

Meet me here, now –
I'll bring my then and there...

Cynthia Lee
José Reynoso

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writings from a text-movement improvisation project



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Los Angeles - 2007

Forward

These writings emerge from a rehearsal process in which José Reynoso and I worked with improvisational structures derived from Logomotion, a form of text-movement improvisation developed by my teacher, Simone Forti. Improvised speech and motion offered a unique way to explore a question that I was grappling with as a choreographer: how do you forge a genuine connection between two people of very different personal and cultural backgrounds, without erasing their difference?

These texts, like our improvisations, were created through a collaborative process. Some texts were originally warm-up free-writes that have been revised to incorporate the other person's editorial advice. Some are transcriptions of the other person speaking while in motion, transcriptions that are inevitably tinged by the hand of the scribe. Other texts share authorship equally, as in "home," where my words are italicized and José's are in standard typeface. The resulting text can be read separately, as two independent streams of thought, or continuously, as a single discourse. Brought to life through the design and photography of Cristina Rosa, this book serves both as an archive of our rehearsal process and an art object that stands by itself.

Cynthia Lee
Los Angeles, March 2007





PORT OF ENTRY

mouth as the port of entry.

I remember Krishna stealing
the butter and his mother Yashoda **angrily**
lovingly telling him to open his mouth
all crammed full of b u t t e r
and he opened it

- INSIDE WAS THE WHOLE UNIVERSE.

I *used* to **hold** food in my mouth too,
excuse myself from the table and **go** to the
bathroom to **spit it out**, half chewed.

A silly rebellion, and one *born*
of privilege.

The porcelain toilet bowl and little
me, r e g u r g i t a t i n g my rice like
a baby bird in *reverse*.

It all goes in *through* the **mouth**,
you know, it's **language** and **food** that
move the **tongue** and not
the *OTHER WAY AROUND*.

I *remember* your sweat reeked of
soy sauce and cheap vinegar, **you are**
what you eat,
but – shine, *shine* in a world of **little**.
Scrap iron wok coated with cooking oil.
Dried yam gruel. Single **flower** in a
cracked blue & white vase.

Those mornings were pickled
cucumber, round tables spinning **lazy**
susans I *chopped* a little bit of pepper

I m i s s y o u .

I sop my **rice** with fried wheat *gluten*

I m i s s y o u .

(by cynthia)



in between

No euphemism can mask social inadequacy. The flesh can inscribe the feelings and the sweat that profusely flow while moving in between two, three, or four...yes "worlds"! From my hands, my forehead, in between my legs.



It sounded like a post-modern cliché - "moving between worlds" - or as if I wanted to victimize myself using a Romantic, Bohemian idea: "el incomprendido, the misunderstood artist." But it is indeed debilitating to be dealing with . . . what is it? What is it? Yeah! Social inadequacy...hereandthere.





Moving in between fields of experience moving in between people and their fantasies, their truth – or many truths? Moving in between manners and expectations moving in between the proper – that is the different propers as defined by he, she, we, they, them, you.



I feel like vomiting, I feel the vertigo of bouncing back and forth sometimes linearly, sometimes in circles, in spirals, collapsing standing back up, but never stopping cause if I stop the motion from here to there from between you and me, they, them, and in between my space and the world –

(by José)



weaving maid

herd boy

in between worlds, stars glancing off the page
the tightrope between lovers stretches across the milky way.

weaving maid and herd boy, absence, their relationship
defined by the space separating them. the space in between:
a gap, a bridge of space and time. love built over the bridge
of magpies ink staining the page the skin I write on.

the moment between inhalation and exhalation. little
deaths. sneeze, orgasm. what happens when the flow
of mind stops suddenly on a dime stops suddenly between
attachment to what was, and what needs to be?

breath interrupts flows across the space between your skinbag
and mine. gooseflesh. your breathing filters cold across my lungs,
translation breaks the backs of the magpies bearing us breaking us
across the space between languages.

warp and weft. in between as a state of being, of wondering and wandering.
wondering what belonging could mean, why I so often turn my back
on identity labels the asian clique the chinese clique this this the that. art resting
born out of the uncomfortable ordinary lived space of dislocation, of in between.
hard to market. this bag of bones and skin and doubt.

weaving girl tries to balance, teetering on tightrope – suddenly her voice cracks,
half-swallowed in black black space peppered by stars.

