
for the worker
is
the rose of the universe
or the aroma of the conjuring hand
for the song of the universal worker
is
resistance burnished
against the tormenting hope
of the social parasite
who
prefers
to die
like the carnivorous mirror
before
becoming
the eyewitness to his own burial
where eternity
strips
to
inflame
its excellence
with flattery of mutinous death
or prepositional delicacy
of the pasture
that is purpose-proof
worker of intellect's factory
worker of the cemented throat

fabled factory of attack with selective
wings
when
the ogre of bullying pride
cuts
into your forehead
eternity
is
the incandescent tenderness
of its blood's sure insubordination
to whom
mortally wounded death
sings
of hope's vibrant death
the hope
that
is
the most serene desperation
of the laborer-worker
or the worker-laborer
who
industriously creates
the holiness of the factory
amid praises waving with arms of coal
so that sensation
unbridles
its mule
of clear militancy
like the woman guerrilla
who
entrusts
to another
the future of the struggle unto death

when the blood of courage
washes
itself
with its blood
like the never-crippled sound
of a syllable
that
intrudes
on understanding
like the backbones of the dead
that
sing
so guerrillas of the murdered
word
might sing
as much in clandestine language
as in the clandestinity of language
for
the dawn
of those who persecute the spirit
is
not metabolic
for the word
is
not a builder
without being
a destroyer
for
life is the tongue of death
with no way out
but
to conquer
both

to
be
architect of the universal crater
where
god is a student
of lyrical assignments
like a child of scrap-heap shacks
where stalk-pruners of stone
are
still
unleashed obstacles
or laborer
who
articulates
the course of atrocious matriculation
to
displease gratitude
the gratitude
that
is
irritating grace
where aggression
climbs
through obscene shouts
to
disintegrate
things gratefully received
to
disintegrate
germinating gerunds
of the new social language of the worker
willfully
kept

ignorant
by
the wealthy deceiver
with the exquisite blood of the worker exploited
till
the eulogy
worker
you
are
the sun rising in dreams
speaking
your auroras
to the earth
that
risks its love for your misery
so you
rebel
against those who slander your solitary pregnancy
its form
revealing
the laborer of your artistic arms
worker
eternity
lives
in your hands
in those hands
lives
liberation

#18

You
are
the promised land
from you
thunders
the elusive or fierce
intuition
that
craves
the human in itself
in a social system of celestial precision
where you
are
the fury of the sunflower
that
whirls
even against the sun's revolution
or the flight of mathematical light
to
understand
that
you are
the resonance of a living being
amid the dissonance of struggle
from you
fertility
give birth to itself
like an omen
of harmonious uprisings
where

cosmonauts of the mind
create
warlike
dawns
to
ambush
the sanctuaries of seductive
assault
the promised land
is
not
a sign with arms of approaching danger
is
not
the comforting flow of prophetic injury
where
the plundering
of mansions
is
not
yet a lyrical tradition
where
the brilliant early mornings of the spirit
gleam
like the chest of a laborer
or word-forged thresholds
where the universe
enters
like the torchbearer of the poetic image
or the form of light
unleashed

— San Juan, 1979

Annharte

AKA Inendagosekwe (Cue Editions, 2013)

REVIEWED BY CAM SCOTT

Bozo Complicity and Comic Defence

It is a somewhat daunting prospect for me to write about Annharte's work: for longer than I've had the pleasure of keeping track, she has been baffling critical commitments, testing readerly reflexes, and provoking complicated laughter in these colonies. Her trio of full-length collections, published sparingly at decade-long intervals, marks a rewarding succession of technically inventive, politically undaunted, and bracingly personal writing; from the formal range of *Being on the Moon* (1990) to the intimate journalism of *Exercises in Lip Pointing* (2003) and the multi-vocal soliloquy of *Indigena Awry* (2012). And the texts comprising *AKA Inendagosekwe* (2013), a collection of prose from the last twenty-odd years, encompass this complex succession, elaborating upon a deeply underrated body of work.

Perhaps it is easier for me to say that Annharte's work remains underrated—a ready-made remark where the reviewer's role is presumed to be one of advocacy—than to really think about the reasons why this may be the case. Could it be so simple as that certain conservative versifiers, in their consummate preciousity, can't abide a bawdy pun? More likely the obstacle is politics; specifically, the *de facto* and official racism that structures every encounter between persons in Canada, and as regards our purposes, the reception of Indigenous texts and perspectives in particular. I'm cautious before the faceless reviewer's task of "situating" Annharte's work, for which I cannot speak, when one of the reasons why I value this work so much is that it has helped me to situate myself, as a settler and a reader, in the North American setting—specifically, the Canadian setting in which Annharte's writing appears without critical sanction.

And how does it appear against this backdrop? On one hand, her work abruptly limits the regionalist discourses attendant upon a state-sanctioned 'Canlit' and its catch-all plurality, at the same time as her formal concerns are in some ways aligned with what one might call the 'vernacular turn' in mid-to-late-century settler poetries.¹ On the other hand, in spite of some very salient affinities, the work poses real challenges to the categories of a white-washed formalism, where much disparagement of the 'confessional' parroted by certain pedagogues remains a silencing injunction that ought to be problematized as such on the spot, wherever it appears. I invoke this provisional spectrum of absent reception only glancingly, for it's clear that there are more important territorial claims at stake in Annharte's work. Meanwhile, the playful repletion of the poetry itself outstrips categorization, traversing the vexed (read: vulgar) boundary between Lyric and Language with laughing indifference. An unflinchingly ebullient style defies the somber critic to laugh alongside the author, or to risk missing the point entirely.

For the delirious kick that certain of us get from such forthrightly challenging texts smarts a little in this case; it bruises the ego some, as each text resists subsumption by (in my case) a settler's understanding. The formal brilliance of Annharte's writing concerns the deft lightness with which she counters the sheer weight of her own words; but this very contrariness is a response to her experience of exclusion as an Anishinaabe woman, among the ranks of cultural producers—and who isn't tasked with the reproduction of one's culture?"

It is from this position that the author speaks, helping the reader to clarify their own subjective coordinates in good faith of this relationship. Annharte's attention to the construction of identity, put across in flights of multitudinous mad-gab, is counterbalanced by a knack for lyric closeness, relating the wages of any such struggle upon the poet *qua* particularity. "Boojoo, I'm from Little Saskatchewan First Nations," she says by way of introduction on the first page of *AKA Inendagosekwe*, open-heartedly assuming the burden of character alongside her reader. "I wonder who in this world can afford an identity," she asks: is this a rhetorical question after all? (1-2)

The difficulty with difficulty

Perhaps it is not only that Annharte's texts, overlooked and lauded in unequal measure, are *structurally* 'underrated.' In addition to this designation, one might adduce that they are 'difficult:' by which I do not mean obscure or foreboding, but *intransigent*. This difficulty is distinct from but related to the sense assigned the word by Charles Bernstein, for whom such 'difficult' poems are an opaque provocation. Such writing demands an attentive effort on the reader's part, which may even occasion a kind of reactive pact with the poem's otherness, opening onto the promise of a "long-term aesthetic experience." (Bernstein, 5) Thought thus, the 'difficult' poem is one for which an explanation or context has not been furnished the reader in advance. And while this certainly applies to Annharte's writing, her texts are not primarily concerned with such induced difficulty, but an acutely felt lack of context, which she must forge herself alongside certain peers and (hopefully) receptive readers. It is this reader that is dragged, perhaps reluctantly, into the foreground, not as a generic, disembodied function but as a full spate of historical and subjective pre-commitments. Annharte writes the real, materially salient difference that obtains between perspectives, with a keen ear to the multiplicity of all language.

Of course, her poems are difficult according to certain of Bernstein's criteria: whether with regard to their "elevated linguistic intensity" or their specific cultural commitments: that is, their "poor adaptability" to generic venues and occasions for poetry *qua* mannerful speech. (ibid, 4) Additionally, however, Annharte's poems are difficult for posing real challenges to interpretation, by which the patented 'difficult poem' of Bernstein et al is eminently recuperable. For Annharte's life writing, though formally inventive, engages the reader not as a discreet function of the individual *vis a vis* this or that perplexing artifact, but dialogically; as a responsible agent face to face with another. This is subtly and importantly different from the manner in which formal difficulty tends to foreground the presence of the reader *qua* reader, however interested. No critical gloss can capture

the sense of this encounter. Accordingly, no adjunct Modernism (not even Bernstein's) equips us to approach her work. We need the author's own words by way of explication: the reader (again, who precisely?) needs to listen, as a separate but related function.

AKA

To this end, *AKA Inendagosekwe* (Annharte translates the title as "reflecting woman") is invaluable. The pieces are varied in tone, encompassing madcap theatrical scripts, de- and re-centering biographical sketches and interviews, stirring statements of vocation, and several landmark essays on language and identity. As stated above, most of these texts are defiantly hybrid, so can't be reduced to a tidy description. "I don't want art or writing to be dominated by only one perspective," Annharte proclaims, and her plethoric style enacts resistance to typecasting as a political means. (91)

For the purposes of this review, I would propose to read *AKA Inendagosekwe* as a sustained meditation on healing and identity, spanning years, genres, voices and individual essays—a recurrent theme and means of which is a knack for humor. For these occasional texts, while varied in tone, accrue to an elaborate web of argument and demonstration. A strong through-line consists in the numerous biographical sketches that appear throughout, as the author auspiciously re-introduces herself at crucial junctures. More than a poignant scaffold, these recurrent statements function as an inventory of identity; an affirmative refrain beckoning closeness, brimming as they are with wisdom, humor and astonishing disclosure. For their insistent candor, these biographical episodes, often read as little more than a professional requirement of the writing 'trade,' operate at intervals throughout the book as a motivic device familiar from oral literatures, a means by which the speaker may orient herself alongside the listener. The author's life story as recounted throughout the text is not mine to re-tell; but the sense of gradual personal revelation and healing that transpires over the course of reading is powerful, structuring each rebarbative counterblast and sly crack at the

operators of power. The call for justice is inseparable from its cause. Again, I can only refer the reader to Annharte's remarkable work, for her cause is different from my own.

Perhaps it is peculiar to begin a review with such qualified reticence; but as a nominal male of European descent living in occupied territory, it is hardly enough to be humble before the likely chance of appropriation. The task before me is not to ventriloquize, to adapt and dominate, but to listen, with the minimal burden of representation attendant upon active listenership. If this review is a gesture in that direction, a tribute to Annharte's activism in writing, it seems important to foreground our utterly distinct voices as I attempt to speak in response to her work. Annharte's words are her own and stand apart from my endeavor, undertaken with respect.

