Noted

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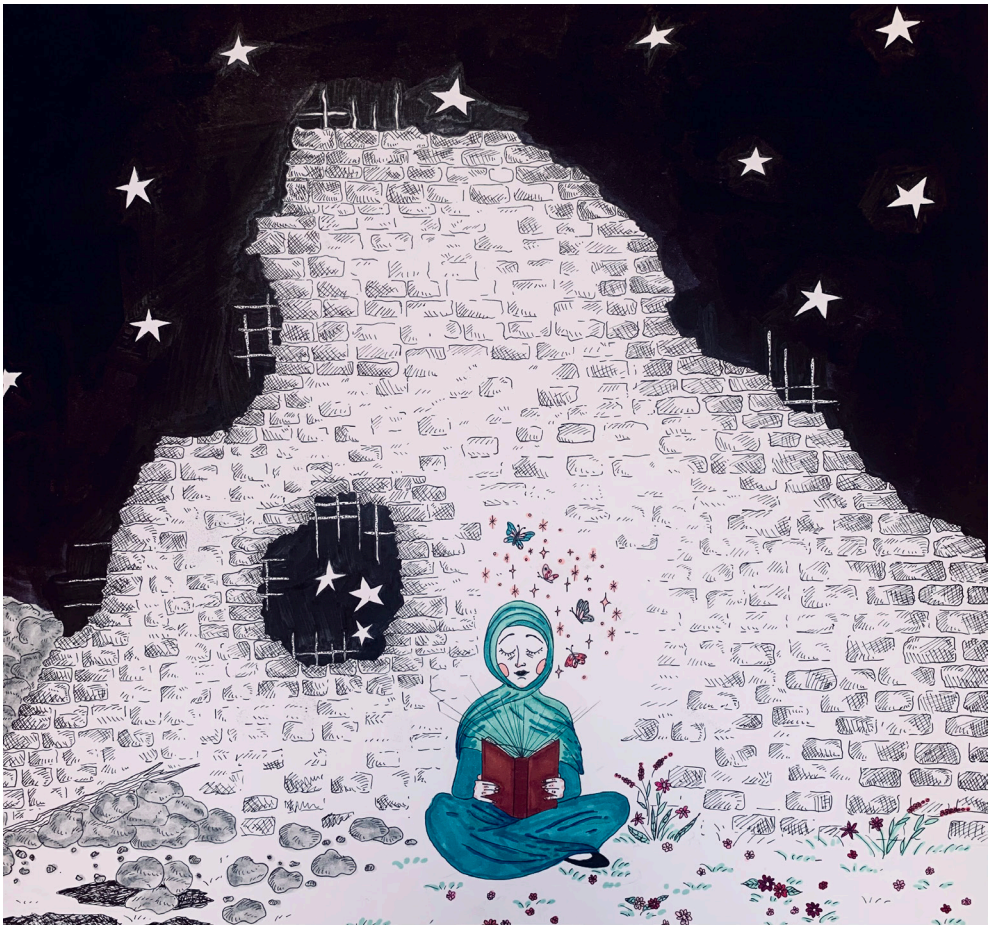
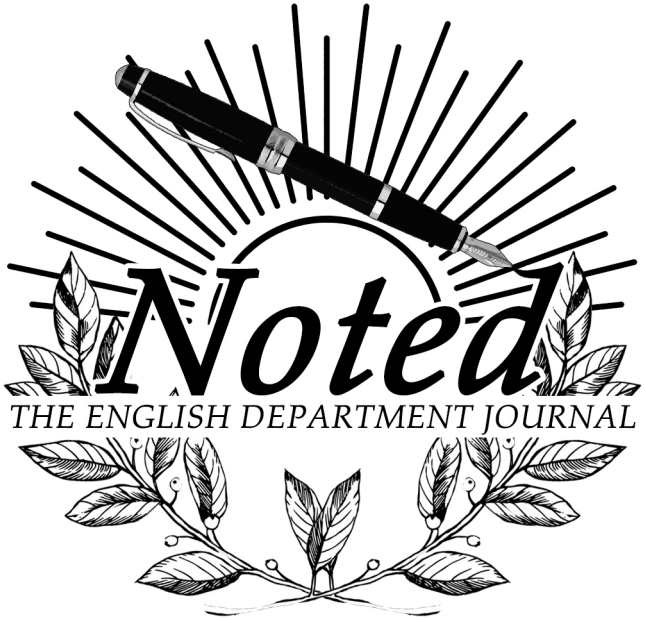


Refuge

Autumn 2022



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Editor's Letter

Emily Smith and Nora Zufferey

In time-honoured fashion, let's begin with etymology.

Refuge: from the Latin *refugium*. If we consider its constituent parts: *re-*, back; *fugere*, to flee. *Refuge*: a place to flee **back** to.

Refuge has become highly political. Indeed, the notion of refuge has been almost subsumed by a word spawned from it: *refugee*. In fact, the News on the Web corpus – which provides quantitative data about news articles published in English worldwide – demonstrates that the word *refugee* is almost seven times more common than *refuge*. The act of fleeing has become about the person, not the place. And so often, of course, the politicization of such people is highly stigmatizing, to say the least.

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." This definition is expanded, too, to incorporate those who need to flee for reasons of safety more broadly (as the events of this year have more than demonstrated). This definition stresses the direction of movement *away* from a place of "origin."

Yet the *re* in the etymology of refuge – and hence of refugee – should give us pause. Re, as in re-peat, re-cite, re-run. Re-, as in something already encountered, something familiar, something that, perhaps, seems like home.

Could this *re* suggest a human belonging which goes beyond geographical boundaries?

This issue, in focusing on the idea of refuge, seeks to explore the history, experiences, and sentiments surrounding refuge, in all of their contradictions. Opening the issue is Inês Filipa Carvalho Santos' examination of J. M. Coetzee's *Jesus* trilogy explores the psychological battlefield which language can represent in cases of migration and the subjective (and hence deeply varied) linguistic experiences which Coetzee's novels depict. Next up, Ecem Memis' interview with the author Colm Tóibín engages with Irish emigration and "[t]he idea of being away and home", yet never quite fully in either. Rounding off the Academia section, a sample of talks given at the recent departmental soirée "Geneva:

City of Refuge" follows, each illustrating the role that Geneva has served in terms of refuge and cultural translation throughout history.

Following, in the Art section, are some creative interpretations of what refuge may mean: River Orsini's drawing 'Home' and Ana Bravo's poem '{untitled}'. Words rarely do justice to works of art, and we encourage you to look at these wonderful explorations of love and belonging yourself. Similarly, in pride of place in this edition, the beautiful front cover designed by Valérie Fivaz depicts refuge emenating from - where else? - a book.

In a move as predictable as a citation of etymology, this edition finishes in style with a playful exploration of the phenomenon of Rogeting (which will make you feel seen, or perhaps observed, discerned, or conceived…). Martin Leer's subjection to the proverbial barbecue, last but not least, concludes this issue.

We hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Noted*!

