

Yellow Papers

Contributions, extracts and samples from Copy Press Reader's Union series:
'I' without guarantees

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'I' without guarantees

Texts 1–3

20–7–17: exploring the use of the self and the essay form by authors who hover around that space where messy lives meet words, where ideas born of experience find textual springing off points; authors raiding their own lives to atomise any theories of existence and build their own informal philosophies.

Chris Fite-Wassilak

Texts 4–7

9–11–17: reading fiction, philosophical prose and poem from authors who make saying 'I' a ground for their experiments, who say 'I' without guarantees. 'An "I" without guarantees!' writes Ingeborg Bachmann, 'what is the 'I', what could it be?'

Yve Lomax

Texts 8–13

8–2–18: readings, soundings and ponderings about the 'I's relation to 'you'. We are each others' echo, says the linguist Emile Benveniste. 'I' posits another person, the one who, being as she is, completely exterior to 'me', becomes my echo – to whom I say 'you' and who says 'you' to me. So echo greets us from the outside. So we form ourselves in relation. So we work towards a new poetics of 'us'.

Kristen Kreider

Copy Press Reader's Union seeks common spaces for readers and writers to delve into the possibilities and limitations of 'coming together'.

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Nostalgia

Vit Hopley

20-7-17

I have no desire to introduce myself; you might think that this suggests a rather unwilling character, but you would be mistaken. All you need to know is that I have been away and have just returned home. I notice the word 'just'. To be precise, one week ago I set out my return: planning a night hour so as to encounter no one, I was to slide back home, not creep but slide without interruption; how I wished to go unnoticed. In retrospect I realise that this was a foolish desire; my plan was flawed. Why?

Realistically, the last train never arrives late enough and during those spare hours, barely past dark, loitering, I would not fail to be noticed. And lets not forget there is always a dog waiting to bark, door hinges needing oil, floorboards that creak and, in the dark of night, to trip, bump or knock is commonplace. It was just past midnight when I walked through the front door. My aunt, holding a stick in one hand and an empty glass vase in the other, was waiting to greet me.

—It's me. For then she decided to show pleasure; it was the following day that I was to receive her true disappointment. What did I expect? Creeping in, after not even a word, with nothing to say for myself. To come and go without demand? Yes. Clearly she had suffered a range of emotion and I, with such ease, have created the impression of a thoughtless character. Yet I assure you my actions have not been without thought. —It's me. An inadequate explanation. My aunt. Silent. Is she best described by the small cowbell hanging on the garden gate, the house, its furniture, polished stairs, curtains, a bottom drawer or the small hole in her cardigan that's not saying anything, watery eyes, short grey hair, which she cuts and styles herself; she is holding a mug, chipped, in her left hand, her finger nail is chipped, all things chipped, ornaments chip, she has a chipped upper left lateral incisor. Yawning. Yellow old teeth. Are you tired? She lost the other by accident, the lower right third molar left on its own accord, more will follow, but in the meantime there is nothing to chew on here, only questions exhausted in my absence. —It's me. The cat, not quite ready to shake off the cat she is to be our cat, saunters in, muddy paws still prowling. Little black and white twice fed butterball cat whose delicate nails, so razor sharp, can easily turn a rabbit inside out, where have you been? Here, there, never far away, jump up pussycat, pussycat; I think if there is to be any realism here: the cat being a cat is ignoring me. —It's only me. Can be no other than the neighbour who only ever enters via the back door though rarely crosses the threshold; she is not stopping, just passing, and won't come in; dirty boots, must walk the dog, must not be late, parish council meeting, village dustbins to discuss, a new terrorist threat or was that global warming, anyway; she heard a kerfuffle last night, suffered a sleepless night, and is just checking there is nothing to

report. Just (that word again), just the passivity of semi-detached living: oh it's you.

—It's you. You there and she there, exactly, you and your aunt are sitting either side of the kitchen table, this is quite usual, you know your place and she knows hers. This seating arrangement, without fail, returns you to you, memories hoard in, they can't wait to be recalled, (surely they don't have a will of their own); back you go, to where, this time, really that far back. Ok. And you wonder where all the time goes. Sitting. You have in front of you, in your possession, a scrap of paper, folded, probably a back of an envelope, unfolded, a list, that you refold only to unfold to refold, folding an infinite increase in the number of creases the paper can hold; the cat's kneading paws and purrs are doing the work of the domesticated. Hold still this image in your mind. The neighbour is poking her head around the door; both you and your aunt have turned to look at her. She, that is the neighbour, is saying one more thing and (that's another thing too) then she really must go. Yes, yes it is spring; the door has been kept open for more than ten minutes, she is not coming in but air enlivened by a higher sun is: filling air space.

It is spring. The glass vase has been filled with daffodils. Early this morning you saw your aunt in the garden move from daffodil clump to daffodil clump; she was being careful to take only those flowers that would not be missed. Daffodils: the chaplet of infernal gods. Narcissi: benumbing youth. Stop there. While you might vainly read too much into these daffodils the expression on your aunt's face is unchanging. Puckered brow, pursed lips. Is she troubling a thought, a thought that escapes her, that will, when she least expects, return to her; she is not one to dwell, her mind is blank. Filling air space. Stop there. The neighbour was saying one more thing; and the cat, oblivious or not, has wondered off. Daffodils. Daffodils again, forgive me.

Forgive me. Me. I cannot explain my significance anymore than you or she can; setting out is hard enough. —It's me. The interruption I fear. —It's only me. The neighbour. Still here. Is she best described by her dogged commitment to the community or by her ability to become as intrusive as a bad memory; and just one more thing (and I will close the door behind me) will she ever leave. —It's me. A cat, not our cat, slinks in; mangy old curious cat, gnawed ear, kinked tail cat you don't belong here. Shoo pussycat shoo out you go before our cat comes back and my aunt takes her stick to you. The neighbour is poking her head around the door and my aunt is looking away. What are you waiting for; the day is moving on. The cat not our cat has left exactly as it came in, through the open door —ah, the audacity— the neighbour left without closing the door behind her and, just (not that word again) as I am about to close the door, my aunt, having waited all this time, desperate to say something, asks —Are you staying? You close the door behind you.

Gloss, an excerpt

Chris Fite-Wassilak

20-7-17

I have spoken in other tongues, not in English, and every word seems to come out upside down. When the holy spirit comes, it feels as if my veins will burst open, as if my head were swelling up, but real big, and then it becomes small once more, I don't know how, and this feeling reaches down into the legs and the middle of the back. It grabs you.

A friend's mother had taken us to the city's amusement park for the day, 'Six Flags' he pronounced it *sickflags* before then dropping us off for a lock-in at his church. After a potluck dinner on Styrofoam plates, we're all sat outside in the warm evening, half listening to one of the organisers go on about prayer and discipline. One boy sitting next to me picks up a pebble, tosses it towards the van parked next to us. It skittles underneath. I pick up a pebble and do the same. It bounces up, arcing inevitably from the ground to ping loudly off the van's metal body. The speaker, a loud, stern woman, stops.

Who di that?

I say nothing. She promises that no one will leave, and there will be no films shown during the lock-in, unless someone owns up. Silence. I slowly lift a limp arm. In my memory, she walks over to me, looking down her nose and demanding an explanation in front of everyone.

Didn't mean to hit the car, I mumble.

What'd you say?

I repeat myself.

Then wha' DIDya mean to hit?

