

REFLECTION NIGHT

Before the codes

A NIGHT OF THINKING THROUGH SENSES

05 - 27.05.2017

BRUXELLES / BRUSSEL / BRUSSELS

KUNSTENFESTIVALDESARTS

SLOW READING CLUB

☞ SLOW READING CLUB begins with an attack on the assumption that there is a single, correct and upright, erect posture from which reading is “performed”. It means to reconceive the erect spine and move towards other means of understanding, positioning, and spatialising the erection of the reader.

☞ SLOW READING CLUB takes seriously the realisation of feminist and queer studies that any act of reading is always (already) encoded by the identity and subjectivity of the reader, and proposes to push outwards by choreographing the relationship between reader, reading, and text.

☞ SLOW READING CLUB imagines the text as (just) one body amongst many bodies - sweating, groping licking, squeezing, snorting, fucking, eating, stripping, squirting, slapping, stroking, dripping, smelling, sucking, teething, birthing...

☞ SLOW READING CLUB performs the reading of text as a social and eroticized space of colliding subjectivities colluding toward and inhibiting each other's understanding of the “text-object.”

☞ SLOW READING CLUB sounds the vibration of “text-object” and “text-body” but never just “the text.” (Object = internally coherent / body = penetrable)

☞ SLOW READING CLUB puts forward readership as something active and empowered, not as weak bitch of the author's intentions.

☞ SLOW READING CLUB's objective is not to “unpack” the text. It understands the text-body as a single, choreographed, and spatially-located utterance - distinct but related to any other utterance of the same text-object. (Object = moveable / body = located)

☞ SLOW READING CLUB takes a necrophilic relationship to the long-stale “death of the author”. The reader shattered, unattached and promiscuous, hand over lifeless, muscular body to an utterance as involuntary spasm of the pleasure function.

☞ SLOW READING CLUB proposes reading with both hands; one hand strokes the contour of the paragraph, one hand rests on the thigh.

A PRACTICE FOR SLOW READING

Earplugs

Hyperbolic form, giddy, expresses itself against the inner skins.

That is, while reading aloud, place earplugs into the ears.

reading out loud & together. perform in joy.

Word at a Time

The load shared by smallest pieces (a word, for example) is mounted.

With the canny use of a silence wedge.

reading together & unsynchronously

Text Body

Scam the text without meaning; on some signal, a single word is spoken (each likely different). Stand beside the body that stands before you briefly, with spine erect.

Whispering

JG says: "The language of lovers is not written down, it is whispered into the ear at night in a hoarse voice."

Skin on Skin (Wanting Nothing & Desiring Everything)

While partnered, the mutual, comfortable touching of skins is had (e.g. holding hands, touching wrists, a desireless finger in the navel). Thus, practice alternating between wanting nothing and desiring everything from text and touch alike.

give turns reading to each other (not necessarily in groups of sentences)

If I die on the road

If on the road I die

reading out loud & untogetherly

A Step-up Under the Tongue

Two roles: reader and listener, in perpendicular relation.

L finds a seated position with the R's head laying in lap. L places hands on the vocal chords of the R. Head still in lap, R reads aloud the text.

alternating roles is possible, but not asked.

Strobe

Text withdraws (coily).

reading out loud & together. With contesting dilation and quiverpupils.

Back to Back

Sitting back against back (not necessarily solitude) and reading in one's head; in the strange thick of reading by one's self.

please, please leave as you please

THE LESBIAN BODY (1973)**by Monique Wittig****trans. David Le Vay****proposed by Kate McIntosh**

I discover that your skin can be lifted layer by layer, I pull, it lifts off, it coils above your knees, I pull starting at the labia, it slides the length of the belly, fine to extreme transparency, I pull starting at the loins, the skin uncovers, the round muscles and trapezii of the back, it peels off up to the nape of the neck, I arrive under your hair, m/y fingers traverse its thickness, I touch your skull, I grasp it with all m/y fingers, I press it, I gather the skin over the whole of the cranial vault, I tear off the skin brutally beneath the hair, I reveal the beauty of the shining bone traversed by blood-vessels, m/y two hands crush the vault and the occiput behind, now m/y fingers bury themselves in the cerebral convolutions, the meninges are traversed by cerebrospinal fluid flowing from all quarters, m/y hands are plunged in the soft hemispheres, I seek the medulla and the cerebellum tucked in somewhere underneath, now I hold all of you silent immobilized every cry blocked in your throat you last thoughts behind your eyes caught in m/y hands, the daylight is no purer than the depths of m/y heart m/y dearest one.

—

Your hair is all black and shining. In the space between your long jaws teeth exposed I recognize your ambiguous infinite smile. Your tall ears move and quiver. M/y hand placed on your sweat-covered flank excites a bristling of your skin. I run light fingers down the length of your spine or else m/y hands bury themselves in your coat. I touch your firm breasts, I squeeze them in m/y hand. You stand upright on your paws one of them intermittently scratching the ground. Your head weighs on the nape of m/y neck, your canines gash m/y flesh where it is most sensitive, you hold m/e between your paws, you constrain m/e to lean on m/y elbows, you make m/e turn m/y back to you, your breasts press against m/y bare skin, I feel your hairs touching m/y buttocks at the height of your clitoris, you climb on m/e, you rip off m/y skin with the claws of your four paws, a great sweat comes over m/e hot then soon cold, a white foam spreads the length of your black chops, I turn around, I clutch at your coat, I take your head between m/y hands, I speak to you, your great tongue passes over m/y eyes, you lick m/y shoulders breasts arms belly vulva thighs, a moment comes when frenziedly you take m/e on your back m/y she-wolf m/y arms round your neck m/y breasts m/y belly against your fur m/y legs gripping your flanks m/y sex thrusting against your loins, you begin to gallop.