Nora and Emily

Academia

General and Personal Use of Language in J. M. Coetzee's Trilogy

Inês Filipa Carvalho Santos

In J. M. Coetzee's novels, the *Childhood of Jesus*, the *Schooldays of Jesus* and the *Death of Jesus*, language is a central concern in the life of residents and refugees arriving in Novilla and Estrella. When the main characters Simón and David arrive in the new country, they observe that the residents have assimilated into the local culture through the mastery of Spanish. The residents believe that in order to fit in, individuals have to forget their former languages as well as their memories. However, Simón and David struggle to adapt to this belief because they have the impression that they lose themselves through the learning of Spanish. Throughout the novels, Simón stands in a grey area; he tries to assimilate by communicating in Spanish with his colleagues and friend but feels simultaneously disregarded by them. In David's case, he seeks new forms of language enabling him to communicate without a restricted selection of words. Thus, in this essay, I argue that J. M. Coetzee examines the tension between general and personal use of language to show the different experiences of refugees. Indeed, language is used as means of transition between the residents' past life and the new one in Novilla. The language of the residents relies on straightforward vocabulary and avoids complex structures, which reflects their simplistic way of living. In the utopian city of Novilla, the assimilated characters carry out acts of goodwill through community labour. In contrast, Simón's use of polysemic use of language reveals a gap between the arrivals and the residents. The gap intensifies when Simón introduces the language of numerical rules. David's difficulties to learning abstract concept reflect the inconsistency of language that fails to adapt to children's perspectives. To cope with the circumstances, David develops his own language through sounds, facial expressions, and gestures. Unlike Spanish, David's new and different approach of language allows him to reconnect with his past and to keep his identity. Finally, the child's use of language encourages readers to find new interpretations as well.

In the Childhood of Jesus, the characters use language as means of transition from their past life to their present one, which leads to assimilation. The novel opens with the arrival of two refugees, Simón and David, at the Centro de Reubicación in Novilla. Once arrived there, where they can find help searching for a room and future employment, the characters are welcomed by Ana who shares an interest in Simón's Spanish. Simón briefly explains that he has had lesson in Belstar and Ana says, "I came through Belstar myself…I almost perished of boredom. The only thing that kept me going was

the Spanish lessons" (2). Ana shares a similar experience with the man by revealing that she had also taken lessons, because she comes from another country. She makes use of a hyperbole, "I almost perished of boredom," to emphasize the importance of Spanish in the new life of the arrivedore which brings him enough satisfaction. Eugenio and Álvaro are considered to have "a good heart and goodwill," because they follow the rules and do not dare to question them (222). By following the rules, which seem so natural to the assimilated characters, individuals access a "new life," which enables them to live in the perfect present created by Novilla. The plain language of the assimilated characters supports the utopian Novilla where the social structure, laws and politics follow ideals against which the characters do not need to rebel.

Nevertheless, Simón's polysemic use of language questions the reality of the utopian Novilla. Polysemy refers to words with multiple meanings which in this case expose Simón notices a strangeness in the city. The residents of Novilla seem pleased with their living conditions, but Simón thinks that, "[t]hings do not have their due weight…Our very words lack weight, these Spanish words that do not come from our heart" (77). Here, the noun "weight" has two meanings: it relates to "importance" and "the amount of resistance offered by a body" (OED, "weight," 10a, 15a). Simón believes that words have lost their importance and that they are no longer expressed by human bodies, but by mere inanimate figures. Hannah Arendt explains that refugees "lost [their] language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings" (Arendt, 264). Arendt associates the loss of language with the loss of "naturalness," "gestures" and "feelings" which combined relate to humanity, what constitutes a human identity. In the novel, Spanish is not able to convey feelings because it "do[es] not come from [the] heart." Consequently, the Novilla residents' bodies are not materialized, but rather levitate in an inhuman and strange symbiosis. Thus, Simón's use of polysemy stresses a parallel reality, in which individuals have lost their liveliness.
Indeed, Novilla becomes a void or a gap without time, place, or history. The inhabitants are completely separated from their past as they "washed themselves clean of old ties" (24), thus losing any reference of time. They live in an unnamed Spanish-spoken country without any specific geographical information where "history is not real. Because history is just a made-up story" (137). This void gives the impression that Simón is constantly falling. After days of work, Simón feels extreme fatigue and has attacks of vertigo. When he arrives at the clinic, he says to the doctor, "[S]ometimes as I look down into the space between the quay and ship's side…I feel dizzy. I feel I am going to slip and fall and perhaps hit my head and drown" (47). The dizziness literally comes from "the space between the quay and ship," but also comes figuratively from the undefined space of the refugee in the new world. Simón is afraid of falling and eventually dying, but he

is metaphorically afraid of falling into the void or gap urging him to forget his past and live a monotonous present, thus losing his identity. The double meaning allows Simón to address his situation as a refugee living between "spaces."

Just like Simón, David is concerned with falling. He repeatedly says, "I don't want to fall into the crack" to which Simón answers, "How can a big boy like you fall down a little crack like that?" (43). The confrontation between the adult and the child shows the different meanings of "crack". Simón understands that David is afraid of falling into the fissures of the paving, which is physically impossible. However, for the five-year-old child, the "crack" is totally independent of the paving. He sees the "crack" as a fissure opened to an entire empty space where he can lose his identity. Later in the narrative, David insists that "We can fall down the gap. Down the crack" (209). To calm the child, Simón explains the difference between the "gap" and the "crack" by giving exact definitions: "Gaps are part of nature" whereas "A crack is a break in the order of nature" (209). The adult is able to distinguish words because he has a large vocabulary, but the child's language mainly relies on similarities between words. Indeed, for David, both words imply an opening on any surface, hence making him fall. The movement of falling highlights the reality of the refugee child who is unable to access the linguistic system of a new language, thus feeling that he is losing himself.

To comfort David, Simón decides to introduce the child to numerical rules so he can later go to school and feel socially included, instead of falling. However, the child struggles with learning difficulties, which reflect the inconsistency of language failing to adapt to children. During one of the learning episodes, Simón explains to David that he cannot simply name numbers because numerical rules rely on a certain order (177). Simón gives an example by showing that 889 is "bigger" than 888 (178). David seems confused and asks, "[h]ow do you know? You have never been there" (178). The child associates the adjective "bigger" with the size of something that has to be visualized in space, but the adult refers to the abstraction notion of the arithmetic progression, which is based on the consecutive sequence of numbers. The adult has acquired the abstract rules, that escape the child. Later in the novel, David insists that "the stars are numbers" (210), which seems illogical for Simón, but speaking from David's language, if numbers can be "bigger" in space, they certainly can be starts in the cosmos. David's association between starts and numbers demonstrates that the numerical rules are internalized rather than inborn. It is through the child's language, which has not yet memorized the rules, that the limitations of language appear. After Simón's stay at the hospital, he realises these limitations by "see[ing] the world through David's eyes" (295). He shares his thoughts with Eugenio and says, "[p]ut two apples before [David]. What does he see? An apple and an

apple: not two apples, not the same apple twice, just an apple and un apple (295). The child cannot add the apples, because the fruit are concrete, differently from the addition, which remains very abstract. For a moment, Simón ponders a different reality: "what if we are wrong and [David] is right?...What if this boy is the only one among us with eyes to see?" (296). While David's different perspective allows Simón to question the abstract language of numerical rules, Simón's focuses on the improvement of David' faculties only stresses the exclusion of the children, who cannot grasp the concept of abstraction. Indeed, educational system of Novilla, and later Estrella, relies on the numerical rules, which creates a "private language" only available to adults. In the *Schooldays of Jesus*, señora Roberta advices Simón to ask señor Robles for private mathematic lessons during which David will learn to count and calculate (24-25). The tutor considers teaching as a way of "instilling the elements in a young mind" (26). This method is based on the memorization of rules, which does not necessarily require the understanding of the child. During their first lesson, señor Robles "takes two pens and places them side by side on the table. From another pocket he…shakes out two white pills, and places them beside the pens" and then asks the child, "What do these…have in common, young man?" (26). Señor Robles' learning approach focuses on the common properties between objects and their classification as a potential item that can be counted. He affirms that "each number is the name of property shared by certain sets of objects in the world," (28) which reflects a process of abstraction that requires to see beyond the objects' colours and textures, and other features, to count them. For señor Robles, the private language of arithmetic "comes so naturally…that we are barely aware we have it" (30). However, for David, abstraction remains overall unreachable, which means that David can only access education through the memorization of numerical rules that must be remembered and repeated, without the understating of their logic. For instance, in the *Childhood of Jesus*, David is unable to solve a mathematical problem, because he cannot visualize what señor León asks him. In reaction to David's reply, the teacher says, "[y]ou can't see what? You don't need to see fish, you just need to see the numbers. Look at the numbers. Five and then thee more" (266). Equally to señor Robles, the teacher associates the similar properties of the fish to a specific number and expects the child to apply the same method. Finally, David timidly writes the correct answer. The teacher considers the initial behaviour of the child as unwillingness, and orders him to "[w]rite…I must tell the truth" as a way to establish his superiority of the representant of the educational system (266). Hence, señor León and señor Robles' "private language" actively participates in the exclusion of children and perpetuates the power of the adult over those who lack understanding.

