

TRANSCRIPT AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF JWTC NOTES

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My notebook became a holding-space for a lot of thought and emotion. Often this was written around, rather than across, the page. I don't do well with lines, but it also helped to capture the explosive thought processes, and then also connected things that found themselves on the same page, accidentally but interestingly. Often, though, I noted things I found beautiful or painful. Occasionally flow-lines that sometimes became hearts helped fill the spaces before I found the words I wanted to keep.

Image 1 – From Ghassan Hage's talk on the A-racial in Ginsberg

Ghassan:

Roots that act as wings

Image 2: First stanza of 'No, wait...' Written during the discussion after the Wopko Jensma presentation in Swaziland

I am sorry for my bones

For their whiteness

I'm sorry that they have been fortified at

The expense of yours

No

Wait

I am sorry for my blood

That not enough of it was

Shed that

The blood on me

Was always yours

Not mine

Image 3: Note from the discussion on resistance and underground in Swaziland. The anger there was palpable.

No TRC for the frontline states

Image 4: Dolores [surname?] speaking scathingly about the supposed peace that some people spoke of in Swaziland, which allowed inter-racial relationships.

It is this superficial peace, the right to sleep with a white man

Image 5: When people started speaking personal stories of struggle history in Swaziland

We have kept these stories for so long, when we tell them we don't know where to start.

Image 6: Quotes from the Wopko Jensma poems read by Quaz Roodt

We have to face the rage

This little piece of rust in my heart

Nie alle diere is olifante nie

Image 7: From the graveyard where Steve Biko is buried, in Ginsberg.

BIKO

ALL OF THE UNMARKED GRAVES

Image 8: Notes on House on Fire venue in Swaziland

House on fire

Has lollipops in the sky

And fire trees

And is a carved

Space of a curved

Space

And an ATM in the wall

But the mountains hold

They do not judge

They do not speak

Image 9: Note from Ghassan's talk on the a-racial, Ginsberg, with fragments of our poetry set underneath it

That moment of escape is crucial to hold onto (but not at [the] least expense of power-relations)

[i.e. if the moment of escape comes at the expense of an awareness of the power-relations it is self-defeating and dangerous]

Image 10: I don't know where this is from at all!

You can also write and speak by offering gifts

Image 11: Title-list of the opening act for the poetry session in Ginsberg. Ayana, Danai, Sarah

Speed of slow

Growing up

Blue

Violence

Country of singing

On the rock

In the fire

Maps

LIQUID BONES

PART I

The devil has gone neoliberal
He has won over the warlords
And he is coming after each of us

His path is laid slowly,
He is in no hurry.
He plants flowers of promise on our paths,
He finds our favourite colours,
Sells us a dream that we can change the world

If we work hard enough

Or that we can at least be happy.
He is most dangerous then,
But we do not know it

He draws us each onto our own path:
We can no longer hold hands, but
We do not notice.
There is a promise of family at the end,
That one person to love who will stop the pain.

PART II

As we walk the flowers start to wilt, then die.
We push forward
The promise is still there
If we endure
The path grows dark.
The ground turns slick.
The only plants now are grasping, enclosing trees

There is no green here.
It is here we grow desperate,
Call out for some one
Anyone
Our legs begin to grow weak and there,
Still, is that promise
If we work hard enough,
If we endure,
We will make it.

PART III

If we are lucky some of our cries weave together
If we are lucky some of our cries still have enough force
Enough magic
To save us
They weave themselves over our heads
Tying our paths back together

We grasp each other
Tight! Tight! Don't let go!
This is a battle
We cannot stop screaming.

Our cries form wings, feathers,
a huge bird over our heads
She beats her wings in the devil's face and

He must retreat
He must retreat

Because our voices made wings strong enough to save us.

If we are lucky.
If we are lucky

We are dressing each other's wounds, planting flowers in them,
Weeping and playing.

PART IV

If we are not lucky
If our hands do not find each other
the path just grows darker
the dark grows thicker
the mud creeps up our legs

We cannot move

Our voices are swallowed by the devil's laughter and there is no
us

There is only me, me alone,
me in pain and me unable,
with liquid bones and no hope
It is all my fault.

The trees suggest it first,
They whisper:

"You have no place here.
No one will touch you in this dark."
I cannot call anyone to me.
This is mine. Alone. And I cannot manage.

The sky will try and sing me hope, if she sees me...

But the trees have enclosed me,
the devil's laughter has swallowed me,
I can see no way
No way up, or forward, or back.

PART V

I choose what is no longer a choice because I there already.
The devil who has laid my path so carefully
opens his palm for his last flourish,
crushes me in it.

Alone.

PART VI

The devil has gone neoliberal.
He has won over the warlords
Filled the sky with drones
He has licked the bank notes and infiltrated the unions.

But he will not win the sky!

Those of us who were lucky,
Those with liquid bones that sing with the voices of birds
We will send our birds to wrest the ones he grabs from his fists

He will only have a moment of triumph

And then, on the wings of our birds,
We will never be alone.

PRIVILEGE

I wish you had been harder on us
That you had expected as much from us as you did
From others

I don't know how
There had been so much blood,
Most of it was not ours

I wish you had been as hard on us
As you were on your people
Asking them to forgive

I wish you had asked us more
That we,
We had done more

That we had shown we were worthy of being forgiven
That it was not so easy for us now
To say thank you
To call you Tata

To say thank you for allowing us to keep our privilege.

This country of blood
where if I spit
your blood comes out
my mouth

This blood that not even the mountains can hold,

This country made of singing.

WOPKO POEMS

SA Smythe

University of California, Santa Cruz

I

You disappeared in
the fire

then 40 years later you
opened your mouth

fire spewed out

you burned our eyebrows
off

burned off our clothes

burnt off the skin we tent ourselves in

until we were just
bones

a collection of skeletons – teeth chattering
and open
to the breeze of bullets your words blew through us

unprotected from the tears
that turn us to salt

II

This country of blood where if I spit
Your blood comes out of
My mouth

This blood that not even the mountains can hold,

This country made of singing.

III

I was at your rebirth
In Swaziland
Where your death started

You were greeted with a breathless awe
That you did not get
The first time round