Some words on appropriation

To begin, I could ask: what kind of reader am I? How do my eyes fall on the page? Moreover, how is a settler to *settle* upon meaning, to proffer an interpretation that is not a degradation or co-optation of the author's stated intent? It strikes me that the Western critical imaginary is not necessarily suited to this hopeful task: for herein, meaning is a rumor, the author's "intention" hopelessly mitigated and inaccessible to the reader. It's not a stretch to see this as the clever means by which the discursive hegemony of the Western subject may survive its own death: shoring up its authority in the guise of a universal interpretant, post-dating a check indefinitely. Annharte excoriates this kind of subtlety, wielding words against unwieldy words: "I do think of myself as a 'word warrior' because I have a fight with words that demean my experience as an indigenous person." (111) From a foreclosed-upon position, the author nonetheless speaks. It would be a double-denial on the part of the European critic not to take heed of this fatal irony; for a certain exegetical gesture, while irreverent in one setting, is flatly authoritarian where it fails to acknowledge the absolute priority of the speaker's position. Here is a sinister and important analogy to ongoing

colonial processes: for what the settler-critic must acknowledge is the anteriority of speech to the late arrival of their (botched) understanding.

Any non-cynical interpretation must begin with an assent to the author's perspective. Sam McKegney speaks of a "willingness to be inspired, guided, even seduced" without abdicating critical responsibility; suggesting this orientation over what he calls a "passive allegiance to author intentionality—provided such engagement is undertaken out of commitment to the well-being of the author and the communities out of and for which she or he writes." (McLeod, 2014, 44)

Word triks

Poetry is an apt vehicle for this inspiration, McKegney finds, guide willing; for "although traceable to the vision of the author, poetic images are converted into meanings and affective responses within the minds and bodies of readers." (ibid) This is an act of translation, presupposed by every instance of contact between peoples. This site of encounter occasions a variety of responses, as evinced by the ravages of history and its ongoing colonial means: on one hand, the violent, mono-vocal superimposition of meaning, 'enemy programming' in Annharte's estimation; on the other, a susceptibility to the "word triks" of herself and others, a 'mixed bag' beckoning indeterminacy. (30)

What is it about poetry specifically that consolidates this affective pact between reader and author? Perhaps because it is irreducible to synopsis or paraphrase, the reading of poetry requires that one assent altogether to the speech of the other; that which is absolutely singular to their expression. There is clearly a connection to oral literature here, which nourishes Annharte's practice, though she speaks of a transfer of her personal energy toward writing: "I feel it is easy for a woman to be discounted if she speaks up. Writing is much harder to put down." (60)

For Annharte, writing seems to be about a contracted closeness of reader and author, of listener and speaker. “I use a polemic Bitch/rant style to shock listeners into paying attention,” she says. “Poetry is confused with polite discourse. So much energy is transmitted from poet to audience when everyday words are exchanged ...” (98) This is as much a matter of the writer’s trickery as the reader’s interpretation, but at the author’s own suggestion, perhaps there is no clear distinction to be made between the two: “to be a writer is to be a trickster you play a bunch of tricks on yourself not always on Others.” (30) Interpretation designates this feeling of baffled agreement; to grapple with and possess in part something that originates altogether elsewhere. “I could always learn more stories,” she writes in an opening salvo: “that would up the identity.” (3)

On production

As a statement of vocation, this is as modest as they come. But Annharte inveighs specifically against this disposition in a market-savvy polemic: “I find it hard to be a humble Native woman writer. I even dread the ‘humble’ stance we sometimes assume when we talk as First Nations women about what we must do to take over the production of our cultural images OR (the ifs, whens, hows of) publishing.” (125) Refusing to clamor for representation, Annharte holds out for recognition on individual as well as collective terms: “we will be so damn good,” she writes, that critics “will have to point out the particulars of each Native woman writer.” (126) Happily, this is a prophecy that has already come to pass where the writing is concerned. And yet too often these particularities are elided by critics who lack the tools to treat work separately of a generic identity; or worse, the crucial predicates—Native, Woman—are left aside in order to treat of the Writer herself, bereft of all but a professional identity. Such careful attention to ‘the work itself,’ at expense of its social embeddedness, assumes the worst kind of abstract universality in the guise of careful regard for the particular writer.

Annharte is unsparing on this point. The division of labor within publishing is itself racialized, she says, “a take-off of the old fur trading days scene,” and the benevolent attempts of academicians and publishers at ‘representation’ remain paternalistic and appropriative. (125) Within such an arrangement, these specific identities are acknowledged only insofar as they are put to work accumulating cultural capital for (well-meaning?) professionals. This, Annharte says, is only another iteration of the “white burden” shouldered by all manner of bleeding-heart colonials: “they (today’s white messiahs and their missionaries) are ‘helping’ us publish and edit our Indigenous writings. They (whomever) are ‘discovering’ us. They (maybe even some of us) are not reading our literature and play along in the game of cultural appropriation.” (119)

This division of labor is not remarked upon as a simply unfortunate fact of capitalism, like so many meek attempts at ‘institutional’ critique by the smugly embedded; and demands more of the settler-colonial reader than your standard-issue structuralist fatalism. I read these words as a challenge to my privilege—to the effect that, as a reader and a writer, I have no intrinsic right to recapitulate Annharte’s theses to my own intellectual credit, but only in order to educate myself and others as to better standards of behavior and engagement. (That these tasks are inseparable clearly requires a certain amount of rhetorical indulgence.)

Literature and healing

This, however, is not regarded as a permanent impasse. The major, recurrent theme throughout *AKA Inendagosekwe*, and it is a particularly joyous theme, is the stalwart resolve to write in the face of oppression, to transcend the categorizations of what Annharte (ever accurate) terms “settler lit—” the writing cultures that have developed alongside (and benefited from) the ravages of colonialism. This goal is greater than, but entails, Frantz Fanon’s famed “will to particularism,” a drawing back from the universal pretensions of the colonizer’s literature, with the aim of self-representation. (154)

Annharte makes significant use of Fanon, championing the therapeutic emphasis of his thought and his “actual incitement to the reclamation of biography and history,” overshadowed in her estimation by the more prevalent image of Fanon as a militant firebrand. (146) Responding to his 1950s address before the Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Annharte explains how Fanon “outlined what might now be taken as an overview of the present situation faced by Indigenous writers and what directions might be taken almost as an agenda and for decolonization or change.” (154) It is in this speech, that Fanon outlines his famous dialectic of decolonial literature. To summarize, the first phase of this literature entails the formal mastery of a prevailing style for a predominantly colonial audience. In the second phase, this gives way to the expression of the customs and traditions of one’s own people in an angry, nostalgic register, negatively nourished by the colonial context, which still comprises one’s audience. The third phase is neither/nor; at this point, the author produces works for her own culture, without regard for the colonial strictures surmounted thereby. This is a phase of education and resistance. “The crystallization of the national consciousness will not only radically change the literary genres and themes but also create a completely new audience. Whereas the colonized intellectual started out by producing work exclusively with the oppressor in mind—either in order to charm him or to denounce him by using ethnic or subjectivist categories—he (sic) gradually switches over to addressing himself to his people.” (Fanon, 2004, 173) Annharte’s writing attests to such a renaissance; which is always subjectively fraught. As she states earlier in *AKA*, “we must risk our own ‘colonized’ identity and refuse to be humble or polite about images that we do not create.” (127)

Lee Maracle has described her practice in complementary terms: “Though I hold no animosity toward the Europeans in this land, I do not intend to write for them. My voice is for those who need to hear some truth. It has been a long time since I had an intimate discussion with my own people and those other people who are not offended by our private truth. It is inevitable that Europeans will read my work. If you do not find yourselves

spoken to, it is not because I intend rudeness—you just don't concern me now." (Maracle, 10)

In her first book of poems, *Being on the Moon*, Annharte breathlessly declares the same: "so few of me yet I still write not for the white audience but the color of their response to my underclassy class." (Annharte, 1990, 63) Like Maracle, Annharte is writing for women; she is writing for Indigenous women. Additionally, however, she is writing for men; for settlers (like myself) by proxy, if not foremost or intentionally. As a beneficiary of this structural 'coincidence,' I've chanced to learn a tremendous amount from the writing of Annharte, Maracle and others.

Borrowed language

But how are these tiered allegiances of the author to be sorted in the free market of possible reception? It strikes me that perhaps Annharte's tack as a poet and rhetorician is to have adopted the joke as a slyly differentiating mode of simultaneous address, such that her language may outstrip any reductive or appropriative claim upon it. As a spontaneous sorting mechanism, humor is instrumentally invaluable—for not only is the mutual "understanding" one experiences in laughter a model of vibrant community, it is virtually impossible to fake initiation should one happen to be excluded from the joke's range of cultural reference.

For a joke, like a poem, is shamelessly particular, and the embeddedness of this extravagant, double use of language makes a mockery of language's universal pretensions. Simon Critchley observes as much: "humor is local and a sense of humor is usually highly context-specific. How does one laugh in a foreign language? Anyone who has tried to render what they believe to be a hugely funny joke into a foreign language only to be met by polite incomprehension will have realized that humor is terribly difficult to translate, perhaps impossible." (Welchman, 145)

Before going any further, it would be useful to go over some key points from Annharte's essay "Borrowing Enemy Language," in which the difficulty of translation, of living one's life and enacting one's culture in translation, is put forth as a permanent condition of (colonized) speech. "Even the most personal thoughts or intimate experiences may be articulated in the strange lingo of cultural outsiders," she notes, cribbed from all kinds of discourses. (109) Accordingly, it is her imperative to "massacre" English, in a street-wise, class-conscious vernacular capable of sending up its colonial conditions. "When I speak of English as the enemy's language, I see the enemy as being within the individual person—within one's own language use and how one is programmed to look at things," she writes, in full accord with Fanon. (111) The difficulty of translation plays out within a given language as well, depending on the background and commitments of the speaker.

