

THE PERFORATED MAP

Also by Eléna Rivera

Remembrance of Things Plastic (LRL e-editions, 2010)

In Respect of Distance (Beard of Bees, 2007)

Mistakes, Accidents and a Want of Liberty (Barque Press, 2006)

Disturbances in the Ocean of Air (Phylum Press, 2005)

Suggestions at Every Turn (Seeing Eye Books, 2005;

available from Guy Bennett and Mindmade Books)

Unknowne Land (Kelsey Street, 2000)

Wale; or, the Corse (Leave Books, 1995;

available as a PDF from Duration Press)

Artist Books:

A Botanist's Dream

Her Hand

Translations:

The Rest of the Voyage by Bernard Noël (forthcoming Graywolf Press, 2011)

Secret of Breath by Isabelle Baladine Howald (Burning Deck, 2008)

The Perforated Map

ELÉNA RIVERA

Shearsman Books
Exeter

First published in the United Kingdom in 2011 by
Shearsman Books
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

<http://www.shearsman.com/>

ISBN 978-1-84861-160-3

Copyright © Eléna Rivera, 2011.

The right of Eléna Rivera to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyrights,
Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

Cover photogravure copyright © Lothar Osterburg, 1999.

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the editors of the journals in which some of the poems in this book first appeared: *The Poker*, *Aufgabe*, *Stand Magazine*, *Parcel Journal*, *Tuesday: An Art Project*, *The Solitary Plover* and *Five Fingers Review*.

Some poems first appeared as limited-edition chapbooks. Many thanks to Richard Deming and Nancy Kuhl for publishing *Disturbances in the Ocean of Air* (New Haven: Phylum Press, 2005), to Guy Bennett for publishing *Suggestions at Every Turn* (Los Angeles: Seeing Eye Books, 2005), and to Andrea Brady and Keston Sutherland for publishing *Mistakes, Accidents, and a Want of Liberty* (Barque Press: Cambridge, 2006). Many thanks to Rachel Moritz and Sun Yung Shin for publishing *When the Shadow Filled Window Opens* in the WinteRed Press Chaplet Series. *Disturbances in the Ocean of Air* was first published by *Stand Magazine*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, Winter 1998, Vol. 40, No. 1; it was First Prize winner, *Stand Magazine* 2nd International Poetry Competition.

The author also wishes to thank Russell Switzer, Denise Newman, the MacDowell Colony, the Djerassi Foundation and “52 West 91st Street, Apt. 9.”

Contents

The Perforated Map I

Ars Poetica	11
Disturbances in the Ocean of Air	13
The Colors Project I	17
The Colors Project II	18
Crossed Out	19

The Perforated Map II

Suggestions at Every Turn	24
The Colors Project III	41
The Colors Project IV	42

The Perforated Map III

In the Frame of the Door	46
Poem with a Line Drawn Across the Body	48
When The Shadow Filled Window Opens	55

The Perforated Map IV

We Will Be Served	62
Mistakes, Accidents, and a Want of Liberty	64
The Colors Project V	77
The Perforated Map	79

Notes	101
-------	-----

*In us an impulse tests
the unknown*

—Lorine Niedecker

The Perforated Map I

Suddenly
on my knees
this large
Bittersweet
pull

Ars Poetica

Inaudible perhaps
this moment, inevitably

washing face and hands
it slips

away, forgotten
by our “progress.”

I am drawn to explore aspects,
features of the seen/heard,

which limp still catch light,
colors, twigs of hope.

I slip in your side,
indistinct,

a moistened hand,
a gangling sinew

where the space of the poem
cascades

as years peel one after another
their films of silence.

Bodies encounter effigies
and turn, bloodless, unable

to defend themselves from distance—
the soundless features

of today holds
unwittingly the lineaments

returns the words home,
opens hinges.

Disturbances in the Ocean of Air

1.

Across the border
soft sadness feathers

A blue way
an icy improvisation

2.

Prepare yourself before entering these impervious parts.

I took a stroll down the corridor and saw
the Pacific hanging on a clothesline.