In reaction to the limitations of language failing to include children, David uses ono-

matopoeias to create his own language. After Simón explains the importance of language to David, the boy still expresses his dislike of Spanish. He claims that "[he] want[s] to speak [his] own language" to which Simón answers, "[t]here is no such thing as one's own language" (221). The negation shows the adult's failure to understand the child. In fact, Simón focuses on the official language of Novilla and the responsibility of learning it, but David chooses to free himself from the rules by speaking his "own language" transcribed as "La la fa fa yam ying tu tu" (221). More than an expression or a sentence, the boy's utterance seems to be an onomatopoeia. This device refers to "the formation of a word by an imitation of the sound associated with the object or action designated" (*The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*, "onomatopoeia"). The child uses a repetitive pattern of four to five different sounds that may at first refer to words originally from his country, which may explain why Simón does not understand. Simón rejects the boy's wish by saying "That's just gibberish. It doesn't mean anything" (221). The onomatopoeia may enable the child to create new words that help him express his thoughts that could not be articulated in Spanish. It may be "gibberish" for the adult, but it certainly "means something to [David]" (221). Hence, the boy prioritizes his individual language, which is created through the combination of new sounds, and shows his nonconformity to the rules in Spanish.

In addition to sounds, David's own language includes facial expressions. When Simón "looks into the boy's eyes. For the briefest of moments he sees something there," something he cannot properly name or express through words (222). He compares what he sees to a "fish that wriggles loose as you try to grasp it" (222). This simile likens the fish's movements to the child's language that constantly avoids the adult. In fact, the device inverts the roles between the adult and child; for once, the adult tries to navigate through the child's language, similarly to the fisherman who tries to catch the fish but cannot properly anticipate its movements. The simile becomes more and more intricate when Simón suggests that it is "not like a fish – no, like like a fish. Or like like like a fish. On and on" (222). The repetition of the preposition "like" builds numerous comparisons between the child's expression and the fish, which does not actually provide any further answer to David's look. Instead, it seeks for new perspectives that depend on the interpretation of the one who is looking, which Simón fails to understand when he "stand[s] in silence staring" (222). In the *Schooldays of Jesus,* David tells Simón that he can watch him dance while they are in the car. Once more, Simón is disturbed and says, "[t]hat is not dancing. You can't dance while you are sitting in a car" (62). The child sits with his eyes closed and a smile on his face, which opposes Simón's perception of dance movements. David's facial expression flees "like a fish" the understanding of Simón who is left perplexed.

In the *Schooldays of Jesus,* David's gestures become more precise when he goes to the Academy of Dance in Estrella and learns a new form of self expression. Indeed, gestures and dancing can be equated as both terms refer to "movements of the body" (*OED*, "gesture," 4a, "dance," 1). The new academy offers a different kind of educational system primarily based on dance, which satisfies David. The boy happily affirms that "Ana Magdalena taught us the numbers…She showed us Two and Three" through dance movements (59). Dancing emerges as a new form of counting, which does not focus on the numerical rules but in the dynamic movement of the body. Gestures can not only represent the numbers, but also words. Ana Magdalena explains to the parents of the children of the academia that "[t]he child…still bears deep impresses of a former life, shadow recollections which he lacks words to express" (67). She underlines the limitations of language that does not have enough vocabulary to express a child's vision of his formal life. She asserts that "[w]ords are feeble – that is why we dance" (68). In Means without End, Giorgio Agamben suggests a similar approach when he explains that "gesture is essentially always a gesture of not being able to figure something out in language" (Agamben, 58). As explained above, language is mainly accessible to adults who have internalized the linguistic system and its abstractions. Children counter these limitations by finding their own language, which in David's case relies on gestures. Indeed, Alyosha claims that "[s]omehow or other David translated anything and everything into dance. Dance became the master key or master language" (*The Death of Jesus*, 177). The act of dancing allows David to express his infant thoughts that can hardly be voiced through existing words and allows him to face his fears. Señor Arroyo, Ana Magdalena's husband, explains to Simón that "[w]hile we stand paralyzed, gazing on the gap that yawns between us and the stars…the child simply dances across" (97). The movements of dance enable David to rise from the gap as he is finally able to express himself without being cast out. Indeed, dancing relies on the connection between the body and the rhythm of music, and the body and its environment. While dancing remains "a foreign language" to Simón and other adults (191), it comforts the child who is finally able to express his feelings and to confront his fears.

David's own language allow the child to connect with his past life, thus contradicting the belief that refugees must "wash themselves clean of old ties" (24). After David expresses his strong wish to speak his own language, Simón warns him that, "[i]f you refuse, if you go on being rude about Spanish and insist on speaking your own language, then you are going to find yourself living in a private world. You will have no friends. You will be shunned" (emphasis added; 223). Simón clarifies that the refusal of Spanish would result in David's alienation. He goes further as he compares David's resistance to the image of the stubborn "mule that keeps digging in its heels" (222). He also uses the verb "digging" which appears in numerous episodes in the novels. For instance, Simón refers to the "gravediggers" when he explains to David where the dead body of Marciano is going (188). The verb reappears in the *Schooldays of Jesus* when Simón suggests that David and Bengi should dig a hole to bury the bird killed by Bengi (9). In both novels, "digging" relates to the dead. Simón draws a parallel between David's refusal to speak Spanish and the movement of "digging", which implies that David is himself "digging" and connecting with the dead. Indeed, David is metaphorically "mak[ing] his way into" his past, as he tries to reconnect with his old memories, through his own language (*OED*, "dig," 2), which as explained by Hannah Arendt allows the individual in question to restore his identity. Onomatopoeias enable David to reconnect with his old memories, and the movements of dancing allow him to create a mental bridge between his former life and the current one, thus going beyond the gap. Therefore, David contradicts the behaviour of the assimilated characters of Novilla by establishing a link between his past life and his new one.

David's own language encourages readers to look for new interpretations. Readers rely mostly on Simón's perspective of his surroundings to understand the narrative. For instance, during one of the music lessons, Elena teaches David a song, which he later repeats to Simón. The boy sings:

Wer reitet so spät durch Dampf und Wind?
Er ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
Er halt den Knaben in dem Arm,
Er füttert ihn Zucker, er küsst ihm warm. (80)

Both characters, Simón and David, do not access the Spanish translation of the song, so they believe it is written in English. Readers are not provided with any guidance either, which creates "a gap" between readers and the narrative. At first, the lack of translation disorientates readers but then encourages them to fill the gap with their own knowledge. Indeed, translation requires interpretation. In reality, David misquotes the excerpt, which refers to Franz Schubert's song "Erlkönig" (Britannica). The 1815 song begins:

Wer reitet so spät, durch Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
Er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.

[Who's riding so late, in the night and wind?