This is not to "viralize" language in general, as always-already alien to its bearer, a standard postmodernist move that could only appear in this context as an act of neo-colonial bad faith. Annharte is emphatic about the necessity of language retention and the special functioning of traditional languages apart from everyday talk-for-trade. There are qualitative differences between languages that cannot be so easily surmounted, and these remain salient for the speaker: Annharte notes the comparative ease with which an English speaker may deceive the listener—"I've heard Ojibwe speakers say it is easy to distort truth or reality in English" (113)—or the sense of levity pervading Cree. (116)

Additionally, Annharte finds "that the speaking of English for some First Nations people presents moments of amusement" insofar as it is rife with ambiguities and double meanings: "the words don't always describe the activity or behavior, yet we are expected to believe the speaker's intent." (ibid) This serves as an important contrast to many a poet-linguist's account of the peculiar "strength" of English, namely its hugely various vocabulary, expanded over the course of countless traumatic historical encounters, which effectively allows the speaker the opportunity to

‘translate’ within the language to endlessly ambiguate effect. This inbuilt duplicity no doubt structures many a colonial discourse; but also allows for the contestation of power by the colonial subject, as Fanon will observe that in many cases, multiple orders of reality may “objectify themselves through the mediation of a single linguistic system.” (quoted in Sekyi-Otu, 200) Fanon suggests that a “circuit of complicity” obtains between these realities, such that an official or enemy language may be put to emancipatory use.² His practical examples, as emphasized by Ato Sekyi-Otu, pertain to an inter-linguistic exchange wherein synonymy equates with solidarity: Fanon records how the French language “lost its accursed character” over the course of trilingual radio broadcasts in Algeria, as in this setting it manifested an echo of the emancipatory, natively Arabic, programming: thus “the broadcasting in French of the program of *Fighting Algeria* was to liberate the enemy language of its historical meanings. The same message transmitted in three languages unified experience and gave it a universal dimension.” (ibid)

This may work in the other direction as well. Annharte cites Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham’s concern that anything put into English, the language of so-called broad intelligibility and “universal” address, may be used against the native speaker and her culture. Durham contends that the colonist’s understanding of Indigenous culture is restricted to a “romantic” vocabulary entirely comprised of strategic mistranslations. “Who decided that the word ‘chief,’ which has the connotation of meaning the head of a land or tribe, is the correct translation of the concept of the Creek Indian word ‘Enhomvta’? Did white people decide that was the correct word by studying the Creek political system? No. They decided because they wanted to show the Creek nation as a ‘primitive’ body of people and “chief” carried this connotation. At first, colonists called Indian leaders ‘kings’ ...” (Durham, 4) By Durham’s accounting, even ‘untranslated’ words derived from indigenous languages are misused in this fashion, appropriated from the cultures they would purport to describe. European settlers selectively retain words from indigenous languages in order to

strategically sequester and condescend to correspondent nations. To treat these concepts selectively, as exceptional loanwords, is to deny the political recognition that proper synonymy in translation might suggest.

The bad faith of the lexically-endowed settler translates directly to political repression where attempts at culturally ‘appropriate’ recognition enact the precise opposite. Notably, however, the very condition of semantic or syntactical uncertainty that makes each ‘universal’ pronouncement so deeply suspect also allows for the “moments of amusement” that Annharte finds in English wordplay. Annharte’s poetics play upon this fundamental ambiguity, which we may relate to Fanon’s “circuit of complicity,” to find an utterly excessive use for familiar language. It is no wonder that humor is her foremost subversive means, given her description of the “borrowed” tongue in which she writes.

Humor and community

Annharte describes the importance of humor in her work in an interview with Pauline Butling: “Anger is a tag that’s always put on First Nations writing. I feel it’s often a way to dismiss it because it just means the person is hearing with the ears of a white person. If you listen from the perspective of a First Nations person, you may hear anger but you definitely go for the humor. It’s not because the anger is so uncomfortable, it’s just that it seems to be part of the whole ‘Indian Act.’” (8)

Anger and humor may abound in a single utterance, a circuit along which multiple meanings are put into play, as remarked upon above. In “Coyote Columbus Café,” Annharte slyly teases by way of a glyphic slip; “Boozho dude. Hey I’m talking / to you. Bozo dude.” (in Armstrong & Grauer, 71) The Ojibwe salutation ‘bojous,’ or ‘boozho,’ is made into a taunt before the uncomprehending European. Speaking with Butling, Annharte explains that alterations such as these enact a “minimizing of the speaker, a kind of leveling in terms of who you’re speaking to ... This is a way to start a

dialogue, as opposed to putting on a pompous air. Humor introduces an informality.” (14) The taunt empowers even as it momentarily excludes, though not always in the same direction or to an equal extent.

Kristina Fagan notes as much in an essay on laughter and community: “On the one hand, humor is deeply social: a shared laugh is an affirmation of norms, attitudes and assumptions in common. Humor can allow the tolerance of disruptive forces, teach social values, and enforce social norms. But these functions can have a problematic side, sometimes leaving people feeling excluded or humiliated ... Thus, Native writers use humor not only to shore up community, but also to complicate or problematize it.” (in Taylor, 25)

Humor models an *ad hoc* community comprised of ‘whatever’ individuals: it gathers seemingly random assemblages of people and initiates them; sometimes roughly, irreverently. On the other hand, it also consolidates a pre-existent socio-linguistic community; it signals to those who share in a vernacular, and excludes by the same measure. In the jargon of sociology, humor is typically performed for the edification and amusement of an ‘in-group.’ Further, the contraction by which such a group is consolidated cannot but expulsively produce a correspondent outside. Therein consists the divisory mechanism of the Master’s seemingly innocuous talk, as well as the great hopefulness of each discourse of resistance.

Coyote Columbus

In “Coyote Columbus Café”, as noted above, non-standardized Ojibwe spelling allows for ambiguous wordplay, the blurring of ‘Boozho’ into ‘Bozo.’ More than a phonetic gaffe on the part of the listener, this moment of simultaneity may furnish the reader a moment of real insight into how a speaker’s intention is always imperfectly put across in words. Perhaps without a somewhat paranoid disposition toward the other, we would have difficulty interpolating the meaning at all, the precarious nature of speech

being such that one is always left waiting for the punchline in order to start making sense.

Over the course of the same poem, however, the reader is required to run this constructive circuit in reverse. The poem appears split into two columns, mirroring one another; on the left, verse transpires in something like standard written English; in the right column, it is translated phonetically into a stereotypical 'Indian' dialect, Annharte explains, such as one might find in the novels of W. P. Kinsella. (17) "Swiss bank account" becomes "swish bank a cunt," for example—wordplay which, in Pauline Butling's analysis, serves to "expose the exploitation." (ibid) This has a great deal in common with the (now somewhat anachronistic) avant-garde tactic of homophonic translation, which often works to foreground the breach between oral and written language, where the speaker of a given language cannot but "correct" the latter according to the standards of the former. Thus an oral recitation of written French, for example, before an English monoglot may be split up to accommodate an English lexicon, an act of internal punctuation which is then re-transcribed as an English language composition. That this tactic is favored almost exclusively by English-speaking poets, faced with an inscrutable trace of a speech wholly other than their own, is notable. Annharte's suggestive overlay lays bare the dearth of understanding that transpires between dialects, not for a lack of stable reference, but through willful neglect. The opaque address appearing in the right column has a great deal in common with the brand of 'difficult' writing that Bernstein takes up, but is not an innocuous, procedural gloss, much less an ironic corruption of a mutually agreed upon repository of meaningful reference. The line that bisects the facing texts seems to be a site of both translation and misrecognition—there are divergent moments where the right-hand column appears to be consoling the guilty conscience of the Columbus character, presented on the facing side. Real difficulties of translation are staged within a unitary address, the two columns literally putting across the 'multiple realities' which share a circuit, not to mention complicating any chance of synonymy.

Giving offence

In the staged comic encounter of “Coyote Columbus Café,” the theme of translation is doubled by that of the untranslatable. Here the reader is faced with a choice between humor or bewilderment; unlike the difficult poem, the essence of the joke is its immediacy. Insofar as its sense is withheld, it is meaningless, irrecoverably so. As Critchley writes, “humor is a form of cultural insider-knowledge, and might, indeed, be said to function like a linguistic defense mechanism. Its seeming untranslatability might endow native speakers with a sense of their cultural distinctiveness or even superiority ... In this sense, having a common sense of humor is like sharing a secret code, often an obscene code ... We wear our cultural distinctiveness like an insulation layer against the surrounding alien environment. It warms us when everything else is cold and unfamiliar.” (in Welchman, 145)

Critchley is surely onto something, implicitly suggesting that the ‘ethnic joke’ is the ur-form of humor (and discourse) in general, insofar as it presupposes an apt audience, thus delineating a socio-linguistic ‘out-group’ by implication. His argument and examples pertain specifically, however, to the paranoid co-existence of European cultures; not to the uneasy cohabitation of European settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. To this end, and with Annharte’s ribaldry in mind, I would propose to describe and champion a brand of humor that works as a linguistic *offence* mechanism, pun intended. Furthermore, as regards the proficiency of not only ‘native’ but First Nations speakers, we must understand the untranslatable essence of the joke to consist not in language itself but in its reference; that is, in something irreducible to a glossary—namely, collective experience.

This is best sketched with an eye to Annharte’s text, throughout which her mischievous “Coyotrix” persona emerges to make strange with suspect language in high spirits. “I have used the Coyotrix persona (image) as a

transformer of our internalized colonized mentality. The inner Coyotrix teases or tweaks meaning out of the verbiage that surrounds us,” she explains in dialogue with Lally Grauer. (104) “I love the joking and even at times absolute ridicule of ideas and concepts held to be especially sacred or unquestionable,” she continues, and the Coyotrix speaks through her to this purpose, traversing the circuit of responsible speech with wisdom and glee. (ibid)

Word plays

The multi-vocal antics of the author as ‘Coyotrix’ buoy much baffled laughter circa *Cannibal Woman Campout*; a theatre-work that stages a cannibal feminist disco inferno at Vancouver’s foremost “clothing-optional” beach, culminating in the devouring of a lecherous priest. Grisly as it sounds, this is no simplistic revenge fantasy; power suffuses the idyll, and while a latter-day conquistador receives his share of bodily discomfort, the righteously voracious campers set their sights higher. The aim is visibility; to terrorize Wreck Beach as an act of direct self-representation. “I am tired of being overlooked,” Windigo Annie laments, speaking for all the rumored beings that roar into full-bodied existence over the course of the play. “We are women of odor,” Sasquatch Sally reports, citing the invisible, all-too-material trace *par excellence* as an index of presence, of life. (84/85)

The recriminatory, ‘angry’ passages of this play are not merely contiguous with separate moments of comic ‘relief;’ they are precisely overlaid, operatized within identical passages. Guilty or spirited, one’s complicity in this circuit is essentially concerned with the partiality of one’s experience. Inclusion and humiliation are but two possible outcomes, depending upon the manner in which one assumes responsibility for the utterly contingent affects of signification. In an essay effectively prefacing her plays, Annharte asks “if the Grandmother’s voice is that distinctive an element in Indigenous writing, then why wouldn’t everybody, Indian and non-Indian, hear it?” (53) It is a mystery to her, she continues, but must have something to do with the

“sensual memory” of one’s experience of a particular grandmother, imbuing the utterance with depth. This experience is an inappropriate support for any ‘neutral’ record of meaning like (written or spoken) language.