I don't answer, attempting to retreat into the seething hole I'd burnt around myself. An awareness has dawned, obvious but until then unspoken, that the ghost that was then settled on me was alone, somehow distinct from everyone else's here, and to continue speaking would be only to dwell on that distance. All I remember of the rest of the evening was flattened silence, as if everyone had disappeared along with their ghosts. That night, lying in a sleeping bag on the floor of the nave, dreams were replaced by the television that they had stuck in front of the altar playing one horror film after the other. I didn't sleep for weeks.

The Old Testament's story of the tower of Babel is meant to account for the origins of the world's languages, the unifying tongue *confounded* by a petulant god. Part of the attraction of the tale is its analogical accuracy: the image of a metropolis full of people unable to communicate, each alone with their own bubbling stream of words. It, of course, doesn't go on to specify the creation of distinct languages, or even start to account for their tilts and stretches and dialects; all it asserts is a lack of understanding.

Every word has its own personality, a theologian once remarked. *A translation is but a mask*. But what, then, is an accent? We assign them to places, like flora that will only grow in one particular valley. Several writers in the sixteenth century likened the use of vernacular Italian and French as fresh young shoots, sprouting, from what earth, near the dying old tree of Latin: *a small and subtle branch which has barely flowered, and not yet borne the fruit of which it is capable*. These tendrils are rooted in a time when distances were thought of as further and gaps were longer. But it doesn't feel so direct, so shinningly healthy or green, when I am asked casually, daily, about where my accent is from. I don't know how to explain it to others, much less myself. Perhaps like one of Child's recipes: one part mellowed American dash of Southern, dash of Midwest; two parts international school mid-Atlantic; quickly shaken with one fifth in the environs of Dublin, all slowed and parsed through countless attempts to talk with those whose first language was Italian, Hebrew, Danish, Polish, Arabic, Greek, Urdu. As if each of those pronouns might stand in for a whole use of words, that the metaphor of a country is a static lawn and its language is a solitary thing, merely a gathering of mouths.

My own improvised theory, as my voice itself became a familiar foreigner, was that interacting with other language speakers creates an accent deficit, a non-accent; which, to me, explained the creation of the plains of the modern North American palette, or those acquaintances who grew up in international schools and ended up sounding like wayward Canadians; and then, making up for such a lack, where ever you might end up next, you would soak its sounds up like a brittle, desperate sponge. There was a familiarity when I later came across a parenthetical aside in Dante's essay *On Eloquence in the Vernacular*, where he notes that he considered the confusion induced at Babel *nothing other than the forgetting of the previous language*. The founding of language instead becomes something like just making it up, filling a void with whatever sounds might come to hand.

Excerpts

Aurelia Guo

20-7-17

1

practiced players in the game of reading signs
but there were no lesbians in Asia

I followed the woman around like a little puppy dog

If there was a planet hurtling towards the Earth, she would not kill herself in
advance, she said; she would wait for the impact

I sometimes felt jealous that sexuality seemed to be intuitive and irrefutable for
everyone else, while I seemed to have to piece mine together from inconclusive
evidence.

She is a dead woman walking and the only question is how long she remains on
death row

2

more times than rats have orgasms
Put coins in a bowl.

vivid, miserable life
I think I've ruined my child

a sensation of being raped in the wrong place

women of privilege who expected their lovers to treat them with veneration

a 'studio boss' who chased starlets

a lesbian with a misogynist streak
the tax penalties, of which she complained bitterly
from the upper stories of the Trinity Square car park in Gateshead

like bothersome flies on a muggy day
who 'allow' you to love them but are all too happy to tell you how low the tide of
their own emotion flows

*You Don't Know Anything You Fucking Liberal Because You Have Never Been
Fucked in the Ass. Fascism is Coming Back*

17 ½ years, 3 shorts extracts

Yve Lomax

9-11-2017

I

My head is swimming with numbers and then a little song breaks in and starts to sing: 'King Jesus hath a garden full of diverse flowers, where I go culling posies gay all times and hours.' Nowadays I am no longer sure about Jesus Christ being ranked as King, but what about those gay bunches of diverse flowers which I was taught at Sunday School, I can go picking all times and hours?

My childhood was spent in a village where each summer a Flower Show was held. Here was a highly competitive event where all manner of things vegetable and flowering were entered for prizes and praise. The category especially for children, which I entered annually, was that of the collection and display of a diversity of wild summer flowers. The flowers had to be wild and there had to be diversity. Now, when it came to the day, this diversity was judged according to number. Each bouquet, indeed each multiplicity, was judged upon a scale of the more and the less. To have entered but one flower and proclaimed this a diversity or multiplicity would have been judged a sorry failure, a bad joke or childish prank. No, the prizes of First, Second and Third were awarded strictly in accordance with the greatest number. In short, the diversity was judged quantitatively.

It could well be thought that each collection of flowers constituted a bouquet of times. However, upon the prize giving day this bouquet was judged in the terms of a 'numerical multiplicity'. What was counted was a number of times, each of which were seen as separate and discontinuous. What the judging failed to take into account was the fragrance, the bouquet of the bouquets. A multiplicity could be smelt in the air, which defied enumeration. To be sure, the judges couldn't see it yet their noses couldn't deny it.

The words have fallen from a million mouths and have been written endless times; nevertheless, I simply have to say: *I love you*. Perhaps, however, the declaration of love would be better said as this: *I am unable to be unable to love you*. And why these words would be better is because the love that is expressed by them has wrapped up within them something of the inability that is the pure potentiality, let's say *passion*, of love.

I love you, but will this love expire if the potentiality of love disappears in the act of loving? The question leads me to say that love requires a potentiality that is irreducible to every definite act of love, which necessitates that in actuality there remains passive potentiality. True love requires true potentiality, which is when the text remains unwritten on the blank tablet and love is unable. *I am unable to love you*. However, saying this is not the same as saying that I do not love you, and nor is it a matter of circumstance: *I would love you if I could but I love another and it is with this other that my fidelity lays*.

I am unable to be unable to love you. With this expression there is a folding back that effects an unfolding, which as such is, definitely, the appearance of love. But of this appearance I must ask: Is it dressed in red, is it sovereign? Or, does it bear the lightning of possible storms.

I am unable to be unable to love you. With these words filling the air, a cry of expression can be heard. But even though an 'I' is spoken, the cry does not belong to the interiority of the person who utters the present instance of the discourse containing 'I'. On the contrary, the cry is an expression of pure potentiality, every definite act of love has wrapped within it a charge of potentiality: *I am unable to be unable to love you*.

3

He is still standing there and still he has not uttered a word since saying, 'This voice is not mine.' A voice had spoken as unpossessed and unattributable, and at that moment a displacement was introduced into the world: 'he' no longer stands as the Man that has stands for the human in general. (And he knows only too well that it takes an apparatus, and more than likely quite a few, to make the subject called Man out of a sex-ually 'male' or, come to that, 'female' being.)

He has not uttered a word, and a remarkable patience, conviction, fidelity or love still has his hand clamped over his mouth. For some, he would appear to be depriving himself of the one thing that makes him human: language and the Voice that has had the cry or chirrup of the animal banished from it. But for him there is no deprivation at all. None whatsoever. However, there is deactivation of a division that separates along the lines of having or not having language: there is the activation of non-division.

With that said, she chucks a stone up in the air and as she catches it there is given, by those who have one, a joyous flick of a tail.

