



DOUBLE | VIGIL

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DOUBLE | VIGIL

LORI ANDERSON MOSEMAN | BELLE GIRONDA



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Lori Anderson Moseman

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VIGIL



		no flap
waiting	no image	
		we hang
for words	in my body	
		wait
from her	to depict throngs	
		for wind
I watch	I sort photos	
		for words
the swarm	study glyphs	
		for change
on ABC	how light is cast	
		to build
on BBC	in the workers'	
		a new hope
on CNN	temple	
on Al Jazeera		



expecting

the worst

unable to imagine such throngs

I copy text from Susan Brind Morrow

The Names of Things: A Passage in the Egyptian Desert, 1997

I read

the swarm

“I walked downhill to where the ferry was anchored below the High Dam.

Behind a high mesh fence was a dense crowd of men,
many of them traders like the ones I had seen in Cairo.

I made my way

among them and asked a tall young man

if this was where we waited to board the boats.

on *Reuters*

‘Yes, but you are a foreigner,’ he said.

the *Times*

‘There is no need for you to wait here with us.’

on *Jadaliyya*

Without a word,

he lifted me up over his head and passed me on to the next person.

I was passed like a sack of grain over the heads of the crowd and
dropped with a dispatch on the far side of the fence.

on *Facebook*

The army officers sitting at a table heaped with papers laughed
as they saw me arrive thus at their customs outpost.”

unable to download Belle's images from Tahrir Square,
I copy her Facebook post (Wednesday, **February 1, 2011** at 5:56pm)

nectar
purpose

“Yes—well, it’s funny because Egyptians refer to KFC as ‘Kentucky.’ As in—
‘You know Kentucky?’ ‘Meet me at Kentucky.’
This was the gathering place for journalists (Egyptian and foreign)
on Feb. 1—which was, sort of
yesterday,
I think.
For some complicated reasons I had to
traverse Tahrir Square on Tuesday alone to try to meet
with an Egyptian journalist friend. The crowd was way beyond what it had been
in previous days, so I was in the mash
and just got lucky about proceeding at all.
That is—until I got close, and then
some Egyptian who thought me a journalist (as occurs frequently now
because mostly the only foreigners in the crowd are) decided to steer me in
(w/out even asking where I was going.)
I have never been in such a large and intense and well behaved and respectful
crowd—ever.”

complicated
dance
alliance
defiance
pathways
pulse
through
people

some pages omitted per authors' request



BBC Live Blog from **February 4, 2011**

Belle's joy
of being

16:21: Rosa Navarro, an American who was arrested and detained overnight at the Intelligence HQ, gives the BBC a disturbing account of her detention:

a foreign
correspondent

“I went out with a friend yesterday to buy sim cards. We stopped by his house and while waiting for a cab we were approached by police officers in uniform. They asked us for our passports, released us and then came back two minutes later and we were arrested. We were interrogated and accused of being spies and in Egypt to bring down the Egyptian government.”

worries us
because of
our cowardice?

“I was left blindfolded and sitting with around 50 or 60 other Westerners who had been picked up while waiting for a bus, or a taxi or just walking on the street. None of them, like myself, were arrested near the protest.”

	Belle slips	
		last
	past	
		I heard
	neighborhood	
Studying Belle's photo of John Ehab		
interviewing Mahmoud Abaza	watchmen	
(her pride in both palpable),		
I conjure the hieroglyph from the tomb	to be	
men in a rows		Belle was
arms tied behind their backs	turned back	
at the elbow (pain palpable)		feeding
	by the army	friends
"Odd," I said to her in the Valley of the Kings	"not safe"	
"us visiting the tombs of foreign kings		
when we don't even know		let's let her
where our own ancestors are buried"		feast
(where does her murdered grandmother rest?)		at her own
		table



in Tahrir Square
via YouTube
we find Nawal El-Saadawi
80-year-old feminist refusing to leave

we love her fortitude
we download her
into our Facebook profiles

[click here](#)