This informs the double-edged incision of Annharte’s critique of appropriation, as it is insufficient to simply manipulate the obvious signifiers of a culturally-sanctioned identity in order to gain access to its specific, irreducible meaning. And yet, at the same time, Annharte links the mania for appropriation to an identity crisis within a by-no-means unitary self. “For me, maintaining an Indian identity is a struggle,” she writes. (54) The multiplicity of signification splits the individual, too. This informs a preceding play in *AKA*, perhaps the most difficult text in the book. “In the scenario, *Albeit Aboriginal*, the two main characters are actually one and the same person,” Annharte relates: “these represent two pulls on the Indigenous woman’s personality. Coyote Girl is the risk-taker. She is the element in our character that keeps us in continual suspense. Rat Lady is naive but also opportunistic. She plays on people’s ignorance and makes a healthy profit. Coyote Girl submits to temptation for fun. She prefers to play games with her own kind. To my way of thinking, Coyote Girl is that part of us that is best at creative problem-solving and just the one to zap out the right answer when needed. Rat Lady is the naive part of us that believes white people are superior and that they need us to prove that fact more often than not.” (56) Over the course of the play, this dynamic is repeated in a variety of interpenetrating settings, conveying a timeless, while crucially non-static, lesson over the course of multiple, historically vitiated encounters.

In *Cannibal Woman Campout*, the struggle for representation is portrayed as a vying for literal space: the time-honored colonial phantasm of the cannibal native turns out to be an apt metaphor for the will to bodily negation of the white male conquistador by the persistent being he would negate or displace. *Albeit Aboriginal* pertains to a vying for position within the capitalist spectacle, in televisory mediums and familiar occupations, in collapsible worlds of lawyers, teachers, feminists, shamans, and actors.

As though to emphasize this point, two actors play a variety of roles against one another over the course of seven micro-acts. In the first act, we see a daughter heading off to residential school; and are eventually alerted to the fact that this action is contained within the bounds of a fictional soap opera, *As the Bannock Burns*. In the second act, a residential school survivor is in session with a therapist, whose tack is to counter the victim's account with a torrent of distracting, good-humored talk. In the third act, these roles merge into those of Rat Lady and Coyote Girl, whose fireside banter continues from and complicates the therapeutic dynamic. Hereafter, the characters phase in and out of each other's company in so many nesting dialogues on identity that the 'who's who' of it all becomes significantly blurred for the reader-viewer, to great effect. In a dizzying *mise en abyme*, the actors of *Albeit Aboriginal* play the actors playing the characters of the soap opera, one of whom turns out to be Rat Lady, touting her own spiritual credentials before the legitimizing person of Nokomis, whose elder stature as portrayed on television coincides with an actually irreverent wisdom. Rat Lady, striving for an absolutely authentic identity—"I've got blood from just about every tribe you might name," she says—appeals to the fictional TV representation of Nokomis rather than the elder before her. (74)

It is unclear whether a live performance (the text includes detailed instructions for slapstick—and rap—interludes) would clarify or further distort the lines between identities, which is surely the point. The author's economy of means only emphasizes the point of these surrealistic metamorphoses; the permanent difficulty of maintaining a 'mixed bag' identity that is not merely borrowed or imposed.

The hapless seeker after identity is passed around, from the 'continual suspense' of therapeutic, culturally specific *praxis* to the mitigated imaginary of a TV soap opera to flights of 'new age' obscurantism—though it is implied by the recirculating roles within the action that the forces structuring identity, pertaining to inner conscience and outer spur,

comprise a seamless loop. In her remarks on the development and meaning of the play, Annharte ultimately opts for the symbolic ‘outside’ as a medium of efficacy: she is emphatic that “to understand real shamanism means to go beyond the Hollywood version of the stories which are popular or media enhanced;” but explicates the nesting structure of the play in quite literal terms. “The soap opera on television ... would be a micro-version of the action. The TV tube would be their channel to the outside world.” (59) Certain ready signifiers of cultural authenticity are placed on the side of artifice, at the present moment nourished by the harmful tropes of a predominantly colonial narrative. The implication is perhaps that inner change begins with taking hold of cultural representation, in whatever medium, by whatever means. “I need a few more lines,” Nokomis states; “more teachings.” (72) In possibly important contrast to Nitani’s call for “a new scriptwriter,” Nokomis speaks on her own behalf. “Listen to this one,” she says: “got it in a dream, direct to myself ...” (ibid)

Staging identity

Fraught with subjective difficulty, the split *personae* undertaken by the cast of *Albeit Aboriginal* may be identified with any number of possible cuts into our proposed ‘circuit of complicity,’ which is perhaps implicitly aligned with humor as a sorting mechanism. The sheer multiplicity of affective responses to a singular instance of speech, which of course differently interpellates each listener, is such that one may, over the course of an utterance, address certain audience members as intimates, and others adversarially (though of course these are not the only possible receptions).

That Fanon would seem to identify humor with an intermediary phase of a national literature’s development—as a self-loathing performance for the colonizer, a state prior to the combative self-completion a national literature must attain to in his view—is an oversight precisely to our point. (Fanon, 159) For especially in such a transitional, contested phase of national development does it become salient that, to follow Fanon’s own

observation, two or more utterly oppositional realities may be manifested by a “single linguistic system.” *Albeit Aboriginal* renders the stakes of this tenuous, crucial phase with incredible nuance; I’m tempted to suggest that one can almost see the whole dialectic playing out over the course of the action, comprised of a series of subjective transformations. During the penultimate act, Nitanis intervenes in the soap opera plot of her own volition; and what, according to her, happens next? “We Indigena girls manage to work together and take over the whole show. Nobody knows how we can do it just yet.” (78)

I should be clear: this is not an allegorical (*ergo* appropriative) reading of the play. I am attempting to be as literal as possible; even so, my suggestion is that the language itself enacts a non-teleological ‘working through’ of Fanon’s proposed stages of liberation, the finished product of which is not only the language of the play itself, but the social conditions under which it is received and produced. Importantly, Annharte narrates the varying responses of audiences to the play to emphasize how its major themes spill over into the staging and reception. On one hand, she describes an air of discomfort and defensiveness that greeted the first performance of the play. “Our amateurish production seemed to go over well but I felt a lot of hostility around discussing what was meant by the term ‘cultural appropriation.’” (57) Here the division of labor in the theatre world, split between amateurs and professionals, may be connected to Annharte’s remarks on the publishing industry; a dynamic satirized within *Albeit Aboriginal*, behind the scenes of *As the Bannock Burns*. Elsewhere, in Toronto, the play “was a hit with a very urbane and radical audience of women. Most of the laugh lines got chuckles. The play had found its audience.” (ibid) In both cases, it seems as though the audience took the part of Rat Lady to heart, allowing the playwright (and moreover the play itself) to function as the fun-loving and risk-taking Coyote Girl. The divisory task of language, the very means by which it may unite *some but not all*, is crucial to the re-duplication of this dynamic between the actors and the audience, even as this distinction is challenged at every moment in a series of daring involutions.

Standing up

This radical method of dual address is used to great effect throughout Annharte's verse, too, through which I would request another brief detour. The poem "Squaw Guide," from *Indigena Awry*, states such a theme bluntly, situating the author as other, as 'guide,' in order to administer a vitriolic tour of personal trauma *vis a vis* the colonial onlooker. The very first words of the poem establish this hostile dichotomy: "You audience/Me squaw." (12) This self-deprecating 'joke' turns upon the (presupposed) white reader's conscience to recriminatory effect, as though the (typically over-cautious, well-mannered) liberal had spoken the offending word with their very being. Myriad reversals to this effect are performed throughout the text—"switch bitch from academic squaw/to academic sasquatch"—which calls incessant attention to the dual production of identity, inside and out. (ibid, 14)

Critchley's suggestion of humor as a "secret code" is amply demonstrated in that although the poem is explicitly directed at an assumed 'white' audience, implicitly aligned with the author's tormentors ("Good Canadians," Annharte calls them), this is little more than a structural prop by which she may address those who, by dint of personal experience, would better understand. This is a matter of great importance: elsewhere in *AKA*, Annharte specifically upbraids humorist Thomas King for adopting a settler's optic in his portrayal of urban aboriginals: "how does the dark humor balance with the white hate hee haw guffaw?" (163) She is keenly concerned with the point at which humor is more apt to harm than heal; to reify rather than erode roles and assumptions. King's work would seem to presuppose a non-native reader, Annharte observes, to whom he makes significant concessions; whereas the white "audience" invoked in the opening line of Annharte's "Squaw Guide" is a formal strategy or framing technique by which the poet may address her own community instead; which is implicitly aligned with the poet's interest, effectively baffling the intellectual division of labor that obtains between reader and author. Such a profound affective pact with the

audience may surely be referred to McKegney's proposed "willingness to be ... seduced," not least of all for demanding an active engagement with the text, rather than a "passive allegiance to author intentionality." (McLeod, 44)

In a new anthology of "humorous experimental Canadian poetry," editors Jonathan Ball and Ryan Fitzpatrick preface "Squaw Guide" with a remark to this effect. "Shifting between the position of the comic and the heckler, Annharte often 'sets up' a sentiment we might expect in a confessional lyric ('I don't have a closet/that's empty enough for me to get inside') and then spins into a punchline that turns the poem towards satire. Here, she explains the image ('think about it I got too many skeletons') the way you'd explain a joke to someone who just didn't 'get it.'" (Ball & Fitzpatrick, 31)

This play-by-play only scratches the surface, for Annharte makes no concession to the European reader/ignoramus; my odd flash of direct relating is collateral comprehension, far from the point. One may interrogate the bugbear of "accessibility" on these grounds: a tone of direct address assures the reader that meaning is forthcoming; but here refers one to a repository of experiences that elude public "access" in the strictest sense. The problem is slightly more meta- than that I as a reader simply don't "get it," although such resistance certainly structures my interpretation. The lesson is that the only thing here for me to "get" is precisely that I *don't* get it, and may not be equipped to do so. The universal address presupposed by the liberal critic breaks upon such an intimation of particularity or social stricture.