Swamp

Yvette Greslé

9-11-17

I'm stuck in the swamp and I'm remembering the first time it happened. I was living somewhere else. Now I live in London. Before that, I lived in Johannesburg. Before that, I lived on Mahé Island. 'Where is that?' I hear you ask. Ok well maybe not you. But more often than not I am asked. Or someone says: 'How lucky you are! Why would you leave such a beautiful place?' Or someone might exclaim: 'How exotic!' Or their eyes glaze over and they start talking to someone else. Just in case you don't know, Mahé Island is the largest island in the Seychelles archipelago, one of 115 islands, in the Indian Ocean, south of the equator, in the eastern and southern hemisphere, northwest of Madagascar and east of Kenya. Why am I telling you this story and what is the swamp? I have no answers and nothing is resolved. Perhaps you can help me figure it out. Perhaps we will find that it doesn't have to be figured out. Perhaps you are also in a swamp, your own swamp, and you're looking for a way out. I am walking backwards and forwards in time. This is no fiction. This is a true story. The first time I felt myself sinking into the swamp I was 11 years old. It was 1981.

I am sitting next to my mother in my great-aunt's sitting room, in Anse Royale, on the south side of Mahé Island. The room looks out onto a garden. From the garden there is a road. You cross the road and find yourself on a beach overlooking the Indian Ocean. The beach is long and the sand is soft and white. The sea changes from season to season. In the monsoon months the water becomes choppy and murky. Seaweed washes up onto the beach. At other times of the year the sea is warm, too warm, and the water is crystal clear. When it is full moon, it is like a mirror. I know every inch of the bay, where it is clear to swim, where there are underwater worlds of life, what it looks like underneath the water: a geography of sand, corals, seaweed, shells, and fish. I seek out the lion fish that live underneath the corals because they are so beautiful to me in form and shape and pattern. The ocean extends into the distance to a horizon line, which is mysterious and I long to see beyond it. The front door of my great-aunt's house, which also leads straight into the sitting room, is always open to let in a breeze. The room is long and narrow and circled with chairs. There are wooden chairs with rattan backs and seats and chairs with ornamental arms and feet. There are also plantation chairs of

the kind my grandfather and father would sleep on after Sunday lunch with their legs stretched out. My favourite chair has twisted arms and legs. It has engravings on the back. The engravings are of flowers. I put down my glass of icy orange squash and I put a sweet into my mouth. The sweet is pale yellow and when I bite into it the inside is sherbet. It tastes lemony and acidic. The flavours catch at the back of my throat. I cough and move around in my chair. Today, my body is heavy. My back presses into the hardness of the wood. My arms weigh down into the arm rests. I am waiting for something. I don't know what it is I'm waiting for. I am longing for something. I don't know what it is I am longing for. I feel as though I have lost something but I don't know what it is I have lost. I feel the weight of memories. But they have no form or shape. I feel disorientated. The inside of my head is all clogged up. It's like those seconds after a nightmare. I wake up in the early hours of the morning. There is no light, only darkness. I don't know where I am. I am still in the dream but, at the same time, I am also in my bed.

My mother is looking ahead through the louvred windows towards the garden, the road and the sea. She is fanning herself with one of the fans my great-aunt gives her visitors. I also have a fan. It's resting on my lap. It's hot. It's always hot. Sweat gathers on my forehead and at the back of my neck. My hair feels damp. I have grown it down to my waist and it hangs between my shoulder blades in a long plait. On the wall behind my mother and me, is a lithograph of a young Napoleon. Soon his image will be absorbed into the dampness. 'I feel depressed', I say. I don't know how I know this word: 'Depressed'. But I said it. I know I said it: 'I feel depressed'. 'Nonsense', my mother says, 'Go for a swim'. But I can't move. I can't lift myself off my chair. The air becomes thick with tension. Insults are flung carelessly to and fro between us, my mother and me. The island is silent. Our thoughts echo backwards and forwards inside our heads. And then they explode like a house with a gas leak and a match. Once, in the heat of a Sunday afternoon, I fell asleep on the *chaise longue* next to my great-aunt's chair. I remember that the *chaise longue* was heavy and Victorian. Its velvet upholstery was too hot for the island. I fell asleep sweating. And then, I was woken up by an atmosphere: a sensation of heaviness. I say sensation because nothing could be seen or touched. Something was definitely there, but whatever it was could only be felt. It felt like the atmospheres human beings create when they're not very happy about something; the kind that fills a room and leaves everyone shifting in their chairs. People say you can cut it with a knife.

Behind my great-aunt's house, which is on a plateau, there are other houses in-between thick vegetation. It's always so hot and sticky and at dusk, mosquitos buzz around my ears. They irritate me and I start smacking at my ears with the palms of my hands. Sometimes, one lands on my arm and I smack my hand down over it hard. Then, I wipe away the blood and the mosquito's remains with the palm of my hand. Once, in one of the houses behind my great-aunt's house, crockery started to fly around, for no reason at all. She walked in with her rosary and it all stopped and went silent. I didn't actually see this with my own eyes. But the story was repeated to me over and over again. Now, sitting on my favourite chair, half in the room and half in the swamp, I see my great-aunt out of the corner of my left eye. She sits in this room, in the same white rattan chair, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. Her hands are white and smooth. She uses them to fan herself with a rattan fan or edges her fingers along the mother-of-pearl beads of her rosary. Like me, she has dark hair and dark eyes. I see myself in her eyes. She wears handmade dresses made of fabrics from the shops owned by Indian or Chinese merchants. They always look handmade and they are printed with some kind of floral pattern. My great-aunt never married but I have heard the grown-ups mention a lost love. When I visit her with my mother she tells us about her maladies and her pains. When I tell my mother about my maladies and pains she tells me that I am like my great-aunt. She tells me that I am a hypochondriac.

My great-aunt's name is Hortense and she lives in her house with Nan Nan Alda. Nan Nan Alda sleeps in a room off the kitchen. Hortense sleeps on the opposite side of the house from Nan Nan Alda; next to her bedroom is another bedroom and a bathroom. Neither Nan Nan Alda nor Hortense speak English. One day, I arrive to visit Hortense early in the morning. She is sitting at the table in the middle of the kitchen eating toast and jam. Nan Nan Alda made her breakfast and the vanilla tea, which would be drunk with tinned carnation milk. Hortense is sitting down and Nan Nan Alda is standing up. I watch Hortense pour her tea into her saucer to cool it. Then, she pours it back from the saucer into the cup. They laughed as I stood there watching them and they spoke to each other in French. I spoke to them in broken French.

Return to Sender/ The Runt

Andra Simmons

9-11-17

Return to Sender

A canvas pouch of postcards: The Golden Gate Bridge, the Empire State Building at night, the Statue of Liberty, the red Grand Canyon and a road cutting through a desert toward a flat horizon which could be nowhere else but a moving America. We pull them from under our mattress every Saturday morning before we set about our weekend chores. We lay them side by side on the blue patterned carpet,

creating a map of unknowing. On an out-of-date atlas our fingers trace aeroplane departures, bus routes, taxi cab deviations, calculating journeys with very little – weekend after weekend. We believe we can predict her return. So we wait for confirmation from her America, with a picture of her smiling beside some polished monument too big for the photo. A smile that says

‘I wish you were here with me’, ‘Missing you’ and ‘Sorry that I left when the rains came, but I'll be back before the lilies bloom’. We wait for that single card to be popped through the door. Perhaps bought for 10 cents from a vendor along an avenue in Manhattan, or a busy boutique near Haight-Ashbury or perhaps she's waiting to design her own postcard. Waiting for someone to snap her. Waiting and waiting beside that carved stone figure too threatening to be consumed in a single shot.