[click here](#)

we want
protesters
to continue

chanting

"Erhal Erhal"

let Belle be

let Belle be Belle

let Belle resist us

so

we must stop

begging Belle

"leave leave"

email from Belle Gironda on **February 6, 2011**

“Today I’m a little tired, worn thin—yesterday was very intense. Went with friends to bring medical supplies into Tahrir for the makeshift clinic there. The army is trying to get protesters to leave so they are trying to keep things like medical supplies out. As a woman, it is easier to get things in, because the army doesn’t search you, female volunteers do instead, and they let us pass with the supplies. The strategy yesterday (on the part of the govt) was to make the process of entry into the square, extremely long and slow, once you passed through the first checkpoint people stood in line for hours on the Kasr El Nile bridge. They were letting people in at a very slow trickle. After standing in line for more than an hour, we got lucky when a couple of veiled Egyptian women said, ‘Come with us—there is a quicker way for women to get in.’ We squeezed our way through the crowd and to near the front where they were indeed trying to let women bypass the men. There was a very scary moment when the crowd surged forward in impatience—trying to pressure the army to speed the process. We happened, at that moment, to be a row of women on the inside, standing right next to the coiled barbed wire barriers that were about waist high—if the pushing had gotten out of control, we would have been pushed onto the barriers. I was looking at the barbed wire and thinking, ‘I’m glad I’m wearing my leather jacket.’ But, as soon as the pushing started, people started yelling—‘Stop, stop,’ and telling the pushing people, (in Arabic) who couldn’t see this because of the crowd—that there were people being pushed against the barbed wire. They backed off when they heard this and the men around us cleared back enough that we could link hands and squeeze through the checkpoint—the army, who were there fending back the crowd, let us go—and we were in—searched one more time by female volunteers, who again let the medical supplies pass in. Phew. The demonstrators had organized a ‘greeting corridor’ for people who made it in—your reward after running the gauntlet, and for many, standing in lines for many hours. When you finally got in there were two long lines of people facing each other and forming a corridor, singing and clapping, ‘*Abalan Abalan*’—(welcome welcome)—so you walked in like a hero—like someone finishing a marathon.”





“... Egypt is for Men Only”

Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights

analyzes written news in 18 local rags

(daily and weekly newspapers and magazines)

Shura Council elections include only three women—

one each

from the Tagammu,

Al-Ahrar and

Al-Watani parties—

a mere 12.5 percent of Egypt’s

24 political parties.²

“In the photo of Sally Zahran¹
widely circulated
following her murder,
a symbol of the regime’s brutality,
she is unveiled.

Many criticize Zahran for that...
question the specifics of her death:
was she really in Tahrir?
Such suspicion is not something...
being leveled on male martyrs...”
“A martyr is a martyr, full stop,”
activist Aalam Wassef said.³

¹ On January 28, 2011 (the Friday of Anger), when state security forces and hired thugs violently confronted pro-democracy protestors in the Upper Egyptian governorate of Sohag, 23-year-old Sally Magdy Zahran died after thugs beat her on the head with bludgeons. <http://1000memories.com/sally-zahran/biography>

² <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/110215>, September 9, 2011

³ <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/339251>, April 3, 2011

“Everyone was chased.
Some were beaten.
They were touching us
everywhere,”
said Dina Abou Elsoud, 35,
a hostel owner and organizer
of the ambitiously named
Million Woman March.

She was among a half-dozen women
who said they were repeatedly groped
by men—“a common form
of intimidation and harassment here
that was, in fact,
a target of the protesters.
None of the women reported
serious injuries.”

“People were saying that women were
dividing the revolution
and should be happy
with the rights they have,”
said Ebony Coletu, 36,
an American who teaches
at American University in Cairo and attended
the march,
as she put it, ‘in solidarity.’
The men—their number
estimated to be at least double
that of the women’s—broke through
a human chain that other men had formed to
protect
the marchers. Women said
they attempted to stand their ground until
the physical aggression began.
“I was grabbed in the crotch area
at least six times.
I was grabbed in the breasts;
my throat was grabbed,” Coletu said.

