

## Inhabitation: Erin Moure: “all of which is invented has just been invented now”

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“Inhabitation: Erin Moure: ‘all of which is invented has just been invented now’” is an essay constructed via the cut-up/remix/montage of the poetry and poetics of Erin Moure. This essay simulates a radical reading of Moure’s writing, proceeding through her material in a distinctly non-linear pattern, and discovering new possible juxtapositions between her imagery, syntax, and critical concepts. My goal is not only to acknowledge the kind of radical intervention that constitutes every act of reading (including the reading of critical writing), but to develop an experimental methodology that both acknowledges and incorporates this intervention, also simulating this methodology in the resultant text.

This essay is part of *Inhabitations: A Recombinant Theory Project*, an ongoing series that implements techniques conventionally associated with plagiarism and copyright violation in order to develop collaborative models of critical writing. The *Inhabitation* reacts against explication (and other means of territorializing a text’s signification) by engaging directly with the object of study, by resisting simplification or closure, and by performing avant-garde readings that might produce new textual possibilities. Instead of speaking *about* a text, the *Inhabitation* attempts to speak *in*

*collaboration with* a text, resulting in an essay that may simultaneously: 1) refract the writer’s critical concepts; 2) speak through the writer’s language and syntax; and 3) produce a metanarrative theorization of the cut-up / remix / montage process, resulting in a story of reading, writing, and recombination.

In *My Beloved Wager*, Moure says that “in the brain, what we might call a fragment – edge, colour, curve, speed – turns out to be one of many overlapping mappings associated with no assembled whole” (225). The *Inhabitation* simulates this overlapping of associations, breaking the corpus from its order and considering new potential syntactic interconnections within it, guided by the precept that “the reader has to undergo the turmoil too, not just read a report about it” (228). While my essay might not be able to communicate the nuances of its own five-hundred hour process, the essay’s rough syntax, strange repetitions, and original (though half-familiar) aphorisms might reflect my attempt to gesture toward the processes of inventive “interpretation” that are produced by, and exist within, a zone of authorship that can be perceived neither as Moure’s, nor as my own.

There are no citations in this *Inhabitation*, despite the fact that all of its material resources originate within Erin Moure’s body of work. The goal here is not to encourage the reader to retrace my steps through Moure’s textual corpus, but to advocate for the reader’s own discovery

of new possibilities for engaging with the text. A hands-on approach to textuality demonstrates the extent of a reader's power, not just as a consumer of the text, but as a co-creator of its theoretical, artistic, and cultural significance.

All of the sentences in the first section are transcribed directly from Moure's poetic and critical work, as are all of the section headers. All other sentences are new splicings-together of syntactic fragments that appear throughout her body of work. This project has been undertaken with the permission and guidance of Erin Moure.<sup>1</sup>

**Inhabitation: Erin Moure: "all of which is invented has just been invented now"**

In short, how can we be true to the way the brain works? The grey light from which we have risen. The brain maps information, reads it in parts, overlapping the parts. We draw or link diverse forces by proximity, not logical progression. The receiver of information can alter the message. Because perception is all we know of reality.

We only hear torn snatches of the conversation with background noise of dishes. And language, the language itself, penetrates the body of such a reader, leaves its trace in the body. We see our selves moving. No wonder to look at the world is to go blind in it.

You can't easily see a structure from inside. Sometimes there is an emptiness huge as a bottle of whisky, hard & glass, caught inside me – I want to fill it with love of the world, not whisky. An impossible noise, and the building falls. We dream with dust in our hair.

What world are we in, then? A poem proving the writer has been to Calgary. A poem written by a woman, in a woman's voice. Language rises into the clearings when you shut your eyes and dream. And in the

photo, of course, the woman had already looked away, into the air. She's you; she left the party a long time ago, she says.

All memory is dream, dream opens the window. I followed wild rows of the yard to find her. Pulling the old poems thru the new, making the old lines a thread thru the eye of the words I am sewing. The reader has to undergo the turmoil too, not just read a report about it. I think we should all stop drinking alcohol.