It is the father with his child.
He grasps the boy in his arm.
He holds him securely; he keeps him warm.] (Encyclopedia Britannica, English translation)

The misquotation is not relevant in the narrative, but what David actually conveys through the act of singing. The boy wishes to sing in a foreign language, which enables him to seek for new ways of expressing himself outside what is offered in Novilla and Estrella. Through David's singing, the novel refuses to submit to one single language or to one interpretation, but instead urges readers to reach for new interpretations, that may as well be infinite. Furthermore, Schubert's song stanza relates the story of a father and his child riding through the windy night, which may allude to Simón and David's story, which begins in sea and ends up with the death of David in the hospital in Estrella (*The Death of Jesus*, 132-134). This allusion stands outside the narrative for David and Simón, who do not have access to the translation, but it appeals to readers as a beginning of analysis. Indeed, J. M. Coetzee's trilogy demands an open reading, which may lead to numerous new interpretations. In the last novel, Rita brings Simón David's favourite book after his death. As he opens Don Quixote, he founds a slip of paper from the library of the City of Novilla, in which the question "[w]hat is the message of this book?" is written (196), but there is no sign of David's writing. The end does not reach a conclusion and leaves readers wondering about the moral of the story or the message David wanted to share. Instead, the end remains open for new interpretations as readers continuously try to understand David's own language.

In conclusion, J. M. Coetzee shows different uses of language through the trilogy. Language is constitutive of the community of Novilla because it participates in the residents' sense of belonging. Nonetheless, language also communicates the personal experience of David's character. In the beginning of the trilogy, language is presented as an ideal method to allow characters transition from their past lives to their new one in the new country. Their plain language mirrors their simplistic lives and their assimilation to the country culture. However, Simón's use of polysemic language shows his perspective as he compares Novilla to a void, where their bodies lack liveliness. The void underlines the reality of the new arrivals, Simón and David, who are unable to feel secure. To counter this reality, David starts to learn a "private language," first with Simón, and then with señor León and señor Robles. This other language, that is the numerical rules, only brings more instability to the child, who is incapable of understanding abstract concepts. As an alternative, David creates his own language through onomatopoeias, facial expressions, and gestures. This new language reflects David's nonconformity to the rules of the new

country, where individuals have to forget their past in order to assimilate. Instead, he seeks new words and gestures to express his past life, which cannot be conveyed in Spanish words. Lastly, David's own language reaches for readers different interpretations and looks for their personal experience.

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Interview with Colm Tóibín

Ecem Memis

Editor's note: This interview was conducted as part of a Masters thesis entitled *Colm Tóibin, Frank McCourt, and Eavan Boland: Portrayal of Irish Emigrant Women in Three Genres.*

Q: What brings you back to Ireland?

A: It's where I am from. A funny thing happens in New York when you go to the airport and you are going on the Air Lingus, which is a national airline on the flight back to Dublin and you start to see Irish people in the airport and as you walk closer to where the planes are going, there are some American tourists but mainly Irish people and some of them have babies, they are going home for two weeks or three weeks, but there is a whole sense of Ireland gathered and when you go into that group that's where you are from. It's not only a question of accents and voices. It's faces and it's how they are behaving. There is something about it that makes you say this is it; this is how. There is that feeling of bounding with other Irish people. There are ways of behaving, body language that no other country has. The relief of feeling it, of not having to explain yourself, of not being different to everybody else, being natural or normal; that's a huge feeling. I suppose that's the feeling I put into Brooklyn. That idea of being away and home. It's a complex thing, it's never simple. 'Oh, I was away and I was home'. Those two words are ironic or complex. Nonetheless, the initial feeling of belonging is there, it exists and I know it and everyone else knows it.

Q: Tell me more about 'away and home'… When do they mean the same?

A: I think that people find a way of making themselves home in a room or two rooms, in a street, anywhere in the world. Maybe after two or three years, without thinking, without doing anything, you become used to the air, used to the day. That's why it's a shock when you go to the airport and you see all those people and you say all those two years, I have been living where nothing was fully natural and at the same time you feel it. In Brooklyn, Eilis gets on with her day. It's when something happens, it's when letters come from Ireland but the rest of the time she is actually involved in becoming at home elsewhere.

Q: How did the experience of emigration from Ireland shape your writing?

A: I think it's the essential question in Ireland that in every generation, in every family, they have 'lost' someone since 1840s. That still happens now, any time there is a downturn in the economy, people go. The English language is very important in this but also there is a particular way of being flexible. Irish people can just make themselves at home in Australia, New Zealand, England, America and Canada and now in the wider European countries. So, it's the secret history of Ireland. It's that important.

Q: In Brooklyn, before she goes to America, Eilis believes that '… while people from the town who lived in England missed Enniscorthy, no one who went to America missed home. Instead, they were happy there and proud.' (Toibin, 24). What is it that made America a promising land for the Irish?

A: It's a constitution thing. In 1960 J. Kennedy was elected in America as president and his great grandfather had come from Wexford. Everyone needed millionaires for being made an American, whereas in England you tended to get factory work and obviously you didn't have any access to power. It wasn't like you could arrive and sense that your descendants were going to be a queen. That could not happen. England is not like that. So, it's about America and its reputation as a place, where you could strike oil; you could do anything and become anything. And of course, that's not true. A lot of Irish people went to America, worked on billion bridges and when they got into their '60s they couldn't work anymore, they were finished. So, that's a myth – the idea of American wealth, an American power, which for most people wasn't true.

Q: The appearance of Ireland as a woman is a fundamental question in Irish writing. As a writer of women, what interests you in writing about women?

A: This is a question that Eavan Boland has raised in a way that I couldn't and should't. I think it has to do with poetry, first, that there are so many poems about women by men. Eavan felt silence, I suppose. She felt that when she looked in the mirror, poetry, there was no one looking back at her. So, she started her own... And it wasn't that she wanted to be a woman writing poem but her own experience as a woman, of having young daughter, of living in Dublin, of being married and being happily married. How could this make its way into a poem or what would the poem look like. She had extraordinary technical skill as a poet and sort of rhetorical skill and she had to actually start to gain as a poet, work her way into … what kind of poem, what would the form of this poem would be… She began writing in a plain style, just making the statements: 'I am'… I don't have this problem at all. It's a particular problem that woman writers have, and I don't think that happens in fiction as much, simply because Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf. Same silences don't exist. The central aspect of novel form comes from women writing about women.

Q: What is the advantage and disadvantage of writing about the female emigration

experience as a male writer? Is there a reason why you specifically choose the third-person perspective?
A: I think there are two reasons for that. One is person. One is that my mother and two sisters that I grew up with. I have the sense of their voices, what they want in their lives… I imagined one of them went in America. There were no men like that around. The second one is, if a man goes to America, he will start immediately having friends and they go to pubs, which a woman can't do in those years. So, how 'room' becomes more important than the pub and the pub becomes a place of easy conversation where people disguise their feelings deeply. They also own the streets. There is so much ownership going on that you don't get that sense of isolation, that sense of incompletion. So, I could work with that.

Q: In your debut novel, The South (1990), the female protagonist Katherine Proctor dares to leave Ireland – her son and her husband and in the first chapter manifests her demands:

> **'I have tried to write to Tom. I have tried to say that I want to get away for a while and maybe I will see him soon. That is not what I want to say. I want to say that I am starting my life now. This is not my second chance; this is my first chance. I want to say that I did not choose what I did before, I am not responsible for what I did before. I want to tell him that I have left him. My son is withdrawn from me, my son will look after himself. There is nothing more I can do for him. No matter how guilty I feel I must look after myself.'**

How is her atypical manifestation different than Eilis in Brooklyn?
A: She is very entitled. She is missing all of those things about Eilis in Brooklyn that I was talking about earlier and just now… about Eilis 'not being entitled'; of actually spending her time moving in the shadows; of not making demands on people. The woman in The South is an entirely different person. She comes from much richer background. She feels almost entitled to be on the street in Barcelona at night in a way that Eilis never does in New York. And we are almost talking about the same years but about entirely different worlds… And it has to do with class, it has to do with political culture.