Waiting with a smile that lingers on the face long after that moment has passed > waiting with her hands clasped behind her back displaying the crisp dress she's purchased to let us know that she's fine, all fine > waiting to deliver the signal for us to dash from the corners in our Sunday best so that we can join her in the centre> waiting for someone, anyone, to come along and capture all three of us within the edges.

The Runt:

We ate our mother. We were young and red then. We may not have known the season but it was the same light every evening, when the blood drains from the dusk leaving the grey matter hanging above. Mother, her hair pulled back into a peppercorn sack, her day clothes unfastened, un-sized and clinging onto the dust from the yard. Exhausted, she hobbles in from the hours of peeling the husk from our onion home. A bag of potatoes pulled from the dark cupboards below the sink, she hauls herself on to the polished teak chair that shares her weight intimately. We never found time to wait. She would give us a pointless signal, a lift of her right arm, her left hand propping the least tender breast. She'd remove any drape from her neck, unsheathe her coconut-oiled thigh, one per night and we would leap. We learned to feed before we learned to breathe, each spotted sibling gnawing at her, piglets warring for too few teats, too little time. Sometimes she would flavour her meat with rose water, or garlic chives, sometimes paprika or frangipani. And as we would rip, chew and swallow, we'd grow fat unable to walk on our own. Mother would grow a little more yella and limp before the aging eve set into a spoiled speckled black out past the door. Then her eyes would close like a carefully placed knife, her breath humming a cautionary tale. Sometimes I could hear her tear, open, a little high apologetic note only sung by mothers and the slaughtered. And I could hear that my brothers could not.

Mess

Jess Potter

9-11-17

I want to speak about *I without guarantee* in terms of encounter and in terms of mess and confusion. I will describe a photograph made by a friend, an idea about the nature of the image and a poem about a nest. These mark out the space of an 'I' always in relation to others, always unsettled and uncertain.

Emmanuel Levinas' version of phenomenology is important to me because of its insistence on description. The sense that language emerges out of response and description. As an apology. My work consists of slow and extensive bodies of description that attempt to push the space of looking to some kind of limit. Most recently I have been thinking about glacial erratic rocks and bird's nests. The insistence of these forms has emerged during the early years of motherhood - throughout which they have been hallucinations - counterpoints to the soft, unpredictable growing bodies and minds that have colonised my own.

Recently I wrote about a show by a friend Becky [Beasley]. It was a special kind of encounter because I found concerns and relationships between ourselves that surprised me. The show was titled OUS, which instantly sparked my interest - a long term fascination with the use of pronouns between writing and photography - the soupy sound, the phonetic play between the end of the name Ravilious, whose work the show encounters. Also the sense of the vowels opening up a primal linguistic space that we all share. In the show there is a photograph called: *Sedum Joy* (Double Grave), within it flowers reach out towards us and sit beside one another drawing relations between themselves and ourselves. The tactile re-touching of the flowers draws us towards the surface of the photograph with a tonal caress that suggests care and love.

In her book *Pure Means*, Yve [Lomax] discusses the image in relation to the thinking of the medieval Theologian and Philosopher Meister Eckhart. He expresses the image as something that grows out of a thing - not as something separate. 'What grows out is the same as what remains within, and what remains within is the same as what grows out.' He goes on to say that the image is 'thrusting forth from nature like the branch of a tree'. Here the image comes from within things.

This expresses something of the forms that insist in my imagination. The forms and faces of a glacial erratic rock that I have been circling around with my camera over the past few years – returning, looking at and attempting to think and write about. So far very little has emerged beyond the photographs. What I had hoped to express in words does not seem to need to be said. The photographs are insistently mute. I have also started to collect fallen bird's nests. This has grown out of a long-term photographic interest in accumulations of matter, heaps, piles and the like. I have looked at the writing of John Clare. His writing expresses great joy and a subtle informality of language through the daily experience of nature. The nest is a place of gathering, a pragmatic form that hides from the surface of things and remains within trees, hedgerows and thickets. The nest is messy, it is a form that contains and exist for others, encircles around a void that beckons and protects. Mess is a form of being.

I want to end by reading one of John Clare's descriptions of birds-nests. Within these words there is a common sense of the construction of a form that gives life and combines great strength and fragility: is woven, complex and confusing. Mina Gorji writes about Clare's poetry as being an expression of the mess of nature. She tells of how his early poems were written on scraps of paper, fragments found and collected from wrapping butter to shop papers. She writes about a 'poetics of mess' in Clare's poetry and observes that his mother found his poems stuffed into a hole in the kitchen wall and then proceeded to use them to light the kettle. He used homemade inks that faded with time. There is a messy materiality in this making of words that resonates with the relation between writing and early photography as drawing. He embraces all that is wild from weeds to molehills, celebrating the confusion of the natural world. He observes a detailed entanglement, the close-up, the formless. He fights the ordering and tidying of nature through enclosure that his lifetime witnessed and speaks to the complexity of nature that is described in the writing of Lucretius – the sense of order and chaos. The nest provides a center and a home for thinking. I love the relationship between the tangle of the nest and the sprawling writing speckled on the surface of the eggs. This is lived and felt experience. In his mess there is intimacy. The nest is also a home, a bed, an encounter – a discovery.

The Yellowhammer's Nest

Just by the wooden brig a bird flew up,
Frit by the cowboy as he scrambled down
To reach the misty dewberry—let us stoop
And seek its nest—the brook we need not dread,
'Tis scarcely deep enough a bee to drown,
So it sings harmless o'er its pebbly bed
—Ay here it is, stuck close beside the bank
Beneath the bunch of grass that spindles rank
Its husk seeds tall and high—'tis rudely planned
Of bleached stubbles and the withered fare
That last year's harvest left upon the land,
Lined thinly with the horse's sable hair.
Five eggs, pen-scribbled o'er with ink their shells
Resembling writing scrawls which fancy reads
As nature's poesy and pastoral spells—
They are the yellowhammer's and she dwells
Most poet-like where brooks and flowery weeds
As sweet as Castaly to fancy seems
And that old molehill like as Parnass' hill
On which her partner haply sits and dreams
O'er all her joys of song—so leave it still
A happy home of sunshine, flowers and streams.
Yet in the sweetest places cometh ill,
A noisome weed that burdens every soil;
For snakes are known with chill and deadly coil
To watch such nests and seize the helpless young,
And like as though the plague became a guest,
Leaving a houseless home, a ruined nest—
And mournful hath the little warblers sung
When such like woes hath rent its little breast.¹

1. John Clare, *Birds Nest*, Mid Northumberland Arts Group, 1973.

Toward a New Poetics of 'Us'

Kristen Kreider, reading Sylvia Wynter

8-2-17

Sylvia Wynter identifies three events. The First and Second Events are the origin of the universe and the explosion of biological forms of life, respectively. The Third Event is the co-evolution of the human brain with the emergent faculties of language and storytelling.¹ This Third Event is Wynter's adaptation of Franz Fanon's redefinition of being human in terms of 'skins' (phylogeny/ontogeny) and 'masks' (sociogeny); in other words, as a particular combination of *bios* and *mythoi*.

