

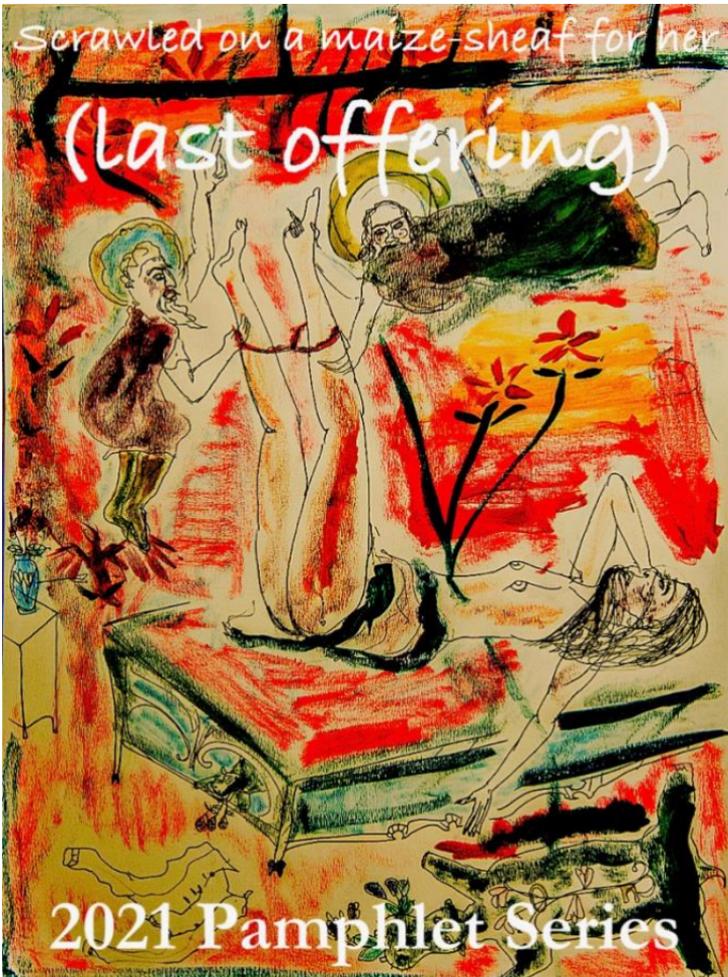
O:JA&L

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Arturo Desimone

Poem





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*Poem scrawled on a maize-sheaf for her
(last offering)*

Eritrean Neighbourhood in South Tel Aviv

Cracked kingdom music on their satellite radio
as Amharic shop signs warp around, and through Hebrew:
the languages are similar—a niece, a nephew
of realms too distant for comparison.

This is Palestine, or was.

Moses had a second wife from over there
(no divorce, so clearly no complaints)
and all passed through here with
or without permit, with or without
warnings or carriages.

I enter a workers' restaurant,
five men turn to look,
eyes plummet back into roast meat,
yams at noon warm a man for Mediterranean winter.

And no news about Jerusalem of Iron
clangs on their satellite television:

African news, (and one report
on Barbados, of all ludicrous isolations)

Throngs float on the streets at night
like frigate schools.

A child, armed with crowbar like a musical bow
works surgical wonders on jalopy cars
first whispering to them, caressing frigid doors
(Talking to a door first is a gentler approach.

The door is female) The moon when full
is *Levanah* in Hebrew, “white”
Hers is the only cold I welcome.
I abandoned Conrad on a bus
somewhere way back when.
A Sudanese asks me for a flame
but I don't own a lighter.
He says he owns a club, just over there
with girls. He warns me of liars
among the Eritreans.
He recounts his travels:
beatings he received and gave in Mali
in Camerun and in Libya.
He tells me of the travels of his fists,
that Eritreans in Israel envy him, and are not African,
That Sudan is the Mother and the Father
and he, the Son.
He tells me of the thoughts grasped by his famous fists.
Travel is fatal to prejudice.
There is a philosophy of fire
to be grasped somewhere, made by the rounds
of wandering fists, undone by rotating hips.
Maybe he punched Conrad in his lips
or Marlowe somewhere along the way
or asked them if they wanted
to take their picture with him
for the postcards of lies
before the bus to Sudan *al-Fransawi*.