Q: Does this have something to do with why the South starts with the first-person perspective and changes into the third-person perspective?
A: I think I was reading a lot of Joan Didion and I was interested in Sylvia Plath. I was interested in that the first person is the chatter voice. I was interested in what I could do with this… The tone is strung out. She is under pressure. In a way I wanted to get her … I wanted to get the novel started in her voice as a powerful thing. She is not timid and I wanted to work with that.

Geneva, City of Refuge

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Geneva City of Refuge: Selected Presentations

Editor's Note: The next contributions were part of the SAUTE conference 'Geneva, City of Refuge', which provided an overview of Geneva's history examined through the lens of writing and refuge. Contributors from the English department and the city shared their knowledge and experiences of Genevan authors and creative practitioners to a lively audience - followed by an equally lively apéro, naturally.

The event was organised under the aegis of the 75th anniversary of SAUTE (the Swiss Association of University Teachers of English). SAUTE exists to promote and develop English studies in Switzerland. It proudly sponsors both individuals and events in English studies, and strives to promote relations between the departments at all Swiss universities.

More information about SAUTE can be found at https://www.saute.ch/en/saute/

Geneva, 1600-1800

Emily Smith

Despite the seemingly hostile walls, Geneva proved a remarkably open city – no need for even Catholics or missionaries to disguise themselves …but with a three-day limit on stays. Indeed, even ex-Catholic clergy started to come to the city!

But there was not universal welcome. City gates could close randomly and rapidly, too, leaving people stuck. So, Geneva had a paradoxical relationship with freedom: the most open and most closed of places.

The poet John Milton, who wrote the exceptionally long Biblical fan-fiction – I mean, epic – Paradise Lost, was a close friend of the medical doctor Charles Diodati. You might recognise that name, given that Diodati's father was in all likelihood born in Geneva; his uncle, Giovanni Diodati, still lived there, and gives his name to the villa which stands in Cologny to this day.

Milton spent two weeks on his estate…

…and he would not be the last English literary figure to make Geneva a destination for education and pleasure. Part of this tourism was due to the beginning of an idea called The Grand Tour, in which young men would go to see the sights of Europe in order to become more "cultured". But some of them decided to have more than just a flying visit to Geneva. In fact, an entire anglophone club called The Common Room formed in the eighteenth century, and became some of the first alpinists, as well as engaging in 'amicable or literary discourses' and theatre.

They also went to the "academies", where one Charles Lennox reported learning "Riding, Fencing, Drawing, & Mathematicks'. Some young men had rigorous schedules, evenup to a rather taxing 43 hours a week…so it's not a surprise that Geneva also became a known hotspot for romantic flings amongst this Anglophone crowd, with more than a few tragic love stories among them.

So, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Geneva transformed from a place where refuge could be sought from hostile forces to a place of escape in a far more leisurely sense: a place of education, socialisation, and tourism.

Refuge, Writing and Romanticism

Simon Swift

Much of the writing that we call "Romantic" – including Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, was written in the shadow of the French Revolution of 1789 – represented here by the prise de la Bastille. We also often think of the French Revolution as the first major mass refugee event in modernity - around 100,000 French refugees, or émigrés as they were known, came to England to escape the new Revolutionary power. And, as in our own contemporary moment, and as in the Reformation, this mass movement of refugees inspired literary writing.

The poetess Charlotte Smith published a poem about these emigrants in 1793, set in Brighton on the south coast of England, where she lived, and in which she depicts émigrés such as those you can see on the slide here looking back over towards France. What is interesting about this poem is that Smith shows sympathy for those escaping the French revolution even though she had herself been a supporter of it. I think there's a parallel here to the contemporary situation of women like Shamima Begum who were trafficked by Daesh to Syria and Iraq, and who now languish in refugee camps, the British government refusing to allow them to return. Can we feel sympathy for enemy non-combatants? This is the kind of question that writing about refugees makes us ask, now as 200 years ago.

What about Switzerland and the French Revolution? The links are actually quite extensive. The Genevan banker Jacques Necker, father of Madame de Stael, was Louis XVI's first minister of finances in 1789, a very unpopular figure for pro-revolutionary forces because he resisted their radical economic policy.

Swiss mercenaries were traditionally the personal bodyguard of the king, and so when the Revolution turned violent in 1792, Swiss people were some of the first to be massacred. The massacre of 760 Swiss guards at the Tuileries in Paris, and the dragging of their bodies through the streets, constituted the first major atrocity of the Revolution. It caused widespread condemnation in Switzerland, and is commemorated by the lion monument in Lucerne.

But the Swiss weren't only associated with monarchical power – they were also involved

in the Revolution itself – here you can see a famous image by Jacques-Louis David of Jean-Paul Marat, one of the most radical leaders of the Revolution, murdered in his bath by a woman named of Charlotte Carday. He was actually from Neuchâtel – more evidence if it was needed to beware of the Neuchâtelois.

But I want to turn now to Switzerland, and especially Geneva, as a place of imaginative refuge for Romantic writers. When France invaded the Swiss cantons in 1798, led by a charismatic young general called Napoleon Buonaparte (about whom Aicha will tell us much more in a few minutes), many supporters of the Revolution in France, or at least of ideas of liberty, turned definitively against France. For Romantics like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Switzerland was the home of mountain liberty, and so for the French to invade showed that they were no longer on the side of freedom (Coleridge published his own poem recanting his attachment to the revolution in the same year, blaming the French invasion).

Yet when Napoleon was defeated at the field of Waterloo in 1815, many other English writers felt that the last hopes for freedom had been extinguished with him. Nevertheless, the end of war meant it was possible to travel freely in Europe again, to reboot the grand tour, and so a rag-tag group of poets and philosophers found themselves at the Villa Diodati, at Cologny, in 1816, telling each other ghost stories. Diodati was not an accidental choice – although the house was built after Milton's death, it was associated in the mind of Lord Byron, who rented it, with Milton, who was a friend of Charles Diodati, ancestor of the owners in 1816. So Byron, Shelley and the young Mary Wollstonecraft-Shelley saw themselves in some way as, like Milton, refugees from the British political system, seeking asylum in Geneva from Britain's oppressive morality – there were rumours that Byron had been having an affair with his half-sister, and Mary had eloped with Percy Shelley, who was already married to someone else.

With one eye on Hallowe'en: the story of the composition of *Frankenstein* is a story often told, but I just want to close by making a few links to the theme of refuge. "Asylum" "refuge" and "shelter" are words often used in the novel, and there are ways of reading the creature as a kind of fantastic figuration of the refugee – perceived as terrifying, monstrous, but actually simply in need of recognition, protection. He is also, of course, something that we have made, with whom a bond of responsibility exists, too often broken. Think of how many scenes in the novel take place in Plainpalais, outside the city walls in the 18C when the novel is set, and at the gates of the city. Frankenstein is a novel about hospitality, and its failure, how to integrate the foreign or other into a polis. The narrative of the creature that makes up the core of this novel gives a powerful sense of

the bodily experience of being unhoused, what it feels like to be unprotected, and also shows his capacity to feel for others in the same situation.

After his rejection by his creator, the creature seeks refuge in a hovel beside a cottage in the woods in Germany, occupied by a French family, the De Lacey's, who are themselves taking refuge from oppressive, and racist state law in France- a kind of imaginative rendering of the French émigrés with whom this talk began. He takes refuge, you might say, in their refuge, and what's really noticeable about this is that his refuge is also a form of reading of writing. We know that the creature learns to read from three books he finds, one of which is Milton's Paradise Lost. But in a way his hovel, abutting the cottage of the De Lacey's, means he also "reads" them. Like us, when we read, his is silent, invisible to the world that he looks in onto and overhears. I'd like to finish by proposing, then, this scene, of the hovel abutting the cottage, as a scene of refuge within refuge – and also as a kind of scene of reading.