Quotes from “Women’s Rights Marchers in Cairo Report Sexual Assault by Angry Mob” by Richard Leiby in the *Washington Post*, March 8 2011. “The demonstration on International Women’s Day drew a crowd only in the hundreds to Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the popular revolt that drove President Hosni Mubarak from power. Gone, organizers said, was the spirit of equality and cooperation between the sexes that marked most of the historic mass gatherings in the square.”

ballots cast

In the interview with Mona Eltahawy
widely circulated
following her sexual assault,
she has two casts:
a broken arm, a broken hand.

viral image:

woman

beaten, stripped

veil

assundered

“A group of riot police surrounded me—about five of them—they beat me and their big sticks kind of rained down upon my arm and that’s why it is broken because I was trying to protect myself... And they sexually assaulted me—I was groped all over my body. I lost count of the number of hands that tried to get into my trousers.... They dragged me to the Ministry of the Interior.... They dragged me by my hair, called me all kinds of insults,” she said. She was detained for 10 to 12 hours.

nonetheless

Belle returns

to Tahrir Square

to deliver

medical supplies

“What happened to me was tiny...
so many men lost their eyes...”

“This is done by security forces funded
by the teeth
by the U. S. military.”

Quotes from “Activist: Egypt’s leaders label female protesters ‘prostitutes’” by Tim Hume, for CNN and Mairi Mackay, CNN updated 11:34 AM EST, Fri November 25, 2011 See: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/25/world/meast/egypt-women-sexual-harassment/index.html>

Eltahawy: “It was November. Maged [Butter] and I had come from Tahrir Square to Mohamed Mahmoud Street, the frontline of clashes between protesters and the military, following a violent invasion of Tahrir by police and soldiers a few days earlier. Almost 40 people had died—including a distant relative—and 3,000 were wounded. We’ve all seen that painfully iconic photograph of the woman who was beaten and stripped to her underwear by soldiers in Tahrir Square.” See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/23/mona-eltahawy-assault-egyptian-forces?newsfeed=true>

some pages omitted per authors' request

D O U B L E

Embracing Territories

ka¹

hug²

*same path from the beginning?*³

we smile together
at museum's synopsis of the Coptic
papyrus: "human with disheveled hair
reprinted in a schematic manner"

on a later ferry
we decipher Luxor
graffiti: girl with firey hair—all sunray—
overrides boat's smoking ban

before tear gas sings

we rest rooftop on wet mats

wake to women tending fire in the dirt below

had we hoped for more?
not just "soul" for a "body"
or shadowscape
symmetry, not just
gilt mummies, false doors
glyphs extending arms

ushered through the Pharaonic
no telling how long our *bugs* will stay
hammock in old havoc
a usurping of daily vitamins
to toy with the underworld
uprising across eons

were you with me apart? | was I with you a part?

could you see a lilt in my exposed scramble
over hardened coral, feel my shutter
unveiled at cistern's column
where Medusa's inverted head shrugs

when you sought the ubiquitous
roasted sweet potato
salesman beyond | between
ousting | ballots

Insha'Allah

¹ The Egyptian *ka* is an entity's own double: everything that exists has a "double"... even weapons.

² The Norwegian *bug*, as human's soul, is movable ... can exist somewhere else at the same time.

³ Mahmoud Darwish, *Unfortunately It Was Paradise* quoted in Gironda's "RE: Preparedness."

Doorway

Cairo Copts keeps twin dog-headed saints
who cares if we stood there side by side
not knowing exactly how
as Anubis totems get traded for fish

inhibition:

the difference between us

when pups' dying mother chews incisions
I insist on an Elizabethan collar

next exhibit:

papyrus records instructions to invisible double on how to trick

can we *be* without reading?
body keeps genetics
mevlevi skirt awhirl full sema
undulating snowfields
home's opalescence
surface as portal

invent scribal habits

the prize:

a mirror ... pleasure the twin afforded."

nazir in Hebrew
separated, consecrated
one who avoids corpses
and any structure that houses them

freedom | dignity

what remains

caged puppy paws carefully placed
in the dual bowl's dips
empty of food, empty of water

Dogearred

caged in paint, well lit, guarded
thinking of our dogs as twins
our own minds meld
as ancient icons

lick wounds

you free her again and again

without new leaders?

language reiterates

nazir always on the next page
of Chapter 33: "Mysterious
Paintings": "... inlaid mother
of pearl ... sackcloth pulled...