—

I swim far out to sea that here bears thousands of seaweeds to look for you. I am totally enveloped in the black liquid mass, m/y body is rolled by the water rolled up in the vegetation. No moon, no stars are visible. I have lost sight of the island shores, I do not perceive the fisher women's boats drawn up with their flickering lights. The warm changing waves cradle m/e bear m/e away. Sometimes a fish comes alongside brushes against m/e, only its motion is perceptible, I cannot estimate its size. The sound of the sea boomings rumblings rattlings impacts clashings surgings enters m/y ears making m/y eardrums vibrate, a pain arises there, reverberates within m/y brain. I seek you in the dark of the sea and the dark of the night which I cannot distinguish, I emerge from the water, m/y head shoulders torso lifted as far as m/y waist pushing down on the water with m/y legs and m/y arms straining m/y loins to look as far as possible. You are nowhere in this mass your white body spread on the surface of the water your shoulders your back lying there your hair dragging behind your eyes closed. Great seaweeds cling to m/y neck m/y shoulderblades m/y waist m/y pubis m/y thighs. I shout your name whenever I am not made breathless by exertion. I do not hear your voice answering m/e. The sea murmurs. There are no bird-calls at this time. I seized with hoarseness which prevents m/y voice issuing from m/y throat. M/y muscles stiffened by fatigue eventually immobilize m/e. Then I submit to the power of the waves. The water enters by m/y mouth by m/y lungs, I cannot spit it all out again, the pressure grows m/y intestines m/y stomach are invaded, m/y parietes burst, the skin of m/y belly splits apart, the water enters and leaves m/e. An obscurity develops the night of m/y body redoubling the other, suddenly it seems to m/e that you are the water which comes and goes in the closest confines of m/y body m/y very glorious one m/y most eternal beloved, it seems that you are that which engulfs m/e now and for ever without m/y desiring any of all you others to implore the goddesses for m/e.

[HAMMER / TULIP]

from Beast Feast (2014)

by Cody-Rose Clevidence

hammer, tulip, aspirate you slut you wretch you lovely.
you voiceless glottal fricative, you beauty.

flesh this wild thing out. is syntactically
atrocious— I multiply to eyes a system in which

a panorama or else. diagram me a convulsive body
you field of trampled, you derelict amoral as a meadow.

gimme many petals. dire oxen pull to thrust out.
satin faggot is love so monotone anyone can hum it?

can anyone traipse as much as us?

—

is an arsenal enough to free an orchard? swampthing.
inebriate. I'll arm a garden. we can all live there.

—

there have always been a glitch like this
you absolute & urgent aria you angel you slag.

polychromatic multiplication along the ozone folds.
polyhedra in the interstice. diamond. rough cut

carved from a formal neoclassical marble. you tease you tempest
you pansy-blooded plethora on whose stalk grows polymorphic fruit,

anathema to "form".

—

listen, dimwit. I'm an animal
with pretty much no short term memory
& a penchant for shiny things.

—

idyll my dandy, petunia, massacre. carniferous
polyglottal pulch. what harm is done to a body.

lewd slew & throng is a messy genitalia be my reductio ad infinitum
hussy of formless furrow the acreage you ugly unseeded desire spit
to the wind &

what palace — forest— Tend.

CHILDREN OF OUR AGE

from 'Poems New and Collected' (1988)

by Wislawa Szymborska

trans. Stanislaw Baranczak & Clare Cavanagh

proposed by André Lepecki

*All day long, all through the night,
all affairs--yours, ours, theirs--
are political affairs.*

*Whether you like it or not,
your genes have a political past,
your skin, a political cast,
your eyes, a political slant.*

*Whatever you say reverberates,
whatever you don't say speaks for itself.
So either way you're talking politics.*

*Even when you take to the woods,
you're taking political steps
on political grounds.*

*Apolitical poems are also political,
and above us shines a moon
no longer purely lunar.
To be or not to be, that is the question.
And though it troubles the digestion
it's a question, as always, of politics.*

*To acquire a political meaning
you don't even have to be human.
Raw material will do,
or protein feed, or crude oil,*

*or a conference table whose shape
was quarreled over for months;
Should we arbitrate life and death
at a round table or a square one?*

*Meanwhile, people perished,
animals died,
houses burned,
and the fields ran wild
just as in times immemorial
and less political.*

NO ISLAND BUT OTHER CONNECTIONS*

An act of remembering sound-territory connections
related to aural folklore

CAVEJA

*Farmer, blood of the servant,
Your plough has remained without music.*

Caveja: An agricultural work tool and a poly-functional instrument for sound ceremonies (with superstitious and symbolic value), common in Romagna. It consists of a steel body composed of a stalk, a decorative top piece (pagella), and two to six circular rings.

The ploughing of the land and the towing of wagons was done by oxen. The animals were always coupled two by two in a yoke carved from a fig tree. The yoke was placed across the necks of the beasts and secured to the horns with straps. In addition to being equipped with a sling to prevent sideways movement, the yoke had at its centre a special slot in which the tiller - usually made of wood - was inserted. Some long pins made out of boxwood, acacia, or sorb were used to tie the yoke to the tiller. Over time, the tiller was replaced with a metal version and a more resistant pin, the caveja, proving more practical for braking and towing.