Difficulty, difference, deference

Annharte's "word tricks" demand that the reader/listener assume a stance of personal responsibility toward the text and its speaker. Frankly, this puts me on edge. It baffles my critical acumen. It forces me to update my self-image. It informs me that there is a speech transpiring which is absolutely other than my own, and yet perfectly intelligible in its antagonism. This is a profound use of the poem, less a collectible knick-knack in this case

than an instance of full-bodied speech (which is always the speech of the other). That it is praiseworthy in my estimation, however, does not suffice to rehabilitate my diminished stake in the proceedings.

With regard to the difficult poem, Bernstein asks the following good question: “Does the poem make you feel inadequate or stupid as a reader?” (Bernstein, 4) Perhaps the virtue of a truly obstinate poem concerns this defensive response, an attempt to shore up the self-esteem of a peculiar abstraction called a ‘reader.’ It is on the basis of this stupid, defensive feeling in the reader that we may explore the affinity between the truly, intractably difficult poem and the structure of the joke. As noted above, the joke tends to immediacy; unlike the cathected meaning of this or that difficult text, the meaning of a joke is seldom pending for more than an anxious second, before the punchline retroacts the sense of the set-up. There is no chance of back-dated explanation outside of the moment, for the joke would cease to function socially were this the case. It strikes me that this is completely okay, even important. To fail by the rehabilitative efforts of the understanding perhaps obliges one to move from a standpoint of generic ‘readership’ to one of mutual engagement with a text or speaker; toward an understanding built upon, rather than opposed to, incomprehension.

But more importantly, this response, which Reg Johanson in his introduction to *AKA Inendagosekwe* identifies with a certain *jouissance* of the guilt-laden colonizer, is itself far from universal: I am not simply substituting an aesthetics of rupture for one of wholeness and repair, which is only more critical sleight of hand. The text is surely *for someone*, perhaps someone other than the critic; it is of a context and a community.

In sketching the difficulty with difficulty, Bernstein is chiefly concerned with a high- to post -Modernist poem that appears hermetically sealed against this kind of conversancy, if not charm. I read Annharte with an eye to a different kind of difficulty, one which differently baffles the ‘have-text-may-travel’ conditions of public reception. By no means transparent,

opacity in this case concerns the irreducible fact of the speech of another, perhaps the most difficult thing of all.

Unlike in many an antagonistic Western tradition, however, this difference needn't be absolutized to a point of impasse. Annharte writes of "medicine lines," the seams between cultures and mediums of cultural transmission that actually aid in understanding. "The 'medicine line' is a boundary line between groups, or perhaps it may designate a division of territories," she explains. (52) "I see this 'medicine line' as what connects me as a writer to the most intangible elements of a culture I struggle to understand." (ibid) Connected to orality, to the transmissibility of experience, to the Grandmother's voice, it is this line itself which turns out to be the irreducible element of one's perspective.

In light of this, I am impelled to return upon those circuits of complicity—the multiple realities put into play by the mediation of a singular speech, and comedy's aptness to this task, in which a separation appears only to be repaired by laughter. Of course this convivial outcome, which excludes even as it embraces, does not elide real difference, real antagonism, real difficulty. Rather, Annharte's emphasis upon this "doctoring" function of poetry and speech alike concerns writing as a space for complex negotiations with oneself and others. As regards this project, bucked by her Coyotrix antics, Annharte is clear and committed: "sometimes our laughter is our only weapon." (25) In observance of this struggle, for what it's worth, one Bozo critic is committed to the cause of his exclusion.

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Rachel Zolf

Janey's Arcadia (Coach House, 2014)

REVIEWED BY SARAH DOWLING

When I was seventeen, my family drove up north from Regina, Saskatchewan, to the farm that had been our ancestors' homestead. It was about four hours away, a nice drive. We took the six-car cable ferry across the South Saskatchewan River at St. Louis, and my dad and I got out to chat with the ferryman. We spoke in French; he answered in Mitchif. We understood each other, sort of. Well enough to talk about the weather, the journey across the water, to say thanks, bye, see you later, have a good one.

Mitchif is the language spoken by some Métis people in Canada. It was formed through the combination of French and Cree, using the grammatical structures of both. There used to be another language spoken by Métis people, though: Bungee. It was formed from Cree, Scots English, Gaelic, and French, and by the late nineteenth century, it was the native language of some 5,000 people, who were called "countryborn." But by the 1980s times had changed and only a few elderly speakers remained. Bungee is now extinct.

It's interesting, then, to see Bungee featuring so prominently in Rachel Zolf's new book *Janey's Arcadia* (2014). The second poem in the book, "The Red River Twang," begins, "Chistikat, I forgot my clé," and carries on quoting language fragments from anthropological, historical and ethnographic studies of the Red River Colony, the first European settlement sanctioned by the Hudson's Bay Company in what was then Rupert's Land and what is now Manitoba. The poem reads almost as a list of different figures of speech: "When things settle down, but / I'm dying for a cigarette, but / A bugger to work and clean things, but" (10). Cree loan words like "kawiinachini," "neechimos," "apechequancee," and "chimmuck" appear throughout,

alongside non-standard pronunciations like “shtop,” “messidze,” “haired,” and “din’t” (10-12). The voices in the poem occasionally answer back to this collection process, resisting their own inscription: “I guess I talk like a Bungee, yes / Oh, don’t write that down now, you” (10), and the poem ends with “With another frog in his mouth” (12).

Bungee is a language that points to a historical moment very different from our own, one in which settlers “render[ed] themselves ... intelligible by means of ... their Indian mother tongue[s],” as one settler Zolf quotes in her afterword wrote in 1871 (118). That is to say, these settlers were using their mothers’ language and mixing it with their fathers’, because Bungee was formed in communities where Indigenous women married Scottish men. This may seem like historical minutia, but by today’s standards, the settler Zolf quotes is making an incredible statement: in 1871, settlers, the Europeans at the Red River Colony, had Indian mother tongues. They used these languages to make themselves intelligible to each other. Rather than speaking English or French, Zolf explains, “the *lingua franca* at the Red River Colony” was Cree (118). Maybe it’s not just the Bungee language that’s dead, then. What emerges most strongly in *Janey’s Arcadia*, like a ghost or a revenant, is the idea that we settlers ought to adapt ourselves to the Indigenous cultures upon whose land we are living and whom we are living among.

The central persona in this book, Janey Settler-Invader, is almost a foil to this idea. She appears on the cover as a wholesome apple-cheeked white lady, waving and smiling in front of her storybook farm, chubby baby in her arms. Bountiful bushels of golden wheat surround her, and she waves into the middle distance while the kid sucks its thumb. This incarnation of Janey represents the “nicey-nicey- / clean-ice-cream-TV scraps” (9) version of Canada, the “Utopia, Ltd.” (17) seen on the immigration brochure from which her image is borrowed, and the one that to this day rears its head in U.S. liberal discourse.

As nice as she looks in pictures, though, Janey is the polymorphously perverse lovechild of Kathy Acker's foul-mouthed teen sex addict Janey Smith, and first-wave Canadian feminist Emily Murphy's Janey Canuck, a plucky post-Victorian settler headed west. Once you crack the spine, you're greeted with all the ugliness that these three Janey's can produce. As the persona and guide figure, Janey's settler-invader characteristics set the tone: the sequence "Concentration" quotes from hate-speech lobbied at Theresa Spence, chief of the Attawapiskat First Nation, during her six-week hunger strike protesting sub-standard housing on the reserve in 2012-13; from the corporate-speak of an evangelical organization targeting Indigenous teenagers in Winnipeg's North End; and from historical texts justifying conversion of Indigenous children to Christianity in residential schools.

Zolf's historical mish-mash traces continuities of genocidal logic across at least three centuries—including the present one—and demands a reckoning. "Concentration" also quotes from an 1824 memoir in which the author describes taking "sixty-two / boys" and "sixty-four / girls" from one "tribe" in order to educate them (38), a precursor to Canada's genocidal residential school system, which wrenched 150,000 children from their home communities from the 1880s to the 1990s. While Prime Minister Steven Harper apologized for residential schools in 2008 (and then promptly declared that Canada has "no history of colonialism"), Indigenous studies scholars such as Dian Million remind us that the predominant frameworks for addressing historical injustices such as these are absolutely continuous with the work of colonization. It is the settler state that convened the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and it is the state adjudicates the injustices that the state itself perpetuated. Moreover, as the recent murder of fifteen-year-old Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg reminds us, it is the state that continues to remove Native children from their families and communities and take them into the notorious un-safety of foster care in disproportionate numbers, in the U.S. as well as Canada.

In addition to its consideration of the cataclysmic history of colonial educational policy, then, Zolf's book is intimately attentive to the ongoing crisis of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls in Canada, of whom there are 1,200. At several moments in the book, there are lists of women's names, printed by hand, each one in a distinctive script. These are the names of just a few of the women, primarily those with connections to what is now Manitoba. Each name, each different hand, seems to beg that this individuation could help us see, to recognize each woman or girl, could make us do something or care about her. But Zolf's use of Optical Character Recognition (OCR), a software program used for turning archival documents into digital text that is notorious for its glitches, errors, and misreadings, prompts a deeper consideration of what it means to "recognize."

In his essay "Subjects of Empire," Glen Coulthard argues that Native people ought to reject the colonial politics of recognition, in which limited cultural rights are granted ("recognized") so that the dominance of the colonial state can be solidified. Zolf's poem "What Women Say of the Canadian North-West," one of the final pieces in the book, uses OCR software's misreadings to stage a dramatic display of the false promises of recognition. Zolf juxtaposes a list of settler women's names taken from a nineteenth-century brochure against the names of the murdered and missing women that cycle through her book. The original brochure was designed to attract settlers from Britain, so most of the settler women interviewees comment that they "have no fear of Indigns, for I never see one" (110). Their inability to "see" is made concrete in the OCR software's misrecognition of "Indian" for "Indign," a misprision that draws attention to indignities suffered as well as indignant resistance. Alongside the settler women's confident assertions, though, the murdered and missing women's names are crossed out and juxtaposed with treated text from police reports and press commentary on their deaths. The juxtaposition produces a tally of fearless settler-invaders, whom we might picture as Janey's descendants, as ourselves, blithely happy in our lives, and "never see[ing]" the people whose land we/they are living

on. Alongside our/their unafraid existence another group of women is quietly crossed out, remaining unseen and without recourse to justice.