Elsewhere, in the essay '1492: A New World View', Wynter compares Fanon's contribution to the history of thought with that of Christopher Columbus who, presenting a challenge to Scholasticism's then-predominant theocentric model of divine creation, made his famous voyage of 1492 when he 'discovered' the Americas. For Wynter, the significance of his contribution to knowledge does not lie in the discovery of any new *facts* but, rather, in effecting *a root expansion of thought*: a movement beyond what, in Foucault's terms, would be called the 'ground' of the feudal-Christian episteme or order of knowledge. Phrased differently, Columbus 'discovery' did not add to the 'knowledge of the world as it is' but, rather, presented a challenge to the 'knowledge of categories': that is, the understanding shared by the subjects of any given episteme that enables them to experience themselves as, in Wynter's terms, 'symbolic kin or interaltruistic conspecifics.'² Ultimately, Columbus' 'discovery' had, and continues to have, an effect on how 'we', as global subjects, learn to live together insofar as it has an effect on 'our' very configuration.

Wynter looks at this configuration of 'we' in Columbus' era in light of the burgeoning intellectual revolution of humanism whose generalised '*poetics of the propter nos*' set up a counterpremise to Scholasticism's theocentric view: 'This premise was that the Creation had indeed been made by God *on behalf of* and for *the sake of* humankind (*propter nos homines*).'³ In other words, humanism effected a shift in thinking where the world was understood to have been created 'for us' and where this 'us' came to be represented by the 'Figure of Man' – a figure best

exemplified in Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing of the Vitruvian Man in 1490. Presented as universal, this figure – and the 'we' that emerges from it – must nevertheless be understood within the specific genre of the white, mercantile, European male. It was this poetics of the *propter nos* and the humanistic premise it set forth that allowed Columbus to justify his claim that the 'new world' he had 'discovered' was intended 'for us'; that is, for the Spanish colonial 'we'. The implications of this are vast.

In a huge feat of intellectual labour, Wynter explores how this poetics led, ultimately, to the displacement of the native populations of the Americas and, later, to black Africans, all of whom were ultimately subjected to varying conditions of enslavement as predicated on their status as other than 'we': a status, as Wynter says, designated through categorical nomenclature, either '*native*' or '*nigger*', respectively.⁴ Perhaps to justify, effectively to propagate, this form of subjugation, the Eurocentric, phallogocentric category of the 'we' then came to be mapped onto the very category of the 'human', understood as a purely biological species: a 'natural' organism, as set forth by Western scientific thought in the nineteenth century. As a model that pre-exists, rather than coexists with, other models of the human, this model of the human as *bios* suggests that all human societies have an ostensibly natural, scientific and organic basis; in turn, all religions and all cultures are merely superstructural. This, in turn, allowed human groups to be classified into those understood as *naturally selected* (i.e., eugenic) and *naturally dysselected* (i.e., dysgenic) beings, thereby mapping the same logic that had governed Columbus' day – a logic that designated some parts of the world as 'habitable' and others as 'inhabitable' – onto the 'human', some of whom were considered to be human and others simply less so.

It is at this point that Franz Fanon figures in Wynter's thinking. Not unlike Columbus, she argues, Fanon was compelled to dispute the hegemonic rationality of his day; in his case, 'liberal humanism's biocentric premise of the human as a natural organism and autonomous subject that arbitrarily regulates his own behaviours.'⁵ And in a movement Wynter considers comparable to Columbus' shift into 'realms beyond reason' – a root expansion of thought – Fanon projects his own image of the human.

Making its appearance in the book *Black Skin, White Masks* [1964], this newly projected image of the human was predicated on Fanon's empirical study as a practicing psychiatrist. Treating patients who were either 'native' colonial or black Caribbeans, Fanon observes that they 'had been conditioned to experience themselves *as if* they were, in fact, genetically inferior as the hegemonic 'learned discourse' of contemporary scholars ostensibly represented them.'⁶ And turning against the predominant Freudian orthodoxy of his time, Fanon sought to explain this autophobia and 'aberration of affect' displayed by his patients not through recourse to their 'ostensibly individually autonomous psyches' but, rather, to the 'specific sociosystemic organizing process that had ... induced the "aberration of affect" itself.'⁷ In other words, where Freud had placed emphasis on the individual, Fanon emphasised the processes of socialisation at play such that the 'problem of the black man and of the colonial native's self-aversive reactions was clearly *not* an individual problem. Rather, it was that of the processes of socialisation.'⁸ This understanding – which Wynter identifies as a veritable revolution in epistemology, turning humanism on its axis – can be summed up in Fanon's declaration that '*besides ontogeny, there is sociogeny.*'⁹ Ultimately, what Fanon projects onto the Figure of Man – onto an understanding of human as *bios* – is *mythos*, language, the mask, so that being human can only be understood in terms of the whole ensemble of collective life.

'And notice!', Wynter writes elsewhere, moving with Fanon through his root expansion of thought: 'One major implication here: *humanness* is no longer a *noun*. *Being human is a praxis.*'¹⁰ For Wynter, being human is a practice of, amongst other things, aesthetics. Why? Because aesthetics 'is clearly the very condition of existence of all human 'forms of life', she argues in yet another elsewhere. 'The category of the aesthetic is the determinant ... of the ensemble of collective behaviour by means of which each human order effects its autopoiesis as a living, self-organising (i.e. cybernetic) system.'¹¹

Significantly, where the radical implications of Columbus' voyage cannot be dissociated from the turning tide from theocentrism to humanism, Wynter explains that Fanon's proposition that 'besides ontogeny, there is sociogeny' cannot be dissociated from the 'general upheaval' of the 1950s and 1960s.

Here, she proclaims, is where one can begin to identify a new poetics of the *propter nos* as the rise of ‘Black Power’ and the ‘Black is Beautiful’ movement fuelling the Civil Rights campaign of the United States, which itself began to trigger a series of other such movements by non-white groups globally, including indigenous peoples of the Americas and elsewhere, leading people to begin a process of trans-ethnic co-identification as a challenge to and collective refusal of the ‘extreme category of an ostensibly dysselected Otherness.’¹² And while aspects of these movements and this general upheaval can be seen to have either failed or been co-opted, it is here that Wynter turns when she argues our need, now – the ‘now’ of her writing, which was 1992, but we can still say the ‘now’ of this writing, which is 2018 – to return if we are to continue to put forward a new poetics for the *propter nos*: that is, new understandings and new alignments of a ‘we’ with whom to empathise, for whom to care, as whom to act.

~

1. Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, ‘Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations’ in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
2. Sylvia Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’ in *Race, Discourse and the Origin of the Americas: A new World View*, eds. Vera Lawrence and Rex Nettleford (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 21.
3. *Ibid.*, 27.
4. *Ibid.*, 37.
5. *Ibid.*, 44.
6. *Ibid.*, 45.
7. *Ibid.*, 45.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Wynter and McKittrick, ‘Unparalleled Catastrophe’, 23.
11. Sylvia Wynter, ‘Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’: Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice’ in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. by Mbye Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 258-59.
12. Wynter, ‘1492’, 41.

An ordinary day
Barbara-Ann Campbell-Lange
8-2-18

I thought I would write you a picture of my life in and from my bed-office.

It's a bad habit I've been told, working from bed. But I quite like how one can sit propped up with a laptop in a world of slipping piles, of emails and ideas and pretend- at least I try to - that I am not working.¹

So what you will hear are fragments of conversations. Conversations that have never been heard, not because they are private, but because they have only ever existed in writing.

I want to give you the briefest picture of this, - my slipping world - on an *ordinary* day.

