

**generation of feeling**

these growing pains though  
this good will hunting  
we  
fallen twigs  
look like bones  
waiting to be lit

i am trying to tell you something about how  
rearranging words  
rearranges the universe

**poem to be read from  
right  
to left**

language first my learned i  
second  
see see  
for mistaken am i native  
go i everywhere  
\*moon and sun to  
ل letter the like  
lamb like sound  
fox like think but

recurring this of me reminds  
chased being dream  
circle a in  
duck duck like  
goose  
no were there but  
children other  
of tired got i  
number the counting  
words english of  
to takes it  
in 1 capture  
another

## the middle east is missing

wha do osama bin laden and i have in common? saddam? qaddafi? mubarak? sharon?  
peres? is kashmir? is asia? is persia? is europe? is iran? is jordan? is kurd? a  
language? a religion? cuisine? borders on bordering? wha do you and i have in common?  
red sea dead sea an empire syria iraq say kurd say we were occupied  
a people under siege of make xenophobia believe drink and say, "zamzam."

say we did it to ourselves.

say: complicit. i want to walk/ return maps speak to managers of mapmakers  
i'd like to see god's atlas compare it to ours trace a new equator a river Nile still running  
azure  
azure  
upwards its own gravity joins scapegoat to scapegoat  
in song: *row row row your boat gently down a stream merrily merrily merrily life is but a dream*

x3

say je suis zidane, je suis égyptienne.

say it to a rhythm not a plot

a quality not a toxin

say dizzy without jury without trial ask of us just us sing back lyric  
dust off vulgar gaslight

say it in the colonizer's tongue. call it the cradle of civilization say dunyah say la illahah

ila allah say jannah inscribe your history inside every barren closet you once  
occupied say quickly *here we are now entertain us/ cartographers agitate us*  
exact us excise us

would you make a space for me? between zoot jute epoxy and a hard place somewhere  
between vengeance and yolk next to the place you go to quake

ive brought my own pillow plus sleeping bag but now the letters have become cryptic i  
cant tell if it is because of shyness or lack of interest when you look like me you  
can say things no one will question or everyone will question you in june as a zygote in  
uterus in excess

maybe it is a cry for help. maybe it is just a cry. say palestinian

say palestine

say syria

say syrian

say baby

say future

say mine

say yemen

say yemeni  
say zay (like)  
say hena (here)  
say mine say ghost in context weep quietly then wail  
so make a space for me in your mind.  
make me a space  
graph, transcribe. jaunt, wax, wane.  
here is neruda. here is his book of questions.  
here is mine. a quiz of sorts. this is the map i navigate by.

who you pulling from bricks? a baby? an arm? books? a ball? who's is it? you ask  
coaxing at gallons of quicksand absorbing and vying for joy, for protozoa

pray static pray jaw pray zoroastrian  
pray xanax pray quickly borrow what you will from  
god, from vagrancy, from vacancy

before i left i wrote: where you from? where you from? where you from? inside every  
empty closet of the homes i once occupied. dont forget  
where youre from, dont squint. zoom in. stow the box, lock the key. jump on.

we made a new map from breath from zone to zone we  
moved, traveled, walked, journeyed. there are many  
who experience what we havent quote benefited from being unquote.

maybe a cry for help, maybe jus a cry. maybe a memory quivering of a juvenile  
kingdom's lie, maybe was a zealous royal  
who unleashed sand and sphinx making borders die: in yellow,  
blue, green, and red, orange and cream lines.

