

The Capilano Review



What are the aesthetics of high stakes?

—*Marvin Luvualu António*

Editor Andrea Actis
 Managing Editor Matea Kulić
 Editorial Assistant Dylan Godwin
 Designer Anahita Jamali Rad
 CRCAS Board of Directors Colin Browne, Mark Cochrane, Pierre Coupey, Brook Houghlum, Dorothy Jantzen, Aurelea Mahood, Jenny Penberthy, George Stanley
 Contributing Editors Clint Burnham, Roger Farr, Aisha Sasha John, Andrew Klobucar, Natalie Knight, Erin Moure, Lisa Robertson
 Founding Editor Pierre Coupey
 Web Design Adam Jones

The Capilano Review is published by the Capilano Review Contemporary Arts Society. Canadian subscription rates for one year are \$35, \$25 for students, \$80 for institutions. Rates include S&H. Outside Canada, please add \$5. Address correspondence to *The Capilano Review*, 102-281 Industrial Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6A 2P2. Subscribe online at www.thecapilanoreview.ca/order/.

For submission guidelines, visit www.thecapilanoreview.ca/submissions. *The Capilano Review* does not accept hard-copy submissions, previously published work, or submissions sent by email.

Copyright remains the property of the author or artist. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the permission of the author or artist.

The Capilano Review gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The Capilano Review is a member of Magazines Canada, the Magazine Association of BC, and the Alliance for Arts and Culture (Vancouver).

Publications mail agreement number 40063611. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to circulation—*The Capilano Review*, 102-281 Industrial Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6A 2P2.



issn 0315 3754 | Published November 2016

Printed in Vancouver, unceded Coast Salish Territories, by Hemlock Printers

Canada



3.30 / FALL 2016

5.

Editor's Note

6.

Oki Sogumi

Motherships

9.

Jordan Abel

the tumbling water washes bones

12.

Marvin Luvualu António

Chapter 1

25.

Merray Gerges

"War is coming": A Conversation
with Marvin Luvualu António

35.

Monroe Lawrence

about to be young

43.

Tim Terhaar

Men

56.

Trevor Shikaze

Maladies

58.

Marie Buck

Once Someone Told Me I Had Seen
the Future

60.

Sarah Riggs

Rābi'a Journal

66.

Maged Zaher

Untitled Poems

71.

listen chen

人莫鑑於流水: YOU CAN'T SEE
YOUR FACE IN RUNNING WATER

73.

sab meynert

infinite unfolding

82.

Ahmad Salaj

from *Vulgar Extraction*

84.

Winnie T. Frick

first days of one hundred days

85.

Hannah Black

Go Thru

88.

Shazia Hafiz Ramji

from *Cults of the Unwavering I*

92.

David Ishaya Osu

Sisters, and other poems

96.

kevin martins mcpherson eckhoff

Five Poems from the Fool's Sermons

101.

Jen Currin

The Shape

104.

Dallas Hunt

Woman Making Tea

106.

see to see—

David Geary

on Truth and Reconciliation Week
at Capilano University

Mia Leinonen

reviews University of X's Graduate
Student Parental Leave Policy

Natalie Knight

reviews Mercedes Eng's *Mercenary
English*, Second Edition

angela semple

on visiting Standing Rock

114.

Contributors

Cover Image:

Marvin Luvualu António and Raul Altosaar,
Everyday is a lifetime, 2016, jpg

Editor's Note

I'd been thinking of this open issue as a "burning house" issue since that week in early July when Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were murdered by cops in Baton Rouge and St. Paul and a few of you were sharing that Kris Straub comic on your Facebook and Twitter feeds: "all houses matter," the one stick figure says to the other stick figure; "we should care exactly equally at all times about everything"; "my house isn't on fire, but i have dry rot. are you saying it shouldn't be fixed?" The absurdity of such reasoning and of the sense of justice it all too commonly invokes is driven home in the final panel when the second stick figure wearily suggests that such objections are pointless since the people in the burning house have already died in the fire.

It's been hard to keep up with all the houses on fire in recent months, weeks, days—hard logistically, hard emotionally. Like many of you, I'm both sickened and unsurprised that white supremacy won the US presidential election; that water cannons are now being used against water protectors in North Dakota; that half of my favourite CanLit authors, taking sides in a high-profile sexual assault case, would sign off on a letter informed by a logic not so far removed from that of the first stick figure in the #AllLivesMatter cartoon; that homeless residents in Vancouver's largest tent city are about to be forced out of their community into even more precarious living situations. I'm also sickened by my lack of surprise at these things. But the space I have for this Editor's Note is smaller than it was before our wonderful new designer, Anahita Jamali Rad, decided to increase our margins, so I should try to say something succinct about the kind of art and writing you'll find in these pages, about the spirit in which it seems to have been made.

To quote cover artist Marvin Luvualu António in his conversation with Merray Gerges: "Everything is war." Which is to say that everything is a pretty good reason for rage. Yet Gerges insists, and António will agree, that a corresponding aesthetics of what the two term *high stakes* "is ultimately a manifestation of unbridled vulnerability"—of a fearlessness rather than a fetishization of failure—and that such an aesthetics, crucially, "doesn't have a definitive set of formal or thematic qualities." You can't know ahead of time what high-stakes vulnerability will look or sound like on the page or elsewhere in life, just as you can't predict the impact of something based on its intentions. As a friend warmly cautioned when I began to work on this issue, "Your best could still be a problem." Or as Hannah Black puts it, "More is being asked of us historically than solo introspection or even introspection in twos and threes, more even is being asked of us than irony." So what additional tools can we wield, together in our different vulnerabilities, to help rebuild those houses that are structurally built to burn?

—Andrea Actis

Motherships

Ok! Sogumi

I. Samsung

Please recognize my mother
She is embedded on a bankrupt
Hanjin container ship with a
limb or finger on the emergency brake

She won't stop calling me
& I won't pick up

But if you care to vocalize progression
as an ember falls from the sky
onto the embargoed mothership
w/ loads of alien cargo just sitting there

Please recognize her in a cloud
Rushing empty and huge toward the shore
in her flaming opacity
An emergent genealogy that has strands perking

"It's a fucking disaster"
someone mutters to no one
"It's so hot: the new normal"
someone else says with bright sarcasm

"It's all collapsing" another
says behind me & when I turn
around, it is my mother &
her arms are full of phones

II. Hyundai

Wrapped in her shell I thought this is what love is
When misrecognition sticks we call it that
& it is true that capital birthed me too
Glued to a hull speeding off beetle-like
On the Hyundai Merchant Marine (HMM) website,
for "Awareness of Global Citizenship"
a Korean girl holds up an empty frame
for "Customer Appreciation"
a white family with two children on the beach
the website copy reads:
"The symbolic meaning of oceans is sometimes a challenge"

The longer I tried to avoid the apocalyptic
the harder it came
skipping work stoppage and flagging sales
into full oceanic duress

III. Korean Air

She loves the seaweed soup they serve
on board, for an airplane, she qualifies
She frowns at the k-drama playing
“so unrealistic, that they end up with three children.”
“P!hen-ts-see”

The big P and little h of Fantasy
pops from her, w/ joyful disdain
She has three children
She pours oil from a packet into the
swirl of hot water

the tumbling water washes bones

Jordan Abel

A deep, narrow chasm. Black rocks. The river lies still on those black rocks. A mile above there is a tumbling; there is a moment. At this very moment there is a tumbling in the air a mile above us that runs straight through the open heavens and into some other place. A deep hollow. No shape. No consistency. No breaking some hundred feet in the air. Some places are softer than others. Some hundred feet up in the air. Some right angles enter into narrow passageways and some right angles break off a mile in the air above us. These rocks are full of cracks. Water has worked through some deep hollows. Breaking here. Wearing there. Breaking and wearing. Breaking and wearing until the chasm separates into two caverns. Some hundred feet in the air there is no danger. There is scattered driftwood and the scent of roses. There are glimpses of roses and rocks and shrubs. There is a steep, rugged ascent. A path that winds among the black rocks and trees. Somewhere in the air there is the scent of roses. Somewhere out there is the wilderness.

A reasonable distance through scenes of greenery and nature and glimpses of mountain ranges that disappear just as suddenly as they appear. Among the rocks and trees there are mounds of earth and other rocks and other driftwood. Somewhere there is an islet and another islet and a clear sheet of water and bald rocks just beneath the surface. There are forests and straits and islets and rocks and somewhere in the air is the scent of roses. There are crevices and fissures and rocks. The rocks surround themselves in other rocks. Although there are sometimes mounds of earth in between. On the shore, there are fragments of rocks. In the deeper parts of the river, there is more tumbling. At this very moment, the river pours into a wide fissure where it just becomes more water between rocks. Between the broken rocks and the deep, roaring cavern there is the scent of roses and driftwood and trees. There is light and straight, naked rocks and immovable trees. There are woods and rivers. And the bed of that river is ragged with rocks and intersecting ravines that cut silently across the water above where somewhere in the air is the scent of roses. The woods are full of sounds and rocks. The woods are full. The upper air, where it drifts over the tops of trees, is full of sounds. Just where it breaks over the tops of trees there are slow, intermingling drifts of sounds and scents that brush over the clearing some fifty or sixty feet up in the air. Rocks and

logs and mounds of earth and narrow fissures and bottom land and little ponds and a brook that shoots through the narrow fissures, spreading through moment after moment of stretched light. There is a bellowing in the passageways between the rocks. There are moments of admonished madness. There are moments spreading over the acres of bottom land. There are precipices and adjacent lakes and head waters. There is a fierceness here that floats through the waters. These rivers are full to the brim. These waters stream down to our feet. In six hours these waters will rush in. And in another six hours these waters will rush out. Salt grows in this water. The water in the woods and on the great lakes and in the higher parts of the sea. Stretching out horizontally until the current flows upward like blood at the throat. On these waters the edges touch the shores and the deerpaths trace back to the streams. In the short distance in between the water and the black rocks is a deep shadow. The breath of the stream. The glancing waters. The throat of the river. These woods are full. Gliding above somewhere up in the impenetrable darkness is the scent of roses. Somewhere there is the sound of rushing waters ringing through the deep stillness of the night. The moon rises and the light glances here and there on the water and down to the river bed. At times, the light hangs in the air on the breath of the river. There are dark waters; there is night. This is the unmingled sweetness of air that sinks into the foaming waters. These are the vaults of forest. There is a stillness here somewhere in the wilderness. There is lightning and then there is stillness. There are echoes that rush through the forest until they disappear. A mile above there is a tumbling. In the foaming waters, there is the colour of blood gushed from some other place. Some other throat. Some other, softer place. Some waters carry the dead. Somewhere up in the air there is the scent of roses. Some flames last forever. Some waters thicken with limbs and bodies and trembling voices. Some waters are still. Somewhere in the velocity of the uproar there is a current of air. An unmingled sweetness that sinks in to the forest. The narrow path adjacent to the brook is full of bodies. The blood as natural as water. Glassy mirrors. The sunken hillsides. The shores. The black rocks between the mounds of earth. The glittering stars. The open air floating over the forest. In the valley, the stream overflows onto the banks. Here, the tumbling water washes bones and the waters of the river go in to the salt lake. There is a canopy from the woods spreading over the lake, shadowing a dark current with a deep hue. When the sun is setting, these waters become healing waters. But the sun is not setting and the current branches silently into the dark parts of the lake. Somewhere in the forest, bark is peeled from a tree. Branches break. For many minutes there is a struggle and a deep, cool wind. There is a current of air. There is silent motion plunging

and glancing and sweeping over the broken branches. The sound from the rushing waters drifts through the air. There are words and yells and cries. As the air flows up from somewhere in the deep, narrow ravine, there is silence again. With the exception of the sounds that come from the rushing water.

This piece is an excerpt from an ongoing (and largely unfinished) project of mine tentatively titled Timeless American Classic. The pieces in this project are all derivations, reinterpretations, and creative distant readings of James Fenimore Cooper's novel The Last of the Mohicans, and are inspired in part by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's argument (in An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States) that Cooper's novel played a role in reinventing the colonial origins of the United States and in creating a narrative that was "instrumental in nullifying guilt related to genocide." My project seeks to disrupt the colonial logic in the novel by displacing and reorienting the text itself in order expose the problematic representation of Indigenous peoples. This particular piece responds to (and perhaps reflects) the deeply troubling fascination the novel has with the concept of terra nullius and empty, uninhabited land. As such, "the tumbling water washes bones" is an impurely conceptual piece that draws heavily from Cooper's descriptions of blank land but also includes many of my own translations and reinterpretations.