You said:

And when I lent out of the window and saw the old green carpet on the terrace below, ripped from its under-foot life with the cut-out shape of the fireplace, speaking - still - in its silhouette, I thought: this is the *idea* of a 'room': - to remake a room - a room *without* a room, *without* walls. For a room (whatever 'room' may be) is of conversations - what could be more important than conversations in any of our lives?

And I said....

Conversations are making-things, they make spaces and spaces - rooms - are always talking to each other ... all the time ...

And she said:

You see I'm in the idea of slopes at the moment: and recalling a room so large, so complex, it is no longer a room but needs another name, here there is a slow-slope that leads space ... a leaning-ceiling that steals space ... a canted-wall that declines space ... turnings and tropings ... errings and veerings ... no corners no longer.

And I said:

I also doubt things 'lining up' these days.

And you said:

I'm attempting to assemble a view of place. Not View; Not Place. But an idea of assembling that does not search for anything in particular. That does not presume or work towards an end, that does not replace. I think I might call it a re-assembling: a building out of ... not on top of, or instead of.

And she said:

Perhaps what we share is difficulty, the difficulty of penetrating the past: it is too thick. Ruins want fresh eyes, they want to know what we see. But I no longer see anything either, it's more like the walls look at me. Yes you said: Walls so close that windows light the streets without a sun.

And she said:

Yet being *inside* the space of a window, not exactly *in* a room but still *part* of a room, with a view to an outside and also into the room itself, is a penumbral place ... *a close* place ...

What it is to be *in* thickness, in an *almost*-place ...

And you said:

To re-assemble a common place does not promise *actual* change: it can be reassembled to almost just as we found or understood it. What it does promise is engagement; it lends significance to acts of curiosity – intuiting – musing – suspending ... For ‘to attend’ designates *worth*:

Why would you attend to something you did not care about?

And I said

It would probably not occur to you even, on an ordinary day.

1. Conversations’ with David Green (AA), Sasha Alexandra Savtchenko-Belskaia (AA) and Nicoletta Michalettos (Cambridge) 2017–18.

I, taken away from me

Caroline Raboutin

8-2-17

— I, taken away from me.

You have changed you see
to me, you have changed lately.
For 18 years steady
I had gotten used
to addressing you directly
with *Sirs* and *Madams* in my first letters
to *partner* and *son* some years later.
I had settled into this new language,
a language of my own, Jacques Derrida might say perhaps
not totally my own anymore.
His nationality taken away from him, Derrida knew his language
wasn't his to own after all.

We had a common goal, a common language
but what now?

Stripped of his right to belong.
Stripped of my right to belong.

This question asked, 18 months ago:
'what of the political body?'
I had only addressed the sensing body, left, right, parts of it,
but what of 'the political body?' he asked.
Others have written about it, before me, but I couldn't engage,
not then, not before I knew what it *felt* like to become a political body.
So this speaking body, what choices does it have?

I turn to the book and look for answers:

The polyglot nomadic intellectual in Europe today must provide food for thought about the exclusionary, ethnocentric usage that is currently being made of the notion of a common European Union and the images of an alleged intranational European identity. Among the figurations of intercultural otherness and mobile identity that are current today, I shall single out the exile and the migrant before returning to the nomad.

— Rosi Braidotti, 2011

Am I in exile? A migrant? Or nomad?

Resistance, I hear of resistance everywhere
working in the interstitial spaces, against the system.
In the last few months Ben Nicholson, Joan Ockman and Victor Burgin
have all pleaded for various forms of resistance.
But I have never been at war.
I don't want a war.
Is resistance a matter of survival?
against whom?
against you?

Is I under threat?

Cell

Kate Pickering

8-2-18

Originally written for a reading inside a Victorian Slipper Bath in Laurie Grove Baths, New Cross. To be performed with a chair for 'I Without Guarantees'.

You sit in the bath. *I sit on the floor, back propped against the chair.* You turn the brass lever, it is stiff but with an effort it turns, squeaking as the helical threads rotate in the interior, until a cavity opens. Instead of clear water, it splutters and spurts a dull coloured liquid containing flecks of dark matter. The tap chugs noisily, expelling ancient air trapped in the pipes, the viscous liquid spewing out. You do not move. It continues to pour a steadily thickening grey mixture into the bath cavity. It is warm. It slides into the gaps between your fingers and toes. You think of workmen pouring liquid concrete into steel foundation grids, slopping through metal funnels, spattering their boots. The aggregate pours out, piling into concentric circles, small lumpen pieces clinging inside the mix. The wet concrete is filling the bath, filling all the gaps around you, moulding to your shape. Already, the mingling warmth of the concrete and your perspiring body is causing the water vapour to escape. It begins to harden and dry.

I climb up onto the chair.

12 June 2010

I have travelled in a cable car up the side of a mountain, and now I am almost at the top, on a flat paved area near an abbey. The mountain is part of a craggy range, its carapace serrated and pink tinged. These serrations are points on weathered protuberances resembling vast fleshy stalagmites. Surrounding the flattened outcrop is a low wall, to prevent falling. A woman is sitting on this wall, posing for a photograph. Behind her is a 4,000 foot drop to the valley below, a vast empty space forms the background. I see her but have to turn away, anxiety has caused my head to spin.

I climb back down and sit on the floor.

Concrete is almost always used in the creation of a building's foundations. It is reinforced with steel to provide tensile strength and enduring stability. The concrete that holds you is seemingly inert, but as minutes leech into hours, small exchanges take place between the concrete and your body. Where it has hardened near your skin, it has absorbed sweat. In turn, micro-particles of aggregate have been absorbed in through your dermal layers and into the blood and lymphatic systems. The water vapour has risen in the cubicle and clings to the corners of the room where a mould begins to spread.

I stand up in front of the chair.

17 October 1993

I am seventeen years old. I am standing waist high in a large container full of warm water. I have chosen to be baptized. 200 people sit watching, expectantly. The pastor and an assistant stand in the water alongside me. I am asked a series of questions, asked to make a commitment to a new life and to the church. I read the answers from a sheet. I cross my arms over my chest as though laid out for burial. I am pushed forcefully down into the water, which rushes noisily into my ears and nose and over my white baptismal gown, which billows into a cloud. I am pulled back to a standing position in a moment of spatial and temporal confusion, transition at high speed, moving from one moment to another and I am made new. Water runs in rivulets down my face and the gown clings to my body. I am elated, my place secure.

I lie down on the floor.

15 August 2014

I am floating, spread eagled, in a salt heavy sea. My ears are filled with water, muffling the sounds of the crashing waves and people calling. I look up at the sky as my body is buffeted. I see flocks of birds. Fish swim beneath me through near transparent water. Eddies swirl the sand upwards in dirty spirals. I feel a rare sense of calm and I stay until I am called.

Later we hunt the rock pools overlaid with glistening green weed. I spy a group of men gathered around a strange stony outcrop formed of helicoid shapes. The men have cut a section away, revealing a deep red interior fleshy inside the rock spirals. It is a bisected *Pyura Chilensis*, a 'blood rock', a hermaphroditic sea squirt or tunicate, which resembles a mass of organs enclosed by a deceptive rock-like exterior. This sea creature is known for having a high concentration of the mineral Vanadium. Vanadium is used as a steel alloy, resulting in a significant increase in the strength of steel, often used to reinforce concrete foundation slabs in buildings.

I lie in a foetal position.