Le reggae, Genève et la poésie dub

Mathias Liengme et Nora Zufferey

Nous situons notre contribution à la thématique de 'Genève, ville refuge' en se concentrant notamment sur l'espace que Genève offre au reggae et à la dub poetry par son ouverture aux contre-courants et aux contre-cultures. Il ne s'agit donc pas de parler de refuge véritable, mais plutôt de refuge idéologique, rendu possible par l'histoire de Genève – entre autres dès la Réformation, à travers la lutte anti-esclavage, ou encore en tant que siège des Nations-Unies et du UNHCR (l'Agence des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés).

La dub poetry est un genre qui a émergé dans les années 1970 et consiste techniquement à réciter un poème sur de la musique reggae. Pour le poète et professeur Kei Miller, la poésie dub a fait un tabac dès ses débuts, c'était du 'sound and fury' (smallaxe.net, n. pag), incarnés et transmis par les poètes dub tant en Grande-Bretagne qu'en Jamaïque. Elle est issue d'un besoin de revendiquer des conditions sociales, et lie le son à l'action ('more than a sound, it is an action' (smallaxe.net, n.pag)), souvent de manière engagée. En effet, l'exploration et la diffusion de points de vue et d'idées lié·e·s aux faits sociopolitiques britanniques et jamaïcains via la radio et les vinyles ont accompagné de près les luttes sociales en Jamaïque et des communautés jamaïcaines immigrées au Royaume-Uni. Par sa forme, la poésie dub permettait de faire circuler des idées, elle servait à informer et à construire une communauté où le son et les mots avaient le pouvoir de faire exploser Babylone à coups de tonnerres métaphoriques (les ressorts de l'effet de réverbe analogique), ou à coups de 'word bullets' ('Oku Onuora', 1).

Si la poésie dub faisait dans les années 70 du sound and fury, elle ne ferait plus, toujours selon Kei Miller, qu'un son plus discret ; 'a smaller sound, a lesser fury' (smallaxe.net, n. pag). Genève, dans ce contexte où la poésie dub retentirait moindrement, joue un rôle presque inattendu. Dans le cas du poète Oku Onuora et du groupe de reggae The 18th Parallel, Genève a été en 2018-2019 le lieu qui a permis une réminiscence de souvenirs et donc un travail sur la mémoire. Ensemble, le groupe et le poète dub ont créé le disque I've Seen, sur la base d'un désir de retrouver un genre poétique et musical dont le son correspondait à sa fureur. Nous allons présenter ce disque et précisément un·e poème/chanson qui y figure. Avant cela, un aperçu de la présence du reggae/dub en Suisse et à Genève aidera à comprendre en quoi le récent album I've Seen répond aux déclarations de Kei Miller au sujet du son plus discret de la dub poetry.

La musique jamaïcaine en Suisse

C'est d'abord Zurich, à la fin des années 1960, puis Berne, au milieu des années 70 – alors que Marley fait ses tout premiers pas en Europe –, qui adoptent le reggae. Cette musique populaire jamaïcaine séduit les musiciens et producteurs suisses par deux de ses caractéristiques : (1) tout d'abord une forme rythmique, simple au premier abord, mais surtout qui s'avère parfaitement adaptée aux mélanges musicaux – étant elle-même le fruit d'une créolisation –, et irrésistiblement dansante. Une forme rythmique basée sur l'enchâssement, à la façon d'une poupée russe, de ce que nous appelons des 'contre-temps', l'accentuation de temps faibles. (2) Cette musique séduit ensuite par son fond : un message rebelle, contestataire, anti-conventionnel incarné par les chanteurs rastas dont Marley devient la figure de proue. Ces deux aspects en font un véhicule idéal que les musiciens suisses, à l'affût des dernières tendances musicales londoniennes, sont les premiers en Europe continentale à adopter. En naîtra une longue tradition de musique populaire jamaïcaine en Suisse, et à Genève en particulier dès la fin des années 1980.

Le reggae à Genève

Par rapport à la Suisse orientale, Genève se met tardivement à la musique jamaïcaine. Preuve en est, Burning Spear joue devant une salle vide au Palladium en 1987 (Ismail 131). Quelques groupes new wave s'y essaient au début des années 1980, mais ce n'est qu'au tournant des années 1990 que le reggae et ses sous-genres conquièrent véritablement Genève. Le squat du Goulet est un important vivier de la culture sound system genevoise. C'est là que le label Addis Record voit le jour. Des musiciens âgés d'à peine vingt ans se rendent en Jamaïque pour produire des morceaux avec des icônes locales oubliées, et ainsi presser sur disque 45 tours des compositions pour le moins à contre-courant de la réalité musicale jamaïcaine de l'époque, puisqu'elles s'inscrivent dans un style qui n'est plus du tout en vogue, la musique instrumentale. Les genevois réhabilitent et préservent ainsi le savoir-faire de musiciens délaissés par l'industrie musicale moderne. Les disques produits par Addis Record ont un impact considérable en Angleterre grâce à Jah Shaka, maître incontesté du sound system anglais, qui les promeut ardemment (Liengme 156). Le travail d'Addis Record ouvre la voix de la production à une ribambelle de musiciens et producteurs genevois et européens.

En parallèle, la société de production Rootsman développe la scène live, en organisant dès 1990 des concerts de vedettes jamaïcaines. Pendant une quinzaine d'années, le Palladium, puis l'Usine – et même le Montreux Jazz Festival – voient défiler à un rythme très soutenu des plateaux tous plus extraordinaires les uns que les autres. Genève, grâce à leur travail, devient l'épicentre européen des concerts de reggae.

Cet engouement impressionnant pour la culture musicale jamaïcaine a, depuis une dizaine d'années, perdu un peu de sa vigueur. Mais grâce à d'irréductibles passionnés, Genève reste un centre important tant par la densité de sound systems – probablement la plus forte d'Europe – que par la vivacité et la qualité des publications qui y sont produites, saluées internationalement. Genève est à la pointe de plusieurs facettes de cette culture musicale jamaïcaine : la diffusion (sound system), la production (labels discographiques) et la mémoire, puisque les deux premières facettes, par leur travail, valorisent, voire réhabilitent, un savoir qui n'est plus considéré en Jamaïque : d'une part le savoir-faire des anciens, de moins en moins nombreux, et d'autre part, l'esthétique sonore d'une époque, depuis longtemps révolue en Jamaïque, mais qui fait toujours vibrer ailleurs dans le monde.

C'est dans cette optique de travail sur la 'mémoire' de la musique jamaïcaine que le label genevois Fruits Records a collaboré avec le dub poet Oku Onuora sur le disque I've Seen, publié en 2019. L'idée étant de créer une œuvre qui mêle modernité et tradition à la fois dans l'esthétique sonore et dans la direction artistique de la collaboration en mettant en relation un collectif de jeunes musiciens suisses, The 18th Parallel, et une figure fondatrice du genre, jamaïcaine, mais tombée dans l'oubli dans son propre pays, Oku Onuora. I've Seen est le fruit d'une rencontre culturelle, géographique, et aussi intergénérationnelle.