CHAPTER 1

Marvin Luvualu António



SERIES S LCD TV 40" CLASS
SÉRIE S CLASSE 101cm
40.0" diag. / 40.0 po en diagonale



LCD
SERIES S



101cm
diagonale

LCD
SERIES S

SAMSUNG



SAMSUNG
LCD
40" CLASS
40.0" diag. / 40.0 po en diagonale
SERIES S

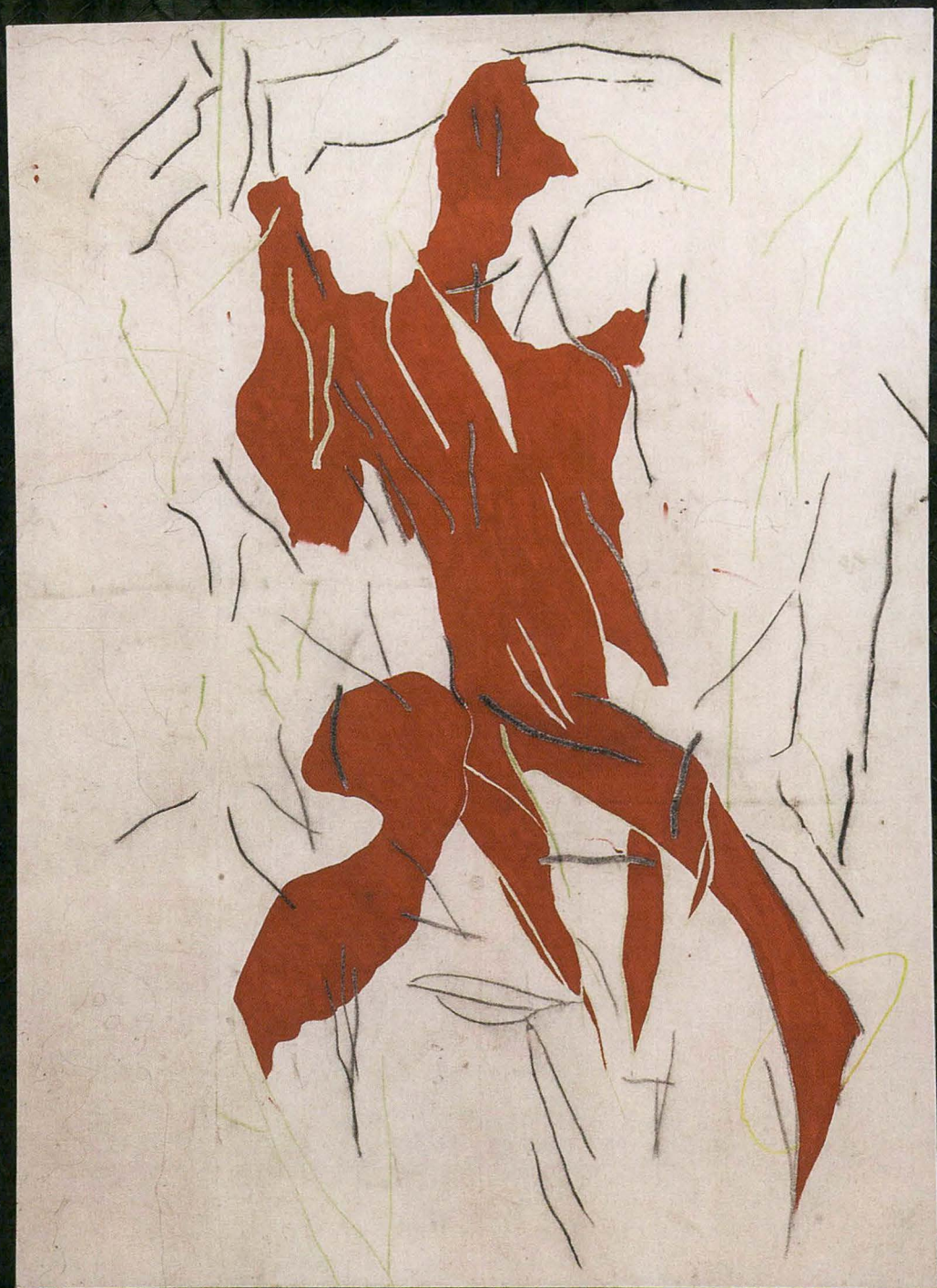


diagonale
101cm



SAMSUNG









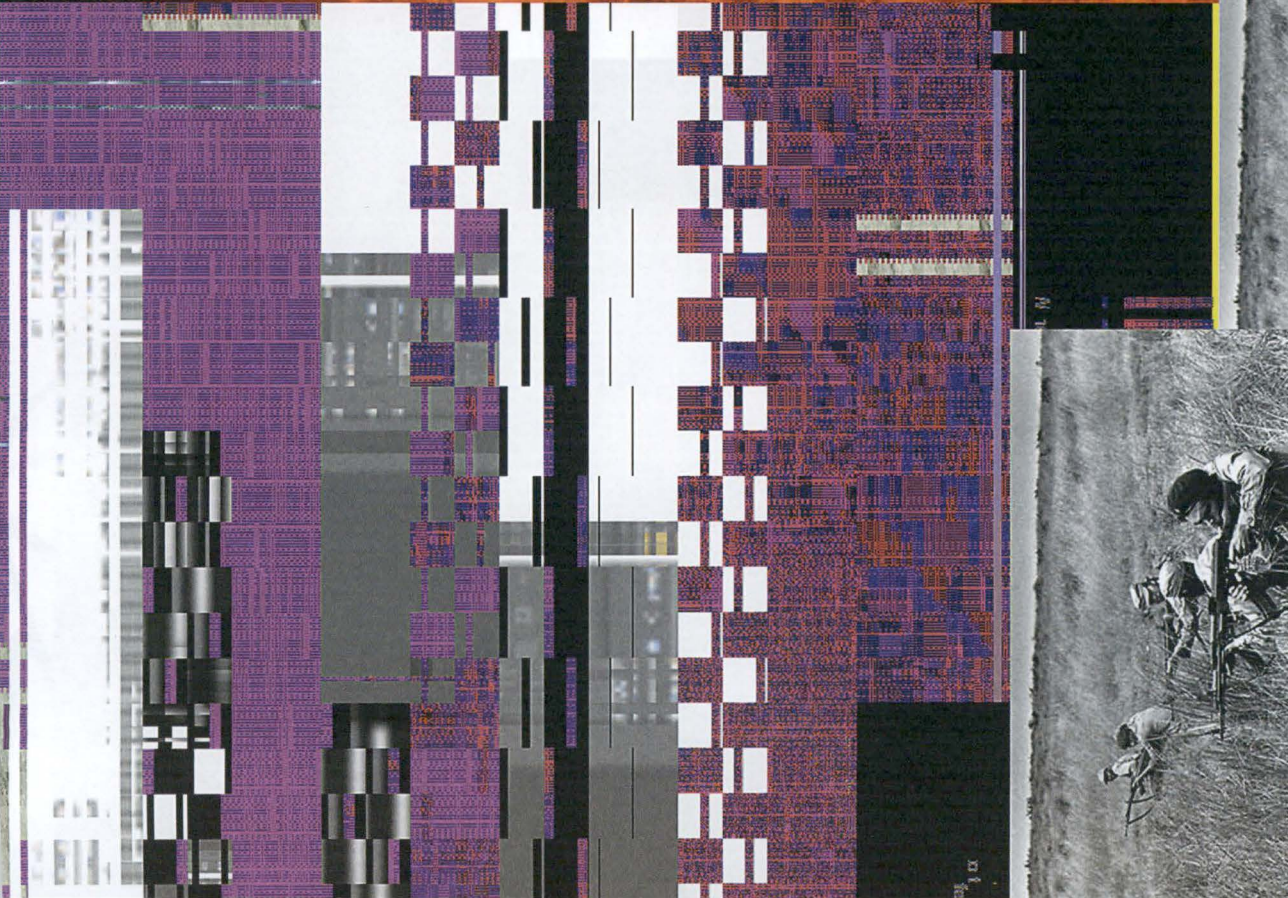


CALL HOME



DOCTOR TMRW.



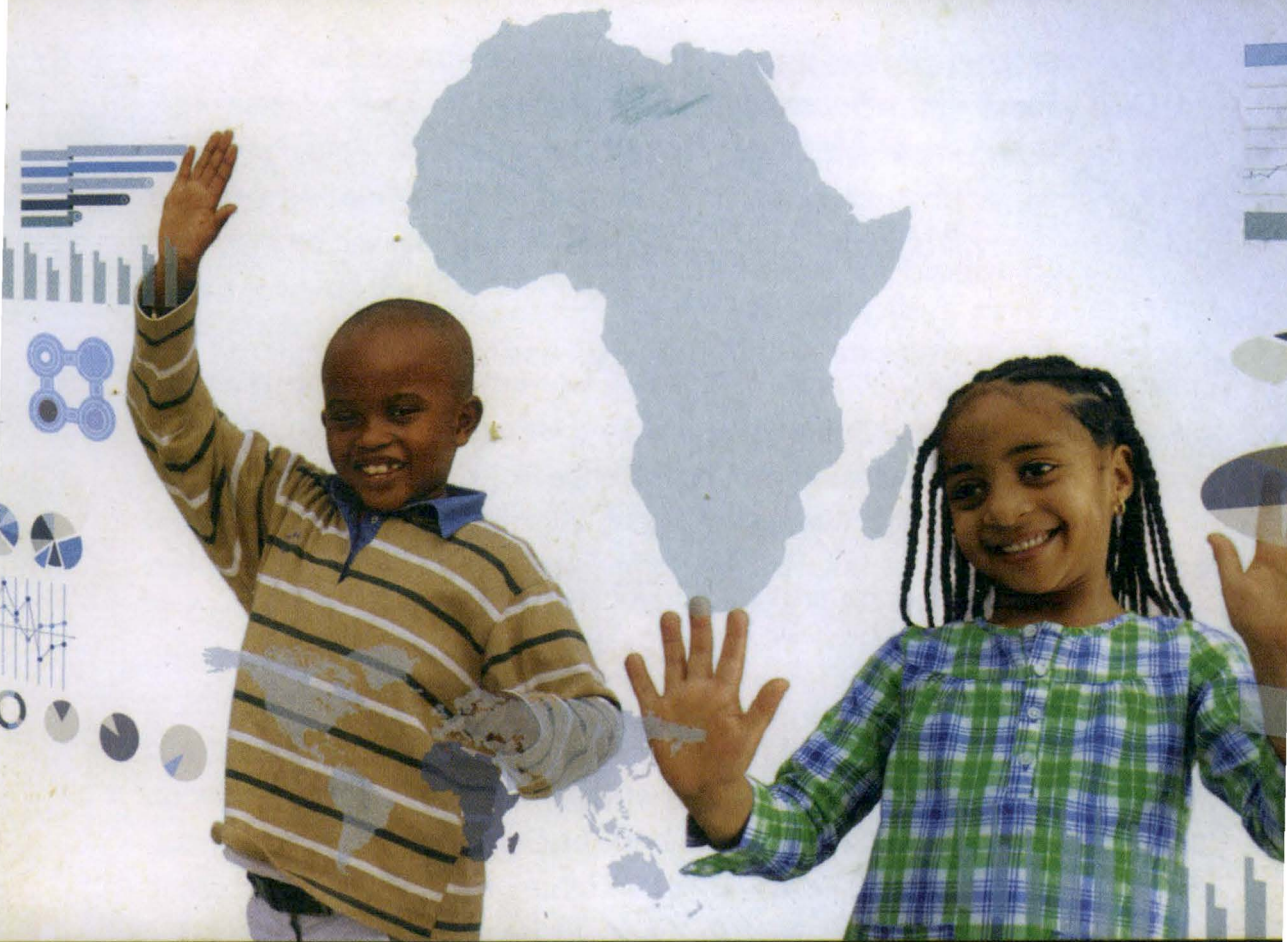




Popular Version

Agenda 2063

The AFRICA We Want





"War is coming": A Conversation with Marvin Luvualu António

Merray Gerges

No word recurs here more than the word "body." When Marvin and I talk about the body, it's a hybrid body. An all-encompassing body. It is a black body that pains, a black body that is nomadic yet relentlessly subject to surveillance. It's a black body that is transformed by the landscape that it occupies against all odds. It's a body that overflows, that inhabits vulnerability. It is a black body that asserts its visibility by embracing this vulnerability and contending for ascendancy.

Before we sit down to discuss this body of work, I read aloud Marvin's Free Will Astrology Gemini horoscope for the week of October 20: "When the wind blows at ten miles per hour, a windmill generates eight times more power than when the breeze is five miles per hour. Judging from the astrological omens, I suspect there will be a similar principle at work in your life during the coming weeks. A modest increase in effort and intensity will make a huge difference in the results you produce. Are you willing to push yourself a bit beyond your comfort level in order to harvest a wave of abundance?" I don't know anyone who works as relentlessly as Marvin does, but when he hears this he tells me that he needs to work harder. I liken the horoscope to a line from the mission statement for Everyday is a Lifetime, a recent show of his with Raul Altosaar at Robert Kananaj Gallery. "War is coming," it reads. "We need to love and fight for ourselves."

Marvin says we don't often talk about our work "because we're afraid of being vulnerable." But when he guides me through this series of images—most of them from Dispossessed /Pt 1, his solo exhibition at Clint Roenisch earlier this year—he is nothing but fearlessly vulnerable as we discuss his experience of missing the last chance to call home, how science fiction narratives influence his work and how its outcome bears witness to black excellence, what I see in his work as an aesthetics of "high stakes," and more.

A real pride, 2016

Laser jet print, tape, Samsung monitor box, chalk pastel

Marvin: I was watching a James Baldwin lecture where he speaks about racial politics and black agency. The video had shots of the crowd, a roomful of black people, and then I saw this man caught in a moment of contemplation and I thought it was a really beautiful image. You don't usually see images of black men thinking, just contemplating. A black man is always in pain, in defence, in some mode of action, or performing/entertaining. But here there's a kind of quietude to him. I was like, "This is a thinker, he's thinking." So I used it almost as a self-portrait.

I blew up the print and put it on a Samsung TV box, and as I was taping it there was this weird crinkle, so I outlined it. It kinda looks like a mental nugget.

Murray: Or the contour of some country.

Marvin: Others have noticed that too. I called the piece *A real pride* because this man exuded self-assuredness, a beautiful self-awareness. I want an image of an intellectual mind instead of one that's easily disseminated and consumed. That's why I like the Samsung monitor box: I don't want the image to just be watched, I want it to be idolized.

Dirty Harry, 2016
Mixed media on canvas

Marvin: I became attracted to the idea of the badlands by reading Octavia Butler's *Clay's Ark*. It's the story of a spaceship that lands in the desert, where this man is carrying a virus that turns humans into animals. I like this idea of the landscape transforming you and stripping you of the safety of language and external ideologies. I was painting this image and a weird body started forming itself. It almost looks like an arachnid and also a humanoid, and it got me thinking: what would we look like if we stripped ourselves? What would be on the inside? I don't think we'd look completely human. If we were animal-human hybrids, I would imagine us to look like this.

Murray: Pure red?