Initially, cavejas were rudimentary pieces of forged iron with a simple ring, devised to help pull the tiller. When the oxen were in motion, the ring emitted a rhythmic tinkling: people connected this sound with all the superstitious and religious energy attached to rural necessities. In given circumstances and through particular gestures and rites, the tool was transformed into the Caveja Cantante, a multifunctional instrument whose sound is magical, conciliatory, and protective.

The caveja was used in sound rituals (even in complex representations) as a way of identifying the sex of an unborn child, to calm storms, to bless wine; it served as a sign of restriction during Holy Week, was used to predict the arrival of messengers, to protect a marriage, as a pledge, to quell nightmares, to uncover adultery, incest, and rape; to bless wagons, to heal curses, to summon bees...

* *No Island but Other Connections* is a site-specific research project by Enrico Malatesta. Sound is presented as a multidimensional event to participate in, becoming the instrument through which advanced listening devices, spatial practice, social interaction, and acts of remembering can be achieved. The texts are extracted from the documentation of the first edition of the project that took place at the MET (Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente di Romagna), during the last edition of the Santarcangelo Festival.

TWO EXAMPLES**Summoning bees**

You must wait patiently until some of the bees in a hive housed in the hollow of an elm or a mulberry tree, separate from the rest to create a new colony. This new swarm flies around until it reaches a nearby branch, surrounding it like a golden grape. The farmer now intervenes, playing the caveja forcefully, shaking it as he walks around the trunk of the tree. He then spits white wine onto the bees and the rings of the caveja repeatedly, until night falls. After this, he imprisons the new swarm inside a sack, cuts off the branch to which it was attached, carries that over to the hollow of a tree close to his house, and hangs the singing rings of the caveja on it.

Healing curses

You pour water into a pottery dish and hand it to the person thought to be possessed. Then, from a height of about 15 centimetres, you dispense three drops of oil into the dish; if the drops remain intact it means that the person is not possessed; if they break apart, the presence of the demon is confirmed. If there's a demon, the dish is rinsed with wine vinegar, red ribbons are attached to all the doors of the house, and the possessed person is made to stand on the fireplace hearth (which becomes the altar), with his shoulder blades facing the flames. Family members are gathered in front of him in devotion, and a child is asked to light a fire of blessed olive branches on the ground. A caveja ring is then placed on the head of the possessed, crowning it. There is silence, followed by the shaking of the other rings: through their sound they are asking the devil to enter the crown. This procedure is repeated several times. Then the crown is removed and put on the patient's chest, over his heart. Finally, the ring is thrown into the fire with force, together with some salt, and everyone looks into the flames to observe the face of the devil drifting away.

SKYQUAKES

Skyquakes are unexplained phenomena emanating from the sky, sounding like a sonic boom. They have been heard in several locations around the world and have been described as being like distant but inordinately loud thunder, while there are no clouds in the sky large enough to generate lightning. The phenomenon has been described in Romagna as an incredibly loud roar coming from the Apennine Mountains, created by a violent wind or by overwhelming water movement underneath

the surface of the earth. The sound has apparently vanished and is no longer audible.

TWO DESCRIPTIONS**(First)**

In the Apennines there is a deep and endless barrage in which a dolphin has been enclosed for millennia. Every now and then the dolphin becomes nostalgic for the sea; it then shakes itself against the wall of its cage and complains: the squashed water and the screams become a hundred echoes that roll down the cliffs, crossing the whole plain, until finally greeting the long-desired routes hidden in the ocean waves.

(Second)

In the bright sky, and without the slightest motion, there is an unrestrained shout. At first it is dark, underground, enclosed; then it expands, with extended, descending modulation. At the beginning, it has the power of an earthquake's rumble, and then it fades into the loud voice of the wind, always with a deep, low tone. It is rare for the modulation to rise once again before disappearing, and it is rare for the first enclosed tone to persist without disclosing the highest tone. Something ungraspable characterises this sound. I heard it one night; it was as if it came from the mountains. It ruined my sleep - the sound ran into the immense shadows and reached the borders of silence. It sounded like the violent blasts of wind that scream loudly when entering the caves in the Apennines, making the whole mountain range resonate.