Nasser in another Egyptian moment
hero but no Castro no Ho Chi Minh
Dekmejian's study affords him
(see page 310)

slaves arms tied at the elbow
multitude linear precursor
to integer, protractor, jackal

Script

Scarf

our brief visit over
you have been there
where a Turk reached out to meet a Greek
stops short not yet sharing
crocus stamen blood red until dipped
a fist full of water in a porcelain bowl turns
outshines hollow clay
this the caftan Clinton bought
script that is a sultan's signature
(say, ruby throated warbler)
motion and shape
we can turn all four directions
after zither and pivot
my homie sits palms up
opened by sacred spinning
who fled his raging homeland to wander here
my scarf travels
each crossing the line to visit his father's grave
to double grief
roasted meat, goat cheese, orange groves
a new *we* goes on
sunrise
I see a dove
we buy tickets
stumble upon a refugee
to seek a bare-belly topped with pretty tits, tassels
wrong revolution?
to our other friend
Cyprus' hardened coral
open market stalls
here where Oprah shopped
of all the colors possible
we savor black on white
a sufi's word for *nothing*
tile mapping, ochre of tombs
misquided men have fled
to non-ceremonial space
to field questions
come Wednesday
lattice lingual: magic stitch accounts for the curse as lace chorus
they will write on their bodies a story of their own subjugation—non-reversible spiral to the naval

Immolationist

the spark starts elsewhere
yet Egypt's swarm is a couple
blocks from your abode, still
you have to read about it
holed up just blocks away
tear gas so thick you must
steel yourself to unmask aggression

we want *you* to escape to an island

where lunch has a noodle layer—
flour's inner form credited to conquerors in waves
(today's cooks come from Turkmenistan—
their children left in poverty temporary as a meal)

when fleeing it is best to eat greens best to note location of evacuation facilities
to time one's departure to fixate on shoreline's past invasions. to rest amid unrest
enduring, endearing habit of stone heft always outweighs neurons' flight pathways

advice is of little use

Ataturk

after the fact
statue as attitude
liberates in its limitations
doorway into a new nation?
secular passages
open ports that remain
fluid

Drawnwork

Leftkara lacework lures
across the courtyard
Hardanger's eight-pronged star
remnant of Viking sea forays
echo Assyrian or Egyptian or Indian—
initial migration a thread

Window

Venetian influence easy enough to spot
guide credits da Vinci:
“pained by women's fumbling
with lace patterns, the master offers
a simpler design”
only so many geometric combos possible

to send you such a doily would be less use than sending sterile gauze you could transport to Tahrir
where you usher us before you now cut a window, we bunch online: are you safe? are you are you?
your long lost lover materializes
Mubarak leaves
crowds are orgasmic and *Al Jazeera* streams a jubilation that will turn to later violence as the army's will
lingers cuts familiar patterns enshroud

why would you flee to Cyprus?
only half of the island on our map his aunts' orchards in the blank part
cooped up wits threadbare
longing for astringent citrus rind molding in clover
bitter lemon

Preparedness | Sheer Serendipity

*"To my dearest lady sister ... greetings.
Lend the Ezra, since I lent you the Little Genesis ..."*¹

Dear Belle,

I had hoped to write about the invisible
but I am at a stoplight
Turquoise window-script lords over
A wig mannequin, sans mullet, faces
Owego's oracle says: sea.
does not spit up its rare
My bucket full:
Cellar steps so narrow-n-steep they turn one's foot sideways every time.

double² and *Another Earth*,
reading "Shear Paradise."
a block-long heap of flood debris.³
traffic at driver-height. Stoic.
A bookstore cannot swallow river
texts without shovels.
ceiling tile, drywall. Mold.

We depend on a red wheelbarrow guy
curbside. Gutter's mounds
Trash novellas skinny-dip
Dust jackets defy nightly curfew, dare
No way not to want to return
herd-song's echo, well-grazed glacial lake above treeline.) Natural aura.

who hauls our papier-mâché
finally read as a chorus.
inside history, shuffle pages. Mesh.
looters: "take me, just take me."
to the oral (walking stick, lean-to, flock,

¹ P. Oxy. 63.4365 circa 4th century in "Nomina sacra in a Bookish Milieu" in *Greetings in the Lord* by Luijendijk.