Marvin: Pure red. It's like sex and blood and flesh. We'd have bodies, but we could also encompass other bodies that we'd secretly shape and talk to and listen to, that would help carry us forth. *Dirty Harry* is this Clint Eastwood detective flick from the '70s that I used to watch as a kid. Its protagonist navigates space aggressively—the streets of San Francisco, violently seeking justice—and he's not bound by any rules. The city's transformed him into this being that is all about action.

Murray: Is he a shape shifter?

Marvin: No, but there's something about him that's not human. We are, ideally, constantly shape shifting. I wanted to put a face to that—or a body. The shape manifested itself. It wasn't planned at all. It just came to fruition. I was surprised.

Dispossessed, 2016
Mixed media on canvas

Marvin: This image is based on a Wolfgang Tillmans photograph of a man in a forest whose face you can't really see. This is another human body in some landscape, completely relaxed, completely beautiful. I tried to trace it and it turned into this other body that doesn't look anything like the photograph.

Merray: What's the proximity of your body to your work?

Marvin: It's really physical. I'm usually on top of my canvas.

Merray: So you're within arm's length. Do you step back often?

Marvin: Not really. I'm always on my hands and knees for a long time.

Call home, 2016
Shoe, iPhone, extension cord

Marvin: Sci-fi movies like *ET* tend to show a strange body in a unusual space trying to find its way back, not really knowing where home is or how to return to it, which gets me thinking about being a nomadic body in the diaspora. Calling home is also like this empty call: that sense of trying to answer a call at the same time you're placing one, or picking up when you don't know what's on the other side or where exactly the call is coming from.

Merray: One of the typical conditions of diaspora is to be separated from your parents, making "call home" sometimes just another item on a to-do list, a task or a chore that you have to fulfill. Often that desire to fulfill it comes not from within but from a sense of obligation. Do you feel that sense of obligation toward your father?

Marvin: Yes and no. After my mother died, I went through a time of feeling really guilty because a couple days before she'd died my father had told me to call her and I'd just pulled one of those fucking passive teenage moves, where I was like "I can call whenever I want. I don't have to call right now." And I've always regretted that. The guilt remains. When you talk about obligation I now think of fearing missed opportunity, so *Call home* is a reminder that you don't know if home is always going to be there, physically or psychologically.

Merray: My parents have been calling me for the past four days straight and I've dodged every single one of their calls because my mom is nagging me to renew my

health card. Looking at this image I'm like, "Shit. I should call home." There's a muted urgency to the prompt to "call home" and a real tension to it in this context: the urgency comes from an awareness of the impermanence of home, but the imperative is passive when it's thrown into a sneaker in a sea of sand. The reminder is on a cell phone, a precious commodity, but then it's nestled in a discarded sneaker that I would never see you wearing.

Marvin: The orange cord connected the iPhone to a power outlet in the wall, so *Call home* was always on. The monitor never slept.

Engineer II, 2016

Concrete, Mercedes bumper, acrylic on canvas, airbag

Marvin: I was thinking about how engineers are masters of a particular kind of knowledge that enables them to alter space and shape worlds. I wanted to relate that to a black mind that could construct worlds by manipulating form. I want to see myself as that. As an engineer.

Merray: You've got me thinking about W.E.B. Du Bois, of the ways in which he visualized data into charts and graphs to illustrate black contributions to industrial progress less than half a century after abolition. His framing was a radical act because it was asserting black excellence in a world that didn't believe that black people were capable of any kind of excellence, in a world that assumed that any indicators of progress or excellence were by default white. People criticized it like, "Why do we have to call it '*black* progress'? Isn't progress just progress?" But Du Bois was like, "If we don't assert the blackness of this progress, it will be forgotten. It won't be attributed to us. It won't be part of our legacy."

Marvin: Makes sense. I'm similarly trying to build representations or manifestations of black excellence in pop culture and politics and science and philosophy and technology. I want black excellence to be seen as such. I want to *be* seen as such. I want black men to be seen as cultural producers, intellectuals, philosophers, scientists, engineers. There really aren't that many spaces where you see black men represented in these ways, undiluted. You have to look hard for them. And I'm not just talking about black men: I'm talking about black culture, black women, black everything. I like to be surrounded by black excellence. We *are* all those things.

Merray: You and I have spent a lot of time talking about the aesthetics of *stakes*, of high stakes versus low stakes.

Marvin: What are the aesthetics of high stakes?

Merray: When I look at your work I see an aesthetics of high stakes. This is ultimately a manifestation of unbridled vulnerability. Such an aesthetics doesn't have a definitive set of formal or thematic qualities; it's just a self-evident vulnerability. You feel like you don't have a choice to make work in any other way.

Marvin: Mmm, no I don't have a choice. I haven't given myself a choice. I'm so tired of all this fucking minimal, fucking soft shit.

Merray: *Low stakes.*

Marvin: I'm interested in being vulnerable, and I'm not scared of failing. I'm not afraid of failure in my work, though that's something I struggled with for a really long time. When you're close to the edge, when you feel like you're on the verge of failing, that's the most beautiful moment. Then you *really* have to take a risk, because you're like, "I'm gonna fail. Okay. What am I gonna do about this?"

Merray: When you feel that failure is impending, you're also like, "I have nothing to lose."

Marvin: Exactly. I don't really have anything to lose. I don't have stocks and shit, or a family in the nuclear/heteronormative sense. I just have myself. And my baggage. And I'm not scared at all of throwing it all out there. Because I really wanna do something with it. I wanna throw it out there and allow it to change and transform.

Doctor tmrw, 2016
jpg

Merray: Does *Doctor tmrw* spring from the same sentiment as *Call home*?

Marvin: Yes, but also from a concern with the future, with wanting to manifest the future and to shape it. I was thinking about all of these discussions about the "post-racial" and I was like, "fuck the discourse, every side of it." Let's take everything that we know and just plough through. I'm not gonna be burdened by what white people think. We're all tryna trudge through this shit so we can get to the light at the end of the tunnel. I'm concerned with that. I don't care what I need to do to get there. I think about the disadvantages of all this language that slows us down and traps and paralyzes us and keeps us from moving forward, how it just perpetuates further oppression. We should all be doctors of tomorrow. Let's go.

Merray: This makes me think of Simone Leigh's recent exhibition at the New Museum, *The Waiting Room*, where she opens up the institutional space to facilitate black self-care. It aligns with my conviction that it takes a Trojan horse to penetrate white institutional space.

Marvin: It's deceptive being the Trojan horse, but you gotta do what you gotta do.

Merray: Sure, but Leigh takes the concern with self-care and embodies it in an institutional setting. The free care sessions she hosted ranged from the intellectual and the spiritual, like "Guided Meditation for Black Lives Matter" and "Afrocentering," to the physical, with community acupuncture, aromatherapy, and massage workshops. We always talk about self-care in this very abstract way that's rooted in neoliberal capitalism, like, "Buy yourself a massage or get your nails done," but it ought to not be just about that. Marginalized bodies that are subjected to pain and surveillance and police brutality necessitate a totally different kind of self-care than the kind that white people talk about.

Marvin: It's more rigorous, more spiritual, more bodily than materialistic. When you say "Buy yourself a massage or get your nails done," you're talking about two-dimensional gestures that just hit the surface.

Merray: They're ornamental. But I won't totally dis those things. They're necessary sometimes. I like getting a wax when I can afford it every now and then, and it makes me feel really good, but I know it's not enough. It's manicuring a bush without tending to its deepest roots. Substantial self-care tactics like consciousness raising and being mindful, for example, are urgent and necessary to avoid burnout.

Marvin: I think we struggle with self-care because it's time consuming, and time cannot exist if you're gonna perform beyond skin-deep self-care rituals. For those you have to be suspended in time. It's difficult to do it in a city, in a capitalist space concerned with speed and demands for the body to be constantly moving. I'm currently reading *Dhalgren* by Samuel R. Delany, which is all about the city and its effects on your psychology and how it can work with or against you. It's not possible to take care of yourself in an urban landscape when the urban landscape is this monster. I'm also concerned with purifying trauma: not getting rid of trauma, but purifying it so that you can exist alongside it as a companion with whom you can live your life. You can't forget your trauma, but you can live with it. Can you do that when you're navigating the maze of a city, when something or everything trips you up? Is the city *trying* to prevent you from taking care of yourself? Probably.

There is no spoon, 2016
Mixed media on canvas

Marvin: There's a moment in *The Matrix* where this kid is bending a spoon and another kid asks him how he's doing it. And he's like, "There is no spoon." So I asked myself: how can I adapt that attitude to painting? There is no right stroke, there is no right gesture, there is no nothing. I painted this in a day to employ that attitude on canvas and this is a painting that isn't concerned with its result.

Merray: So what made you stop?

Marvin: I just decided it was finished.

Merray: From my peripheral grasp of painting discourse, I've come to understand that as being a question that painters ask other painters.

Marvin: There are so many layers on that canvas. I didn't want to stop, but then I got to a place where I was like, "You're done." I guess that's another fucking painter's answer.

Untitled, 2016
jpg

Merray: You say you're a painter, and the next work in this suite is a JPEG image.

Marvin: The bottom left is a glitch that I screen-capped then collaged onto the rest. This symbol at the top represents the Golden Horde, a Mongolian faction that overtook Russia before Russia became Russia, in a war that ruptured Russian territory. I appropriated that symbol to speak to historic, global, geographical, and cultural ruptures, to say that things haven't really changed. This image has a kind of urgency, a nature-versus-tech vibe. At first I'd wanted to call it *War is coming* but then I was like, "I've already named something *War is coming*."

Merray: Everything is "war is coming."

Marvin: Everything is war.

Untitled, 2016
Mixed media on canvas

Marvin: I was just mixing, mixing, mixing, mixing, allowing forms to develop, with colours I hadn't used before. That eggplant on the bottom right, that green, that mauve. I tend to use primary or RGB colours. I was attempting to work outside of my comfort zone.

Merray: I'm into this idea that exhibiting a formal exercise is an exercise in vulnerability. It defies the convention of exhibiting work that's concretely "finished." Who dictates completeness? Exhibiting institutions do. Works are construed as complete because they're presented as such, in spaces with audiences where the walls are white and the lights are fluorescent and the objects get professionally documented. We only ever see an artist's exercises posthumously. That's why I asked you when you'd decided to stop working on *There is no spoon*. When you tell me that a piece we're looking at is an exercise, it's not just an exercise in displaying vulnerability, it's also an exercise in flexing agency. I wouldn't have guessed these were exercises if you hadn't told me. Formally speaking, this is not missing anything.

Marvin: I really like painting—I *really* do—because I'm always straddling this fine line between serious and non-serious. I always have a foot on each side.

Merray: As a painter or as a person?

Marvin: Both. When you're too serious it enters into the realm of academia and having to engage institutional frameworks. And I'm not interested in that. I don't wanna relinquish my control. Having a sense of play, of *exercise*, allows me to maintain the kind of agency I want. I am a kid. I'm an old boy. And I don't wanna give that up.

The Africa we want, 2016
jpg

Marvin: *These* are the fucking doctors of tomorrow. It's a scan of an African Union pamphlet—my father represents the Union in New York and I saw it in his office. It's basically a policy report on the changes that the African Union is trying to implement throughout the continent. I'm going there soon. Africa is the final frontier in a lot of ways. It's ripe territory. It's like I'm going home, even though I don't know what the fuck home is. But, one, my family is there. Two, I thirst

for knowledge and there's more knowledge for me there. Three, I wanna function outside the Western paradigm. Four, I'm curious to see how Africa is changing.

Merray: When was the last time you were in Angola?

Marvin: I've never been.

Merray: Are both your parents Angolan?

Marvin: Yeah. I have *work* to do there. I also like how this pamphlet says "Agenda 2063."

Merray: "Agenda 2063" sort of itemizes it into another entry on that to-do list with *Call home* and *Doctor tmrw*.

Marvin: Yeah. That's *my* future. Also, what I've seen of African graphic design is an aesthetic all of its own. Look at it. It's very simple. The Photoshop skills are like level 2. There's a kind of naiveté to the design—it's clearly not naive, but it's got this naive aesthetic that makes it to-the-point.

Merray: So by naive you mean direct?

Marvin: Yes, direct. It's not concerned with seducing the audience or creating seductive imagery. There's no manipulation. It's not an advertisement. I love the invisible touchscreen, man, that's the future right there.

War is coming, 2016
Mixed media on canvas

Merray: How do you see *War is coming* as the conclusion to this sequence of images?

Marvin: It's an anchor to this sense of urgency, this need for movement, direct action, engagement. It's kind of on the horizon. Or at least on my horizon. I feel like this image could carry forward for some time as a representation of this feeling, this mode of functioning. There's something kind of ominous about it. But even though that symbol derives from history, there's something futuristic and hopeful about it too. This is the final painting from this series of work.

Merray: It's a distillation of a lot elements in the suite: the figuration, the atmospheric blurring, the bold mark-making, the symbolism. When you said "direct action," I literally envisioned direct action onto the canvas.

Marvin: Do you think using symbols repetitively becomes a kind of language?

Merray: Totally. But it's a natural inclination. When I look at these images I think about conversations we've had about rage and channeling rage—especially when you say you've been subjected to racism and you're told "it's not worth it, let it go." We've talked about how our understanding of the African way to channel rage (and obviously I understand that your African is different from my African), which we get in part from our families, allows for an external, unabashed, unadulterated expression of rage. Does channeling rage need to be productive? What do you do when you feel sheer blinding anger?

Marvin: I want to express my rage more often. And I don't want to have a special "space" for it. I don't wanna put it somewhere. I just want my rage to exist the same way that I do.

Merray: You don't wanna just pour it into your work—that would confine it?

Marvin: I don't really have the answer to that. Some people's rage is really powerful and really dangerous and it can hurt people. That rage's sole purpose is to attack you. When I think about rage, I think about my image of Dirty Harry: is my rage *Dirty Harry*? It looks like it could cut. I think that's why I'm scared of my rage. It's dangerous. It could hurt me and it could hurt somebody else. I need to practice slowly letting it out.

Merray: Because you're not interested in destruction.