THOMAS THE OBSCURE (1941)**by Maurice Blanchot****trans. Robert Lambertson**

HE NEVERTHELESS DECIDED to turn his back to the sea and entered a small woods where he lay down after taking a few steps. The day was about to end; scarcely any light remained, but it was still possible to see certain details of the landscape fairly clearly, in particular the hill which limited the horizon and which was glowing, unconcerned and free. What was disturbing to Thomas was the fact that he was lying there in the grass with the desire to remain there for a long time, although this position was forbidden to him. As night was falling he tried to get up, and, pushing against the ground with both hands, got one knee under him while the other leg dangled; then he made a sudden lurch and succeeded in placing himself entirely erect. So he was standing. As a matter of fact, there was an indecision in his way of being which cast doubt on what he was doing. And so, although his eyes were shut, it did not seem that he had given up seeing in the darkness, rather the contrary. Likewise, when he began to walk, one might have thought that it was not his legs, but rather his desire not to walk which pushed him forward. He went down into a sort of vault which at first he had believed to be rather large, but which very soon seemed to him extremely cramped: in front, in back, overhead, wherever he put out his hands, he collided brutally with a surface as hard as a stone wall; on all sides his way was barred, an insurmountable wall all around, and this wall was not the greatest obstacle for he had also to reckon on his will which was fiercely determined to let him sleep there in a passivity exactly like death. This was insane; in his uncertainty, feeling out the limits of the vaulted pit, he placed his body right up against the wall and waited. What dominated him was the sense of being pushed forward by his refusal to advance. So he was not very surprised, so clearly did his anxiety allow him to see into the future, when, a little later, he saw himself carried a few steps further along. A few steps: it was unbelievable. His progress was undoubtedly more apparent than real, for this new spot was indistinguishable from the last, he encountered the same difficulties here, and it was in a sense the same place that he was moving away from out of terror of leaving it. At that moment, Thomas had the rashness to look around himself. The night was more somber and more painful than he could have expected. The darkness immersed everything; there was no hope of passing through its shadows, but one penetrated its reality in a relationship of overwhelming intimacy. His first observation was that he could still use his body, and particularly his eyes; it was not that he saw anything, but what he looked at eventually placed him in contact with a nocturnal mass which he vaguely perceived to be himself and in which he was bathed. Natu-

rally, he formulated this remark only as a hypothesis, as a convenient point of view, but one to which he was obliged to have recourse only by the necessity of unraveling new circumstances. As he had no means of measuring time, he probably took some hours before accepting this way of looking at things, "but, for him, it was as if fear had immediately conquered him, and it was with a sense of shame that he raised his head to accept the idea he had entertained: outside himself there was something identical to his own thought which his glance or his hand could touch. Repulsive fantasy. Soon the night seemed to him gloomier and more terrible than any night, as if it had in fact issued from a wound of thought which had ceased to think, of thought taken ironically as object by something other than thought. It was night itself. Images which constituted its darkness inundated him. He saw nothing, and, far from being distressed, he made this absence of vision the culmination of his sight. Useless for seeing, his eye took on extraordinary proportions, developed beyond measure, and, stretching out on the horizon, let the night penetrate its center in order to receive the day from it. And so, through this void, it was sight and the object of sight which mingled together. Not only did this eye which saw nothing apprehend something, it apprehended the cause of its vision. It saw as object that which prevented it from seeing. Its own glance entered into it as an image, just when this glance seemed the death of all image. New preoccupations came out of this for Thomas. His solitude no longer seemed so complete, and he even had the feeling that something real had knocked against him and was trying to slip inside. Perhaps he might have been able to interpret this feeling in some other way, but he always had to assume the worst. What excuses him is the fact that the impression was so clear and so painful that it was almost impossible not to give way to it. Even if he had questioned its truth, he would have had the greatest difficulty in not believing that something extreme and violent was happening, for from all evidence a foreign body had lodged itself in his pupil and was attempting to go further. It was strange, absolutely disturbing, all the more disturbing because it was not a small object, but whole trees, the whole woods still quivering and full of life. He felt this as a weakness which did him no credit. He no longer even paid attention to the details of events. Perhaps a man slipped in by the same opening, he could neither have affirmed nor denied it. It seemed to him that the waves were invading the sort of abyss which was himself. All this preoccupied him only slightly. He had no attention for anything but his hands, busy recognizing the beings mingled with himself, whose character they discerned by parts,

a dog represented by an ear, a bird replacing the tree on which it sang. Thanks to these beings which indulged in acts which escaped all interpretation, edifices, whole cities were built, real cities made of emptiness and thousands of stones piled one on another, creatures rolling in blood and tearing arteries, playing the role of what Thomas had once called ideas and passions. And so fear took hold of him, and was in no way distinguishable from his corpse. Desire was this same corpse which opened its eyes and knowing itself to be dead climbed awkwardly back up into his mouth like an animal swallowed alive. Feelings occupied him, then devoured him. He was pressed in every part of his flesh by a thousand hands which were only his hand. A mortal anguish beat against his heart. Around his body, he knew that his thought, mingled with the night, kept watch. He knew with terrible certainty that it, too, was looking for a way to enter into him. Against his lips, in his mouth, it was forcing its way toward a monstrous union. Beneath his eyelids, it created a necessary sight. And at the same time it was furiously destroying the face it kissed. Prodigious cities, ruined fortresses disappeared. The stones were tossed outside. The trees were transplanted. Hands and corpses were taken away. Alone, the body of Thomas remained, deprived of its senses. And thought, having "corpse which opened its eyes and knowing itself to be dead climbed awkwardly back up into his mouth like an animal swallowed alive. Feelings occupied him, then devoured him. He was pressed in every part of his flesh by a thousand hands which were only his hand. A mortal anguish beat against his heart. Around his body, he knew that his thought, mingled with the night, kept watch. He knew with terrible certainty that it, too, was looking for a way to enter into him. Against his lips, in his mouth, it was forcing its way toward a monstrous union. Beneath his eyelids, it created a necessary sight. And at the same time it was furiously destroying the face it kissed. Prodigious cities, ruined fortresses disappeared. The stones were tossed outside. The trees were transplanted. Hands and corpses were taken away. Alone, the body of Thomas remained, deprived of its senses. And thought, having entered him again, exchanged contact with the void.

SI MUERO EN LA CARRETERA (1970)

IF I DIE ON THE ROAD

by Virgilio Piñera

trans. Juliana Canal Paternina

I

Si muero en la carretera no me pongan flores.