As Zolf writes in the afterword to her book, “a one-week span lies between the hanging of the Métis revolutionary Louis Riel and the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in November 1885, inextricably linked events that wrenched open the ‘Canadian North-West’ to mass European immigration” (119). My family settled right around that time, and Riel was hanged just a few blocks from the house where I grew up. When I was in high school, the government awarded our extended family a plaque for having farmed continuously in the area for over 100 years. This is what it means to be a settler: we got a prize for being the beneficiaries of land theft and dispossession. But it’s not enough to get “another frog in [your] mouth” and feel guilty. Rather, Zolf’s book looks to the historical example of Bungee and asks what kinds of new relation might be possible: how can settlers change what we’re doing in order to halt the work of colonization, in order to actively decolonize? “It is we who are hopeless?” she asks (99). I think so, but I hope not.

Muriel Rukeyser

Savage Coast, edited and introduced by Rowena Kennedy-Epstein (The Feminist Press, 2013)

REVIEWED BY SUSAN BRIANTE

A Modern Shape

In an article published in *Esquire* magazine in 1974, “We Came For the Games: A Memoir of the People’s Olympics, Barcelona, 1936,” poet Muriel Rukeyser recounts her experiences as witness to the first days of the Spanish Civil War, traveling by train to Barcelona to cover the People’s Olympiad, an alternative to the Hitler’s Olympics. Towards the article’s conclusion she remembers a conversation on a Belgium ship leaving Barcelona. A Hungarian printer asks her, “And in all this—where is the place for poetry?” Rukeyser responds, “I know some of it now, but it will take me a lifetime to find it.”

That quest to discover poetry’s relation to activism, politics, and war produced some of the most compelling work of the twentieth century. Now with the posthumous publication of her novel *Savage Coast*, a fictionalized account of her experiences in Spain, readers get glimpse into a time Rukeyser calls “her moment of proof”—the catalyst for so much of the writing and activism that would follow.

In *Savage Coast*, Rukeyser’s protagonist and stand in for herself is Helen, a young American writer who like Rukeyser becomes stranded in the Catalan countryside because of fighting between the Popular Front and Franco’s Republican Army. Many of the novel’s most memorable passages come when Rukeyser, only 22-years-old when she went to Spain, traces the distance between Helen’s political ideals and the reality of the struggle: “General Strike. The words at the end of a poem, the slogan shouted, the headline for gray industrial scenes ... Not like this.” Helen witnesses houses

searched, churches set ablaze, a truckloads of soldiers heading to the front. Gunshots sound closer. Helen rides in a car through a war-torn Barcelona trying not to lean back into a bloodstained passenger seat. A plane flying over the stranded train passengers in the Catalan countryside produces such panic that Helen imagines: “They might have been ready to be executed, strapped in the chair, the current might be shooting through them, the constraint of terror stabbed them so...” And yet the possibility of death must quickly be incorporated in order for life to continue. This gives Helen pause: “It was all absorbed, immediately, too soon, in the way that the danger from the unknown plane had been accepted by the time the plane reached its position, able to let fall its bombs. The gunners could pass now: one had passed behind them as they criticized the fruit that morning, it had passed tooting, and they had not turned to face the guns.”

As the violence of war becomes more normalized, so does Helen’s resolve to describe such a transformation and its implications beyond the front. “Helen thought how weak she was to let everyone talk on so, and to enjoy hearing them...” Rukeyser writes, “...if she had the poetic genius, that produced the clue, she could find them, hear the real sound that could be spoken only at a moment like this.” Rukeyser offers a complicated proposition: that poetry can help locate the self and others in moment of crisis by providing the only “true” utterances able to bring its listeners into the full present. It’s not a wish that words can alter reality, but that they might fully name it—and thus bring us into a more complete awareness of our complicities and connections. This idea will echo in a footnote to her groundbreaking documentary poem, “The Book of the Dead,” in which she expresses her desire to recognize the “theories” and “systems” which lead to the Gauley Bridge mining disaster. It can be seen as well in her biography of the physicist William Gibbs in which she explains her passion to “to dissect the web” and to deal “with the processes themselves.”

In *Savage Coast*, Rukeyser’s search for a “real sound” leads to stylistic experiments she will repeat elsewhere. Lyric turns abound in the novel,

as does innovation—not the least of which is Rukeyser’s choice to narrate war through the eyes of a young woman. Throughout the novel, Rukeyser inserts her own lyric reflections between the reproduced lines of source material: a transcription of a message from the French delegation read at a Barcelona rally or excerpts from a DH Lawrence novel, to name two examples. This gesture of talking back to the document can also be found in “The Book of the Dead.” Likewise in the novel, Rukeyser experiments with fragmentary dispatches as well as breathlessly descriptive sentences—techniques Rukeyser employed in so much of her work she is said to have stamped the words “PLEASE BELIEVE THE GRAMMAR” across the top of all her manuscripts.

Such aesthetic experiments may have caused her editor at Covici-Friede to reject *Savage Coast* in 1937, declaring it “too confused, too scattered in its imagery and emotional progression to be real.” Although Rukeyser continued to write poems and essays about her time in Spain until her death, the novel remained unpublished until doctoral student Rowena Kennedy-Epstein found the manuscript misfiled in the Library of Congress.

While *Savage Coast* documents the roots of Rukeyser’s aesthetic development as an innovative and political writer, Helen’s growth as an activist takes a primary role in the novel. By its end, Helen marches in Barcelona in a show of solidarity with the Spanish Nationalists and tries to imagine ways in which she might stay in Spain alongside her lover, Hans, a fictionalized version of Rukeyser’s real life lover, Otto Boch, who had fled Germany and came to Spain to run in the People’s Olympiad, eventually joining the International Brigade. Boch was killed at the front in 1939, and his death remains a constant in many of Rukeyser’s writings about war. Kennedy-Epstein calls it “the script that runs through her history.”

Perhaps because of Franco’s victory and Boch’s tragic death, the most profound and lasting lesson of the Spanish Civil War for the young Rukeyser is revealed at the end of her 1974 article (reprinted with the novel), in which

she expresses her determination to “to not let our lives be shredded, sports away from politics, poetry away from anything.” That challenge remains urgent for readers and writers today--at a time of ever burgeoning conflicts in the Middle East, an increasingly militarized police force at home, and continued racial and income inequality. What new shape flies above us? Is it an army transport or an INS drone? In *Savage Coast*, Rukeyser challenges us to “to hear the real sound of the moment” when we discover ourselves under its gaze.

Trish Salah

Lyric Sexology Vol. 1 (Roof Books, 2014)

REVIEWED BY ZOE TUCK

Trans women poets: raise your hands if you have written poems about or in the voice of Tiresias? Although I'm not sure if there are enough trans poets AND trans poets who have written Tiresias poems to call them a commonplace, I will cop to having written a few. The figure of Tiresias looms over the search for precedent. Trish Salah recognizes that sometimes the only way around these commonplaces is by honoring the spirit of the search for origins in myth while also critiquing its pitfalls (on these more momentarily). Note the irreverence of "Tiresias, Impersonated":

I am not a transsexual. Or an intersexual, or a hermaphrodite. (Hermaphroditus can write her own damn book.) I am not any of those things

you have words for now. You don't have words for what I am. What I was was this:

I was a dude.

Then I was a chick.

Then I was a dude again.

Hah. You didn't think we said "dude" or "chick" in what you call ancient Greece, Hellas of the Hellenes, etc. Think again. (11)

The wit masks a real concern that has dogged transgender history and queer history before it: who can we claim, either in the past, or across cultural boundaries, as being one of us? Put another way: is there a universal category of gender? This *isn't* a guide or a 101, so don't go looking for an answer. While this lyric sexology involves time travel (and cylons), it is not a safari.

Salah deploys Madame Tiresia in “Berdache: Trans* National Geographic Edition,” a biting homeopathic orientalist romp through cross cultural gender difference. She immediately follows it with “Polemic Anthropologies,” which gives the plan of a (typical?) lyric sexology:

On the books though it's all one or the other,
Like they declaim. It is like biography:
In the first chapter of a lyric sexology
Lies the proof, or the deconstruction
Pink and blue were not as they once always were
The world is very different now from how it once was...

Literature review is the second chapter
Ambrose Bierce, Aliester Crawley vs. the Skoptzy Sect of Russia
Gallae, Hijra, and don't forget Ovid, Tiresias
It's the usual suspects really.
Alibi for colonialism, but seriously high
— how pot gives you boobs—
fantasy of the sex role reversal
critical utopia
Marge Piercy, Joanna Russ, Suzy McKee Charnas,
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf
Variety. White Lady feminism.

To say nothing of whether Havelock Ellis really cribbed
The Adventures of Julian Robinson, or Michel Foucault
Jerked off to *La Mystère Alexina*
Herculine Barin's softcore bodice ripper adaptation).
Oh to be alone in a Nunnery at last among my own kind
And young and in love, like Rousseau among the Cherokee.

After that, well, I'm sorry to say, but
it's all down hill. (74-75)

I've mentioned so far the search for *origins* in myth in *Lyric Sexology Vol. 1* by trans subjects, but not on behalf of trans subjects—a thornier matter. I think I know what I'm writing about when I write about Tiresias, but what about interested cisgender writers like those mentioned above? Salah, in her easy conversance with and Kathy Acker-esque disobedience from the canon, traces their emphasis on sex. The gods' question (which sex [sic] has the greater pleasure?) becomes Freud's. *Gynecocracy*, a Victorian erotic novel regarding forced feminization shows up, along with Bataille and Genet, and the above-quoted poem's sexological equivalents to the questions in Donne's "Song: Go and catch a falling star," re: Ellis and Foucault.