Marvin: I'm not interested in destruction, no. But I'm a tiger in the Chinese zodiac and apparently you're not supposed to push a tiger against a wall.

Dirty Harry, Dispossessed, War is coming, Untitled (the painting), There is no spoon, A real pride, Call home, and Engineer II are photographed by Jimmy Limit

about to be young

Monroe Lawrence

Driving up the hill
in the dream There is a line of
remonstrance Cars backed down the hill
They gleaming good shame
At my gift, at my folded
& final window, like glancing blond
Monroe! collect self! Pour language
the totaled car
Oh I love my mom
And dad so much upon waking:
& my best friend Lee upon waking

There is a moment, I want
again, I
would like to unwatch
when
it seems
you take your glasses off, again
between us,
and I cannot be harmed
through two windows, rather bald, and
And again, you folding shirts
by the dark
sky
to wipe
the daydream
I would have
yes? to
keep it

about to be young
Of a colour you were wearing
approaching my front arms
about to be young

I cannot fit inexpressiveness
Snowing my mouth

At the table I felt, for a time
it seemed
the world was human colours
The long
room
of thinking filled
with furniture, of your family,
A dynamic slowly
seething
in the air behind
my conception of,
you & the long grains
of detail
piling
Into
half-understanding

Please, I felt broken
away,
Resisting to write out
in the other room
Two people were occupying
with one another, thank god,
I could
held my book at my side, leaned
Back
and cried

My mother hugs me
after I
have been called, I
have
been away
She would cry on,
holding Up
the damp light,—my
conflict
writhes apart.
She
puts her
hand
in the lease
of only family tonight—
Where the
weapon is,
A velvet daughter

Tonight if you could drive
your car, by
dream
The interior light on, so I could recognize
So you recognize me
& stop
Like a narrative so
perfect, it floats
up and
down the night
And within it, to offer
the paper-bag colour iced coffee
Tonight is wet air, wet
clothing
and somehow
That
would make it
really last

Men

Tim Terhaar

Men and Their Thoughts

Every man thinks that all true thoughts are obsessive thoughts, like soldiers deployed to a jungle on the other side of the world in service of a war that began in ambiguity and continues in perpetuity.

Men and Their Plasticity

Every man thinks that poetry is for the birds, not the bees. He thinks he knows what he means by this, but that metaphor, like all metaphors, has never fit quite snugly among the jigsaw pieces of his mind.

Men and Their Hydration

Every man thinks of his soul as something that is being constantly ground into dust, which he dissolves into his drinking water by the spoonful every morning. The day his soul has been entirely reduced to powder is the day he drinks unadulterated water for the first time and promptly melts like the wicked witch he is.

Men and Their Struggle

Every man struggles all his life to raise his family up out of conditions of poverty or modest wealth into a more secure position of inextinguishable comforts. In middle age, he joins a delegation of prominent businessmen and petitions the regional authorities to construct a railway in his town. Half blind with old age, after his son has gambled away or drunk up most of the family fortune, he steps in front of a train on his way home after a full day's labour at the paper mill.

Men and Their Terror

Every man drives a hearse until he retires, at which point he asks his policeman friend to give him a handgun so that he can protect himself from the dangerous young families of suspect ethnicity who have overrun his neighborhood like a horde of people who expect to survive in the world.

Men and Their Recreation

Every man prefers to go hiking when everyone else is doing something else so that he can pretend to be more sensitive to the beauty of nature than other men, whom he secretly despises for endangering the tenuous existence of rare creatures by making boorish intrusions into the wilderness parks that he so lovingly tromps through.

Men and Their Fathers

Every man loves his father even though his father tortures mice for a living. His father used to give him for his birthday glass mice, ceramic mice, and guides to North American animals that fostered in him a paradoxical sympathy for the critters that lived in his imagination and in reality died, and were seemingly born for no other purpose than death.

Men and Their Shadows

Every man thinks of his shadow as the body of his soul, which is why he takes pictures of his shadow late in the afternoon and shudders when he looks at them later, as if he could then see some other man, more resilient and more ruthless than he, gazing back at him out of the faceless face of his own negativity.

Men and Their Pilotism

Every man takes joy in airplanes because he delights in fantasies of soaring above the clouds with other men not near enough to touch yet near enough to impress. He yearns to triumph over gravity so that he can finally suspend all decisions, including about whether to believe in the absolute or whether to risk his reputation by indulging in unseemly pleasures.

Men and Their Sons

Every man gives his son a gift without occasion exactly once, and usually that gift is the Motörhead album *Ace of Spades*, which he explains is quintessential. This is a way of saying “I love you.”

Men and Their Tears

Every man cries while listening to Enya.

Men and Their Barbarism

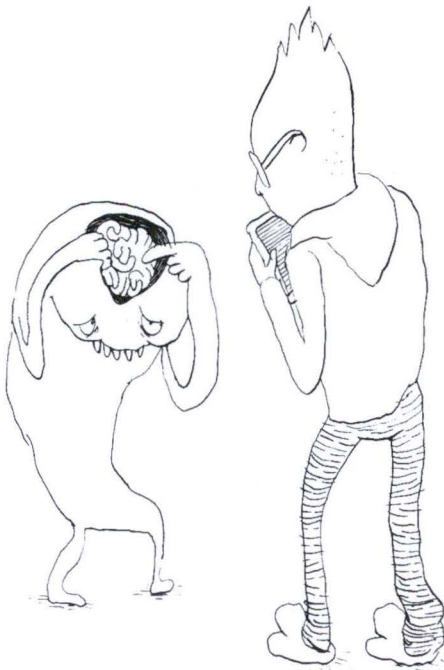
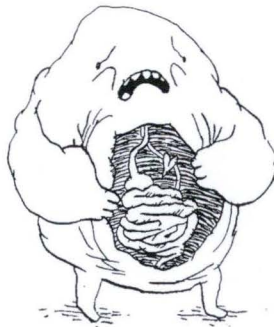
Every man envies the man who can pummel walls with his bare hands and chop up other animals with a smile on his face. He wishes that he, too, could generally believe in nothing, not even in his own significance or in the importance of such saws as love, charity, and wisdom. Mysterious is his failure to realize that he is already as empty as he wishes he were.

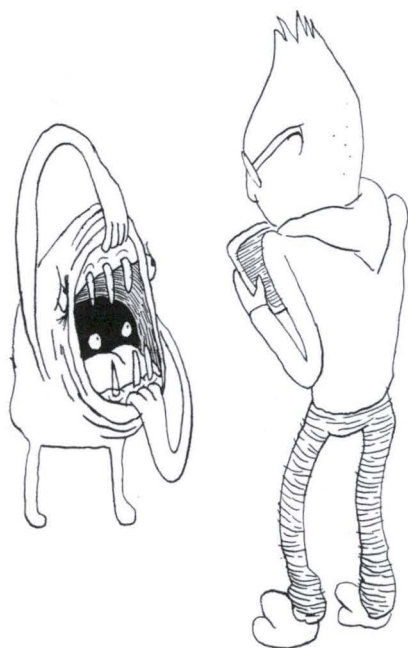
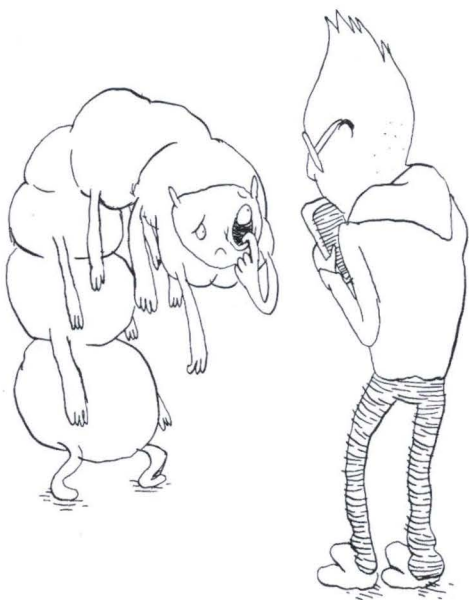
Men and Their Procrastination

Every man puts off the embrace as long as he can, because he knows that once he succumbs to the security of another's arms, he will never feel the need to stand alone again.

Maladies

Trevor Shikaze





Once Someone Told Me I Had Seen the Future

Marie Buck

For the past several weeks I've been on the verge of crying.

And so in the supermarket I buy myself something really special,
the egg of a demon. Marked with a stamp.

Somewhere a policewoman is saving the life of a newborn baby
by breastfeeding him.

Yet here I am, crying.
Here I am, putting some moisturizer on my forehead.

I take the demon's egg from the miniature casket it's packed in.
I drop it into a pot of cool water and turn on the flame.

I set a timer and while the egg is boiling I watch images
of women falling down over and over again. A compilation video.
Though there are things here that are subtle, subliminal messages.

Yet I'm the one wearing the t-shirt, the t-shirt
that shows a cop, the cop with a thought bubble, oink it says,
oink says the cop as it breastfeeds the freezing baby.

My own wrathful, sanguine hue projects itself onto the screen
and then precedes me, the pot of boiling water now has this colour too.

The egg is preparing. If this demon emerges we'll do a drug together.

I'll stare at its breasts, its breasts like divine light, as we do acid.

We'll eat some sort of ice cream cheese dairy thing, sweating in SPD cleats at the same time. Like a really miserable experience. Like I bought this egg at the store so I could let this other creature emerge in the shadow of me, my projected sanguine hue hitting its pot and bringing it forth, bringing it forth so that I can make it do aerobics and eat dairy products at the same time while I stare at its breasts, the demon a divine light, perhaps it's actually from heaven. The configurations into which it can move its body are infinite.

There's something for everyone here. Indeed, the spiders weave their art

& the most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire,
says my shoe, and it's true—here I am here, eating pie.

Rābi'a Journal

Sarah Riggs

Blend I

It was in your hair

She wore morning glories

This taste and this joy

Down her back

Tastes like separation

They were torn between

Times of influence

Here a prison strike

One night turns into a thousand years

The Wall Street Journal covers it

Part of the Koran written into the cathedral

He went on silent meditations

They said Strumpf was a clown

The last of the thyme

He could be elected

He isn't outside it

We had heard all that before

But now it was flipped over

Give the treasures of paradise

Several people are listening in some rooms

The hours I spend with you

Scattered here and there

Mostly things were slow to change

Or else the change was not good

I am a stranger in your country

Toni said the extreme far right

Is coming for us

Blend II

The cupolas added later

And the mix of everything to rest

Cup, wine, and friend make three

Housed in the curve of microphones

My ears cannot hear your slander

The girl holding an instrument

It was about intimacy

It was about a sense of belonging

It was about change and determinacy

The identities were merging

Watch out for martyrdom as self-definition

And boxes to be opened like presents
Refugee camps too dangerous to set foot in
Always seeking various forms of utopia
They coasted in on feet
The locusts rose in a cloud
The bags were empty, a thousand or more
And were never seen again
And the streets cobbled
It's the biggest strike in history
The media are sanctioning violence

Blend III

The quickened relation of women to women
The number of trans writers supporting her
The accents and the energy of those accents
The heightening of the intonation
The heightening of tensions on the West Bank
Till a drizzle of tears fell on Rābi'a
The daringness of Megan's writing
Also of Abdellah's writing
Your name on my tongue is the sweetest word
The measure of the heightening

The quickness of the trigger
Her bravery in showing her face
A fierceness growing out of circumstance
A pacing and an opening
Bringing friend and friend together
Reaching after a place, here
And so they were certain for a second
That dizzying focus of attention
My soul, how long will you go on falling asleep
To let it go into the wireless
Synapses out of the body, the arm sore
The passage instantaneous and important
However the communication occurs

Blend IV

You belong as much to stories as to places
You round the fountain with clothes on
A tender history missed by the foreign eye
A half dozen faces watching
21.3 million, half Syrian and Palestinian
The words held in river, just letting go at the mouth
The waters rising, fear encroaching

It is like this, very akin, like to that

I'll open to you one spark

You are torn, led from there, a hand in Arabic

Take my prayer, devil and all

Poetry is not a luxury

She quoted Audre Lorde

A necessity of our existence

In love, nothing exists between breast and breast

You have to deal with people as equals

You can switch places and still belong

We should all revise our clinging to borders

My tears don't stop falling

It was this rather than that, an ear then

Nor can my burning eyes ever let me sleep.

When narratives act more efficiently than stars

Blend V

Peeling fruit in the Pharaoh's kitchen

Making an hourglass out of vulnerable bodies

Just like those Egyptian women

Holding the curve as a place to hold to

It was in those hands, creased and held out

Delivering some lines with ears to open after
A leaf already dropping, persons, not leaves
Your house is only a stone
You could not tell from the memories not said
The way to know, to try to listen before speaking
I am only a handful of dust
Autumn notes, letting go, letting be

"I took god out" was an early title for my emerging work with and on Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya. It's hard to imagine someone more spiritual than this renowned 8th-century Sufi poet from the region of Basra. But what I'm interested in is harnessing the strength and nuance of her energy to the present moment, as an alternative to Islamophobia. This involves weaving in and out of excerpts, drawn from Charles Upton's translations/versions in Doorkeeper of the Heart: Versions of Rabi'a (Pir Press, 2004), with insights offered by Ted Byrne. The next stage (which I've just begun) is translating directly from the Arabic with a tutor.