(by cynthia)

Patrick Henry Bruce
American, lived in France 1881-1936
Composition 1916; Oil on Canvas

visit
to the
hammer
museum:

may 17,
2006

I feel these dislocating parts,
these compartmentalized single
thoughts finding their place
amongst a chaotic stream
of consciousness, a flow
that threatens to overflow
its boundaries over the
threshold between sanity
and insanity.

Colors
and shapes
collapsing in a
flow with inner random-
ness and chaos; the mirror
of dislocations my body
can feel . . . if I just
have the guts to let
go.

Multitude of colors and shapes crumbling as
something whose parts collapse in an
estrepitoso flow of movement downwards . . .

parts collapsing hitting each other,
momentarily bouncing back
up a few inches at a time
but downwards

. . . Individual parts
stumbling, spinning,
and rotating in
space while
finding their way
down in the
chaotic
stream of
movement.

This is
everywhere; it's
Modernism
after all

Would this have
healing properties
or would it merely be
the propeller to-
ward the other
side of the
threshold
. . .

There
light only
becomes
alive in the
reflection of
shapes and colors
traveling in an
uncontrollable stream
of consciousness but
never in a "functional"
thought that assists
in survival . . .

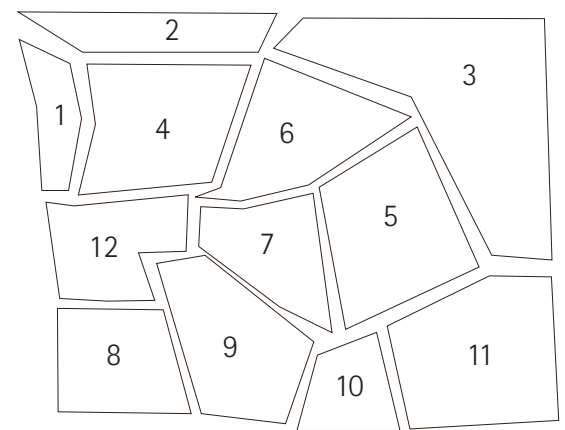
... with no return:
are there thoughts,
bodies, and realities
that are just a
multitude of colors
and shapes that lose,
mutate, reconstruct
their identities?

I
wonder
if I can contain
these parts in my
hand but most likely, this
torrent of falling,
stumbling, dislocating parts
will flow through my
fingers as liquid that can't be
stopped. Even if I try to catch
it with my other hand
below, the process
just repeats
itself.

much
less in
leisure,
enjoyment or
art making?

Black is the
background,
but it can hardly be
seen. The flow is so dense,
so heavy, full of sharp objects
whose edges and corners can be
felt on my back and neck as I
curl down receiving this flow
as if under a shower. My hands
reach for the water valve to
shut the flow off. But can't.

(by José)



modernism running away into ...

it's running away, black performance art and social history. 2, 3, 4, 5 books. one... reader. I can see the green light turning [**head turns back**] into blue. decision predecision one touch allocating my time. my shoulder knee, little black dog running away [**right leg bends**] crunchy tostada falling on floor grabbing the little bits reaching out reaching in [**body collapses to floor**] I say hi I say bye [**hand fingers reach**] did you take pills? I'm getting tired now...

(cynthia transcribing José talking while in motion)



modernism

running away, black performance art and social history. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 books.

crunchy tostada falling on floor.

... it's running away, black performance art and social history. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 books.

grabbling the little bits

my shoulder knee

little black dog

coating my time.

reaching out reaching in [body collapses to floor]

head turns back] into blue.

did you take pills?

I'm getting tired now...

(cynthia transcribing José talking while in motion)



little french girl: the first step.