At this point, since I've invoked Acker's ghost, it's relevant that, like any proper -ology, Salah's comes with quite a bibliography, or, as she puts it, "This book **rips** riffs off many texts" (136). She has said in conversation that *Lyric Sexology Vol. 1* is the other side of her doctoral dissertation. Now I wish I remember the precise word. The inverse? While it may have chapters, and a works cited, this text is definitely not compatible with strictly academic writing, both from its kari edwards-inflected typography to its incorporation of personal narrative. And yet, it should be admissible, because the transition between personal and historical is (to me) seamless, because both are mediated by the medicalization and psychiatrization of gender difference. Case in point: Salah gives us Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (and Freud and Lacan, natch) and on a more personal note, the song cycle "diagnostic detour," in which the speaker expresses desire for:

An older and more beautiful diagnosis, the kind you could
bring home to mamma
More, one from even before Freud, the science of the mythic past,
and how it keeps coming up. (92)

She is stymied in this pursuit, however. I have to quote section V in full:

At the end of my intake interview, at the Montreal General, Doctor Abdullah asked me something, I don't remember, about the length of my hair, manic fuchsia tendrils, my lace up pants, and eighteen skull books, the scorpion crawling my arm a year later, being unstuck in time, I don't remember. And I said something half defensive and art school smart about subcultures and semiotics, about how queer was the new punk, again

In 1991 I thought that might be clever

He didn't bother to conceal the condescension, mumbling "Borderline." his answer "Borderline." to a question "Borderline." I'd not asked

You don't need to be psychiatry smart to know what he meant, that the word wasn't incidental, and wouldn't be.

It would be a while before I got that diagnosis. (94-95)

In case any readers missed the political stakes of this: trans lives are mediated by gatekeepers. Our access to hormones, surgery, changes on legal documents, are too often contingent on our ability or willingness to represent the image of a pole of binary gender that satisfies the retrograde standards of the medical imaginary.

This is the other side of the desire for origins mentioned above. If (some) trans people want to know where we came from, something of our forbears, some cisgender people want to know where we're going. For example: the more femme, the better we pass but the more we open ourselves up to (tired) criticisms or *parodic* femininity. The more butch, "You're not even trying," etc. This is perhaps the most basic version. Salah offers at least one rendition:

People at parties are reassured when they see a transsexual in a dress...

The fact that she is wearing a dress tells them they are at a party, and
the fact

That transsexual is a she perhaps not a he a she not a she

That she is transsexual, of course, let's them know they are women
and men

enough to be at a party with a transsexual in a dress.

When she is not wearing a dress, all trembles with the terror,
the confessional

Cool (67-8).

Of course, not all of gender's demands are sartorial. See also: "Metacritical Comment on the Expectation that Transgender People Demonstrate Their Feminist Analysis" (105). Or Salah's answer to Poetry's and Feminism's (imagined here as monoliths) uncritical celebration of Adrienne Rich, whose transmisogynistic comments made mourning complicated: "Explore the wreck." Though critical, this is not a takedown, just more exquisitely sophisticated ripping or riffing—which Salah doesn't limit merely to cis gatekeepers and critics. She alludes to/converses with the Rachel Pollack, Trace Peterson, kari edwards—whose typographic stamp shows up off and on throughout the text. She also riffs, prosodically and stylistically, off of other Canadian and US experimental writers, many of whom appear in her Acknowledgments, which functions like a second Works Cited for the lyric portion of *Lyric Sexology Vol 1*. This book demands another review to treat the prosody, but "I am counting the kinds of impossible" and I have only counted this far (127).

I continue to get caught up in the long twentieth century that lives on in our jails and bathrooms, writing in advance of the possibility of reviewing trans lit *qua* lit. In *Lyric Sexology Vol 1*, Trish Salah has given trans readers our most poetically rigorous genealogy yet. The extent to which she has worked the rupture stand to make reviews of this nature obsolete—a happy prospect.

EDITOR'S NOTES

*The American poet can no longer write as the citizen of a nation
but an empire, a fact with endless implications...*

— Murat Nemet-Nejat (2003)

When Yedda Morrison & I started *Tripwire* in 1997, among several relatively new currents in the experimental wings of North American poetics was how many emergent poets were rethinking—both formally and as subject matter—how to articulate the emergent networks and discourses of what was just then beginning to be understood as (neoliberal) ‘globalization’. Between 1989 and 9/11 (if you’ll excuse the somewhat lazy periodization and generalizations), neoliberal capitalism—having successfully weathered most mid-century anticolonial movements and integrated newly independent (yet ‘dependent’) states, using IMF and World Bank arm-twisting and debt-baiting alongside a post-Cold War geopolitics of militarist and economic consolidation—had fully transformed the geopolitical landscape such that radical activists, critics, and artists felt the imperative to rethink their practices viz. anticapitalist and anti-imperialist struggle, as well as aesthetic representations thereof.

Of course, there had been many writers and artist-activists who had mapped out the emergent post-WWII world-system and its imperialist logics, from Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein to Frederic Jameson and David Harvey, from Manuel Castells to Saskia Sassen, from the Latin American dependency theorists to the Subaltern Studies group, to mention only a tiny handful. From the 1994 uprising of the Zapatistas to the Battle of Seattle, many North American poets followed the implications of these shifts as well, attempting to forge new poetics appropriate to the historical moment. Poets like Rodrigo Toscano, Juliana Spahr, Jeff Derksen, Myung Mi Kim, Mark Nowak, Heriberto Yepéz, or Deborah Richards, as well as journals such as *XCP*, *West Coast Line*, *Chain*, *Tinfish*, and *Interlope*:

suddenly a new generation of poets, emerging in dialogue with previous generations of avant-garde, diasporic, and anticolonial poetries, was moving beyond increasingly provincial debates over nationalist poetries and identity, as well as a return of a conversational (and often apolitical) poetics of personality, to rethink and reframe what North American poetry could add to the cognitive mapping of and struggles within-and-against neoliberal globalization.

Translocal Montage

East / of what?

—Catalina Cariaga, “No Orient”

In “Excerpts from Bahala Na!” (*Cultural Evidence*, 1999), Catalina Cariaga splices together textual fragments from an advertising campaign for Singapore Airlines, a study of cockfighting, and various international news accounts of the case of Flor Contemplación, the Filipina migrant domestic worker executed in Singapore for murder. Throughout, there is the additional “voice” of international activists’ communication via the internet, attempting to gather information and organize around Contemplación’s case. Cariaga’s collaging of these various sources does more than merely place seemingly disparate discursive and rhetorical materials ‘in conversation’. The formal (dis)organization and rearticulation of her source texts makes manifest the violence of the poem’s subject matter, violence both physical and discursive. At the same time, by placing quotation marks around each fragment, she retains to some degree the sense of speech fragments ripped from their historical context, while at the level of reading (whether aloud or silently) producing a kind of halting, stuttering poetics that resists any smooth lyricism or, for that matter, any smoothing over of the parataxic clash of meanings:

“All around the world” “it put cockfighting on the map”
“required reading for folklorists” “please E-mail me”

“Singapore girl” “a vacuum cleaner and oven” “cooks”
“you’re a great way to fly” “armed with steel spurs”

“All around the world” “combat in a circular pit”
“100% cotton; extra starch” “please E-mail me”

The clash of phrases, rhetorics, and modes of address produce multiple readings that nonetheless accrete over the course of the poem into an affective rendering of local politics suddenly writ (and re-writ) global. “Singapore girl”—exotic flight attendant? migrant domestic worker?—“cooks” (as verb or noun or both?)—is (via the implied domestic laboring) “a great way to fly” yet is nonetheless “armed with steel spurs”—referencing both kitchenware as well as an implicit violence. A singular event—the case of Flor Contemplación—begins in one local (a site already overdetermined by the gendered shuttling between the Philippines and Singapore) and becomes, via the thick description of ethnographic and advertising discourses, connected laterally to the uneven machinations of globalization, while at the same time set into a more complex context wherein “you’re a great way to fly” can be read (against the cross-cultural grain) ethnographically, and “it put cockfighting on the map” as touristic advertising rhetoric.

“Singapore girl” “please E-mail me”
“All around the world” “please E-mail me”

The repetition of the phrase “please E-mail me” throughout the work functions at one level as a refrain or plaint, as well as interrupting any clean divide between public and private discourse (or frontchannel/backchannel). At the same time, any easy identification with the well-intentioned activist’s refrain—as a recognizable positionality vis-à-vis the “content” of the poem—becomes more difficult upon closer reading. The pairings within lines of (for instance):

“required reading for folklorists” “please E-mail me”

or:

“100% cotton; extra starch” “please E-mail me”

produce an interesting tension within the poem, problematizing the reader’s position. These lines mix a kind of advertising language, from book blurb to commodity boast, and then seem to invite the reader’s participation in what is clearly an ethnographic/commodity aesthetics. Thus the “please E-mail me” becomes both “please contact me (the poem) for what it promises/offers for consumption” and “please contact me (the reader) with more information/ethnographic data.” This suggestive framing of the ambivalence surrounding transnational activism and its subaltern ‘object’ prevents the poem from lapsing into an oversimplified tale of good (immigrant/native/activist) and bad (employer/ethnographer), as well as implicating writer, reader, and activist in the complex and often contradictory cultural politics at work in the poem.

“All around the world” “a domestic” “she” “was represented”
“with clemency, but this was rejected” “please E-mail me”

Here the transnational migrant laborer, “domestic” (both “local” and as gendered site/form of labor); in the poem (and in the press, in activist’s accounts, in anthropology, etc.) “she” “was represented” / “with clemency, but this was rejected...” The implied critique of ethnography throughout the poem questions representational practices, especially of the subaltern. The “please E-mail me” can then be read as an (exasperated? ironic?) request by the poem/author/reader/Western subject for subaltern speech/text — which, of course, can only be mediated via electronic communication (pre-Web 2.0, it should be noted), presuming a geographical (and thus geopolitical) distance — perhaps the *distance of representation itself*. Again, a concise staging of several problematics: of representation, subaltern speech (or the inability to ‘speak’, to invoke Spivak), gendered labor within transnational migrant economies, the

suggestive relation between the activist's plea and the juridical's rejection, all while retaining (within the broader canvass of the entire poem) the horizon of a nascent transnational feminism—"all around the world"—as well as articulating a specific historical event within developing translocal activisms and broader global contestations around gender, ethnicity, and commodification.

Scale Work

Sometime after the Seattle protests in 1999, Robert Fitterman gave a talk at Yedda's and my flat in San Francisco. Presenting his ideas on what he was then calling "inventory poetry"¹, he played a cassette tape that collaged different language sources, including Noam Chomsky giving a speech in New York wherein the word "Seattle" is repeated several times on the tape. Amidst linguistic detritus and tape hiss (as I recall it), a buzzword of the era's politics (however naïve in retrospect) was able to "make itself heard" through the din. Seattle had traveled from New York to San Francisco in a poem consisting of nothing but others' words (played on a stereo assembled in Asia, not surprisingly). Though the bulk of that evening's discussion was centered on the implications of appropriation for poetry (this was before many of these concepts had been theorized under the banner of conceptual writing), the (analog!) tape collage Fitterman played stuck with me as a something between a chance encounter and an overdetermined articulation of how new forms of composition might be able to embed and manifest the mutually intertwined politics of the global and the local. Indeed, Fitterman's poetry in this time would reflect this shift as well.