Untitled Poems

Maged Zaher

The family mythology is mostly lies
There: a poet killing himself with excess alcohol
Here: a poet killing himself with insufficient antidepressants
They meet somewhere to listen to each other's poems
Each desires secretly the other's life
Instead of switching places they sleep
They both write about crows

The condition of joining is loss of freedom
You end up in a misunderstood utopia: everyone is marginal
I am getting disinterested again
So I wake up in the morning and pretend I don't exist
In the image of the thing, not in the thing itself I dwell
There is no explanation, though, you just cross the Atlantic
To pretend you are equal to the rest of them, and you read the tough Marxists
The ones who also made poems
Then fall in love with as many passersby as you can
Like an out-of-touch troubadour closing his eyes

I know your stories
How you withstood electrical shocks
To bring us candy in the evening
And how you articulated your sadness
By not touching us
Now I articulate my missing your touch
Only with sadness

It is all there
This lust
And its hiddenness

So I went back
With the openness
Of a scar

There was the peekaboo of things
Their shapes
Not their actual forms

I reorder the pages
Call you
Call a few friends
Until I am sure
I am by myself
With the duty of transitioning
Into love

What is missing from our shoes: our waiting
What is missing from our waiting: our ashes

The building will drown even if by itself

I will make a phone call to greet April with good blood

I will sit in the shape of waiting and raise a map:
it is what expats do

人莫鑑於流水: YOU CAN'T SEE YOUR FACE IN RUNNING WATER

listen chen

in the dream when one falls down to die the other leaps into the air

covered in dew bounding away from the scene toward her own

inevitability in the dream we are dead

w/ incandescent fingers clasped to all the wrong dead digits what's missing

having been scattered beneath the foliage while the eurasian magpie preens dirt
from her specular throat *self-directed*

& sootily twinning over the course

of a single revolution around the sun the shape of any single death is fashioned by
many dreams & the *colour* of any single tree fluctuates in hue saturation & lightness
therefore it is better not to ask questions about the merits of lying *what colour is a
mirror?* or

when a fish turns into a bird that fills the sky & the blues & the greens of the world
recede—see how the little pink-throated creatures guffaw! *this is the difference*

between small and big—a quail mocking her poverty or her wealth a cicada
hungering for failure or victory a dove

who cannot touch or who can only be touched *What is Colour?* when memories float

like weather balloons into second skies the disparate surges of each daybreak
turning language into polish & clouds into unbroken vessels *u shouldn't pretend like
something that u r not* alas

we are less interested in where zhuangzi ends & the butterfly begins than how monarchs migrate from canada to mexico

over the course of five generations *We are tolerant toward everyone They behave themselves mostly Why wouldn't you be nice to them?* assimilation being intelligent the toxins in milkweed become part of their bodies thus *causing discomfort in potential predators* aka 以毒攻毒 or *using poison*

to fight poison as tongues teeming w/ dark confetti make strangers blush *Shade*

said to Shadow, "A little while ago

, you were moving; and now you are standing still. A little while ago, you were sitting down; and now you are getting up.

Why all this indecision?"

Shadow replied, "I awoke

with unfamiliar sap in my mouth thus losing parseless visions of the jungle to dim morning light therefore in the dream

you say time otolith polyphagous & I am not afraid in the dream

a bird finds her loneliness in a mirror Spreading her wings

, she rose

into the air once and

died while we watch her

form the shape of our forgetting Don't I have to depend

on others to be what I am?" which is to say silkmoth

plexor

pappus : one dies

& the other leaps away

infinite unfolding

sab meynert



a fever swelled in me, 2014

Ink, gouache & brass dust on paper (photographed by Walter Willems)



a competition for power, 2016
Ink on paper



safe space, 2016
Ink on paper



let everything around you absorb you, 2016
Ink on paper



at the foot, inside the mouth, 2014

Ink & gouache on paper (photographed by Walter Willems)



by proximity, 2014

Ink & gouache on paper (photographed by Walter Willems)



reflected common ground, 2014

Ink & gouache on paper (photographed by Walter Willems)



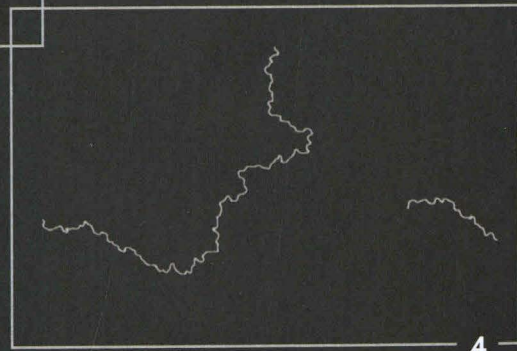
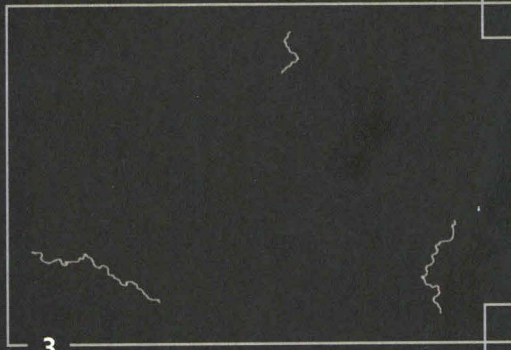
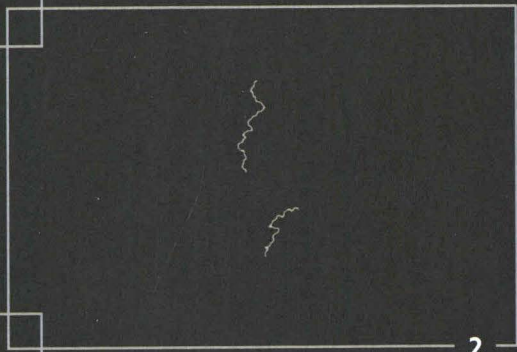
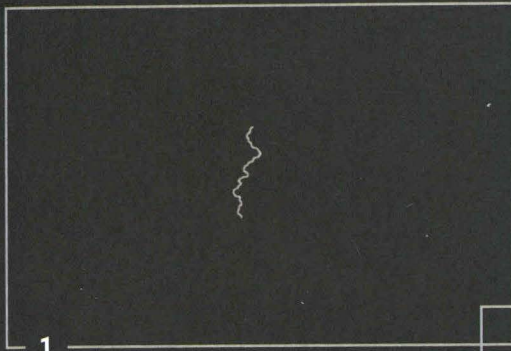
beneath and below, 2013
Ink on paper

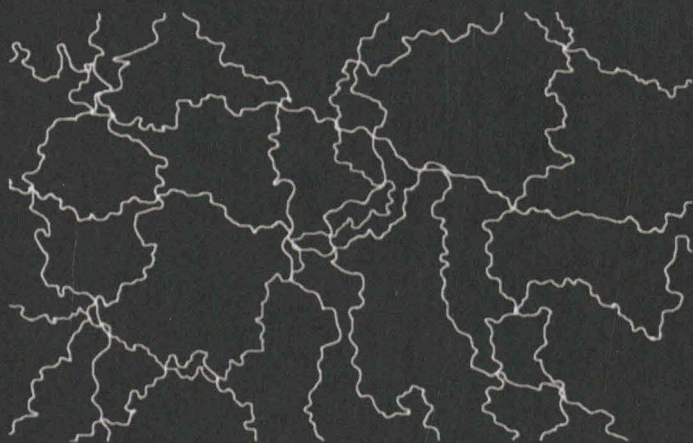
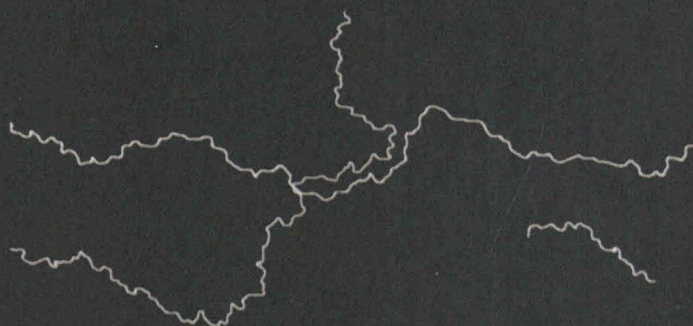


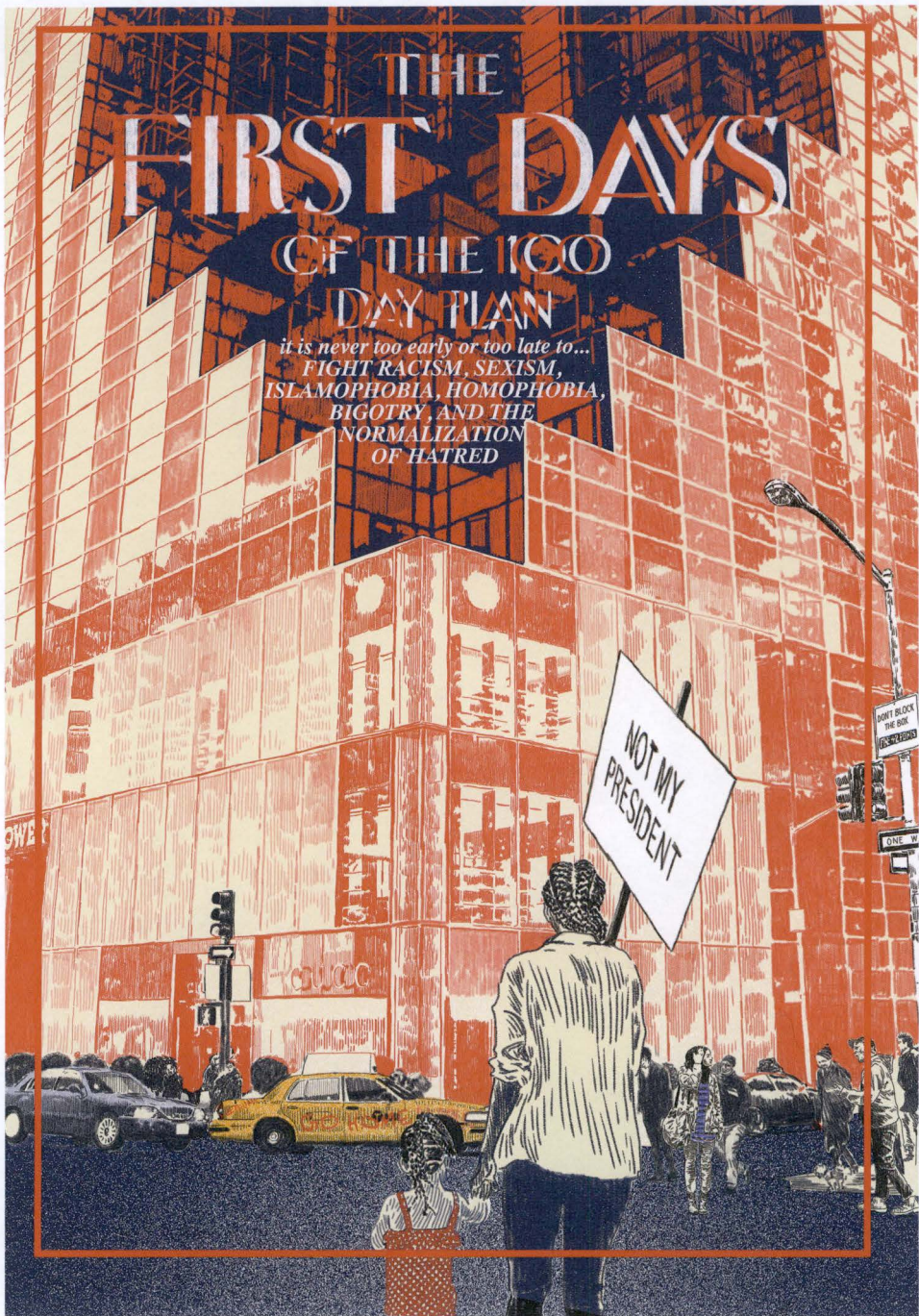
decisions, 2013
Ink on paper

from *Vulgar Extraction*

Ahmad Salaj







Winnie T. Frick, *first days of one hundred days*, 2016

Go Thru

Hannah Black

Things seen in movies: the cop or journalist in his dedicated search for justice, his wife has left him because he is just too goddamn committed to his job. His job is the repair and the maintenance of the truth and the light. To do this job, he has to go down into the deep underworld like a janitor into a cellar and test his goodness against the badness of bad men.

The goodness of the good men and the badness of the bad men is transcendental and not immediately evident through action thought or word, it's all in how the eyes narrow or widen in contemplation of the pedophile or murderer, a generation ago of the homosexual, further back and not of the fugitive slave, etc. This enemy-Odysseus lives in a bad apartment because there is no woman to help him. He could get a servant but wives are better than servants because when you have sex you see the face of your father intoning the words I LOVE YOU SON. Men are helpless and will die alone or kill. Lol stupid movie.

Nevertheless the romance of the takeout container, romance of the whiskey bottle, romance of the ex-wife, do their work of efficient seduction. I know from this scripture how to perform the rites of love and the empty hand returning. I forget that sex doesn't need cutlery, remember in relief: O, only the immediate hands. Everyone congratulates each other on a job well done.

Because of the good man's dedication, the bad man is caught. The good man is dedicated to the bad man, he thinks of him always. The alibi of this dedication: he must ignore his wife to fend off a possible threat to her. What do women want? Don't they know that life is threadbare and in excess of circumstance? The white children are protected and the white wives are saved to wife again another day, repeated actions of the hand and the heart. Everyone seems more machine when you look closely, but animated by a warm and animal light. Reproductive capacities secured. Border secured. Everyone congratulates each other on a job well done.

You were brought up on this shit, pushed to the margins or beyond the margins of the plot, or maybe you were at the shining centre, who knows what the word "you" will

come to mean when it arrives in the mystery head. Brought up on this shit and supposedly classier shit just like it: "read this, it hates you," "no I don't want to read what hates me," "read it or you won't be smart," "I want to be smart because I think that will protect me," "you are too smart now and no arms fit around your thoughts, without the solace of solace you will grow bigger and spikier until it occurs to you to take this image of your hugeness back to its source." You cannot go around you must go through.

What do the detectives and the journalists know about the search for truth, the search through the toxic waste dump for truth, the rat-like search in community or solitude through the decayed packaging and discarded food bits of this world this world this world for the truth that only the rats uphold in their trashy search for it?

The cop or journalist isolated by his quest. The explorer, colonizer, or traveller isolated by misfortune. There are movies now about men alone in space, men alone on islands, men alone on boats. Is this a new cheap method of making a movie? At the end everyone congratulates each other on a job well done.