If I die on the road do not put me flowers.

Si en la carretera muero no me pongan flores.

If on the road I die do not put me flowers.

En la carretera no me pongan flores si muero.

On the road do not put me flowers if I die.

No me pongan si muero flores en la carretera.

Do not put me if I die flowers on the road.

No me pongan en la carretera flores si muero.

Do not put me on the road flowers if I die.

No flores en la carretera si muero me pongan.

Do not Flowers on the road if I die put me.

No flores en la carretera me pongan si muero.

Do not flowers on the road put me if I die.

Si muero no flores en la carretera me pongan.

If I die do not flowers on the road put me.

Si flores me muero en la carretera no me pongan.

if flowers I die on the road do not put me.

Flores si muero no en la carretera me pongan.

Flowers if I die on the road do not put me.

Si flores muero pongan en me la no carretera.

If flowers I die put me on the do not road.

Flores si pongan muero me en no la carretera.

Flowers if put I die me on do not the road.

Muero si pongan flores la en me en carretera.

I Die if put flowers the on me on road.

La muero en si flores pongan no me carretera.

The die on if flowers put me do not road.

Si flores muero pongan en me la no carretera.

If flowers I die put on me the do not road.

Flores si pongan muero me en no la carretera.

Flowers if put I die me on do not the road.

Si muero en las flores no me pongan en la carretera.

If I die on the flowers do not put me on the road.

Si flores muero no me pongan en la carretera.

If flowers I die do not put me on the road.

Si en la carretera flores no me pongan si muero.

If on the road flowers do not put me if I die.

Si en el muero no me pongan en la carretera flores.

If in the I die do not put me on the road flowers.

II

Voy en cacharrito, en una cafetera,

going in a junky car*, in a coffee pot*

yo voy por la carretera;

I go on the road;

yo voy, voy yendo por la carretera.

I go, go going on the road.

Yo voy a un jardín de flores que está por la carretera,

I go to a garden of flowers that is near the road,

yo voy en un cacharrito, en una cafetera,

I go in a junky car, in a coffee pot,

voy a comprarles flores a mis muertos,

going to buy flowers to my dead ones,

pero no me pongan flores si muero en la carretera.

but do not put me flowers if I die on the road.

III

Si muero en la carretera me entierran en el jardín

If I die on the road bury me in the garden

que está por la carretera, pero no me pongan flores,

That is near the road, but do not put me flowers,

cuando uno tiene su fin yendo por la carretera

when one has his end going on the road

a uno no le ponen flores de ése ni de otro jardín.

one gets no flowers from that or any other garden.

IV

Si muero, si no muero,

If I die, if I don't die,

si muero porque no muero

if I die because I don't die

si no muero porque muero.

if I don't die because I die.

Si muero en la carretera.

If I die on the road.

Si no muero pero en la carretera si muero.

If I don't die but on the road I do die.

Si muero porque no muero en la carretera.

If I die because I don't die on the road.

Si no muero porque muero en la carretera,

If I don't die because I die on the road,

no me pongan f, no me pongan l, no me pongan o,
do not put me f, do not put me l, do not put me o,

no me pongan r, no me pongan e, no me pongan s,
do not put me w, do not put me e, do not put me r, do not put me s

no me pongan flo, no me pongan res,
do not put me flo, do not wers,

si muero en la c.
if I die in the r.

THE LESBIAN BODY (1973)

by Monique Wittig

trans. David Le Vay

The is no trace of you. Your face your body your silhouette are lost. In your place there is a void. In m/y body there is a pressure at the level of the belly at the level of the thorax. There is a weight on m/y chest. Initially these phenomena are intensely painful. Because of them *I* seek you but without knowing it. For instance, *I* walk beside the sea, m/y entire body is sick, m/y throat does not allow m/e to speak, *I* see the sea, *I* gaze at it, *I* search, *I* question m/yself in the silence in the lack of traces, *I* question an absence so strange that it makes a hole within m/y body. Then *I* know in absolutely infallible fashion that *I* am in need of you, *I* require your presence, *I* seek you, *I* implore you, *I* summon you to appear you who are futureless without hands breasts belly vulva thoughts, you at the very moment when you are nothing more than a pressure an insistence within m/y body. You lie on the sea, you enter m/e by the eyes, you arrive in the air *I* breathe, *I* summon you to show yourself, *I* solicit you to emerge from this non-presence which engulfs you. Your eyes perhaps are phosphorescent, your lips are pale m/y much desired one, you torment m/e with a slow love.

We descend directly legs together thighs together arms entwined m/y hands touching your shoulders m/y shoulders held by your hands breast against breast open mouth against open mouth, we descend slowly. The sand swirls round our ankles, suddenly it surrounds our calves. It's from then on that the descent is slowed down. At the moment your knees are reached you throw back your head, *I* see your teeth, your smile, later you look at m/e you speak to m/e without interruption. Now the sand presses on the thighs. *I* shiver with gooseflesh, *I* feel your skin stirring, your nails dig into m/y shoulders, you look m/e, you do not stop looking at m/e, the shape of your cheeks is changed by the greatest concern. The engulfment continues steadily, the touch of the sand is soft against m/y legs. You begin to sigh. When *I* am sucked down to m/y thighs *I* start to cry out, in a few moments *I* shall be unable to touch you, m/y hands on your shoulders your neck will be unable to reach your vulva, anguish grips m/e, the tiniest grain of sand between your belly and m/ine can separate us once for all. But your fierce joyful eyes shining hold m/e against you, you press m/y back with your large hands, *I* begin to throb in m/y eyelids, *I* throb in m/y brain, *I* throb in m/y thorax, *I* throb in m/y belly, *I* throb in m/y clitoris while you speak faster and faster clasping m/e *I* clasping you clasping each other with a marvelous strength, the