² Doubles as explained on Coptic papyri still displayed in Cairo as the human swarm in Tahir oust Mubarak.

³ This September flood of the Susquehanna in Owego, NY not the story of Pakistan's floods: "Three quarter of a million people in temporary shelters, 7000 bitten by snakes ... two million people suffer from malaria...." Dean Nelson, *New Delhi*, 7:00 AM BST 16 Sept 2011.

My breathing is labored,
the Oxyrhynchus Papyri:⁴ “... Heraclius,
he has something against you again”
Karaoke Nite. Each double remains
Text tells all
Tomorrow, I cross Red Cross chapter lines
When you enroll in Disaster Overview, you are signed up automatically.

throat raw. I memorize
the current steward, seeks you ...
A cafe near the laundromat hosts
a poor substitute for the one we know.
before any open mouth has a chance.
to train for Shelter Operations.

Tonight, my K-Mart jeans (Route 66)
oblivious to me. Mystery is *this*:
one and the same
together? Did they form part of an archive
several letters from the same person have been
there is a hair side and a flesh side to papyri? *Nomina sacra* can be found on either.

cycle in the wash twice
“If these papyri indeed refer to
man, how do they fit
or is it sheer serendipity
preserved?” Did you know

I hover in Middle Egypt
(Bar Yusuf Canal). Page 12 talks of oasis
(Libya). I miss you.
traded so many opportunities
The gift—offering help—not plot enough.
Swarm tries to work its leaderless way into declaration and triumph.

on the west bank of the Tomis
(Small) after oasis (Fayum) and beyond
The flick, *Another Earth*,
for sex, betrayal and spaceships.
What are we without biomimicry?

⁴ Quotes from “Letter to Apollo” (P. Oxy. 14. 1680) and *Greetings in the Lord* by Luijendijk. By the way, as I send you this letter: Quaddafi's execution foto online now. You've seen it, I suppose.

A hive voices ____ exactly?
 flood victims. Sump-pumps pump
 so Egypt can “embrace a market economy.” All this drives me back to a textual souk
 of third century Pemdje.⁵ Hortatory
 of fertility. If theocracy is a bloom, then
 rights. Humane rites. Childbirth.
 new Sufi Tahrir ... where do women align

University’s gym sheltered 1500
 pump pump. 222 constituencies poise
 surfacing alongside a hippopotamus
 transparency is ____? Human
 Liberal Wafd, leftest Tagammu,
 themselves? Their texts? Guess the Red

Cross is not going to deploy me.
 splayed on a table; I’ll use a vice
 balance titles on a seesaw shelf.
poem for the house. Future. Regime.
 to mobilize for common good.
 promise AutoMata that distill molecular info from individual cells. To collaborate?

Next fair’s organizers don’t want books
 make a fulcrum of a dictionary,
*How We Saved the City*⁷ out-waits
 Tell me again about your faith in humans
Bio-Inspired Innovation and National Security.⁸

*Letters from the Nevada Frontier*⁹ less
 but made the grave mistake of selling
 relation to an abandoned daughter—
 wake? Every text marks an exchange:
 aside. Now the spider and the speaker
 change. There is less mail. Bedsheets pale. Names in an address book now numinous.¹⁰
 Yellow tulip in an earlier poem lingers. As do the maple leaves littering the dog’s path.

covert: “we’d have made millions out of mines
 out too soon” So what if I rewrite a priest’s
 canoe lesson on the Salt River in Civil War’s
 X likes a spider web. Y brushes it
 are no longer at home. Seasons

5 Pemdje is what Coptics called the city Oxyrhynchus. (“In total, 5,476 documentary texts and 2,918 fragments of literary manuscripts from Oxyrhynchus have been published.”)

6 hippopotamus = Thoreris

7 *How We Saved the City* by Kate Schapira + *poem for the house* Katie Yates. Stockport Flats, 2012.

8 *Bio-Inspired Innovation...* Eds. Armstrong, Drapeau, Loeb and J. Valdes. National Defense University, 2010.

9 *Letters from the Nevada Frontier: Correspondence of Tasker L. Oddie, 1898-1902*. University of Nevada Press, 1992.

