

what about support and what about struggle – editorial foreword

Part of what about support and what about struggle

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The struggle we are confronted with cannot be in any way a one-person task. We must now collectively undertake a rewriting of knowledge as we know it.

–Sylvia Wynter

In November of 2020, Francis Marie Lo's volume of poetry *A Series of Un/Natural/ Disasters* was sent as a gift and an invitation to poets and artists **Napo Masheane**, **Léuli Eshrāghi**, **Merve Ünsal**, **tacoderaya**, **Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo**, and **Fernanda Laguna** with the proposition to resituate its critique of catastrophe discourse in other urgent pasts and presents. *what about support and what about struggle* is the result of that proposition: an international speculative translation project where writers and artists across a range of geopolitical contexts have responded to Lo's work across languages, forms, and aesthetic-political concerns.

Published by Commune Editions in 2016, Lo's *A Series of Un/Natural/ Disasters* reads the US-based scenes and events of Hurricanes Katrina (2005) and Sandy (2012) in order to wonder about collective possibility as it intersects with state failures: what potentials might emerge when we read against the grain of precarity and erasure? What are the poetics we are left with when the un/natural entanglements of "disaster" are taken apart and reconstructed? Lo's text utilizes translation as one of many methods to examine and critique what scholars such as Orlando Patterson term "social death," that is, a condition of not being recognized – especially by nation-state apparatuses – as fully human, vis-à-vis a poetics of mutual aid represented through assemblage, transcription, data-gathering, interview, and still-life.

Borrowing from Lo's methods, we have invited seven artists to respond freely to the

book in order to resituate its critique in past or present un/natural disasters relevant to the questions posited by Lo's work. The invitation was to interpret the term "translation" very loosely and with as much conceptual flexibility as possible, to encompass anything, including a video, a poem, a letter, a performance, a sound piece, etc., in response to Lo's text. "Translation" should thus not be taken to mean a seamless transfer between languages and/or geopolitical contexts, but should instead be regarded as a concept or method to lean on as a kind of scaffold for thinking about how one wants to be in dialogue with another writer's work – their aesthetic or methodological entry points, modes of critique, rhythm, gaze, etc.

We understand that this project moves from an anglophone imperial US context to what could be loosely described as an international constellation of languages and geopolitical sites; as a result, it feels important to underscore that this project is not about mapping US discourse onto non-US contexts. Instead, we hope that Lo's methods of looking, feeling, and writing can be useful instruments for not only resituating the book's analyses – its pasts and futures – but expanding it and allowing it to morph into places and events elsewhere: the exploited shores of the Atlantic, islands settled by colonizers in the in the Great Ocean, and a multiplicity of languages that carry joy, sorrow, and resurgence equally.

Parallel with, or following on, the poetic/artistic responses, we have asked for Translator's Notes, included in this collection, where the contributing artists unpack their processes of generating their response in order to orient the reader/viewer's relationship to the work, taking a cue from their re/verberation of history, complicated both temporally and geopolitically, hinting at unexplored routes of contemplation, composition, and (re)construction of language.

With this collection of speculative translation responses, we've experienced processes of re-mixing histories through language and time – fast-forwarding, resting, reversing, accelerating, and discontinuing – almost as if tangibly whirling on a turntable through temporalities, methods, and geographies based on repetitions, recirculations, and kinship in the practice of revolutionary solidarity.

The written piece by **Léuli Eshrāghi** travels throughout different geographies and languages in the Great Ocean, finding points of inflection with Francis Lo's compositions in order to convene into an ecology of poetic reverberations. **Eshrāghi** presents a textual work that comments on how history is produced through exclusions of languages and of expressions, of traces of what the tongue may express and what the colonial gaze witnessed, thus exposing the colonial logic that forms our relation to words and how we formulate the world.

Napo Masheane's work is an interventive series of audio and textual pieces which can be read as an annotation of histories of omission, as well as an intervention into how they can be retold. **Masheane** weaves a pattern constructed out of a variety of mediums for us to follow through, and across, languages present on the African continent which inform the poetic and sonic composition.

Through their video work, **tacoderaya** (Jonás de Murias + Paula Pérez-Rodríguez) reflect upon the overexploitation of natural endemic landscapes such as the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Fernanda Laguna's work, produced between 1995-2008, is a visualization of compositions and the translation of feminist, political, and artistic struggles in Argentina from a temporal perspective, interacting with Francis Lo's poetics as both a sociopolitical as well as poetic dialogue across time, history, and geography.

Merve Ünsal's video work extends the notion of catastrophe through a fairy tale and sculptural approach to image and speculative narrative of the end of the earth. The choreography of the narration is entirely dependent on an interpretation of image sculpted onto the retina.

Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo's call-and-response poster series sets in motion a visual exchange with Lo's work, thereby imagining textual and material solidarities with the book's articulations of mutual aid through poetic and ideological cross-cuttings and refractions.

Francis Marie Lo was invited to respond to the group's responses to *A Series of Un/Natural/ Disasters*, responses which we presented and discussed in two group-wide online seminar-workshops during 2020-2021 where Lo was present. Their piece, "A Rupture," could thus be termed both a continuation and disruption of this larger speculative translation project where their work is simultaneously the point of origin and (tentative) conclusion, or, hopefully, incitement onward:

**Fumbling around a new world, mouth around
language with inadequate potential.**

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Works Cited:

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