In a movie the face of a white man of middle age contorts in what looks like grief and sorrow. The grief and sorrow has been outsourced to everyone else while the middle aged white man just twitches and winces in thrall to his numb inside. This is perfection. The music and the camerawork elicit my sympathy without giving any particular reason for it.

In a movie a friend turns to me and says, is the political task to identify agents or processes? For a minute I enjoy the clear distinction before I feel it unravel again. Something must actualize a process. The body with its distinguishing marks, its pretexts, is the hardware that runs the software, the software is violence, or violence is the hardware that produces the software of the body, or the software is relationship, is the social. Money with its lack of distinguishing marks, its pretexts, is the language in which all the wares are written. In the movie there are no analogies, everyone is too serious, they have rendered reality trivial.

Where should I begin if not with this transparency says Glissant, and ends there too. In this Chinese hair, my opacity, still covered in the glass of my skin and the no-more-truthful organs...I know I am only a minor character but I burst into the love scene with a gun in each hand; the couple freeze halfway through their first kiss. Me, from the wells of my eyes, to my reflection in the mirror:

I must start the process of becoming-mirror all alone; fear of becoming nothing, zerophobia, fear of a black planet shackled to its white moon. I am a minor character, my life is not mine, it belongs to the executive producers. I find myself unimportant, my nakedness is not indispensable to the plot though no one uses that excuse anymore, obsolete now that plot has been superseded by nakedness. Is this plot indispensable to the sexually explicit scenes that it comes like John the Baptist to prepare? I ask you like a child to please find me important, do your own work of import and export you say, and the producer calls me and says I am not playing well with test audiences, could I speak slower, could I be more single-origin like a good coffee, could I lose a little weight?

Problem solving. This is not my job. This is no one's job, or a collective one. But you keep trying.

Listen, the demands are simple, we have to abolish cops, prisons, husbands and landlords, the demands are impossible. More is being asked of us historically than solo introspection or even introspection in twos and threes, more even is being asked of us than irony. We are being asked but by no one to become class traitors—art is the R&D wing of the bourgeoisie—or to render ourselves gratefully historically irrelevant. We are being asked to get ready, get ready, be ready already—

Coming up from the gay beach and through the poor neighbourhood to catch the train, the men rocking back and forth on the pavement, catch the eye and throw it away. A couple is counting dollars outside the shop, I only need 2 dollars for Aleve he says and we can spend 6 dollars on you. She seems angry or just sad. They have 8 dollars. The very big difference between counting singles and not having to count. The very big difference between zero and one. Don't move your head or the camera can't track you and turn you into an animal, all you've ever wanted to be, unnatural desire to be natural. Nature is whatever resists thought, whatever turns thought into a machine. Everyone there carries the heavy weight of poverty, there is no reason, class war. I walk through with careful steps wondering which side do I look like I'm on which side do I want to look like I'm on. I will report back later in richer rooms. Recognition is not magic. Later in the airport afraid of being counted as zero and not one I forget to withhold my thank you from the agent of the border. Go through go through. They offer the blunter edge of their protection. Fear is shameful but what isn't, given the right light and a wrong day. This world is a mirage and only the distinction between world and not-world is real. In faith, in grateful transit, I put the little exhaustions of words together however they choose to lie down.

from *Cults of the Unwavering I*

Shazia Hafiz Ramji

Change of Scene

1.

We were warm in the summer grass, fireworks on mute. One of us arrowed out toward the question of our death.

Their faces were brick facades organizing under the sunbulb.

A thin voice of silver chalk spoke and changed the scene.

2.

They were both in the rain-wet boulevard, with many corners and culverts—a state of mind where desperation was devised to look like accident.

We sat beside each other and hummed for heat.

A thin voice chalked up the scene and put itself in the question of our space.

Chain

We were told the fibre thins out here.

Tidal waves curry our address so we fuss.

At this depth we are visible to each other in bits.

The geyser of a new death is still around.

We can't exit this command.

A large image of the moon is coming through.

They say we hold what it takes to return.

They say that tides arise from an error on the map.

That some of us switched too quickly. That there is regulation for the pull.

We move through silt because we know enough about caress.

We accrue more of us found in the grain.

Gateway

We see two white dogs and draw the ambit closer.

Resolution reveals lego in a field, a sensor for a stand-in.

At this point, it's speculation by way of description.

(At this point, it's still language.)

We feel quaint for a fibre thinking about the afterlife.

For a fibre we were next to dogs, and then—

The menu's ruse of options and the house it asks.

We fill in filters and find more dogs.

A new fibre has been built because we are in Tokyo.

At this point, it's speculation by way of proxy.

The city is quiet and bright with bonds.

(At this point, it's still language.)

Gerrid

We are on top of each other and the pressure crunches dew.

Packs of Ativan banded with rubber in a safe.

The boss doesn't care as long as the work is done.

We have grown to acquire a splitting.

Smile's inverse panopticon.

We chatter in the back of your head but we are not your friends and lovers.

Images of images of us elsewhere with minimalist furniture.

Our loyalty to the coast is keyed in before close.

We no longer look each other in the eye, which is not to say—

Delinquent envy of little kids' leisure time.

We are told to treat texts as separate from people.

For purposes of efficiency, not criticism.

Fragment, please consider revising.

A splitting is elastic and it has reached—

We spot the pills on the table in the Montauk Sofa ad.

A force around us says not to take things personally.

The office diagnoses us as manic though we are not.

A lack of visible expression on our face could account.

We have a ream of cellophane to catch us when we fall.

The surface confers an ease and clarity for ten minutes.

Sisters, and other poems

David Ishaya Osu

Sisters

lay your back on mine
don't leave; we will
time together and

drop as rains
to the green
teen garden—it

is not tomorrow
nor sealed lips
it is seeing

the light in
coffee is
for closing

of cup and
mid-sore
as one

Obscura

from the pink
you take tomorrow
with just a tongue

total as playing
your balls, your
answer

comes slow
in your dress
blow to bone

you are the child
whose candy is
unlit

or, are you on

the way
smoke or going
back to lilies?

with

Sometimes

onto a river she
opens her body

free
soft as
snake afire

others

striping
—bring in tongues, bring out

the front
of flesh hidden
—i could see my house from the mirror

from sloe lines, burning

behind

it is today's

to

drink the cup or—forget what is written

in webs

in light

Leaving

I've stopped
planting flowers
in my hair

now I pour
raw eggs
& before

a mirror
my eye is
closed

in prayers
breakable
like hairy

shadows
across
wars

Five Poems from the Fool's Sermons

kevin martins mcpherson eckhoff

Conceit Sermon

Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.

Proverbs 26:12

A rabbi, a priest, and an atheist walk into a bare. Or like a mule, an agnostic, and Jesus bar themselves. From the night, stars, and planks. The bartender asks, "Why the long face?" They set their money on the bar tenderly. Peanuts aside. The atheist pulls a piece of white chalk from her pocket and draws a dove. On the wall, the priest agrees. The mule orders a holy water. A sign: no tabs. Moonlight whines through the windows while worms in the tequila bottles. Remember the fresh mouth-hue of cadavers. The rabbi says, "Throw your money in the air!" The dove flaps from stool to stool to stool to stool to stool. Stool to stool. Circumlocution? It's the agnostic's turn to eat the baby. There is no. Jukebox playing "I'm a believer!" The atheist realizes this is just. Another room. Jesus makes like a tree. Spirits rise from the bottles. The priest lights a candle. In the bathroom, olives are tenderized. Whatever. God wants. God keeps. The mule wonders, "Is this some kind of yoke?" The dove counts its feathers. Wane is turned into wider. The bartender says, "Stop me if you've hurt this one before."

Esteemed Sermon

Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

Proverbs 17:28

sigh
leant

Snare Sermon

A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Proverbs 18:7

aloof
aloft

foul oath
all offal

thalamus flotsam
slothful assault

utmost fault
usual fallout:
fatuous atoms

fathom flatfoot oafs
as moths at fatal halos

outshout shootouts
total tumult almost

moult moolah
mutual flush
ahhh

shhh
lustful ammo

haul lush
tomato mush
off asthma flam

loofah half-solo
lasso atlas

maul soul
slush thus

lost
soot

Noise Sermon

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise.

Psalms 98:4

Ha ha ha ha
Ha ha ha Ha
ha ha yes
baby baby
boo boo boo
boo boo ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha
ha oh you oh
you oh you
know ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha
ha Ha ha ha
do you ever
ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha
yeah ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha
yay no I love
you

Clasping Sermon

The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

Ecclesiastes 4:5

an ambulance is another kindness of prophet,
and as every key implies a lock, cruelty imposes intelligence.

smoke alarms live for smoke and batteries
and this is all so straightforward.

a squealing tireless fart, volition,
justice, the geometry of an overripe banana.

how a prayer can become a cannibalism,
our capacity for failure perfects us.

a vein is not an artery, thank goodness!
but everything still tastes like DNA.

a clear, simple action: ringing the doorbell.
what's not to be understood? this is apart, of that

jelly-filled doughnuts are four-dimensional
something-something, while kindness is a kind of intelligence.

the delivery van backs up, and backs up, honey,
vaccinations, calcium carbonate, cash register, phylogeny.

a spade is not a cobra but both
can kill a rat, the difference's invention.

even the cleanest laundry is never really clean;
asphalt can be recycled into new asphalt.

i'd rather be uncertain of what I know
than confident in what I don't or vice versa.

The Shape

Jen Currin

She sips and rocks and thinks. A glass, encrusted with the silty residue of weeks of red wine, clutched in her hand. Her thick white hair has been thinning these last few weeks; wisps of hair cover the shoulders of her black sweater, as if a fluffy white cat had perched there and then departed, leaving its snowy fur.

The days are very short now. The windows suddenly black, then pink with dawn. She closes her eyes to nap and opens them to blue light seeping into the room. Her chair is by the window, so she can see out, but a gnarled old fig tree blocks her view of the street. She can hear children yelling at play and her neighbours arguing about real estate on their front porch. She hears people trying to be surreptitious as they steal her figs, although one time a young man's loud voice abruptly wakes her: "Bring the ladder over here!"

The figs are ripe. The birds devour them. The fruit fall to the ground, split open, releasing a sweet smell that turns to rot. They smear the stairs, the walk, with seedy muck. She hates figs. Their gooey insides, their too strong, too sweet taste. Yet she used to love eating them. Now she can't imagine eating anything.

The figs are ripe. That means it's summer. She is certain now. Summer. Summer again.

Something glimmers in the corner of the room. A light-shape in a dress-like garment. A robe?

She is not afraid or surprised. The starvation diet and the wine keep her from being afraid of anything.

She might be hallucinating. Like the time her eldest son—long dead from a motorcycle crash—visited her. He held his helmet under one arm and brushed his long brown hair back from his face before leaning in to kiss her cheek. He smelled like cigarettes and motorcycle grease and some woodsy soap. She knew he had come to talk to her about *Open Secrets*, the book of stories she had sent him, and she hoped she remembered enough about the plots and characters to engage in a worthwhile discussion. She did not want to waste his time with her forgetfulness.

It could be a hallucination. There was the time she fell and couldn't get up from the floor for ten hours and finally saw a gentle, masculine hand reaching out from the arm of a blue robe to help her—Jesus? Although she didn't believe in him.

One of her daughters had found her the next day and hadn't believed her when she shared her vision.

The light-shape shimmers, as if this shimmering is a form of speech. The old woman takes another sip of her wine and blinks.

Now the shape appears to be a big white fluffy cat. It purrs, then arches its back and hisses, its eyes a cold black. Even through the dulling wine, the old woman feels something akin to fear. Her hands, which always shake now, clench like frozen claws.

"What are you?" she croaks.

The shape throbs with light and returns to its original form, a humanish blur in an incandescent robe or dress.

"I'm the hospital," the shape says.

"The what?"

"The hospital."

"You're a ghost!" the old woman says angrily, as if she has just found out something that was being hidden from her. She thumps her glass down on the table. "That's what you are."

The shape sighs. A thousand tremulous lights shuddering. Then silence.

The old woman takes a different tack. She dusts off her most polite voice.

"What I meant to ask was, who are you? I mean, my dead son visited me once so I know that's possible, and more recently a hand reached out..."

She stops because the shape is shaking again, this time quite vehemently. It is laughing! She is being laughed at by a ghost!

"What's so funny?" she snaps.

There is a shifting of light in the area of what might be the face. Is the shape smiling?

"Isn't it time for you to go to the hospital?" the kindly voice asks. "Your children are worried. You haven't been answering their calls."

The old woman feels something flutter in her stomach, a sort of muffled panic. Does she have any children? She remembers most clearly the dead son. But were there others?

"Your daughter stopped by with groceries and you hid behind the curtains," the shape calmly tells her.

Now the old woman remembers. She heard the neighbours talking on their porch. They said she had twelve children. Or was it thirteen? But were they children, or just unlucky numbers, one after another? Their births—one with an umbilical cord wrapped around her neck, blue-skinned like a saint, and always so sensitive after that, the quickest to tears. The colicky one who wouldn't stop screaming. And

the quiet ones who laid so still in their cribs, staring at the ceiling with impassive brown eyes.

But those were all nightmares! Not her real children, the ones who never visit her, never call. All twelve of them. Or thirteen?

The shape throbs again, sympathetically, it seems to her. She feels it reaching across the room to her in a sort of embrace. Then it lightens, disappears.

She is alone again. She looks around the room, at the peeling paint, the dust piled in the corners. She sips her wine. She rocks. The chair's creaking is a comfort because it is not silence. Outside it is still summer, she thinks. She is sure there are figs on the tree. She would like to get up from her chair now and go pick one. But it is too far. She sleeps.

When she wakes, it is still daylight. Morning, she thinks. Morning again. She vaguely remembers talking to someone. Who? Had someone visited her?