### **poem that wrote me into beast in order to be read**

samira and aziza nabila awatef and 3adaal isis and ma'at yes ma'at of the 42 laws and ideals we used to live by you of white feather and commandment who made us taught us of stars and named them named us made nout and systems of irrigation nile delta source inventors of mead and kohl for drawing of lapis and woven cloth and harp sinai berber pen and paper we were winged creatures werent we tell me because i still dream of flight sometimes i trumpet waiting to be sound i who have made earrings of arrow reporting now to you of the mythical creatures i dismantled in order to become the one writing words you are reading tarsal by metatarsal i disjointed false to be true sometimes i am cell with eyes made up of five strand DNA quintuple helix amoeba bond i would claim you as my ancestors thrice but once is honor i am trying to be worthy live to have learned so much that god made arab to know what it is to be both black and jew to be arab is to be a beast in order to be read like scripture etched calligraphy wooden metal i ask you to marvel at poetry they tried to make us forget in guantánamo and all unnamed time will ask us of this time come back again and again while we were out the world has become image we made in our own image and this is what we hunt now ive caught my reflection between incisors i beast of no nation who want only to be read excuse me now it is time to be fed

## **in the first world**

people arrive at cubicles in a rage.  
at day's end, they  
punch bags  
hanging from the ceiling,  
fight their reflections in the mirror,  
sprint on padded treadmills,  
while a cop sleeps outside in a car—  
its engine running.

**poem for the beings who arrived**

*zuihitsu for group c*

if you ask me where i come from i have to converse with broken wings. this is a line. and all love is agreement, each day of living: an agree or a disagree. and love is not what we think it is. what we have been told it is: agree or disagree. i am telling you how to read me. neruda wrote: if you ask me where i come from, i have to converse with broken things. with the beings who arrived. who had the glasses of the heart. we are the beings who arrived because we had the glasses of the heart. we are the broken beings who arrived with glass for hearts. poetry is instrument; allows us to see through thought. thank you for saying my work does not sound like it is in translation, thank you for not saying my work sounds like it is in translation we are all the proof i need as singularity approaches us they ask with intrigue: how did you construct your blackness in america? each question requires a reconstruction. and i am always re never constructed in egypt, they ask: do they hate us? i pretend not to know who they mean by they what they mean by hate but i know because i live with they and aint they. aint they? we have to stop pretending we are not [capable of] winning and i know you know we know when i dip you dip we dip this one goes out to all the women in the world you see me everywhere i go they want to know which one i am and more of? still, you see me. the mask i wear is not leo rising but the colonizer's falling and still, you see me. and when i say you see me, what i mean is: you feel me. we, we: the beings who arrive.

## **poem for brad who wants me to write about the pyramids<sup>1</sup>**

he says the substance is lacking a center [sic]; a traditional plot / says [i] miss where [im]  
from and [i] set flashbacks while [i] walk around san francisco / he wants to know what  
makes [my] story so much more interesting and provocative than others? / says egypt is a  
wonderfully exciting place ([he is] told by others) / [he does] not like my scenes of  
policemen and sunflower seeds / says [he has] heard the  
pyramids are very interesting wants to see more  
of egypt in my writing ///// this is where the poets will  
interject / they will say: show, dont tell / but that  
assumes most people can see and i bet most of you  
thought brad was white but brad is not but brad is hot so  
the class lets him get away with being dull but i  
understand that what brad means is he wants to see  
camels and more of his own ideas of egypt in my work and  
this is how this poem becomes its own genius  
annotation: see what brad missed is that i didnt give up my spot in med school for this /  
and if brad had read / he wouldnt have missed the generous foreshadowing / would have  
seen i was saying my country has become a POLICE state / and when i say my country /  
i mean both / of them / the poets will say this poem is trash / but i dont care my mother  
says if you want to know what the future of the world looks like then look to egypt and  
let every poem i write be a response to the cumulus cloud of aggression that follows me  
and let every word work to reverse the effect of the slow meting out of system[at]ic  
violence let every letter represent a human standing in protest

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<sup>1</sup> "Some days past I have found a curious confirmation of the fact that what is truly native can and often does dispense with local color; I found this confirmation in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon observes that in the Arabian book par excellence, in the Koran, there are no camels; I believe if there were any doubt as to the authenticity of the Koran, this absence of camels would be sufficient to prove it is an Arabian work. It was written by Mohammed, and Mohammed, as an Arab, had no reason to know that camels were especially Arabian; for him they were a part of reality, he had no reason to emphasize them; on the other hand, the first thing a falsifier, a tourist, an Arab nationalist would do is have a surfeit of camels, caravans of camels, on every page; but Mohammed, as an Arab, was unconcerned: he knew he could be an Arab without camels. I think we Argentines can emulate Mohammed, can believe in the possibility of being Argentine without abounding in local color." Borges, *The Argentine Writer and Tradition*