sand is round our waists, at a given moment your skin splits from throat to pubis, m/ine in turn from below upwards, *I* spill m/yself into you, you mingle with m/e m/y mouth fastened on your mouth your neck squeezed by m/y arms, *I* feel our intestines uncoiling gliding among themselves, the sky darkens suddenly, it contains orange gleams, the outflow of the mingled blood is not perceptible, the most severe shuddering affects you affects m/e both together, collapsing you cry out, *I* love you m/y dying one, your emergent head is for m/e most adorable and most fatal, the sand touches your cheeks, m/y mouth filled.

—

I have swallowed your arm the weather is clear the sea warm. The sun enters m/y eyes. Your fingers form a fan in my esophagus, then come together to thrust further. *I* struggle against vertigo. M/y optic nerves start under a very strong pressure. The shimmer of the light on the waves insults m/y entire body. *I* am penetrated endlessly by you, you thrust into m/e, you impale m/e, *I* begin an extremely slow journey, *I* am thronged by roarings, m/y ears lengthen, they beat furiously at the wood of the deck, they strike the sides of the boat, m/y tongue cut against m/y teeth is carried away as you descend m/e, m/y vocal cords stretched by the passage of your fingers transmit no sound, cries propagate themselves within m/y arteries incessant siren wailings arm signals. You do not stop. *I* perceive within flattened against m/y skin the organs ranged one beside the other all distended, the green bile makes halos, the stomach hangs emptied of its acid the liver resembles a stranded turbot, the spleen has burst, but you m/y so atrocious intractable implacable one you still descend. *I* wait for you to perforate the membrane of m/y diaphragm, *I* wait for you to touch m/y pylorus, *I* wait for you to thread m/y duodenum on your hand, an enormous cry accumulates at the centre around your arm, the pressure you exert on the sound-waves finally makes m/e explode, *I* know it by heart m/y tormentor m/y most baleful one, m/y shadowy visage sparkling with black, the sea closes over m/e, then *I* draw you down, *I* drag you down, *I* take you with m/e foundering.

—

I have access to your glottis and your larynx red with blood voice stifled. *I* reach your trachea, *I* embed m/yself as far as your left lung, there m/y so delicate one *I* place m/y two hands on the pale pink bland mass tou-

ched, it unfolds somewhat, it moves fanwise, m/y knees flex, *I* gather into m/y mouth your entire reserves of air. Mixed with it are traces of smoke odours of herbs, the scent of a flower, irises it seems to m/e, the lung begins to beat, it gives a jump while the tears flow from your wide-open eyes, you trap m/y mouth like a cupping-glass on the sticky mass of your lung, large soft sticky fragments insinuate themselves between m/y lips, shape themselves to m/y palate, the entire mass is engulfed in m/y open mouth, m/y tongue is caught in an indescribable glue, a jelly descends towards m/y glottis, m/y tongue recoils, *I* choke and you choke without a cry, at this moment m/y most pleasing of all women it is impossible to conceive a more magistral a more inevitable coupling.

—

The tears flow fast on your cheeks, m/y hands repair there and are moistened there, the tears fall larger and larger tepid salt against m/y mouth, they cover your neck your shoulders your breasts, *I* scatter them, *I* disperse them over your entire body, the tears continue to flow, your breast heaves with sobs, you begin to hiccup, the saliva falls in great strings from your mouth, *I* hold its elastic substance between m/y fingers, *I* carry it on m/y mouth on m/y forehead on m/y eyes on m/y cheeks, *I* stop breathing, *I* roll you in your own tears, now they make quite a pool around you, incessantly *I* utter words to make you redouble your tears, you weep without stopping, you weep for yourself, you weep for m/e with marvelous force, your entire body is involved, your shoulders heave, now you start you sob you cry out, your tears fall all at once when you straighten your neck, you implore m/e with strident voice but *I* remain utterly ferocious towards you, then you begin to weep harder still, you make yourself drunk and you intoxicate m/e while your water m/y in-temperate mistress, m/y most tormented one, descends in runnels across the beach of the island to the sea.

—

You turn m/e inside out, *I* am a glove in your hands, gently firmly inexorably holding m/y throat in your palm, *I* struggle, *I* am frantic, *I* enjoy fear, you count the veins and the arteries, you retract them to one side, you reach the vital organs, you breathe into m/y lungs through m/y mouth, *I* stifle, you hold the long tubes of the viscera, you unfold them, you uncoil them, you slide them round your neck, slopping you let them

go, you cry out, you say delightful stink, you rave, you seek the green fluid of the bile, you plunge your fingers into the stomach, you cry out, you take the heart in your mouth, you lick it for a long me, your tongue playing with the coronary arteries, you take it in your hands, *I* cannot speak, your teeth biting m/y cheeks your lips unscathed at the edge of m/y lips you, your sovereign hair over m/y face, bent over you look, you, your eyes not quitting m/y eyes, covered with liquids acids chewed digested nourishment, you full of juices corroded in an odour of dung and urine crawl up to m/y carotid in order to sever it. Glory.