The light is fresh. It brightens the smears on her wineglass. She sees her hands shake as she lifts it from the table. It is normal for hands to shake. She is old. She knows this but it has been some time since she could bear to look in the mirror. Her skin is cracked, a ghostly red-veined paper loosely covering the face of a skeleton.

The last time she was in the hospital they gave her bigger and bigger pills, and only a few sips of water. Some of the pills she choked on. The physical therapists, the speech therapists, the nurses—perky, young, convinced of her ability to heal—urged her to clomp up and down the hall with her walker, to practice sitting up, rolling to her side, and getting out of bed. She hated these exercises, but complied.

No one visited her and she had to let these smiling strangers help her in the bathroom. She had no privacy. She would lie in bed, breathing in the scents of floor wax and medicine, listening to the squeak of food carts and nurses' shoes in the hall, and she would silently curse them.

She shared the room with four others, and during the week she stayed there, two of them died. The two who lived had clogs of visitors, friends with daisies, oranges, fat shiny gift shop novels; relatives who sang songs and stayed until two or three in the morning, whispering to each other. There was always an old sister or adult grandchild to hold their hands, spoon-feed them homemade applesauce or yogurt from the hospital tray.

At first an annoyance, their murmurs, after a time, soothed her—this was the code of people who understood each other, who shared an intimacy.

Late at night, she would lay on her back and imagine turning over on her side, using the bars to hoist herself up. She did the exercises over and over in her mind. She knew she must keep doing them. She must get stronger; she would get stronger. And once she was strong enough, she would be released.

woman making tea

Dallas Hunt

For Annie Pootoogook

you hold tight
to a
single
hanging
slingshot, to protect
against
the flash-
bulbs
and negligent
headlines

deadwood leaves
shine light
where safe
shadows
harbour
those fleeing
heavy hands

writers' deadlines
complicit in flat-
lines, food lines,
procession
lines—
looking for but
unseeing the
scoop(s)

gawking, with
the death of print
culture weighing
heavy, benefit
from the benefits that
keep the
taste of
perfect teeth
in their
mouths

seeing your photo now,
appreciating
the gentle shadings
of your eyebrows and
the cracks that
line your face

lines that
hold
constellations and
such small,
ordinary gifts
that you
gave to
us all

see to see—

Truth and Reconciliation Week

David Geary

Capilano University has an annual Truth and Reconciliation Week. As a new citizen of Canada and as an instructor at the university, I try to attend every event.

MONDAY

I ask my theatre class what “Truth and Reconciliation” is: *Recognizing injustices / celebrating Aboriginal Culture / engaging in dialogue / learning and understanding / forgiveness?*

“How many of you know that the former prime minister, Stephen Harper, apologized to all residential school survivors in 2008?”

“Did he do that?”

“Yes. Who’s been to a pow wow?” No one. “Were you scared off by the ‘Don’t come down this road unless you’re on band business’ sign?”

“They have signs like that?”

Later, at Kéxwusm-áyakn Student Centre, the First Nations student lounge, everyone is invited to write on patches to form a “#Myreconciliationincludes” blanket out of their messages:

Mandatory Indigenous Studies at University / an open and humble heart, respect the land / hearing all the stories / save women from human trafficking / Ban the sales of “Indian” costumes to battle Cultural Appropriation.

Meanwhile on Facebook, my Māori and Pacific Island friends are angry that Disney has released designs for a grass-skirt-and-tribal-tattoos-on-brown-skin costume for the character of Maui in the new Polynesian Princess movie, *Moana*. *It’s black face! Halloween comes early!*

TUESDAY

I join the drum circle with Latash, a Squamish Elder. We struggle to keep the beat with him but our hearts are in the right place. The children from the crèche join us for “The Bear Song” and “The Cedar Song.” Latash once told me how his father had asked the nun at a residential school about his daughter going to university. The nun had laughed in his face: she taught trades to Indians, not things you need for higher education. Latash’s Dad then confronted the Indian Agent. The Agent shrugged. Bad move. His Dad lifted up a chair and threatened to hit the Agent with it. So the Agent got on the phone to

Ottawa. Latash's sister, and Latash, were transferred to a different school and went on to university.

Freedom Babies, a documentary by Doreen Manuel, is screened. It focuses on her niece, Kanahus, who never registered her four children with the Canadian government and instead brought them up off the grid. Kanahus was to be on the panel but has joined the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota. Pipelines are the new frontlines.

WEDNESDAY

Ernie George, Hereditary Chief of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, speaks about how the Mount Seymour Parkway went through their orchards, potato gardens, and graves. How the high tides from tugboats and container ships are taking their land, mudflats, clams, crabs, ducks. He was seven years old when put in residential school. After one year, his grandmother said he wasn't to go back. She knew. His grandfather argued with her. He had spent eight years at the school and so would Ernie. His grandmother insisted. She won. She knew.

THURSDAY

The Blanket Exercise. The organizer is disappointed that only six of us have turned up. I urge her to do it anyway. We lay out blankets to represent Canada, then enact European colonization. First Nations end up on handkerchiefs, disenfranchised, or dead. Settlers give blankets infected with

smallpox to the Natives—biological warfare.

The exercise ends; we introduce ourselves. Grace is from China. Julia is from Korea, is reminded of the Japanese invading and banning the Korean language, but at least they went home. Lay Lay is from Vietnam—she knows invasion stories.

Later, at Meet the Teachers night at our elementary school, I ask our son's new Grade 4 teacher what Indigenous content he teaches. He cheerfully announces that Indigenous content is covered in Grade 3, allowing him this year to concentrate on the explorers—Mackenzie, Fraser, etc.—though he does recall having enjoyed covering the "Hunter & Gatherer" culture of First Nations. I find this label of "hunters and gatherers" limiting, so I remind my son later that we were (and are) also explorers, scientists, inventors, navigators, politicians, economists, gardeners, farmers, traders, lovers, fighters, medicine men and women, storytellers, comedians, chefs, costume designers, weavers, jewellers, and generally multi-faceted complex and beautiful human beings. I'm then reminded of how Carleen Thomas, Ernie George's daughter, asked everyone to stop letting the media label them as *protesters*. "We are protectors. It is our sacred duty to protect our land, and our people."

FRIDAY

Another instructor frets to me that she observed the Minute of Silence to honour residential school survivors but halfway through worried how to bring her class

back out of it. I fret that the week is over and that we need to challenge ourselves to make truth and reconciliation part of every day of the year.

Late Breaking News: Disney pulls the controversial Maui costume after complaints. Meanwhile, the Grade 4 teacher reluctantly acknowledges Orange Shirt Day but worries that it detracts from the Terry Fox Run.

.....

University of X Graduate Student Parental Leave Policy

Mia Leinonen

*To facilitate return in a seamless manner /
To support open communication and good
will between students and advisors and
administrators*

.....

I agree you should not have to return after 4 weeks / Since we can't pay you for work you aren't doing / Hopefully logic / will make sense

I would like to hear from B--- first / I'll check with M--- tomorrow / I'm copying B--- and M--- / hoping B--- can advocate / I've written to L--- formally / She's really an ally / only seems bureaucratic

L--- was a great chair of the small committee / I was on / All the members / shared a passionate commitment / to making parental leave available

.....

I wish I had better news / after consulting with B---, J---, and L--- / Policy is going to hold firm / out of equity / I wish I had better news for you

Your estimated due date is two weeks prior to the January 10 leave start date indicated on the request form / We will need to adjust the dates of your official leave

For consistency / this is how / Parental leaves are handled

Approved December 27, 2015 to February 7, 2016

Confirm receipt

.....

We care about you, we want the best for you / We just have to be mindful / of equity

Mapping individual pregnancies onto the academic schedule / raises the thorny issue / of equity

Whenever a student gives birth / Summer, Fall, Spring, or Winter / We can't guarantee the length / of time at home with baby

Personal choices that determine one's delivery date / determine that

Do we just say Spring mothers are luckier? / Summer mothers are much luckier? / Every student-mother / Regardless the accident of due dates / We simply do not have the money

oooo

You need to distinguish between / you and
your department

Your primary role is as a student / your
other role is as a teacher

They did not design the policy /
to address teaching / It does help
departments support students

oooo

I prefer to continue this conversation /
in person

oooo

*// Please // I urge you // Thank you for your
efforts // I go into labor any day now //
Thank you // Yes, please do // Thank you for
your thoughtful response // I'm going to focus
on birthing this baby now*

oooo

I hope by now / a healthy, happy baby

It may be awkward to meet in person / so
soon after but / I would rather be talking
with you face to face / so you might see
the friendship and empathy

If you think about equity / and still feel
your case deserves / special support

I would feel happy for you / but also feel
very, very bad / for others

Neither J--- nor H--- was articulating /
department policy, nor making a / binding
promise

You're not being cheated of time with your
newborn / Even so / I would like to make
you happy

You must agree / you will not pursue /
time-consuming complaints

Congratulations on the birth of your baby

I hope you're not physically miserable / I
look forward to seeing you / and perhaps
meeting your baby

.....

Review of *Mercenary English* Second Edition (Mercenary Press 2016)

Natalie Knight

I insist on revolution and its poetics as I
read the new edition of Mercedes Eng's
Mercenary English, expanded with an
afterword by the poet and a conversation
between her and Fred Moten (to whom
the book's credits give special thanks "for
fellowship"). As this issue of TCR goes to
print, Eng is readying to self-publish and
launch the second edition of her book,
and I sit on my bed, laptop in lap, with
a press-ready PDF of the text. I want to
say to Mercedes, "Fuck yeah you did it"—
you self-published this incredible work,
a countering and resistant act in this era

of widespread reliance on publishers, whether big or small, to facilitate poetic conversations. And you are making it free because that's the way it should be. This is the fourth time I've read *Mercenary English* cover to cover since getting to know it when it was first released by CUE Books in 2013. And now, three years and a few social movements later, I still think *Mercenary English* defines our history and activates our revolutionary potentials as much as it did when it first came out.

I situate *Mercenary English* in a diverse line of revolutionary poetics—including those of writers like M. NourbeSe Philip, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Kamau Brathwaite, Cecilia Vicuña, Heriberto Yépez, and Laura Elrick, to name just a few. Eng's revolutionary poetics emerge in part through reflections on her relationship with Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood on unceded Coast Salish Territories, a neighbourhood that populates the text throughout. Her readings of her social position pull no punches; as she writes in her afterword, titled "there goes the neighbourhood!":

When I moved to the Downtown Eastside in 1996, I was an addict and street sex worker, and the space that [a] picketed restauran[t] occupies was a second-hand shop, then a pharmacy where I filled my methadone prescription when I went into recovery, and the space above it, now occupied by expensive private residences, was low-income

housing. I've changed too: in socioeconomic class and attendant privilege, I now typify the new residents that have displaced the kind of resident I used to be. My life is far removed from that of the women I worked with. For one, I am among the living. (118)

The content of this prose reflection does a different kind of emotional and political work in poetic lines like the following, from the long poem "February 2010": "my women hold me down / with their bones in the ground / with their bodies bound / with their voices hushed of sound / my women hold me down" (63). Passages like these, whether discursive or musical, also reveal just whose side Eng stands on, and that taking sides is absolutely necessary. *Mercenary English* calls out all those who sit on the sidelines while human suffering, borne of structural causes, continues apace. Eng charges, "every / single / one / of / you / who looked away / while women were murdered / left right and centre / in this dream city / this gold mountain city / with its cold coal heart / i call you out" (n.p.).

Building from the clear taking of sides in the social war that defines the lives of many residents of the Lower Mainland, one of the most inspiring characteristics of *Mercenary English* is its enactment of revolutionary solidarity. I mean that Eng knows the difference between "allyship" and solidarity, and knows how to write a poetics that pushes us to enact the latter. Allyship, as well-intentioned as it may

seem, doesn't require action from a position of understanding that our liberation is bound up with the liberation of all others; that we must fight against the forces of oppression that all of us experience; that it is not enough to say "I recognize your oppression and I stand beside you." Instead, revolutionary solidarity requires dismantling the oppressive forces of the seemingly pacific nation of Canada, a nation built and continually rebuilding itself on top of Indigenous dispossession, even through its 21st-century politics of reconciliation. In Eng's poetics this tension resounds emphatically: "what caused the tears? / who caused whose tears? / what about the tears? / those deep structural tears in the warm blanket of our multicultural nation" (10). Yet, it would be misleading for readers of this review to assume that *Mercenary English* is a book of tears. The text overflows with rhythm and music, humour and puns and inalienable connection. As Eng writes in response to one of Moten's questions about what he calls "the documentation of genocide": "Even though what I write about is dark, there's often humour, which I can see as a kind of a beauty in being able to document genocide honestly and also creatively through a kind of textual transgression [...]. This is how my humour works in writing and in life" (129).

Mercenary English is also a call to justice for so many whose living days know violent injustice. These bodies, women gone missing and murdered, unhoused

neighbourhood residents who make a tough residence on the streets, sex workers making a living on street corners, bodies who cope with violence through addictions, and all of their defiant resistance to the forces that hold them down (in one sense of that phrase) are the residents of *Mercenary English*. Eng issues a "fuck you" to city officials, bureaucrats, and poverty pimps for their irresponsibility toward community members most at risk—those who are also, often, most resistant and enlivened. As Eng clarifies in her conversation with Moten, "There is already life in the DTES, just not lives that are valued" (126).

So, dear readers, I want to leave you with the primary feeling that I still have while reading *Mercenary English*, and that is a big, wide, uncontainable "fuck you." This rebellious affect is, in my reading, the guiding impulse of Eng's poetics: "Like colonizers and capitalists," she writes, "I wanna use language as a weapon and swearing and vernacular are some of the ways I weaponize English" (128). To be sure, this weaponized English is a vulnerable and tender form of revolutionary poetics, with "hair like waves of amber grain" (22) and with its speaker "cradled by a maternal ecology" (130). The poetics of *Mercenary English* erupt with insurrection—"I love it that my work says: Here we go, motherfucker!" (128)—redoubling this call with the courage to affirm: "my voice / it's mine to find / when it comes / my call will make you deaf" (50).