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Poem-Marrano: Punishment of the Converso

I travelled, a cage around my waist,
part of me haunted and rotted
the heart through which the blood of a sultan
in the solomonic line warrior-galloped, was fractured

wings of the monarch butterfly were fractured

for I had thought my identity to be unchanging,
kept it unchanging when confronted with
this bleeping world of the lookalikes
who lookalike each million other mercurial

and yet all that time, there was a cross in me,
sharply pressed in my inner red human and animal
carnage, like the pin that was forgotten
in the leg of the cat, after the bones set,
her hidden crutch of sickness weighed her
when she chased usual iguanas
and red throated or yellow-bellied birds
so she was unable to tear them apart, humiliate them
in the forest of aloes
and my back was beaten
and my legs broken
by a cross of Christophor,
who found me out, of passing *marrano* blood
in mid-stream, and showed me
his Catholic mobster balls
I failed in women,
Solomonic-sensuality of suns unattained,
I failed in escape,
and from rage to what was done to my people,
I ate the white wings of that plastic dove
that would have lifted me out from where water fades the rocks.

Poem scrawled on a maize-sheaf for her
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Romina's only non-Indian feature: the freckles.
Kiss each of them,
each the size
of an unfertilised egg,
small, rough but hewn
like pale, little soft stones poised
upon the precipice
before the long drop.

We seeded them with kisses
in the name of our *mestizaje*
for a maize-field to shoot up there,
to sprout from her sleeping face
by morning, in the arranged absence
of her small son.

In the moonlit corner of her apartment near Gallo str.,
in her lace, she knelt in her mane
weeping into the corns
piled in a corner,
against the canopy
of the blue bedroom
(like the old punishment
invented before the Latian hordes invaded
what was never called Buenos Aires)

(Why did the deaf hordes rename them ears,
ears of corn?)

In the morning, stalks and flowers of corn
surrounding us like children
of Argentine spring in October.

Andromeda Teenage Milkmaid (Modern)

In The Hague together
we looked at Vermeer's
pearl ear-ringed turbaned glimpsing girl,
and Rembrandt's Andromeda: all tied up.

Her first Vermeers, though she was Dutch,
how funny that I introduced us,

In the bitter years without a dollop
of cacao I had not paid attention, poor then
to any of these painters of the light,
except for Bosch's red hell
and his green hell he called
garden of earthly delights,
or was that paradise?

I drew her half nude
portrait a few times (four or five).
We stood side by side
Beholden to Rembrandt's Andromeda,
I said "Millet said,
the frame is the pimp of the painting".
She liked that one.

Only a year later, and every membrane
of my every cell
has become but a frame, *passee-partout*.

The frames agleam, creak
encase the outline silhouette of her,
the canvases asking for last lacquer,
asking for the sitter
who cast those silhouettes
in prison-coloured gouaches.

And like a janitor
more than like a painter,
waiting for comprador who does not return calls,

*Poem scrawled on a maize-sheaf for her
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my fingers can no longer find the wall hinges
to take this exhibition down
the way they once found the clasps on
corsets and costumes of Andromeda.

and the Protestant Judge's hand that tries
to incinerate this canvas
burns itself instead.

About the writer:

Arturo Desimone is an Aruban-Argentinean writer and visual artist. His articles, poetry and fiction pieces previously appeared in [Berfrois](#), *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Nueva York Poetry Review*, *Island* (Tasmania), the *Drunken Boat*, *Anomaly* and in the poetry collection *Mare Nostrum/Costa Nostra* (Hesterglock 2019) and *La Amada de Túnez* (Clara Beter Ediciones) a bilingual edition of his poems and drawings was published last year in Argentina. He has collaborated as a translator on the book *Land of Mild Light*, a translation of poems by Venezuelan poet Rafael Cadenas, released by Arrowsmith Press during the pandemic.

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