Analyse du poème 'Mada' de Oku Onuora

Le poème 'Mada' figure dans le dernier recueil de poésie de Oku Onuora I A Tell (2018) et sur l'album I've Seen (2019), accompagné par le groupe genevois The 18th Parallel. C'est un poème où le je-lyrique cherche un refuge, qu'il crée et tente de définir à travers le poème. Pour ce faire, il ouvre la porte à une voix – celle de mada – qui semble détenir un savoir que le je-lyrique recherche. Mada, soit 'mother' en jamaïcain, est un personnage à plusieurs facettes dans ce poème. Son sens premier évoque le rôle de la mère biologique, qui dans le contexte social et familial jamaïcain est particulièrement important : c'est elle qui, dignement, a élevé ses enfants face à l'adversité. Mais 'mada' souligne aussi la mère nation qui est la Jamaïque, à savoir un refuge idéologique pour la culture rastafari ; avec les symboliques d'abris, de sécurité et de nourriture spirituelle qui y sont liées malgré les tensions. Ainsi, le 'wi' (16) pourrait jouer plusieurs rôles également, faisant à la fois référence au nous communal/communautaire, aux enfants d'une même mère biologique, ou encore aux enfants de la Jamaïque.

Ce 'nous' semi-actif remet en question la fertilité du sol jamaïcain, en constatant que l'herbe n'y grandit plus, ou plutôt qu'il n'est plus capable de l'y faire grandir 'yuh trad

/ weh grass / wi grow / no more' (14-17). Cette semi-activité, dont la qualité semble remise en question, est soulignée dans la continuité du poème par une alternance d'images positives ('tall tree' ou 'nuff bawn' 20, 25) qui se voient à plusieurs reprises ternies par les négations des lignes suivantes ('tall tree / fall' ou 'nuff bawn / nuff gawn' 20-21, 25-26). Le je-lyrique interroge directement mada – alors donc à la fois géographique, biologique, spirituelle et métaphorique – sur les directions dans lesquelles il faudra regarder pour avancer. Il s'agit bien d'une avancée temporelle, évoquée par le mouvement chronologique du poème : du passé 'yeh deh trad' (5), on arrive au présent ('ow it hard', 'ow yuh stan' (32, 41). Ainsi, la question finale 'weh yuh site' (where are you looking) semble logiquement tournée vers l'avenir (46). Cependant, si le mouvement temporel du poème semble suggérer un regard vers l'avenir, cette dernière question, laissant place au silence (et à la réponse), pourrait également être tournée vers le passé, dont la nostalgie et l'expérience seraient la boussole.

La fin du poème écrit est différente de sa version enregistrée. Si la fin du poème sur la page est 'weh yuh site' (46), le morceau se termine sur les mots 'mada, tell'. Ce verbe impératif 'tell' n'a ici aucun objet, comme s'il soulignait la mouvance pure du dire sans forcément présenter de contenu ou de destinataire – bien que ce dernier puisse être sous-entendu par l'écoute. Il y a donc deux fins différentes, mais ces fins ne dissonent pas. C'est comme si la fin du morceau 'mada, tell' venait souligner ou prolonger la question qu'il y a à la fin du poème 'weh yuh site' (46). Ainsi, ce mouvement entre page et oralité souligne la volonté d'une écoute et l'importance de la question à la fin du poème écrit comme une question qui ouvre un espace pour que la mémoire se crée, se construise ou se reconstruise à travers le poème oral ou la musique. Par ce poème, un lieu de mémoire s'ouvre, qui se matérialise dans l'oralité, le son, ou dans la relecture du poème. Par leurs fins, les poèmes écrits et récités invitent 'mada' à raconter sa propre version de l'histoire et offrir les conseils qui rétabliront la prospérité et la fertilité du sol jamaïcain. Ce dernier étant à l'origine de la dub poetry, la manifestation du je-lyrique et de sa volonté d'écoute ouvre également la place à une réponse de la part de celui ou celle qui puisse entendre la question/la chanson. Qu'il s'agisse d'une remémoration du passé ou d'une ouverture vers l'avenir, le poème/morceau semble encourager une forme de reconnexion, elle-même incarnée par la dimension physique sonore qui transcende les distances géographiques.

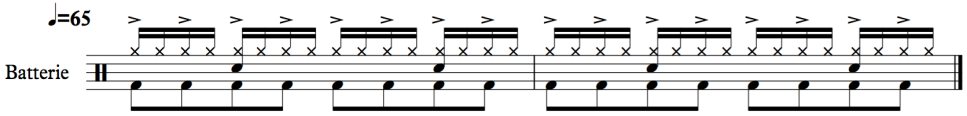
En figurant comme morceau enregistré à Genève, 'mada' fait écho à l'attrait de cette ville comme espace géographique ayant permis une remémoration de souvenirs et amené une contribution au dub, au reggae et à la dub poetry. Les espaces géographiques et métaphoriques interrogés par ce poème font écho à l'espace unique que Genève présente par son histoire, en offrant des possibilités de refuge idéologique, et de refuge par la mémoire ; sa

mémoire devenant ainsi, elle-même, refuge.

Nous allons maintenant en entendre plus sur la dimension sonore de ce poème, et voir en quoi la forme sonore crée un espace acoustique qui assied et souligne le fond thématique du poème.

Analyse musicale de 'Mada'
La musique qui accompagne le poème 'Mada' est construite de façon à mettre en valeur certains aspects du texte par la rencontre entre le sens des mots et les sons, autrement dit entre le fond et la forme.

Il y a tout d'abord un jeu de placement rythmique. Le rythme global du morceau est un stepper. Il s'agit un hommage au reggae de la fin des années 1970. Rythme très droit et régulier, il est caractérisé ici par une batterie à la fois chargée – la grosse caisse joue toutes les croches et le charleston toutes les doubles-croches – et épurée – la caisse claire n'accentue que les deuxième et quatrième temps de la mesure, sans aucune variation.



Cette stabilité rythmique de l'instrumental offre de l'espace au poète pour jouer avec son placement. Il anticipe parfois certains mots, pour ensuite mieux retenir les suivants et terminer sa diction derrière le temps. Il prononce, par exemple, 'many / rivers / yuh crass' en accélérant, anticipant ainsi les temps, puis 'many / people / places / yuh pass' en retenant les syllabes. Cela donne de l'élan, puis pose le discours. Procédé d'emphase, ce jeu rythmique permet d'accorder le fond et la forme.

La deuxième façon d'accorder le fond et la forme passe par l'usage d'effets spatio-temporels. Le dernier mot de la première strophe, 'gawn', est accentué par l'ajout d'un echo. D'une part, cet ajout fait techniquement ressortir le son, car il ajoute du volume, et d'autre part, la répétition du son s'en va au loin, pour finalement disparaître quelques secondes plus tard. Le mot, d'un point de vue sonore, 's'en va', la forme suit le fond, le son suit le sens.

Par la suite, la seconde lecture du poème par Oku Onuora est plus libre, car

l'instrumental est davantage épuré. La musique s'inscrit véritablement dans le genre dub par la déconstruction. La section rythmique est réduite à son minimum, le duo basse-batterie, et des effets spatio-temporels d'écho et de réverbération sur les caisses claires et les contre-temps jouent au question-réponse avec la prosodie du poème, soulignant ainsi l'importance de certains vers. Par exemple, les vers 'yuh trad / weh grass / wi grow / nuh more' ressortent par le fait qu'ils sont les seuls récités sur un rythme de triolet. Le triolet est suggéré dans les mesures précédentes par les répétitions des effets d'écho. Oku Onuora joue avec ce rythme ternaire, alors que l'instrumental reste binaire. Il y a dès lors une tension forte entre le rythme de la voix et celui des instruments qui pousse l'auditeur à porter une attention particulière à ce passage.

Conclusion
En écho aux propos de Kei Miller que nous évoquions au début, la dub poetry fait bel et bien toujours du bruit, encore faut-il être à même de bien vouloir l'écouter. Genève, ici, aura bien servi comme espace de création, tel un refuge idéologique à même de faire vivre et retentir le reggae et la poésie dub.