Did my thoughts choose this commotion?
I wanted to compose under the overpass

so as not to hear the roar of the city.
I took off my clothes and slid down in

a cold, moist repository—
“and then who knows? Perhaps we will

be taken in hand by certain memories,
as if by angels.”

3.

The full moon opens a hole overhead, hovers. I am cut open with an
arrow of air. Disturbed by this I start to run. I am running around
in circles of different sizes. Which one will lead to where I want to

go? My head is at the level of my mother's hand. I press my cheek against her soft smooth hand, her "every soft thing." Turbulent pleasure. She says, "A man will go home and tell his family how a little girl kissed his hand in the subway today." That was around the time when I saw the movie *Hara Kiri*. The wooden sword went in with much difficulty.

4.

Tender children
clipped

mad for a home
but only housebroken

5.

I wake from the dream while lunate pleasures adapt to stillness. I hear the sound of my body; it lies supine on the wet bed. I am wearing a wool coat (and nothing underneath). In the distance a truck/jeep is going toward the border of an immense ocean (disorder here). Water moves violently up and down, up and down. If this is real life what can one do? (I think.) If this is fiction what can happen? She is lying on the floor and levitates up and down, up and down, almost banging (terrifying). The way with childhood memories—how things are magnified. I was explaining how I was in a room where something was going on—how I could have taken it wrong, because when the insect crawled on my body it seemed like such a big thing. So in the room with Mom and this man, I could have easily, taken what had happened as a much bigger thing.

6.

Can one imagine: “Desire without the object of desire”?

Without even an image? an extract? lava?

7.

Scarlet

Scar

Imagine the peeling bark
of a madrona

What is underneath?

That huge intrusion

8.

A movie can also magnify a drip: “*You didn’t see it.*” those words “*You didn’t hear it.*” I was pushed from both sides, put in that in-between place, that bridge—the place between “tree” and “wood,” “morning glory” and “dried flower,” or “cow” and “a piece of beef wrapped in cellophane.”

9.

and then you stumbled across
I was at that age

where I heard everything
a vessel for every hard word

From mouth to air to ear
The line is taut

Words are changed by refraction
Can you rest where it is dark?

The Colors Project I

language creeps into snowthoughts I and my
penchant for out out damn spot
spiral down enter the woodpecker peck peck
at my soft and fuzzy and the juice runs up the tree
sound it out a young deer in front crossing as I came
One stood and stared watched me descend
into the cold place
my heartless branch I wasn't sure I would go there yet,
simple but then I had to I make myself that's the problem
make myself She will she will she will
and "I" stuck mud, snow, fatigue
results in nudity and then the idea of failure
another *moyenne* no not that not not compare
the drip drip the juicy blotting out the long
obscure sides of my mouth give me something to do
before rising the amethyst stillness
typographically drops our day

The Colors Project II

Honeysucklesunshine
 carves holes in my eyes soft light wheel a vans motor
 running A portrait In the morning a pump
 shutting out bird calls, heaters, refrigerators We will put you
 in an envelope to try your feathers slip slip
 so you will have to pay close attention hair bleached
 by the sun what is muddled at first
 grows clear in time at times barely
 Warm me and I will bathe in an essence of what is left of
 jaune or four syllables in Spanish spreads
 the call to rivers
 beaches, and the children playing with building and the making
 of the ephemeral this is my deep trickle Lorine as we play
 call and response your words so engrained
 each plump grain has become cell in me absorbed
 as we reach toward the sun absorbing light
 more than we can handle giving it all giving what we can
 our words our narrow limits softening the hard meeting
 the chair sit bones coming out of excrement
 and rising back into it to seek sweet suckling

Crossed Out

The written fact (lies) transmitted
and ignored, jewel of red daylight
Words take on meaning and we, carried
heartbreakingly by the speck of possibility

“desire for desire”

the density of that edge
dominates as I bind myself
angry at being rebuffed—
Full of wiles these words

“jewel of red daylight”

that ensnare me,
dominate, as I bind myself
to the density of that edge—
desire rebuffed

again and again

these stairs pull

ice gleams, hold

the Mind Tower

or “an angry person”

slips out (can't help it)
We contradict,
slip into
desire dense with specks

all open

sieve words

all

all