—

I press m/y hands and m/y bare feet against its slippery surface, *I* swim the whole length of your body, *I* re-ascend, *I* touch one of the small fins at the level of one of your eyes, *I* try to unfold it, it resists, it palpitates under m/y pressure, *I* let m/yself sway on your flank from one great flipper to the other, *I* try to stay balanced while you move forward at full speed. Then *I* fall in front of you at mouth level. You in the incessant movement of your single gaping curled lip m/y mole you swallow m/e, at once *I* enter into your immense red illuminated esophagus, *I* fall against its wall, *I* find m/yself propelled from one point to another to the level of the arterial arch, *I* am utterly shattered by its throbbing, *I* am driven to the level of the auricles and the ventricles of your heart only the membranes of the two walls separating m/e from them.

—

The eye of your stomach is closed. *I* kiss its swarthy lid. The girdle of eyes that stretch from one hip to the other below your navel regards m/e whole. Drowsiness overtakes m/e. *I* shake m/y neck and head with all m/y might. *I* apply m/y mouth to the eyes of your belly. *I* make them roll under m/y lips one by one. They watch m/e, they all begin to shed tears together, *I* see them flow over your thighs and knees while you laugh with your single mouth, clasp m/e with your large hands. *I* am surrounded by the brilliance of your multiple eyes. A blue halo rises from manifold whites. The eyes edging your pubis are closed. Each eye in the fold your elbow watches m/e. At your wrists the lids of the eyes which accompany the movements of your hands flutter. *I* seek your mouth with m/y mouth. *I* perceive the two eyes of your face, they watch m/e. Weakness overcomes m/e. Moving away from you *I* see that all the eyes of

your body are fixed attentively on the different autonomous parts of m/y body in their actions in relation to one another. M/y muscles affected suddenly convulse. *I* see distinctly the gleam of your eyes ranged along the inside of your thighs, they stare at the skin of m/y belly close by. *I* see the winking of the ocular bracelets at your ankles. *I* see the two long rows which descend from your shoulders to the tip of your breasts. M/y entire body is riddled by your gaze. It immobilizes m/e. A mist comes before m/y eyes. Slackness takes m/e from the brain to the hollow of m/y loins, *I* am dizzy, *I* totter, *I* try to compel your eyes to a convergence, but at this point m/y all-seeing one you suddenly disintegrate m/e all your eyes fixed on m/e.

STORY OF THE EYE (1928)**by Georges Bataille***trans. Joachim Neugroschal*

I grew up very much alone, and as far back as I recall I was frightened of anything sexual. I was nearly sixteen when I met Simone, a girl my own age, at the beach in X. Our families being distantly related, we quickly grew intimate. Three days after our first meeting, Simone and I were alone in her villa. She was wearing a black pinafore with a starched white collar. I began realizing that she shared my anxiety at seeing her, and I felt even more anxious that day because I hoped she would be stark naked under the pinafore.

She had black silk stockings on covering her knees, but I was unable to see as far up as the cunt (this name, which I always used with Simone, is, I think, by far the loveliest of the names for the vagina). It merely struck me that by slightly lifting the pinafore from behind, I might see her private parts unveiled.

Now in the corner of a hallway there was a saucer of milk for the cat. "Milk is for the pussy, isn't it?" said Simone. "Do you dare me to sit in the saucer?"

"I dare you," I answered, almost breathless.

The day was extremely hot. Simone put the saucer on a small bench, planted herself before me, and, with her eyes fixed on me, she sat down without my being able to see her burning buttocks under the skirt, dipping into the cool milk. The blood shot to my head, and I stood before her awhile, immobile and trembling, as she eyed my stiff cock bulging in my pants. Then I lay down at her feet without her stirring, and for the first time, I saw her "pink and dark" flesh cooling in the white milk. We remained motionless, on and on, both of us equally overwhelmed.

Suddenly, she got up, and I saw the milk dripping down her thighs to the stockings. She wiped herself evenly with a handkerchief as she stood over my head with one foot on the small bench, and I vigorously rubbed my cock through the pants while writhing amorously on the floor. We reached orgasm at almost the same instant without even touching one another. But when her mother came home, I was sitting in a low armchair, and I took advantage of the moment when the girl tenderly snuggled in her mother's arms: I lifted the back of her pinafore, unseen, and thrust my hand under her cunt between her two burning legs.

I dashed home, eager to jerk off some more, and the next day there were such dark rings around my eyes that Simone, after peering at me for a while, buried her head in my shoulder and said earnestly: "I don't want you to jerk off anymore without me."

Thus a love life started between the girl and myself, and it was so intimate and so driven that we could hardly let a week go by without meeting. And yet we virtually never talked about it. I realized that her feelings at seeing me were the same as mine at seeing her, but I found it difficult to have things out. I remember that one day, when we were in a car tooling along at top speed, we crashed into a cyclist, an apparently very young and very pretty girl. Her head was almost totally ripped off by the wheels. For a long time, we were parked a few yards beyond without getting out, fully absorbed in the sight of the corpse. The horror and despair at so much bloody flesh, nauseating in part, and in part very beautiful, was fairly equivalent to our usual impression upon seeing one another. Simone was tall and lovely. She was usually very natural; there was nothing heartbreaking in her eyes or her voice. But on a sensual level, she so bluntly craved any upheaval that the faintest call from the senses gave her a look directly suggestive of all things linked to deep sexuality, such as blood, suffocation, sudden terror, crime; things indefinitely destroying human bliss and honesty. I first saw her mute and absolute spasm (which I shared) the day she sat down in the saucer of milk. True, we only exchanged fixed stares at analogous moments. But we never calmed down or played except in the brief relaxed minutes after an orgasm.