.....

All my relations (on visiting Standing Rock)

angela simple

Thursday, October 27. I watch from my flannel sheets stretched over my queen-sized bed as 117 of my relations, protectors of the water and the land, are arrested. The militarized police force pulls my brothers out of our church—a sweat lodge—where they are “acting out” in peaceful prayer. Horses are shot out under teenager riders. Children are numbered along with Elders, aunties, nephews, and nieces. They are put into dog cages, thrown to the ground, some of their bones broken.

I think back to when I first saw the violence begin. The long weekend in September. I had just completed my contract at a summer job and was returning to school. I watched online as a private security company (now with court cases against them for having operated with inadequate training) sent their dogs to attack our people.

It was that night that I said to a friend: “I’m going. I’m going to the Dakotas. I didn’t even know at the time where Standing Rock was. All I knew was that my family was being attacked. Attacked in the same way we’ve been for so many generations on the same land Custer massacred our ancestors.

I live in Nogojiwanong,¹ where I was

¹ Nogojiwanong means “the place at the end of the rapids” in Anishinaabemowin. It is the Anishinaabe word for Peterborough, Ontario.

able to organize a fundraiser in less than twenty-four hours. On the shortest of notice people came together to play music, bring supplies, donate cash. \$735 Canadian dollars were raised in one night because everyone had seen the Facebook videos of the dogs sent to attack the people protecting our futures (all of our futures). A recent double-mastectomy survivor donated first aid supplies, a friend’s mom donated her fur coat. And then my co-pilot offered to join me: she doesn’t drive, but she’d get us there just as much as my maneuvering the gas and brake pedals would. It had taken me less than a minute to decide I would go to Standing Rock, but it took an army to help pull off over 5000 km of driving, crossing colonial borders, and facing the unknown of blockades, attack dogs, rifles.

In our rented car we crossed that border and drove all the way into the camps of the Oceti Sakowin at Standing Rock, North Dakota. We set up our tents and delivered money (USD \$2000 in cash) and supplies. We prayed with our sister, the Missouri River, our relation, the *wu’u*,² and we visited. We laughed and sang and talked and prayed with brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, grandmothers—relations from all parts of the world who’d come to be there. We were there on the land, learning again how to be together, and I saw some of those people I’d met in the videos.

I’ll leave you here with a poem I wrote as I watched yet another attack on the sovereignty of our people:

² *wu’u* means water in Ktunaxa

this is what they felt
our great grandparents as those
indian agents

stormed their houses and took
our grandparents\\their children
this is what they felt

our ancestors on
the same land we stand on now
at custer's violence

this is what they felt
watching the caribou drown
the waters dammed

the buffalo gone
hunger in our hearts for our
relations\\all them

this is what i feel
grenades and rubber bullets
pepper spray and dogs

dogs are medicine
weapons once came from the land
turned them against us

this is what they felt
this is what i hope you feel
for we need you now

A series of haiku to tell you just how locked
into it we are. We will die for this, and none
of us will be surprised when the first body
falls. Will you?

Jordan Abel is a Nisga'a writer from BC. He is currently pursuing a PhD at Simon Fraser University where his research concentrates on the intersection between digital humanities and Indigenous literary studies. Abel's creative work has been anthologized in *Best Canadian Poetry* (Tightrope, 2012), *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* (Arbiter Ring, 2015), and *The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century* (Hayward, 2015). He is the author of *Injun* (Talonbooks, 2016), *Un/inhabited* (Talonbooks, 2015), and *The Place of Scraps* (Talonbooks, 2013), winner of the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize and finalist for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award.

Marvin Luvualu António is an interdisciplinary artist of Angolan descent whose work explores but is not limited to the topics of identity politics, geopolitics, and the artist as subject.

Hannah Black is an artist and writer from the UK. She lives in Berlin.

Marie Buck is the author of *Life & Style* (Patrick Lovelace Editions, 2009), *Portrait of Doom* (Krupskaya, 2015), and *Goodnight, Marie, May God Have Mercy on Your Soul* (forthcoming from Roof in 2017). She lives in Brooklyn, recently completed a doctoral dissertation on the aesthetics of the Women's Liberation and Black Power movements, and works for the journal *Social Text*.

listen chen is a capricorn born in the year of the rabbit who lives & writes on unceded coast salish territories.

Jen Currin has published four collections of poetry, most recently *School* (Coach House, 2014), which was a finalist for three awards, and *The Inquisition Yours* (Coach House, 2012), which won the 2011 Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry. Her short story collection *Hider/Seeker* will be published by Anvil Press in 2018.

kevin martins mcperson eckhoff hearts poetry hang outs and saying "Mmmmm-hmm." He's got a few books, like *easy peasy and their biography*, which Emma Healey described in the *Globe and Mail* as "wide-ranging and [...] incredibly playful," plus "reading it is fun even when it's frustrating." His very bff is Jake Kennedy, and together they guest-edited the deathblow issues of *dANDeIon* and *Open Letter*. Sorry! Okanagan College is where he usually does his workstuff, but sometimes he acts and othertimes he hangs out with a Laurel and two boyos, cuddling at the Starlight Drive-in or dipping into Halfway Hotsprings. At the moment, kevin really likes reading Anne Tardos.

Winnie T. Frick is a comic artist and illustrator based somewhere for the time being. She is a pseudonym for another woman, or perhaps a mirror reflecting the spirit animal of blissfully giving up. Her comics can be found at www.monthlysmokeandmirrors.com.

David Geary is from the Taranaki iwi/Māori tribe of New Zealand and since 2013 has taught in the IIDF Indigenous Filmmaking program at Capilano University. He writes plays, screenplays, fiction, and haiku on twitter @gearsgeary.

CONTRIBUTORS

Merray Gerges co-edits *CRIT paper*, a free newsprint criticism publication that she co-founded at NSCAD in 2012. In 2015 she attended Superscript, a conference at the Walker Art Center that deliberated over the futures of art criticism, as a *Hyperallergic* mentee, then spent the fall of that year as Emerging Critical Writer-in-Residence at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. She is *Canadian Art's* 2016 Editorial Resident.

Dallas Hunt is Cree and a member of Wapiseewipi (Swan River First Nation) in Treaty 8 territory in Northern Alberta, Canada. He is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia. He has had creative and critical work published in *The Fieldstone Review*, *Decolonization: Indigeneity Education & Society*, and *Canadian Literature*. His work looks at the intersections of Indigenous studies, urban studies, and Indigenous literature.

Natalie Knight lives in Coquitlam, unceded Coast Salish Territories. She is part of the editorial collective for *The Volcano* newspaper and a member of Alliance Against Displacement.

Monroe Lawrence was born in Campbell River, Canada. He currently studies Literary Arts at Brown University.

Mia Leinonen is a student-mother and teacher in the Southeastern US. She is happy to hear from you at mialeinonen.author@gmail.com.

sab meynert is an artist and writer based in toronto, whose work has been recognized as a melodic counterpoint to the independent arts publishing sector. their work spins poetic imagery and text to weave maps of visceral emotions and the multiformity of life's infinitely unfolding nature. between independently published artist multiples, national and international gallery shows, grant-funded bodies of work, collaborative initiatives with high-profile musicians and artists, and their recent publishing debut *SPRAWLING HEART*, meynert is an embodiment of the artist working in dynamic multiplicity.

David Ishaya Osu was born in 1991 in Nigeria. He is a board member of the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation based in Uganda. His poetry appears in numerous publications, including *Chiron Review*, *CutBank*, *Vinyl Poetry*, *The Nottingham Review*, *Transition*, and *Maintenant 10: A Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing & Art*. David is a fellow of the Ebedi International Writers Residency, is currently poetry editor at *Panorama: The Journal of Intelligent Travel*, and is at work on his debut poetry book.

Shazia Hafiz Ramji is the poetry editor at Talonbooks, an interviews editor at CWILA, and co-editor of the "Intersections" issue of *Poetry Is Dead* magazine.

Her poetry has been nominated for a 2016 National Magazine Award and her book of poems *Cults of the Unwavering I*, the title of which refers to a non-existent book referenced in a footnote in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, is forthcoming from Talonbooks.

Sarah Riggs is a writer and artist based in New York. *Pomme & Granite* (1913 Press) is her most recent book of poetry, and her visual work has shown in Paris (where she recently lived) and Montreal (where her mother is from). She has translated many books of French poetry, including Marie Borel's *Wolftrot* with her partner Omar Berrada.

Ahmad Salaj is a video-based artist living, working, and studying in Montreal. *Vulgar Extraction* is a video installation which points to imperialist border-making, particularly the border between Iraq and Iran near which he was born.

angela semple is a proud member of the ktunaxa nation and a phd candidate in indigenous studies at trent university. angela identifies as two-spirit, a social media addict, a cat person, a musician, an auntie, and a writer.

Trevor Shikaze lives in Edmonton. Mostly he writes, but sometimes he draws. Find his work in *The Puritan*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Rusty Toque*, and elsewhere. www.trevorshikaze.com.

Oki Sogumi is a writer who lives in Philadelphia. She is interested in rebellion, speculation, waywardness, and the politics of care. "Motherships" is a three-part poem in the wake of the bankruptcy of S. Korean shipping company, Hanjin. As container ships lay stranded at sea, unable to dock, they came to stand in for anxieties about capitalist logistics and therefore the crisis of global capital. The poem triangulates those anxieties through the figure of a "mother" who bridges banality and national mythology, who stands just outside and peers critically.

Tim Terhaar lives in Tucson, AZ, where he works as the Special Projects Coordinator at a primary school. He is a practicing philosopher and the bass player in an unnamed rock band. His writing has previously appeared in this very magazine, as well as in the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, *Tiny Mix Tapes*, *Gauss PDF*, and the Organism for Poetic Research's *PELT*.

Maged Zaher was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. He has lived in the US since 1995 and has published several books of poetry and translations. In 2013 he won the Genius Award for Literature from *The Stranger* newspaper in Seattle. Zaher's *Opting Out: Early, New, & Collected Poems* is forthcoming in late 2016 from Chatwin Press.

Congratulations to Monroe Lawrence and Kevin Martins McPherson Eckhoff for their winning entries in TCR's Sixth Annual Robin Blaser Poetry Award competition, judged by Aisha Sasha John.

FRIENDS of TCR

2016

\$551+

Anonymous donors
Dorothy Jantzen

\$301–\$550

Anonymous donors

\$25–\$300

Anonymous donors | Andrés Ajens | Phaniel Antwi | Sonny Assu
Katy Bohinc | Jules Boykoff | Stephen Brock | Colin Browne
David Campany | listen chen | Yeow Kai Chai | George Elliott Clarke
Stuart Cooke | Jen Crawford | Dan Disney | Sarah Dowling | Rinde Eckert
Elee Kraljii Gardiner | Babak Golkar | Jessica Hallenbeck | Nicola Harwood
Ya-Wen Ho | Sergio Holas | Erica Holt | Liz Howard | David Karena-Holmes
William Kentridge | Kyle Kinaschuk | Natalie Knight | Danielle LaFrance
Map Office | Aditi Machado | Nicole Markotić | Daphne Marlatt
Gabrielle Moser | Erin Moure | Chris Nealon | Wayne Ngan | Cecily Nicholson
Denise Oleksijczuk | Javier Padilla | Aaron Peck | People's Co-op Bookstore
Craig Santos Perez | Marek Poliks | a. rawlings | Rhoda Rosenfeld
Lisa Samuels | Donovan Schaefer | Susan M. Schultz | Jordan Scott
Gordon Smith | Jason Starnes | Cole Swensen | Tim Terhaar
Nancy Tousley | Thomas Weideman

read & support *the volcano*

The Volcano publishes experiences and critical reflections from the front lines of the neoliberal social cleansing of our cities and the colonial-industrial dispossession of Indigenous lands through resource extraction. From Downtown Eastside struggles against gentrification, Maple Ridge homeless struggles against Ridgeilante hate and violence, to the Lax Kwa'laams struggle to defend Lelu Island against an LNG terminal, *The Volcano* is there.

READ - *The Volcano* quarterly print newspaper is available in community centres, libraries, and community hubs throughout the Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island. We publish a weekly online newsletter through email subscription and at <http://thevolcano.org>.

SUPPORT - *The Volcano* is all-volunteer produced and does not receive any state or regular institutional funding. We rely entirely on donations from readers and supporters. Donate at <http://thevolcano.org>.



thevolcano.org

SMALL CAPS

multimedia chapbook series

now free to download at

www.thecapilanoreview.ca/small-caps

Princess

by Tim Terhaar

prison industrial complex explodes

by Mercedes Eng

Clearance Process

by Jordan Scott

Fables of a Bunk Future

by Michael Loncaric, Michele Helene Mackenzie,
and Justin Patterson

**Advertise with TCR for cheap
...or propose a weird trade!
contact@thecapilanoreview.ca**

SUBSCRIBE



\$30!!!

Individual

Can \$30 + \$5 S&H

US \$30 + \$10 S&H

Int \$30 + \$15 S&H

Student

Can \$20 + \$5 S&H

US \$20 + \$10 S&H

Int \$20 + \$15 S&H

get your copies at

thecapilanoreview.ca/order

Institution

Can \$65 + \$15 S&H

US/Int \$65 + \$30 S&H

or mail us this form + a cheque:

Name	_____
Address	_____
City	_____
Prov/St	_____
P/Z Code	_____
Email	_____

Jordan Abel
Marvin Luvualu António
Hannah Black
Marie Buck
listen chen
Jen Currin
kevin martins mcpherson eckhoff
Winnie T. Frick
David Geary
Merray Gerges
Dallas Hunt
Natalie Knight
Monroe Lawrence
Mia Leinonen
sab meynert
David Ishaya Osu
Shazia Hafiz Ramji
Sarah Riggs
Ahmad Salaj
angela semple
Trevor Shikaze
Oki Sogumi
Tim Terhaar
Maged Zaher



ISSN 0315 3754
\$16.00