4 May 2016

The body of a man wearing 'concrete shoes', hands tied behind his back in an obvious homicide, has washed up on Manhattan beach. A Kingsborough College student discovers the corpse wrapped in a plastic bag on the shoreline near Sheepshead Bay.

I lie with my back to the floor.

It is almost impossible to weigh a body down enough for it to remain on a river or seabed. As the body decays it releases gases into the tissues, inflating and distending the skin. The body becomes lighter than water and rises to the surface. When fully distended, it is almost impossible to sink this body even with counter weights.

Minerals flow through our bodies. Although they are essential for life, they aren't made by the living, they originate in the ground. Concretions of mineral salts form into stones in organs and ducts of bodies. Gastroliths, or stomach stones, used to grind food in certain species, can range in size from sand to cobbles.

I stand facing the chair.

24 August 2017

I am in Knaresborough, at the Petrifying Well, the only one of its kind in England. This ancient well is endlessly filled by a waterfall flowing over a rocky outcrop resembling a giant skull. The waterfall has a high mineral content turning anything within the flow to stone. Below it hangs a series of objects suspended on a string within the water's trajectory. These objects – teddy bears, teapots, socks, a tennis racket – have become shrouded with a stony coat as the minerals dissolving in the groundwater stop up the pores in the objects. Beneath the falling water is a smooth façade of rock with vertical undulations and streaks. It has flowed for a century over a Victorian top hat and bonnet, which camber out from the façade, leaving a concave cavity underneath.

I sit on the chair.

Concrete thinking is a form of literalism, defined as both: 'the interpretation of words in their literal sense' and 'the literal representation in literature or art'¹, suggesting an adherence to truth and reality. Concrete thinking, this understanding of the world *as it really is*, orients us. It fixes us in place.

As Sara Ahmed points out in *Orientations Matter*, to be oriented towards something is to turn to it, to have bodies directed to it.² I will flesh this thought out: being entranced or enchanted by a thing is to become particularly fixed within that orientation. Perhaps, disenchantment may be a form of disorientation, where that which once enchanted loses its power, the unhooking from it causes a dizzying turn away. Without a stabilising ground, the wild freedom of disorientation rapidly disenchantments.

A narrative forms an orientation from which the fabula arises, fragile at first, emerging falteringly like mist rising off the ground. A fable is the speaking of a story, but it also refers, in old European law, to a contract or covenant. It is both the foundation stone of law and the shifting realm of imagination. The narrative grounds us. This orientation is felt in the gut, carried in the mouth, produces the rhythm of our blood and the sensations in our skin as we speak it. The fabula is the atmosphere in which the extraordinary, the visionary, the fabulous blooms and envelopes. Myth forms a narrative that, in its repetition and reinforcement, provides a foundation on which a community is built and a fabulation is conjured.

When we use the word myth, we mistakenly understand it as a fiction, as a widespread, popular belief that is false. Yet for Jean-Luc Nancy, myth has a foundational and operative power that materializes in the real, and it is a mistake to dismiss myth (or fiction) as immaterial. What the ancient Greeks originally called *muthos* was a true story, a story that unveiled the true origin of the world and humankind.

Nancy writes: 'The phrase "myth is a myth" harbors *simultaneously* and *in the same thought* a disabused irony ("foundation is a fiction") and an onto-poetico-logical formation ("fiction is a foundation")'.³ This ironic relation is engendered by the internal disunion, which supplants a former union at the heart of myth itself. Concerning the 'myth is the myth' Nancy writes: 'it is not by chance that its modern usage in this phrase that underlies our knowledge of myth – that myth

is a myth – produces in a play on words, the structure of the abyss.⁴ The repetition of the *mise en abyme*: a myth is a myth is a myth is a ... ad infinitum, figures the dizzying fall which comes as a result of the collapse of founding structures.

Nancy writes that mythic speech is: ‘a way of binding the world and attaching oneself to it.’⁵ Bodies speak a narrative of narratives into being, bodies that ingest and seep and pulse and in speaking find their footing. The foundation story, the story of how the community came to be, underpins and authorises. The leader leads the chorus, enchanting this story, repeating and repeating until it materializes as a stable ground. Life stories become framed within and reinforced by the mythic narrative. The *muthos* holds the community, binding the world and attaching us to it.

Vertigo slides into fixity, disorientation into a story which is concretised, sacralised. But this solidity, this stability, gives rise to an atmosphere, a fabulation, an enchantment felt in the body, in which the believer lives and is entirely immersed.

I lie down on the floor.

The water vapour continues to rise as the concrete hardens and sets. Your sweat mingles with the dampness emitting from the concrete, which clings to the walls and meets the windows where it cools and trickles in branching lines. Through the heat haze you notice a speckled mould forming in the crevices and corners of the walls. You look again, perhaps it is something mottling the vapour, tiny specks floating inside. Your vision breaks up into spots. These dots begin to sharpen, crystallising into a vast crowd gathered together in a brightly lit auditorium, countless bodies packed in tight, held in place, finding themselves in the upsurge of feeling, the joy of being part of a vast spectacle of one-ness, pieces in the aggregate, flecks in the mix.

1. ‘Literalism’ *Oxford English Dictionary* [Online].

2. Sara Ahmed, ‘Orientations Matter’, *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) p.234.

3. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) p.55.

4. *Ibid* p.52.

5. *Ibid* p.49.

In a Game of Capital C

NaoKo TakaHashi

8-2-18

Ignore that relentless voice
Of the Letter 'I'
That persistent voice
Shaped by 'IT'

Ignore that relentless voice
Of the Letter 'I'
That persistent voice
Shaped by 'IT'

All the voices put through auto-tune
Designed to be the No.1 hit
Manufactured to be fake as real
Fabricated to be true but fake

Shadows drawn across the pages
Muddled up
Chaos circles around
In a creative mess

Look at the gigantic fluorescent ice-cream sculpture
Eat it before it melts
Put some gold leaf on it
If there's not enough fun

Keep massive jewel-rings on the fingers
While cooking Champaign cupcake
Walk around with a gold chain around the neck
While watching the brothers dig

Check the transparency of Gluten-free water
Look at un-sustainability of the oil in the ingredient

Warburtons, Hovis, Kingsmill
Flora, Clover, Utterly Butterly
Special K, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, Jordan's Country Crisp
Mr Kipling Cakes, McVitie's Digestives, Goodfella's pizza
KitKat, Galaxy, Dairy Milk, Milkybar
Persil washing powder, Comfort fabric softener, Dove soap
Wrigley's chewing gum and so on...

Eat a small slice of rainforest for breakfast
Have another slice for lunch
Clean hands with a piece of rain forest
Soft clothes with another piece

Have some more with a cup of tea...

See the biological desert, created by...

"IT"

It's cooking, It's cooking, It's cooking
It's cooking the life out of the earth

It's cooking, It's cooking, It's cooking
It's cooking the life out of empathy

In a game of Capital C

See the rainwater falling straight down
Feel the land sliding off
See no vegetation to soak up the rain
Watch the flooding everywhere

See more trees being chopped down
Watch the holes being dug up
Imagine the colour of dark brown all around
Hoping that freaky snow would cover it all up

Feel the sun blasting out the heat

See the orange frames across the screen
Watch the wildlife, synthetic-life, in-between-life burning
Hear the Helicopters spraying powders in the sky
See most of it getting blown by the wind

Feel the heat from the fire
See the fire spreading across
Hear the trees squeaking in frame
See the surface of the land left by the fire

Follow the outline of the smoke moving into the sky

See the sea of people trying to cross
In shoes with no soles left
Hear them talking in silence
While walking

Watch the mountain of rubble
Blocking the streets where they lived
Read about the dry soil
Growing nothing where they lived

See them getting stopped by the wire fences
See them sleeping on the concrete
With nothing but plastic sheet & cardboard

Feel the arctic air in the air

Flick the screen

Hear about the plastic island in the middle of the ocean
See the Animals drop dead in masses
Hear the oil spilling into the sea

See the black carpet floating in water

Flap flap... feathers stuck together
Not flapping any longer...