**"this is a life in which a case of whisky is one drink"**

Stories are repositories of drinking. Alcohol the rough ocean. A bottle of whisky hard and glass caught inside the translator. I open my notebook and drink whisky, a useful and strong bottle of whisky, each word of the writer stuffed into the whisky bottle.

To translate we have one drink. Again there is the pull of the alcohol. A paragraph is pulled out of the veins. Fiction allows us to inhabit the spilling.

The poet must open a structure from inside and fill it with love of wine.

Again there is the pull of the bottle of whisky hard & glass. My accent trembles in these pages, the noise generated by all these souls, the noise generated by drinking, standing in the background noise of dishes. The translation depends on how much it leaks.

**"but there is a line that cannot be crossed in translation"**

To translate we need to deal with the impossibility of translation; I am now within that impossibility. The way people use language claims it.

Words are alive in the surface of the page. They inhabit the ruin of translation. The texture of paper infects the opacity of the word. The receiver of information can alter its surface.

Words are said with the most beautiful robbery. What if I said poetry was another language? You deal with language in perpetuating it, with language in your own hands.

**“this is a map of Calgary, I unfold it to find you”**

There is an opening for a real poet in Calgary, a set of signs bending around me. Can you imagine a map of Calgary, the opaque & gorgeous mechanism? It’s a weightless Calgary.

What’s tricky is our neural pathways in the heart, our social order that makes our own world view. The citizens are social and cultural codes: measurable people locked into their own cultural habits, retaining the overall syntax of the city.

The receiver can alter the world. I have come to speak about Calgary, Alberta, Canada, how in the poem the artists came to drink their coffee, to drink their coffee & read so strongly, to freely inhabit a skull and an open book. Artists came to drink their coffee & created the author. The only thing I reject is the idea of the café.

Writing words in the impossible city, as if the city moves faster. There’s no forever & ever, there’s coffee & the afternoon, and as writers we have to expect more coffee. Noise like this is Calgary. Noise like this is in fact interruption. So what if these are maps of cities that move? Artists came to drink coffee & shut themselves into their rooms.

**“they have been talking incessantly, yet no one has been listening”**

Working in the university in your own context of language, feeling the calcified deposits forming around academic discourses, choking on the voice in which we have trembled, choking on who knows what anyhow. We’re all leaves of a single text. These institutions are the grey light from which we have risen. Their own voice inhabits this prose.

A context is socially and culturally constructed. As inhabitants of our own conferences and debates, we talk in an immense structure. Space only looks like it is opening, crowded with ecstatic figures, crowded with frameworks. Grinding speech pours out of us.

Speech is the hub of Calgary. I was trying to forge this room, the rough discussion in universities. More & more speech pours out of us. So then it’s just me constructing the poem or book. This tactic causes the indignant person to drink their coffee. The audience snaps in the cold air. The chairs are empty on every level.

One can be very passionate in the conferences and debates. In the movement of spilling, no one else watches. It’s funny to slow down and speak normally. A public space is where we are both the reader. The chairs are empty; you have looked away into the air.

**“when we are still, speech pours out of us”**

The mind attends only to the cigarette: a poem in which I walk to the store for cigarettes. We have to walk to the store for cigarettes. We should get to know each other outside of context. The woman twists the end of the cigarette, smoking a cigarette with the most beautiful accent.

Her discussion of smoke has the colour of smoke. I wear the colour of smoke for that moment. There is an opening for a real poet on the sidewalk.

And so what if poems don't happen in real places? We have trembled in the darkness or street. You are about language; I am here to twist the code in the language itself.

We walk away from night in a blur, maps of cities like thick brush strokes.

**“you're on a train & the passengers are in danger of freezing”**

Later I am sitting in the Metro. The author is trying hard as usual to derail, pulling the old poems thru thousands of miles. An alphabetic spire of ink is the real escapism.

The world is moving. Poetry is no different from the gravel roar of the roadbed. Between Edmonton & Calgary there is an emptiness huge as a highway.