10 Jay Leeming’s “She Killed a Spider,” *Between Water & Song*. Ed. Norman Minnick. White Pine Press, 2010:105.

Landing

rubble

huddle

The rumble of the oncoming
but trains bearing letters calm you.
where you offered lessons on déjà vu
Leave it to you to see space

triggers my panic (memory of collapse)
Was it the A or the D
purview of the homeless and jet-setters?
as armature of hope.

I fled the city before
one pilot managed a water landing
folks walked right off floating wings.
You are back on that island.

Now what?

Reread Michael's *Winter Vault*? Revisit St. Mark's?
retrace entrances? We were at your red table
when I urged you not to keep too much. Will you
gather the same surfaces on which to read | feed?

Places I've marked for you: (the Ise temple on page 83): "Every twenty years, for almost three millennia, the temple had been dismantled and burned and a new, identical temple erected in the clearing next to it. The the empty site is covered in a white pebbles and only a single post remains, in a small wooden hut; this is the sacred pillar that will be used to build the temple again when its turn comes again."

Winter Vault by Anne Michaels: "The temple is not considered a replica, instead it has been recreated. This distinction is essential" (83).

some pages omitted per authors' request

DOUBLING BACK

















Oxyrhynchus and other lost

Some cycling desires, confused currents
keep home coming
back as—
I don't know
—a concept?
An old love turned new,
a new love imbued with
history,
starts the tug which
like the unseen, on the line,
could be just detritus.
When the jerk from the depths
is sudden
the heart jumps
the rod bends
all adrenalin turns to
landing
it.
but, really there is no sleeping
in this concept—
(perhaps Jonah slept in a fish, but where did it get him?)
unlike a tumbled tarp stretched on a couple of sticks
blown up the beach.

Poetry actually loves both—
or all,
the words
the idea
and the broken shelter. Meanwhile
leave it to you to unearth
a city
of waste
name for a fish.

RE: Preparedness

*Was this the same path from the beginning?
Or did your dreams find a Mongolian horse on a hill
And exchange us for him?*

Mahmoud Darwish, *Unfortunately It Was Paradise*

Disaster overview, a muddy slope that leads automatically to shelter operations, willfully building and writing, where our belonging(s) is/are always questionable. The river suggests. The desert suggests. A lone column grows yearly less, a phallus consumed of the missing moon.

the Ezra:

Sat up late last night, reading about Palestine, Darwish's "country of words" wondering about the bid for statehood, petition open on computer desktop, recent memories of a flag in flames and the near and palpable frustrations of Egyptians who wished to be less yoked to US/Israel policy in Palestine where even memory /marking of "the disaster" (Al Nakva) is illegal—and "shelter operations" means...

—the mood in the souk is strained.

I'll think about theocracy, and thorn, in a country with no dew and about transparency here, where we see the air.

I'm fascinated if horrified by the shoveling of melted books, with melted walls, the pulpy mounds of text-play that winds up where—landfill

set against an image of Oxyrhynchus,
set above the floodplain, safely dry
for the good of the text
but referenced by a fish who spits up: Set against Osiris

and Set's relationship to Typhon
this latest storm's chaos, set-animal, sea creature, or canine (or Mongolian horse)
tracking our preparedness.

Which side is for writing: flesh or hair?

What humans, things and places shorn show is
not another world, but this one.

Lend me a digital of the latest in your novel, so I can read the Salt River lesson.

It was good to hear your voice last night through the ether—

End of the end of a day, where the air smelled like smoke and looked like it too
(voice mail—what a concept, when you think about it, via Skype, apologies to Walt
Whitman.)

It always says, "Unknown."

which is how I know

it's you.

Farewell,

B

Double Vigil II

"Was I with you a part?"

Writing, like seeing or being there,
a scribe behind me,
before me,
keeps vigil. I
am aware
unaware
wearing the cold string of rooftop mornings,
preparing for the burn of
tear gas nights,
unmatched to the experience.
I can't record
with enough depth
without you
a part of how
I see
and what.

Discoveries that require distance
enriched by reading
come to me from afar
light,

I have followed you
enough places

including down to ground

zero, to know

You will show me a ladder.