## **photographs not taken**

airbags opening during a crash;  
a life saved;  
DJ armed with two milk canisters,  
when the three of us were still friends;  
my mother's birthmark next to mine,  
on the same spot above our right knees,  
hers brown on white,  
mine white on brown,  
proof: i am the negative of her image;  
flames moving upwards from charcoal,  
singeing my eyebrows and eyelashes;  
flames that lit nashwa's sweater,  
we were playing with sparklers in bideen;  
flames in a trash bin, a homeless man,  
winter in mansurah;  
train light reflecting on rails when it is still arriving;  
train light reflecting on walls when it is still arriving;  
my mother when she was younger than me;  
my father when he was younger than me;  
my youngest brother's hand reaching out of the bathroom door,  
open and waiting for a towel;  
the Green Day CD my father threw out the window  
lying on the side of US-131;  
my grandmother tucked in for her afternoon nap;  
the light in her window;  
the light the day i left;  
mezo's big toe,  
before i left;  
all the dawns i slept through,  
before i left;  
my own face,  
looking back at his  
before i left;  
your face,  
the one  
reading this.

**ghost purchase**  
**by #05661**

i could buy these reading cups: now worth between  
3,000 and 5,000 francs. i'd go to galleries in algeria  
or tunisia, i'd have them removed from the cabinets  
in the museums, from beneath the dust, i'd make the  
transaction, they could belong to me then and there.  
i even thought of buying them with the money i  
would make from this poem. i even thought of  
including them in this poem, but as i progress, they  
become more distant, and who needs reading cups  
when there is a poem to be read i mean written. the  
cups once bought would lose value like most of life  
a diminishing return or rather, latent; ghost.

**about #05661**

refugee 05661 arrived at the island of algiers when she was 12-years-old and lived during a time of great poverty in the southern united states where she contracted a rare autoimmune disease during which she turned to poetry for comfort. she became an established poet late in her life, publishing two volumes of poetry after 55 years of working as a healer and medium, helping connect those who had been estranged from their family members in the great refugee crisis of 2016-2200. her work centered on ancestral memories, the energy that lives within objects and the psychic space between colony and place of origin. it is also worth noting that she never used her government name and instead chose to use the last five numbers of her refugee id card. she also refused to use the colonizers' hierarchy of capital and lowercase letters, insisting that all letters be equal once stating, "in my mothertongue the letters are connected, the way the letters stand in this language is a way of disconnection, i am not interested in."

**translator's note**

#05661's work was necessary to the refugees who found themselves on the island of Algiers in the southern united states. she never believed it was a coincidence that she landed on an island by the same name as that of her ancestors. in her final remarks to her class at twolane university she said, "their vision followed me as i have followed their guidance in waking, in knowing and unknowing, in dreams, and in responsibility." by way of honoring her aesthetic, the translator has chosen to write about #05661's work using the same devices of language she applied.

## **poem for palm pressed upon pane**

i am in the backseat. my father driving. from mansurah to cairo. delta to desert,  
heliopolis. a path he has traveled years before i was born. the road has changed but the  
fields are same same. biblical green.

hazy green, when i say: this is the most beautiful tree i have ever  
seen. and he says, all the trees in masr are the most beautiful. this is how i learn to see.

we planted pines. four in a row. for privacy. for property value. that was  
ohio. before new mexico. before, i would make masr

my own. but after my mother tells me to stop asking her what is wrong  
whenever i see her staring

out of the living room window. this is how trauma learns to behave. how i learn to push  
against the pane. i always give hater the inside seat.

so he can sleep. on the bus. his warm cheek against the cold  
window. when i am old enough to be aware of leaving. it is raining hard.

5000 miles away, there is a palm. in a pot. its leaves  
pressed. skinny neck bent. a plant seeking light in an animal kingdom.