**Infant Language**

By Lakshmi Holmström

I need a language

still afloat in the womb

which no one has spoken so far,

which is not conveyed through signs and gestures.

It will be open and honourable

not hiding in my torn underclothes.

It will contain a thousand words

which won’t stab you in the back

as you pass by.

The late night dreams I memorizes –

hoping to share them –

will not be taken for complaints.

Its meanings will be as wide as the skies.

Its gentle words won’t wound

the tender surface of the tongue.

The keys of that unique language

will put an end to sorrow,

make way for a special pride.

You will read there my alphabet, and feel afraid.

You will plead with me in words

that are bitter, sour and putrid

to go back to my shards of darkened glass.

And I shall write about that too, bluntly,

in an infant language, sticky with blood.

****[Original text in Tamil of ‘Infant Language’ by Lakshmi Holmström]

**Search for my Tongue**

By Sujata Bhatt

You ask me what I mean

by saying I have lost my tongue.

I ask you, what would you do

if you had two tongue in your mouth,

and lost the first one, the mother tongue,

and could not really know the other,

the foreign tongue.

You could not use them both together

even if you thought that way.

And if you lived in a place you had to

speak a foreign tongue,

your mother tongue would rot,

rot and die in your mouth

until you had to spit it out.

I thought I spit it out

but overnight while I dream,



it grows back, a stump of a shoot

grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,

it ties the other tongue in knots,

the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,

it pushes the other tongue aside.

Everytime I think I’ve forgotten,

I think I’ve lost the mother tongue

it blossoms out of my mouth.

**Hodgepodge**

By Habib Tengour

I.
At first sight, they are only incoherent games. Grotesque fillers. Show-off non-sense. Smacking of the platitudinous. Formal variations for the pleasure of an elite. An elixir! Today's reader is bored faced with the complexity of the techniques put into play. He understands nothing of all these sassy-smart experiments with language. The newspapers speak differently to him. Each day a new catastrophe engulfs him in anguish. Blood all over the reported stories. A woof of unforeseeable elements where it is difficult to recognize the golden threads of the embroidery.

II.
The practiced constraint falsifies syntax. Intervals insinuate themselves into the distortion of the vocabulary. The narrative obeys no causality. Events follow each other without any change. This amuses some stylists who see in it an exemplary freedom. But such juggling is incapable of silencing the empty bellies. Everywhere one bumps into a dubious meaning. One looks for words with an edge to get the upper hand. In fact, the choices remain limited. The nouns prevail over the verbs and adjectives. Terrible toponyms. Chiseled obscenities. Irremediable blasphemies. Unhealthy scatologies. Repugnant names of animals or people. Earmarking of certain body parts. All of which teems in a triviality that provokes a slight disgust.

III.
It borders on a macabre polyphony. One doesn't listen to one another anymore in the middle of the tableau. There's something in it for everyone, he says. But it doesn't add up. It is not a question of a simple stroke of the pen. You see how heavy the slightest word weighs down on language. To ferret it out hasn't been a picnic. You suffer faced with the contradictions of the lexicon in the ever slighter hope of finding a way out. Language is never free or profuse despite signs of an opening up. It is a bleeding that can't be staunched. A local color lacking the emphasis of time.

Beyond that, an apparent emptiness produces an effect of contrast.

Translated by Pierre Joris

[Original text in French of ‘Hodgepodge’ by Habib Tengour]

**Fatras**

I.
A première vue, ce ne sont que des jeux incohérents. Des remplissages grotesques. Un non-sens exhibé. Voire une impression de platitude. Des variations formelles pour le plaisir d'une élite. Un élixir ! Le lecteur d'aujourd'hui s'ennuie devant la complexité des techniques mises en œuvre. Il n'entend rien à toutes ces expérimentations délurées du langage. Les journaux lui parlent autrement. Chaque jour une catastrophe nouvelle le plonge dans l'angoisse. Du sang éclabousse les récits rapportés. Une trame d'éléments imprévisibles où se discernent mal les fils d'or de la broderie.

II.
La contrainte exercée fausse la syntaxe. Des décalages s'insinuent dans la distorsion du vocabulaire. La narration n'obéit à aucune causalité. Les événements se succèdent à l'identique. Cela amuse quelques stylistes qui voient là une liberté exemplaire. Mais les jongleries ne parviennent pas à faire taire les ventres creux. On se heurte de partout à un sens douteux. On cherche les mots qui tranchent pour avoir le dessus. En réalité les choix restent restreints. Les noms prédominent sur les verbes et les adjectifs. Toponymes terribles. Obscénités ciselées. Blasphèmes irrémédiables. Scatologie malsaine. Noms d'animaux ou de gens répugnants. Désignations de certaines parties du corps. Tout ça grouille dans une trivialité qui provoque un léger dégoût.

III.
Ça frise la polyphonie macabre. On ne s'écoute plus au milieu du tableau. Chacun trouve son compte dans l'affaire, dit-il. Mais le compte n'est pas bon. Il ne s'agit pas d'un simple trait de plume. Tu vois combien le moindre mot pèse sur la langue. Le débusquer n'a pas été de tout repos. Tu souffres devant les contradictions du lexique avec l'espoir de plus en plus réduit de trouver une issue. La parole n'est jamais libre ni profuse malgré les signes d'ouverture. C'est un saignement qui ne tarit pas. Un couleur locale sans l'emphase du temps.

Au delà, un vide apparent produit un effet de contraste.