Departure | Arrival I

Communication starts to splinter
before I fly into the blackout.

Will there be a flight? Unclear.

There's a bird in the terminal.
At the bar someone says,
"Egypt, there's something happening there, right?"
on the plane.
New York recedes, as always, in a swirl of defection
exits just outside your window—
to escape.

The space between bodies fills with reverie
a pressurized cabin that sucks moisture from corpus

I land, January 29,
The Day of Rage.

we are made to feel
the physical nature of narrative
as progress through space

At the airport
anxious tour guides
circulate
warning tourists
their trips are cancelled.

Lines blur.
In the end, I'm the only white person
the iron work of emergency
psychic architecture of the need

negative space available becomes
headed into an arid land.

in the wake of

Sometimes
time as linear,
unfolding

information

and debris.

What was my walk up Kasr Al Aini
a long tracking shot
momentum
flash of scent
the pull of commerce

disintegrated
with the littered
that can

afraid and unable to stop
past tanks arriving
I am
invisability

Before I see my friends
the tear gas
greet me with what sounds like

littered with
bodies of burned cars

to my bus stop
fueled by traffic's
the mint seller on his bicycle
cooking oil carbon monoxide
trays of tea in transparent glasses
wobbling

post storm
look of a power
rearrange.

to the square

I walk the story
unfolding

around barricades
and atypically focused MPs,
cloaked in
until I enter the throng.

a stranger hands me a tissue for
and a young man of 17 or so
wonder and joy

but I don't know what he is saying.

Departure | Arrival II

“Come, resign this moment...”

—translated fragment of a tweet from Cairo blogger Wael Abbas, **February 4, 2011**

All the winters I was there, the ghost of water was thick in my throat, synaesthetic syllables I could taste and smell without saying or writing, falls roaring in the back of my head, the thick late summer shadows of a humid childhood. The color of the word is green, the flavor is a mouth of grass and dirt, on skin it is the resting of a cheek against the cool rough concrete of a dank cellar wall, shallow and repetitive breathing that wants to go deeper.

In late **November 2011**, while I negotiated for the job that would allow me to leave Cairo, people were dying again in Tahrir—one of many rounds since January. The military massacre of demonstrators at Maspero was only one month past. For about a week, ambulance sirens were continuous day and night, so persistently that, one morning, I finally woke to silence with startle and alarm.

I mostly stayed home and followed on Twitter the events just blocks away—it’s nothing like walking, confounding time and space—still, narratives emerge.

When I finally succumbed to the pull, the tear gas hit us blocks away from Tahrir. At the field hospital set up in a mosque at the corner of the square, we delivered some food and drink to those who had been working around the clock. Everyone wore masks to help with the gas, communication was all just eyes meeting eyes. We wept continuously, as we were meant to.

All that is signed, will be re-signed. Like S. Salamlek where I lived, renamed Abdel Rahman Fahmi some time in the past—meant to eradicate the Turks and to honor a 1919 revolutionary. Salamlek sticks stubbornly for the locals, but the guys who deliver takeout ask for the name on the street placard.

If time went the other way, the dehydration of a transcontinental flight could be reversed, carbon footprints erased, the dead would spring up from the streets, a dictator would be restored to power, the illusion of apathy could descend again.

Unlike most, I get to go home.

January 1, 2012. The light at the beach in winter is almost too much. I walk with Allen to the edge of the Atlantic ocean. When a wave breaks, I drop the folded pages of a homemade book into the foam. It bobs upright like a buoy, the ink blurs and runs blue and green, into red.



photo credit: Tom Moseman

BELLE GIRONDA is the author of *Building Codes*, from Stockport Flats, and two chapbooks, *Start Here*, St Andrews Press, and *Volume 1 , Number 4* with the artist Sheila Goloborotko in the *High Watermark Salo(o)n* series, also published by Stockport Flats. Her poems have appeared in *Crayon*, *Confrontation*, *Crit*, and elsewhere. She taught writing in Cairo, Egypt for 3.5 years and returned to the US in January 2012. In the following year, she taught in the Levermore Global scholars program at Adelphi University and lived in Brooklyn, NY. She is now perched and writing in the mountains of Western North Carolina, outside of Asheville.

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