

# This Fold Dreams and Undreams Until a Last Dream Which is an I

.....  
**Erín Moure's** latest books are translations of François Turcot's *My Dinosaur* (BookThug, 2016) from French, and Chus Pato's *Flesh of Leviathan* (Omnidawn, 2016) from Galician. *Planetary Noise: Selected Poetry of Erín Moure*, edited by Shannon Maguire, was published in 2017.

*The author who disdains words must still arrive at sentences.*

Blanchot

things, emotions, vegetation, passions, gaze, humidity

what writing does: performs on paper and in mouths of voiced words and on digital bands or (tattooed) on the skin of animals (human). Muteness, humidity, gaze, pleasure. What translation does: transmutes the same vegetation and passions to a place where a different humidity does imbue. Lucidity, vegetation, herbs, wind. We drive out to the desert or more officially the shrub-steppe at Osoyoos and climb the hill on Syilx'tsn lands in the rented car, stopping partway to the top to clamber out of seats and unfold ourselves in the high wind to gaze at sunset in the west: Vancouver, we say, over those mountains

there is no water here, no rains, no this is not Galicia, has no green textility of foliage and damp, yet in English I recite in this shrub-steppe or desert: the poetry of Chus Pato

TRANSLATION ("the poetry of Chus Pato") is a way of bringing—into the secession or cut—another voice, her human voice, markings in words from a culture across a far border, to mark these words (her words) into new ears and onto new bodies, just under new skin (leopards, fish). A word, skin (marten), a word, a mouth or tongue, a membrane (upright): Vancouver, we say, over those mountains.

we climb out on the desert shelf or overhang of rock until we can see the lakes spread clear below, the narrowing of their waters into two lakes, their surface a kind of glass. There's not another place this dry in all of our history on this side of these mountains, in this elongated primordial trench or valley between furrows, in the Uk<sup>w</sup>naqín or, as we say, Okanagan.

WHO we are:  
you and me:  
sheltered beings:  
skin pockets:

WE duck back into the rented sedan which is made for our folding and unfolding and descend again the hill through the town and then up into other hills to the winery restaurant perched over the valley, where we eat a repast of two courses with a glass of wine, the kindness of the waitress, looking out to the valley illuminated by the full moon through the glass, looking east, our first anniversary: Montréal, we say, over those mountains, home

there is the matter of choice or intention in any setting, which prevails here too; some details are called forth, but most are elided, although there is no plan to elide. But the nature of affect is aleatory, and why would I pick this scene over any other? It doesn't seem to echo Chus Pato at all. The word that writes, the word from another language, from Galician or Dane-*zaa*, for insects, for butterfly: in Galician the word is *bolboreta*, seemingly like Algerian Arabic *bofertoto*, or Old English *butorfleoge* but no, not like Dane-*zaa*, *wǫlǫle*.

Skin membrane:  
Translating this:

Grey darkness. "We only see what we look at," wrote John Berger. "To look is an act of choice." Choice, what is choice, and how is it driven by emotions, vegetation, passions, gaze, humidity? Neural mappings too are an incidence of inflected cultural particularity; thus we choose, and how can translation work here? I look down at the page and see curved darker markings against a white ground. I drink lemon and rinse with salt, eat carrot and potato boiled together yesterday with a little cumin and garlic: a shabbat meal. Today. An deep incision, the hip opened

Skin tents and the clandestine circulation of the blood in arteries, ropey walls that the earliest cells of the body have differentiated from the cells of blood or mucin, the spindle fibres of muscle. There is something in us that cannot be untangled with ease. We take for granted so

often (too often) the respiratory membranes and the transfer of oxygen into molecules necessary to the blood and, in fact, *in* the blood, when once the molecules were outside the body, in the air. It is difficult to duplicate or ignore this process, as it is difficult (breathing) to ignore the relation with the friend, the one outside the skin tent (breathing) but similar, she who disagrees and looks differently, and contributes this different seeing to the texture of space-time, to an afternoon, for example.

We have an argument, briefly, over words and sentences.

Who we are:

You and then me:

Me along with you:

What do I/we mean by me/you here?

POETRY, it is said by this me which is not *me*, is a conversation, or a texture like a shawl and each one of us weaves our own particular corner, or the bit where we gently hold its edge, aware that others are pulling gently as well on the surface of the textile, contributing their own gesture to the whole. And none of us produce this whole, not on our own, not with our friends alone. None of us are this whole nor can any of us speak for this whole that is poetry, we can only bring our hands' work into the conversation, and raise not just our voice but our ears to it, to listen,

as listening affects the bones inside the ear and the balance of fluids inside certain membranes

listening alters the cells.

TRANSLATION is about this too, this listening. it is a hearing and transferral into the pen of rhythms and an exactitude of meaning whereby "distinct" in French cannot be translated into English as "various" since its meaning is closer to "different" for "distinct" emphasizes differences in a group, emphasizes what pulls the group apart, while the English word "various" leans on what it is that pulls different parts together, they are various but they are together, or they are different and it is hard to keep the group in one piece

as we walk out on the rock ledge of the desert, the flat tablet of sedimentary lakeshore outcropped over softer sand and water-riddled limestone eroded beneath, I think of this conversation and movement, the difference of translation, the fibres of any given word that upon micrological analysis extend and contract best in one or another way

How do we know, translators, that we are really reading, how do we introduce the innocence of reading into our work again? Is the transfer of language subject to an ecology? To endogamous markings? To allow translation to go somewhere fecund, the oceans, the way we once believed we would be fed from these oceans, and now they are empty, sonic, nearly empty, nearly sonic, we know we won't eat from those waters forever, humans won't, people won't, women won't

AND so what if poems are cryptic, this protest just annoys me, poems activate more areas of the human cortex than do non-ambiguous speech, they bring excedent light and hormonal energy into the dark matter of the frontal cortex; when we read literature we equip our brains to deal with "ambiguous speech." We realize the ambiguity of all speech, all mouths opening, and where in the mouth the accent is. Location, fear, passions, humidity

I address you:

You see me:

We turn to speak

LIGHT. Morning illuminates the towers and buildings where I write these words. Noise of roofing on the church (which is still leaking). Small torques of light. Medium fibres of light. Lengthy spindle-cell bundles of light.

You are sleeping in another city.

I see you:

We don't speak

"what we see is affected by what we already know or believe"

"WILL I never again muster the joy and impudence to take in my stride the distortions and falsifications that inevitably arise during the conversion of experience into written sentences..." wrote Christa Wolf (a question that arose while she brushed her teeth). These words written not by Christa Wolf but by her translator Jan van Heurck. "Using my false name as a shield," she/he writes, "I will advance again into the fray."

As for ambiguous speech and the cells, that the speech or sonorous note of poetry lights up more of our neurons, over a wider area of the frontal cortex, this has been shown by experiments with electrodes, with transfers via electrodes of information between brains in remote locations, between remote areas and rat brains, and rats are like us, surely, though did we need these experiments? For their result is the same as when someone says (I forget who) that difficult writing ("the poetry of Chus Pato") makes us more glad. It is literature itself posing the question of literature, of who reads, of for whom marks are made, for no one, they are invisible and made for no one. They transfer between bodies and the tissue of neurons, the bundles and flat maps of fibres, via which we dream, our writing dreams,

writing itself dreams.

(...)

.....

Excerpt from Erin Moure, *Insecession*, published by BookThug (2014) in one volume with Moure's translation of *Secession* by Chus Pato. Republished by permission of BookThug.ca and the author.