Fitterman's *Metropolis* is a multi-book serial poem, wherein many of the individual sections 'take place' in New York, where the author lives and works. However, in Fitterman's work, New York is not simply the local(e) of the poem's titular imaginary, but functions as a particular (and particularly fluid and dynamic) site of multiple discourses and scales. By "scales" I wish to invoke a notion of the simultaneous registers of both local and global networks of social, economic, and cultural relations, as well as the unevenness

of such relations as they manifest themselves in cultural politics. Further, the concept of scale refers not only to spatial realms of globalization but the related imaginaries necessary to render—discursively, aesthetically, cognitively—cartographies of globalization from a variety of sites and positions.

Metropolis 19—"Dream Cuisine: Neo-Colonialism, Nouvelle Cuisine, Lewis & Clark, and the Union Square Café" (1998)—constructs one such mapping, using source text from the journals of Lewis and Clark and the menu of New York's Union Square Café to interrogate the celebratory discourses of both the "American frontier" and contemporary multicultural "ethnic cuisine":

State of the cumin

glorious fusion yet
a tricky dance of cardamom and

Elk skins, I was obliged
to leave my celery root

coconut chutney of self-
discovery

Capt. C and myself concluded to set out early the next morning
and ascend these rivers until we could perfectly satisfy ourselves

Here the local dining experience in New York—"the cultural capitol of the world"—is re-scaled in several ways. The fusion of source materials in the poem provides an historical contextualization of the contemporary tourism of so-called global cuisine, as a journey of "self-discovery" that is perhaps more concerned with "perfectly satisfy[ing] ourselves" than in cross-cultural

exchange and dialogue. U.S. nationalism, while celebrating the melting pot (to invoke another cooking term) of cultural diversity, becomes as much about (literal) consumption as it does an encounter with living, dynamic cultures and traditions. Indeed, just as the references to both menu items and hunted game seem to equate non-Western cultural references with pre-conquest 'cultural tradition' ("cardamom and / Elk skins"), United States national identity ("the state of the cumin") is at once a "glorious fusion yet / a tricky dance."

The poem functions at a number of different sites and scales, from local to national to global, as well as traversing different kinds of cultural, economic, and discursive routes, from frontier exploration (its own form of imperial cartography) to the spice trade to the poetics of menus, replete with their own melting pot imaginaries (the "dream cuisine" of the poem's title). At the same time, this is not a touristic poetics, or a clever traveler's guide for globe-hopping cosmopolitans, but a rearticulation from a specific position, that of the global (neocolonial) city of New York. Here the subject is indeed a citizen of empire, offered the possibilities of consuming the global (or to be more specific, commodities delivered up by global capitalism) from within the confines of the local. However, the local and global can no longer remain separate, binary realms of experience or consciousness. As global consumer capitalism performs its own re-scaling on the site(s) of the local, the subject is interpolated as a citizen-subject of the global (or as a citizen-laborer, citizen-consumer, etc.). Where better exemplified is this than in New York, which is:

crowded with Islands;
Colorado lamb and

tangy salsa verde

[...]
social fabric,

croquetted wontons

sustaining the loss
of two very large bear skins

Not to strike those nations we had taken
by five hundred

dinners five nights a week

Though Fitterman is likely more known today for his post-conceptualist works, *Metropolis* captures his transition from a Reznikoff-ian documentary poetics to a full-scale mixologist (especially in *Metropolis XXX*). Though much of his current work is highly attuned to how contemporary culture becomes ‘flattened’ in online space (in turn revealing new modes of affective depth and mediated subjectivity), here the drop-down menu has an IRL materiality directly linked to global trade, consumption and the exotic, and the geo-historical mapping is served up in a delicious stew that remains an exemplary model of how appropriation and collage can perform scale work well beyond the individual or avatar.

Bringing the Global Home

over the table — mergers
across the mesa — maquilas
—Hung Q. Tu

The cover of Hung Q. Tu’s *Verisimilitude* (Atelos, 2000) contains US Dept. of Defense photos of soldiers in Vietnam, with the names of American cities printed over them, referencing the strategy of “bringing the war home,” a component in the ideological struggles of the US anti-war movement. In *Verisimilitude*, Tu brings the neoliberal ideological wars “home,” rearticulating

the global at the level of the local and rewriting the subjective against the terrain of transnational shifts in political economy and (im)migrancy.

Hong Kong — South Central
material — material
freighter — freight

China Embraces Liberalism!
consequences live in neighborhoods
but since this is literature
I'm interested in the term FOB

— from “Uneven Development, Uneven Poetics”

The title of this poem in particular suggests a broader poetics in response to (and/or symptom of?) uneven development, at once both socio-economic as well as *global* in its scope. Uneven development, conceptualized in numerous Marxian domains from cultural geography to dependency theory, projects the capitalist world-system as its horizon, as well as its cause. ‘Uneven Poetics,’ in this context, might suggest a notion of literary practice and reading that would decenter Euro-American modernisms (or at least reframe them within a structurally uneven global system of production, distribution, and imperial imaginaries), as well as begin to explore a ‘global poesis’ within the form of the poetic itself. Thus the contradictions and disjunctures within such poems are not merely aesthetic elements for the sake of upsetting conventional notions of cohesion or gestures intended to stand for ‘innovation’, but rather fundamental to a rendering of the contradictions within global capitalism itself, wherein uneven development is both a byproduct and a necessity. Rather than attempting to read (and recuperate) such poems within dominant Euro-American notions of modernist and postmodernist values (where, for instance, there continues to be an implied—and also at times explicit—hierarchy between “Poetry”, celebrated for formal innovation and

‘universal’ [ie, Western] liberal values and [insert identity category here]-poetry, read for content presumed to reveal ‘messages *about*’ the author or [identity-category] experience), perhaps we might recognize how new formal strategies can break such problematic divides and better represent the ‘actuality’ of the contemporary, without erasing the particularities of those bodies and subjectivities (such as Flor Contemplación’s), for whom globalization can be a curse as much as a breaking down of rigid borders and categories.

I don’t want to invest too much in the title of Tu’s poem, which I imagine is at least partially ironic, but I do think it is nonetheless a provocative (and productive) invitation to read his work within a broader global socio-economic nexus. Likewise, I don’t wish to imply that his poetry is solely a one-to-one representation of “uneven development” (or global capital) itself, but rather suggest a possible reading that allows for the formal elements of Tu’s work to be read alongside the content as two (separate but linked) kinds of articulations of the global. If “the poem,” circulating within networks of distribution, interpretation, and lit-crit discourses, might be said to constitute a kind of “local site,” then Tu’s work exemplifies an ongoing dialectical remapping of various kinds of articulated locals within the contested spaces of the global. Again, local and global are not two separate domains, each occupying a coherent discursive space. Rather, many (uneven) locals and positionalities—including the contested site of the transnational subject, which in Tu’s work is often the Vietnamese immigrant service worker or the itinerant tech worker imbricated in the expanding and uneven ‘worldwide webs’ of culture (the ‘global cuisine’ of digital consumption?)—are brought into a contradictory and uneven spatiality of poetic form, from the local/personal to the global—

rent —
since rent
gained (historical) ballast

giddy up horsy giddy up
you, me, and the land mass of Brazil

(“It’s Just Your Basic CYA [The Streets of San Francisco])”

—or from global to local/subjective, effect to affect:

 wherever a beach
In Bali the din that is
Tin to mistake
The stock from the
Company or that
From the product
Or that from your
Self or that from
Benevolence or that
From justifiable or
That from homicide

(“The Birth of Cool (Cash)”)

In Tu’s work such poetry does not use a prefab form or genre (the ‘immigrant narrative’ or the ‘identity poem’) simply remodeled to address global/local economic issues, but a working-through of those issues in both content and form: the lived daily processing (in language) of various locals (from self to jobsite to state to national to transnational identity) within and against the backdrop of the global (even as that ‘backdrop’ is neither ‘over there’ nor some thematic of exotic cosmopolitanism).

last word
global village
global idiocy
logic of conservation posture of farce

stake out strategic ground figure any hill
chatter over “maintaining lifestyles”
rent raised history soon to compensate

copies! copies! copies!
transfix a hovering rim that trade
vessels plot by stars then
radar’s iridescence as construed providence
indivisible term only magnets see
being *on behalf* end *in good faith*
supplier/supplied — suffixes hardly do justice

aversion
the authentic
restaurant heir
embargoes namesake
gripped a tables turning
paid underneath *un der* towed
compradorship by example

potential
clerks clergy
for their convenience
or *by the grace of god*
b sub-altern to b
autopsy on the text reveals
the body’s captive language

(from *A Great Ravine*, [Parenthesis, 1997])

Here we can see a compelling distillation of immigrant identity and its linguistic representation worked through the grinders of labor, production and global trade. The language of global capital ends up literally inscribed on the body, while its rearticulation (through laboring immigrant bodies) becomes the poem, whose “last word[s]” provide “the autopsy on the text.” The “body’s captive language”—named worker, renter, “FOB,” clerk (“copies! copies! copies!”: shade of a Bartleby in the age of digital reproduction?), coroner, poet—shows how subaltern(ized) bodies re-articulate identity, but without any easy coherence or “maintaining lifestyles,” even while increasingly subsumed into the global economy and its racialized logics (“always already race bait” he writes in *Verisimilitude*). As Tu puts it in “Market Psychology and Economic Fundamentals in a *Times* Article on the Straits”:

la differance — accountant’s *raison d’être*

world-view around the clock

As in Cariaga and Fitterman’s work in the late 90s, Tu’s is yet another example of how, against the increasingly tired and over-simplified discourses (both neoliberal and leftist-theoretical) about and around ‘globalization,’ a radical and avant-garde poetics might continue to chart fissures and fractures in neoliberal capitalism while also forging an internationalist outlook for living in a world of our laboring but not of our making.

¹ cf of the special issue of *Object* on inventory that Fitterman edited around that time, as well as his discussion with Bruce Andrews on the concept in *Tripwire* 4.

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