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Yevgeniya Traps on Susan Sontag; Christian Moraru on Dumitru Tsepeneag

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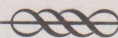


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Pushing a poetics of metatextuality well beyond contemporary norms, Teresa K. Miller's debut, *Forever No Lo*, shreds narratives of "vehicular homicide, relationship dissolution by imperceptible degrees, genocide, [and] terror by war," writes Christian Peet, and tamps the fragments into sinewy but uniform brick stanzas. The resulting compositions are dense with potential and press against their packaging, their narratives threatening to spring back to their separated states.

Miller keeps a tight lid on this structure—keeps the particulars at bay and lets the gestures of these many people's stories heal into a new, hybrid flesh. **She makes inspired selections from the narrative moments—odd unto themselves they enjamb so** clearly it's rather easy to overlook the sutures:

Não é nada// Dear X, I might be in love
with you/ no matter the extra ten years
trailing behind/ your first kiss before I
had the chance to emerge from the spinal/
wide eyed/ and grab my father's beard//
Every hand in the classroom raised, and
I hold one finger to the television// Iraq
Body Count to differentiate the victims
from one and one/ from third deadliest
month in war// Her cane clicks against
the standing pole/ one eye a red gouge,
one never emerged/ one eyelash stuck to
smooth skin stretched over a sphere/ no
opening//.

With Portuguese and French thrown in, these poems can read like channel-surfing. And is this something to resist, aesthetically? The rule of informational transparency in poetry—the rule against interiority, or coding—is falling to the wayside even as more information comes online. With the mashing together—the linking and linking—of our many stories likely to continue as population swells past capacity, the art of the times must gesture to this crowding.

Miller's elderly woman on a bus, salutation to a love one, and Iraq War carnage described above all fit together so eerily well—so well that Miller's implicit suggestion is that these consciousnesses and events not only can belong together, they can be and really are fused. More so than through simple webs of causality, Miller's chosen events are so compacted they become *interior* to each other, already dependent in this new arrangement. And the information presented, finding itself in the odd circumstance of

————— *Eason continued on page 19*

poetry and here deranged, remains vital. Miller's poems fill every inch of their new skin:

In the ossuary the dusty nobles dream of
water in the Moorish cistern// On BBC
the men arrive at the *gacaca* singing
in the back of a barred pickup// Easiest
because I could replace her with a new
addiction/ Dear X// I had to turn away/ her
cane clicking against the polished shoes
of rush-hour commuters/ the blended
words, the crowd pushing to separate//
Because God knows which legs sup-
ported which torso carried which skull//
We always come to Lagos now/ It's the
quality of life//.

Yet, perhaps in the end it's not that easy to gloss the suture-virgules stitching Miller's collection together. They do enact the stress of tearing, and they incise tough narratives. As gestures, they evoke multi-tradition, broad-identified poets like Ntozake Shange and Sonia Sanchez (I'm thinking of Sanchez's "Listening to Big Black at S.F. State" and Shange's *For Colored Girls* [1975]). And, they mimic the raise of a scar, especially when one contrasts their fierce angles with the no-hips no-shoulders of Miller's chosen form. Still, the poems have a peace about them that comes not from one cooler narrative winning out, or from some moralistic ending, or gimmick landing at dismount. These poems' peace is anchored in the simple surety of their stocky form, and how the presented information reassembles so

completely, scars included. Soon into *Forever No Lo* it is apparent that fragmentation is not the operating interest. The lava is cooled, and the slashes represent the swoop of new stone, not the cleft and hack of carnage. This is an additive, not reductive collection. But whatever the poetics, Miller's *Forever No Lo* is a sleeper success—wide reaching and bold.

New poems by Haines Eason will soon appear in Pleiades, Indiana Review (with D.A. Powell), American Letters & Commentary, Smartish Pace, Cutbank, and other places. He has book reviews in Smartish Pace and Rain Taxi. He is a finalist for this year's Third Coast Poetry Award, and attends Washington University in St. Louis.