

THE REPUBLIC OF
EXIT 43

outtakes & scores from an archaeology and
pop-up opera of the corporate dump

Jennifer Scappettone

a t e l o s

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A Project of Hip's Road

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*This is for
Mom above all
& the salvager Angelo Frank
for Ilaria Alpi
for Peter, Stacy, Leslie, & every survivor
still fighting and passed*

Now since this Science of Husbandry is of a very large extent, the Poet shews his Skill in singling out such Precepts to preceed on, as are useful, and at the same time most capable of Ornament....

And if there be so much Art in the choice of fit Precepts, there is much more requir'd in the Treating of 'em; that they may fall in after each other by a Natural unforc'd Method, and shew themselves in the best and most advantageous Light. They shou'd all be so finely wrought together into the same Piece, that no course Seam may discover where they joyn; as in a Curious Brede of Needle-Work, one Colour falls away by such just degrees, and another rises so insensibly, that we see the variety, without being able to distinguish the total vanishing of the one from the first appearance of the other....

—Joseph Addison, “An Essay on the Georgics” (1697)

What a burdensome world, brimming with treasures, sure of itself, domineering, brimming, of course, with some of the world's most beautiful works, channeling crowds of mortals, of tourists from corridor to corridor, from signpost to signpost, toward the Exit.

—Etel Adnan, *Of Cities and Women: Letters to Fawwaz* (1993)

then with your tongue remove the tape

—Jean Toomer, “Her Lips Are Copper Wire” (1920)

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*barrowful of what?"
a murmur of folk
Either the well was very deep,
shedding gallons
"Our digression on
a narrow escape!"
half untied,
the waves suck back*

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*was no one
children, let us away;
stay down
What can all that green stuff*

*which changed into alarm
always to have lessons
windows disappear into their frames, embracing
at the flowers and the blades*

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*Untitled (Imagine a Cinder-Wench)
seeking ballet in the victims, unconsciously
after Chicago—
"As if it wasn't trouble enough hatching
that is to say
they set to work
and every now and then a great crash, as if a
Untitled (Angelo, Salvage)*

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and the fall was over.

Let me add—for I feel (a panorama fragment, mid-zoom)

Let me add—for I feel (a panorama fragment, more zoom)

Sentiment (a screen capture, Paumanok)

Sottovuoto (a still from a film)

Sentiment (a screen capture, Fresh Kills)

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AN UNDERTURE

This is an archaeology of the dump and opera of pop-ups. It performs a virtual and analog return to the Exit
in which its author was raised—the dual
Edge of the township where Whitman was born, bored by the obsolescing mall, on Paumanok punc-
tured by numbers of a Robert Moses gasway. Midway, returning to the freeway of our life
After a decade of growth in transpicturesque climes, I found myself—through an upbeat feature on rehabbing
young artists in the real estate section of the *Times*—peering into the ExxonMobil
Petroleum plume below our linoleum in Williamsburg, Brooklyn—& over the course of a few related
search strings
Found that the ex-copper rod mill and free-for-all landfill of the postindustrial cul-de-sac in which she grew up
had been placed on the State and National Priorities List,
Meaning that the EPA identified the terrain as among the most toxic in the nation, eligible for capping through
a Super fund of monies. The following

maps the everywhere aborting research into the sludges—now only apprehensible as zeros and ones—
conducted since discovery of this stultifying fact, a fact whose unabstraction I seemed to feel coursing below
her motions
& through our organs, and through the concurrent
valves of Mom's chemo and the unparallel afflictions
of an increasing toll of friends, unready. It has found itself addressing a multinational sprawl
of diversified environmental mishaps along the way.

The pop-up choruses, which interrupt the archaeology, sample the syntax and nonsense logics of Lewis Carroll
to graft
last-ditch pastorals of poetasters, from Virgil to Victorians, onto the quarrels of buried corpuses, CEOs, the EPA,
estimated pupils
and halflives of chemical substances, tracing the pathways of a malice in Underland that is incompletely virtual,
for which responsibility has been rendered abstruse. These pieces

score the frustration of de facto digital efforts to apprehend ecochemical calamity as archaeology, disclosing
the poem's status as both material and pixelated artifact;
They are modeled on those pests of the internet that assailed surfers of yore with unsolicited advertisements or
warnings, but were wrought in nostalgia for a cut-and-glue solution. In want of manipulation with the
hands.

Far along the way, in want, it was found that this story erased itself as I wrote:
the Settling Defendants being permitted, by Consent Decree, to begin destroying
documents within their possession or control (or that of their contractors or agents)
relating to response actions taken at the Site or the liability of any person for response
actions conducted at the Site, beginning February 22, 2006.

Along the way, I was plagued by the ethics of disentanglement and the doubt
that investigative reporting might suit the business better than poesy—by her damnable
need to make music of innermost tragedy, reencode responsibility, need to emote.

When in reading, you're caught in redundancy, it's because we've reached uroboreality, a point of spatiorhetorical
choke.