See the scene of abuse, abused by...

'IT'

It's draining, It's draining, It's draining
It's draining the life out of the earth

It's draining, It's draining, It's draining
It's draining the life out of empathy

In a game of Capital C

Ignore that relentless voice
Of the Letter 'I'
That persistent voice
Shaped by 'IT'

All the same voices put through auto-tune
Designed to be the No. 1 hit
Manufactured to be fake as real
Fabricated to be true but fake

It's draining, It's draining, It's draining
It's draining the life out of the earth

It's draining, It's draining, It's draining
It's draining the life out of empathy

In a game of Capital C

It's draining...

BACK DRIVE
Anne Tallentire
8-2-18

'A FILM'

The Screenplay

Set in N.Ireland 1964. Bologna, Italy 2006

The Characters

CLEANER

MATRON

GIRL 1

GIRL 2

BOY 1

BOY 2

FARMER

WOMAN 1

WOMAN 2

MIGRANT WORKER

Front Titles

Light moves across a swathe of waste ground catching a stone or two. The camera pans across up and along the edge of a dense wood. The trees are illuminated by one circle of light beaming down from a helicopter circling above. Reference: 'Edge of a wood', 1999, Rodney Graham.

1.

CUT TO:

DORMITORY — DAY, 1964

A woman is cleaning the mirror.
GIRL 1 walks towards her locker.
MATRON wearing an overall coat appears, her white hair sparkling.

MATRON

What are you doing here?

GIRL 1

I'm looking for my cardigan. I'm sorry, I was cold, I forgot it.

MATRON

Ok then. Go on. But be quick.

The girl opens a box at the end of her bed, wraps a book in her school cardigan and leaves.

MATRON

Shouts at the girl as she runs down the stairs.

You know you are not allowed in here until five o'clock, and do not use that door.

GIRL 1

Turns and runs out in to the garden.

2.

GARDEN – DAY

MATRON

Shouting from the window above

You must NOT use the front door; how many times do you have
to be told?

Girl 1 keeps running, over the lawn, under the apple trees towards a gap in the hedge that leads the tennis courts. It is raining. She takes shelter under the trees. She looks back at the house. A heavy dark sky hangs above the purple slates. The wind gets up. After some time she walks back to the house running her fingers along the leaves of the hedge. She ambles. She does not care that she is wet. When she arrives back at the house she stops inside the door for a moment and watches the room dissolve as her glasses stream.

3.

Grounds – NIGHT – 11.00pm

Girl 1 is practicing. She leaves the house, walks down the avenue past the tennis courts, through the gates and on to the main road.

STREET – NIGHT, MOMENTS LATER

It is cold. A car passes. She walks along to the crossing, then down the other side to the narrow path beside the hedge and eventually back to the house and up to bed. She takes 14 minutes.

4.

DORMITORY – NIGHT

GIRL 2 lies awake. There are eight beds, 4 on each side. At one end a bay window. Her bed is diagonally across from the

door. The dimensions of the room are in line with national boarding standards i.e. the minimum floor area of a dormitory accommodating two or more is defined as the number of students sleeping in the dormitory multiplied by 4.2 m², plus 1.2 m². A minimum distance of 0.9 m should also be maintained between any two beds in a dormitory, bedroom or cubicle. Boarding schools must provide a total floor area of at least 2.3 m² living accommodation for every boarder.

GIRL 1

Are you asleep?

GIRL 2

No. Did I tell you that
in year 2 I was demoted to the junior dormitory as
punishment.

GIRL 1

What did you do?

GIRL 2

I got into another girls bed to comfort her the night she
lost her mother.

GIRL 1

For God's sake.

5.

GROUNDS – STREET – MID NIGHT

We creep out of the dormitory and make our way via the back stairs into the night. Half walking, half running down the back drive to the school gates which are closed but not locked. We pile into the car, light up and head for the coast.

COUNTRY ROADS – NIGHT 1.00pm

10 or so miles along we run out of petrol. The boys get out of the car and walk to a farmhouse.

They seem to be gone for ages so we set out to find them. They are standing staring at the back door of a farmhouse.

We tell them to knock. Eventually a man answers. He gives us a can of petrol. Underage and without a licence between us, no further than a mile up the road we see a red light circling. It is the B Specials, an auxiliary police force in theory, but in practice unionist militia.

BOY 1 makes a U-turn.

We shoot off down the road, on to lanes that cross the country and get us lost. At just after 3am we get back to the main road and in to school before light breaks.

6.

GARDEN – AFTERNOON

GIRL 1 is reading – sitting on a bench below a bay window at the front of the house.

7.

JUMP CUT TO:

LANDING – LATE AFTERNOON

GIRL 1 goes to the telephone room on the landing at the top of the stairs.

8.

JUMP CUT TO:

STREAM – EARLY EVENING

GIRL 1 and GIRL 2 are swinging on a rope hanging from a tree over a stream. They leap across, miss the bank, get their feet wet and laugh a lot.

9.

SMASH CUT TO:

BOLOGNA, ROAD THROUGH INDUSTRIAL ZONE – 2006 – DAY

WOMAN 1, (FORMALLY GIRL 1) AND CURATOR are driving to the edge of the city. They stop at what they take to be abandoned factory (built in the 1930's – steel rusting, glass bricks cracked with echoes of Art Nouveau and darker futurism in the fabric). They make their way towards the semi circular glass fronted entrance.

FACTORY - DAY

The door is open. They climb a wide staircase to a large space full of scattered debris, boxes of tiles, wire, shoes, wood, plastic clothes, cloth, car parts.

WOMAN 2
Is anyone there?

The sound of a hedge cutter in the distance can just be heard, then a lorry passes. Otherwise silence. A man in yellow overalls is sitting on a grey locker tipped on its side in the forecourt outside. He does not look nor answer.

WOMAN 1 is taking photographs.

WOMAN 2 takes a call.
OK
OK - we will leave, now.

Turning to Woman 1
We must go, now.

WOMAN 1
Please wait

MONTAGE

She is taking photographs – slowly grasping the logic of the spacing between the things that lie there.

They leave.

10.

SMASH CUT:

IRELAND - HALL - DAY

GIRL 1 steps out into the hall. The hall has ultra marine blue, brown and black patterned tiles. She attempts to fit her feet into a triangle of blue.

GIRL 1 hears GIRL 2 coming down the stairs she looks up.
Are you going down to tea?

GIRL 2
Yes, we are late.

CUT TO - DINING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

There are five tables in the dining room. One square in the centre, one long at the west end, one at the north beside the bay window and to one side of the fireplace. The smallest table for the youngest children. The girls are whispering. It is raining again. There is a rumour. They may have been caught.

11.

CUT TO:

DORMITORY - LATER - NIGHT

GIRL 1
Can you see the moon?

GIRL 2
Not from my bed, but I can see it catch the end of yours.
It scares me

GIRL 1
Me too.

*

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