'What makes her French exactly? A tortoise shell for a skirt, a long neck becomes spine elegant upright torso, knobby three part knees. But there's something uncertain too, like the way deformed babies or down syndrome people are sweet, strangely, in their not-quitiness. I'm romanticizing disability but I love the single foot chopped off to reveal the ragged wood grain, how the feet stand at uncertain angles - not parallel, not not. Her tortoise shell colonizer's helmet tutu seems to shine, light shines smoothly off, a second head. Her spine vulnerable, its ridges could be ribs, could be the inner protrusions of her vertebra. And I think of our inside bodies, the side of the spine you never get to touch, cushioned by organ tissue body juice, all exposed to the air. All exposed to the outside air footsteps echoing across the museum's plastic ridged floor. If the proscenium is over, are museums the graveyards of art? Or not. The little girl, who could have been someone else, still stands there. I can feel the chisel working sharp, metal curve shavings peeling away into a rough manbeard, thick sausage legs.

a response to constantin brancusi's sculpture,

"little french girl" (the first step iii)

(by cynthia)

language and relax

Sometimes I
what warlike
I attend to when
the paper:
immigration
sometimes with
from the Calendar
feeling and looking
intoxicating
imagery of La
Lalo Alcaraz.



hesitate to decide
language should
skimming through
Iraq, Iran, or the
debate. I start
one or two articles
section; for sure
at the incisive,
language and
Cucaracha by

Every night I see myself in the mirror; I see my body, its features, the color of its skin; I feel its history. . . I relax. That helps me decide to start reading about the immigration debate. Its dehumanizing warlike language and imagery: the other; the alien; the lesser-than; the job taker, illegal, doer of jobs nobody else wants; the beaner, little bug.

When I switch to the readings on those other wars – Iraq and Iran – “terrorists” and “enemy” permeate its language. When I reflect on it, I just relax, then ready myself to join my neighbors, my comadres y compadres, my brother, my sister and their children in acts of self-defense. We’ll clean and dirty, walk and march, overpopulate and reshape the streets of L.A . . . well . . . and the rest of the United States.

(by José)

what you caught of my dream

Forty lights candles
burning the image of a
Buddha with a blue
face, a bit of color – an
image on Venice Beach.
I like the Thai family that
sold the pictures of the
Buddha – if I were
religious I'd be Buddhist.
The image remembers,
makes me see: holding
chopsticks between my
fingers, picking bone
from ash. They say my
grandmother's bones were
like coral, in a hand fragile
– crush it into dust. My

grandfather's bones were
a healthy pink, putting
them in a green jade urn.
Chemotherapy weakens
the bones. When I was
little, shiny shiny, hu!
– and she used to smile,
the treatment, later, later
after all this, black woman
wheeled her through empty
airport, she was so small like
a little bird. Skin hanging.
From her bones crystallized
like sponge, inside she,
amber. Echoes through
the Houston airport. They
say I have her eyebrows.

josé transcribing cynthia talking while in motion



home

home homely homesick homey home-spun home is where

It's not always the things I consciously think of
but the ones I haven't taken time to reflect on

*the heart is the wooden butcher table
polished by years of
hands touching wood
touching*

how they make me feel about
that place which is at times becoming

*cracked split seams rice bowls
thrown against the floor*

more elusive – home.

*home is the kitchen the blackened
pot the tea kettle with bluegreen*

It was at one time

*flowers the trail of ants
taking refuge from the heat
home is*

the titles of the books my dad read

the heat and twist and retch of incense

the records he listened to,

*beads clicking, the single burner suspended
outside the screen door*

the photo of el che guevara
placed by the staircase

home is foreign living in a foreign tongue

in the house where I grew up –

his emotionless stare to the horizon, his
thin beard, his hair sticking out of his boina

home

a tiny star on his frente –

home

is family, home is body

his image which meant, at my house,
equality and justice for all – his image

sweet sour salty

standing where I could see it a thousand times a day – that

preserved plum in the mouth melting

too many flavors all at once

unconscious Political lesson has spun around and around

puckering with joy and sorrow

until it has even changed

homeland homelanguage homeschooled a home you carry on your back

that notion of the place in which I learned

*sweet smell sweet snail
home is a bowl of rice soft
mother hands lazy*

to learn – the home in which

movement is from one language to another

home is lack too a throat ripped with pain

that lesson continues to thrive for expression –

to shape a new space...a new

home, I carry

you on my back I miss you always

(by José and Cynthia)



thanks to Simone Forti...

... and Cristina Rosa

