

no te entiendo

I am honest about my work.

Y tienes miedo de mí. *And you are afraid of me. Spanish*

I have to be.

It is both narrative and abstract. It works with lyric and avoids it. It fights with the English language and yet is dependent upon it. It makes mistakes. Often.

Di kon ba ta asina rabja? *Why are you so angry? Papiamentu*

mwen panse ke ou se pè m '. *I think you are afraid of me. Creole*

This is a conversation with brown and black folk and an invitation for everyone in between. I don't know what I am attempting at times or if it's succeeding.

chairō. *Japanese* kālā. *Bengali* ruskea. *Finnish* sEdä. *Malay* rojo. *Spanish* pula luwad. *Tagalog*

and sometimes Y.

It demands that a aniuwodige *brown folk* and anigvnige *black folk* aesthetic be included in this tête-à-tête over the avant-garde, the experimental, the innovative. There are those who wish to highlight “a blindness perpetuated by the big houses, ‘major’ anthologies, and high-school English curricula.” While their argument may have some truth, my heroes are absent from all this talking. It is disappointingly void of any hue (or music) darker than beige.

nande sonna ni kowai no? *Why are you so afraid? Japanese*

What did Carl Hancock-Rux say? *Your heroes never did this to themselves.* I have no interest in a dance of words that rambles for freedom and equity yet remains institutional, exclusive, and aristocratic. To be blunt, what does it matter to my neighbors? The elder who I share polite gossip with next door could care less about an avant-garde. And why should she concern herself with a poem?

I am honest about my work.

Tengo que ser. *I have to be. Spanish*

Soshite anata wa watashi ni okoteru. *And you are terribly angry with me. Japanese*

Bob, the newspaperman, represents what I most struggle with.

He does not share our angst.

I want to create work that is relative to him (should he ever be interested) and I want to create work that speaks in the tongue(s) I was raised in. I admit here that my ganvgo *tongue Cherokee* has a multiple personality disorder.

I accept that Bob may never understand me.

Kaore koe e hiahia ana ki te mātau mai ki ahau *You do not want to understand me. Maori*

My tongue began speaking in variables upon the annexation of Hawai'i; with the *Jones-Shafroth Act of 1917* and *Hernandez v. Texas of 1954*; the first Bengali/Punjab maritime worker to jump ship in Harlem; the US targeted recruitment of medical specialists from the Philippines and Eastern Europe during the 80s and 90s; upon first watching *Akira*; with my first French kiss with a U2 lovin' Puerto Rican named Rolando Lucino Morales; with my Haitian co-workers at a coffee shop in World Trade Center serving Japanese stock brokers; with baklava, gnocchi, bagels, falafel, pad thai, samosa, and egg roll; with my short time living in Jamaica and my Trini-Italian first love from Long Island; with my Southern mother, my Harlem shake, my Boogie Down Pinay BFF.

No, Bob will never understand me.

Ano pa ko tapos sa galit mo? *What have I done to anger you? Filipino*

My tongue was disrupted by igpay atinlay *Pig Latin* and Tsa'lägı' *Cherokee* within the same year and continues to be collaged by accents, diphthongs, alphabets, syllabaries, and semanto-phonetic systems that flood online translation engines. It continues to be inspired by posters advertising public health services and job training in multiple voices. My universe: phrase books. Those Learn English banners adorning the subway cars, written in no fewer than six languages, grasp my attention. These tongues are my aunties and they exist in this terribly confused country. How dare I ignore them?

Works Cited

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