I ought to say, nevertheless, that we waited a long time before copulating. We merely took any opportunity to indulge in unusual acts. We did not lack modesty-on the contrary-but something urgently drove us to defy modesty together as immodestly as possible. Thus, no sooner had she asked me never to jerk off again by myself (we had met on top of a cliff), than she pulled down my pants and had me stretch out on the ground. She tucked her dress up, mounted my belly with her back towards my face, and let herself go, while I thrust my finger, lubricated with my young jizm, in to her cunt. Next, she lay down with her head under my cock between my legs, and thrusting her cunt in the air, she brought her body down towards me, while I raised my head to the level of that cunt: her knees found support on my shoulders.

"Can't you pee up to my cunt?" she said.

"Yes," I answered, "but with you like this, it'll get on your dress and your face."

"So what," she concluded. And I did as she said but no sooner was I done than I flooded her, again, this time with fine white come. Meanwhile, the smell of the sea mixed with the smell of wet linen, our naked bodies, and the come. Evening was gathering, and we stayed in that extraordinary position, tranquil and motionless, when all at once we heard steps crumpling the grass. "Please don't move, please," Simone begged.

THE POLITICS OF TRANSLATION
from *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993)
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

The idea for this title comes from Michèle Barrett's feeling that the politics of translation takes on a massive life of its own if you see language as the process of meaning construction. In my view, language may be one of many elements that allow us to make sense of things, of ourselves. I am thinking, of course, of gestures, pauses, but also of chance, of the sub-individual force-fields of being which click into place in different situations, swerve from the straight or true line of language-in-thought. Making sense of ourselves is what produces identity. If one feels that the production of identity as self-meaning, not just meaning, is as pluralized as a drop of water under a microscope, one is not always satisfied, outside of the ethico-political arena as such, with "generating" thoughts on one's own. (Assuming identity as origin may be unsatisfactory in the ethico-political arena as well, but consideration of that now would take us too far afield.) One of the ways to get around the confines of one's "identity" as one produces expository prose is to work at someone else's title, as one works with a language that belongs to many others. This, after all, is one of the seductions of translating. It is a simple miming of the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self.

Responding, therefore, to Michèle with that freeing sense of responsibility, I can agree that it is not bodies of meaning that are transferred in translation. And from the ground of that agreement I want to consider the role played by language for the agent, the person who acts, even though intention is not fully present to itself. The task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency. The writer is written by her language, of course. But the writing of the writer writes agency in a way that might be different from that of the British woman/citizen with the history of British feminism, focused on the task of freeing herself from Britain's imperial past, its often racist present, as well as its "made in Britain" history of male domination.

Translation as reading

How does the translator attend to the specificity of the language she translates? There is a way in which the rhetorical nature of every language disrupts its logical systematicity. If we emphasize the logical at the expense of these rhetorical interferences, we remain safe. "Safety" is the appropriate term here, because we are talking of risks, of violence to the translating medium. I felt that I was taking those risks when I recently translated some late eighteenth-century Bengali poetry. I quote a bit from my "Translator's Preface":

I must overcome what I was taught in school: the highest mark for the most accurate collection of synonyms, strung together in the most proximate syntax. I must resist both the solemnity of chaste Victorian poetic prose and the forced simplicity of "plain English", that have imposed themselves as the norm... Translation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate. These songs, sung day after day in family chorus before clear memory began, have a peculiar intimacy for me. Reading and surrendering take on new meanings in such a case. The translator earns permission to transgress from the trace of the other - before memory - in the closest places of the self.

Language is not everything. It is only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries. The ways in which rhetoric or figuration disrupt logic themselves point at the possibility of random contingency, beside language, around language. Such a dissemination cannot be under our control. Yet in translation, where meaning hops into the spacy emptiness between two named historical languages, we get perilously close to it. By juggling the disruptive rhetoricity that breaks the surface in not necessarily connected ways, we feel the selvedges of the language-textile give way, fray into *frayages* or facilitations. Although every act of reading or communication is a bit of this risky fraying which scrambles together somehow, our stake in agency keeps the fraying down to a minimum except in the communication and reading of and in love. (What is the place of "love" in the ethical?) The task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay. The politics of translation from a non-European woman's text too often suppresses this possibility because the translator cannot engage with, or cares insufficiently for, the rhetoricity of the original.

The simple possibility that something might not be meaningful is contained by the rhetorical system as the always possible menace of a space outside language. This is most eerily staged (and challenged) in the effort to communicate with other possible intelligent beings in space. (Absolute alterity or otherness is thus differed-deferred into an other self who resembles us, however minimally, and with whom we can communicate.) But a more homely staging of it occurs across two earthly languages. The experience of contained alterity in an unknown language spoken in a different cultural milieu is uncanny.

Let us now think that, in that other language, rhetoric may be disrupting logic in the matter of the production of an agent, and indicating the founding violence of the silence at work within rhetoric. Logic allows us to jump from word to word by means of clearly indicated connections. Rhetoric must work in the silence between and around words in order to see what works and how much. The jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing, is a relationship by which a world is made for the agent, so that the agent can act in an ethical way, a political way, a day-to-day way; so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world. Unless one can at least construct a model of this for the other language, there is no real translation.