I was in a train out there in the real world, floating above several roads cut into the cliffside. The other body is 800 miles away. Our falling in love has been 800 miles away.

There is no escape from touching you, she said. There is no escape from the surface of the page. I live in words between cities. There is no escape from the weather now.

**“to work here is a thin breeze chilling the chest”**

We should walk into a land where no one speaks, an enclosed universe covered with snow. Snow produces meaning, a hard wind moving everything into language. Alberta in general stands on the threshold of the text.

Trees convey our desires. A massive tree growing in the snow, Alberta innocent as a swung hatchet. The writer is material texture and opacity and each word of the writer is from this body. To work here is a thin knife wound that has entered the blood.

My poetic work is largely the suppression of anxiety. Texts we create are at the same time our heart, my poetic work in which we have trembled. My eyes do not want to leave a blank page below. You phone me; the flash punctures the darkness.

**“in the dream one's own body signifies, at last”**

We are in the dream already in the world, living the dream one's own body signifies. Again there is the pull of the earth, simultaneously perceived and framed. I feel I am the street where I see her, the shadow of stood-up knives in the dark of the road.

I'm not going to write the shape of the dream, flowers & more coffee & you drinking more & more. We dream with dust in our hair of a darkness or street, the grey light from which we must translate everything, the real emptiness. What I long for is the gaps from which we are rising.

Individuals are buried in each other and connected. I am here to twist the blue thread of light, the blue thread of light & the colour blue. Memory becomes possible grey light. Ashes endure in the brain, a grey wall already in us. No wonder I can't sleep if I see you. And we all know the history of the grey light from which we have risen.

We are in the dream of a word. We are all language, the grey light from which we scarcely rise. We see more and dream.

**“we too, her lovers, listen to the ruined city she searches”**

We perceive only what is already experienced. The unmentionable grows out of one night. One’s own body signifies these nights. She remembers the shape of the dream.

What I am is below your window covered with flowers. I will look at you this morning, perpetuating it. Suddenly I have been able to touch that content. We speed up into each other’s arms. The text starts again below your window.

Last night I dreamed I kissed you on the front step in the light where we are innocent as a swung hatchet, your sub-text like deep seas. How do we overcome the margin between us, to see the world end in your room as love the unmentionable?

I don’t think there’s any sense touching you she said. Wake up in the ruined city she searches, an arbitrary wave in which we have trembled, the lovers who stopped on the sidewalk, where were we going into each other’s arms. A brain sees, absorbs, and codifies the body—I will look at you to look at the world.

**“the cut grain from which we have risen”**

We are bombarded cities. Sometimes there is an emptiness huge as a poem—but why are you still wanting determinate structures? But why are you still wanting consciousness? But why are you still wanting the world? A bottle of whisky, hard & glass, breaks when you lay your hands upon it. Everything is a fragment and is not one’s own.

Then suddenly I had this image of the blood. Then suddenly I had this image of flowing. The impossible vandals worked over the neighbourhood like a knife. The

most beautiful vandals worked over the neighbourhood. Things were messier than blood, messier than blood which we drank between the houses, a swung hatchet letting the blood out.

And discourse splinters thru the floor. Wrench open the knife wound that has entered the blood. The pull of the earth is only that it breaks apart, running sideways into the emptiness of the poem. The writer splinters thru the floor; suddenly, I have been able to touch the ruined city she searches.

NOTES

- 1 To quote from this work, please credit any citation as follows: For citations from the introduction: Katelnikoff, Joel. “Inhabitation: Erin Moure: ‘all of which is invented has just been invented now.’” *Canadian Literature*, 226 (2015): 163-64. Print. For citations from the essay: Katelnikoff, Joel via Erin Moure. “Inhabitation: Erin Moure: ‘all of which is invented has just been invented now.’” *Canadian Literature*, 226 (2015): 164-68. Print. Moure work used by permission of Erin Moure and the publishers House of Anansi, NeWest, and BookThug.

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