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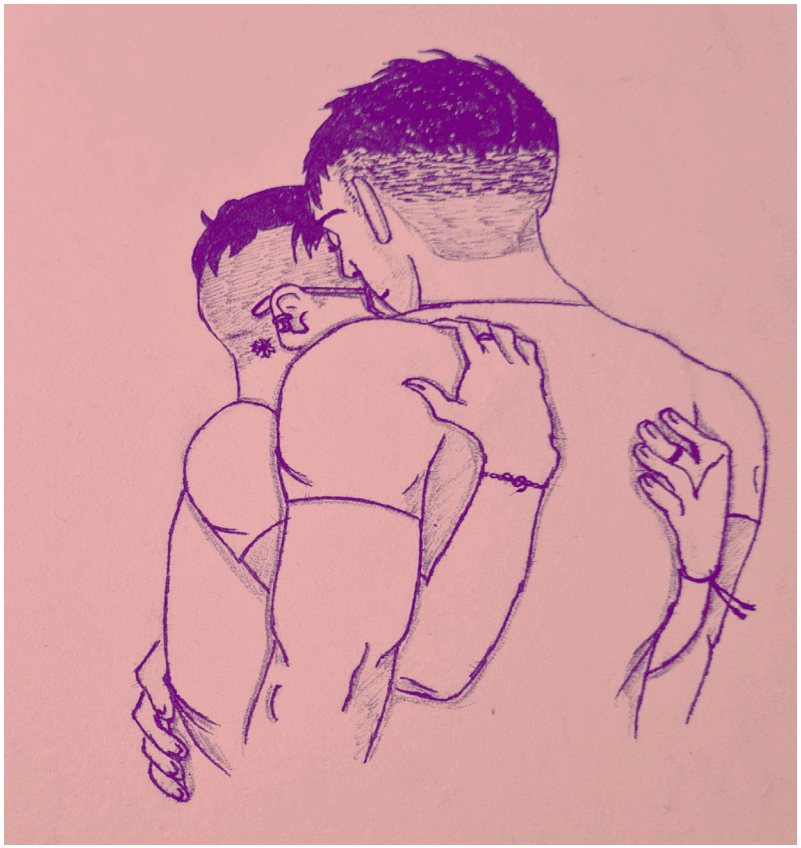
Art

Home

River Orsini



{untitled}

Ana Paula Bravo Verduzco

april 4th, 2022

{untitled}

i've always been
in love with the idea of love
being someone's home
someone's self place

it felt safe
like a warm blanket or a cup of hot chocolate
on a cold winter's day

my grandparents love seemed out of harm's way
their love for me
and their love for each other
at least for me
from a young age
i used to see it as something sturdy
something that could weather
the harshest of storms

but as i've gotten older
the idea of love seems
more and more daunting

trusting someone completely
falling to their mercy
giving up all control

maybe falling in love is not for everyone
because i'd rather live with an endless supply of hope
than with a heart
shattered to pieces

over and over again

Varia

Encyclopedia Non-Informattica "Rogeting"

Rogeting (v.): When thesaurus-loving students have a feast, prompting some ridiculous sentences. In other words, "rogeting" is used to avoid the detection of plagiarism by plagiarism checking software. To achieve this, students will carefully replace each word in a sentence taken from another writer, by its synonym. Avoiding plagiarism sounds good enough, right? That is, until we get to this sentence:

"The purpose of the day care checklist was to ensure no children were left behind."

In a brilliantly bizarre use of synonyms, the student had replaced "left behind" by the sordid – and indeed nonsensical in this context – "sinister buttocks." Students, let this be a lesson, if you absolutely must "roget," do not forget the importance of proofreading! If you want to test out your "rogeting" skills, you could try your hand at the game below (with the help of thesaurus.com). For each "rogeted" sentence, try and find the original statement. I'll give you the first one for free:

0. Sinister buttocks: *left behind*

The rest of the answers will be listed down below. Enjoy!

1. The capital of Helvetia is a conurbation of harbourage (hint: the theme of this edition):

2. Byron was a bona fide impish youth:

3. I moil in the aim of being as frosty as Mary Shelley:

4. The small village is cowardly:

5. Mrs. Dalloway is one of the most vexatious and cantankerous symbols in English literature:

6. Catherine and Heathcliff's conjunction is not maudlin:

Answers:

1. City of refuge
2. Byron was a very naughty boy
3. I strive to be as cool as Mary Shelley
4. Hamlet is a wimp
5. Mrs. Dalloway is one of the most annoying and whiny characters in English literature
6. Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is not romantic

A Gentle Grilling...

WITH DR. MARTIN LEER

*Dr. Martin Leer teaches contemporary English literature at the University of Geneva, a wide range that covers literature from the 1920s until today. His enthusiasm for Literary Geography and Cartography has taken him all over the world, and has led to the publishing of articles and books that center on the topic of post-colonial literature in the english-speaking world, through the contention that geography and cartography have shaped literature as much as history. Dr. Leer also enjoys translating poetry, and translated the work of his friend, poet Les Murray, to Danish to critical acclaim (*En helt almindelig regnbue *1998).*

When did you choose your academic speciality – and why?

I always answer this question by showing a 10-vol. leather bound set of books on my shelves entitled *Verdensgeografi* (Geography of the World in Danish) and inscribed Martin Leer 1929 on the flyleaf. I have no identity and had to borrow my grandfather's from the time I was christened. Literary geography has grown on me since childhood (spent on ships, a small island and a fishing port with a famous artists' colony, where all the Danish Leers come from). I crossed the Atlantic the first time at 4 and still remember the blue whales and the giant turtles and the flying fish. I mourn them daily as I mourn the vanishing songbirds. I originally wanted to be a scientist, but shifted when I discovered literature in 6th grade through a fantastic teacher and my mother, then moved from an interest in classical philology to medieval studies to postcolonial literature. Another way to say that I never really chose, and don't really have an academic speciality?

If you could make the world read any book, which one would it be?

At the moment David Graeber and David Weingow's *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, which by disproving everything we have always been told gives hope in a dark time. For the rest of my life possibly Ivan Illich's *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary on Hugh's Didascalicon*, from which I am still learning how to read.

What piece of advice, wisdom, or encouragement would you give to your first-year past self?

Come out, be yourself, be less fearful of what other people think! It may not be as bad as you imagine. Do what you want to do! But he can't hear it, in his cocoon of hurt. He did, however, avail himself fully of what university had to offer in opening of the mind and the world, which is what I would advise all students to do.

What's your favourite French word or expression?

Je l'ignore, - said really aggressively, when you obviously do know.

Which talent would you most like to have?

Playing the piano – or being able to lie convincingly.

Which fear have you successfully faced?

As Mark Twain is supposed to have said, "The worst things in my life never happened". When you are hit by the really big stuff (my mother's Alzheimers, my father's dementia, the love of my life dying in my arms a little over a year ago) you face it. It is real and you deal with it. Anything to do with money leaves me quivering, on the other hand, because it is not real, but holds so much power. It was the first thing my parents couldn't deal with, where they had to be protected from others and themselves.

What is the last song you listened to?

Hildegard von Bingen's Hortus Deliciarum, as it happens. But my favourite songs are Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and Schubert's "An die Musik".

Musical theatre: art form or earache?

I have loved opera since the first time I heard Carmen. But maybe that is not the question. I spent the happiest years of my life with a former "hoofer", professional dancer and singer , so I developed a deep appreciation of anything from Cole Porter, which he used to sing to me, through *Cats* (his debut) and Stephen Sondheim (oh those rhymes) to *The Book of Mormon*, which he used to sing when he was cleaning (it is very bad!)

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Contributions, comments, and suggestions are very welcome, and can be sent to noted-lettres@unige.ch

Thank you for reading *Noted!*