

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## ATTENDANCE: June

Rachel & Rocío · Wednesday, July 13th, 2016

**Attendance** is documentary poetry by Rocío Carlos and Rachel McLeod Kaminer, who are collaborating on a book length manuscript for the duration of one year.

As we stand in relation to plants and animals—and one another—we are not exempt, but alive as creatures in and of the world. Taking attendance, and attending, alters\* our writing, bodies; places—city, land, wilderness; times—past, present, future...

\*fucks up / fucks with / plant sex

Previous: [January](#), [February](#), [March](#), [April](#), [May](#)



## June Notes

May ends in the dark.

Raven, cat, hummingbird, lizard, bee. Rosary of attendance.

May really does end in the dark.

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1 June: The log is becoming the work and the notes for the work feel precious or studied even when they don't feel that way but it's a new admitting, that I'm writing what I'm writing, that the notes know they're the work and my hands stay in view of one another.

3 June: House Finch—*Carpodacus mexicanus*—and [the too many ravens article](#). Sycamores on the Solano Canyon hill—where are they drawing their water from? Rocío told me the name. I know about sycamores they're almost as bad as willow for needing the water.

6 June: Ravens and ravens and ravens. Remember that thing about corvids demarcating the death / life / death lines? Holy / awful? This = ecology prophesies? and by prophesy I mean describes reality. I mean a Sign, signs. Revere, as in vereri, as in the place you stand when fear, when awe, when respect, when *bow*. And guard, as in ward, as in tender, keeper, watcher, protector.

The 12th, rain: How much blood in one spring? Answer: more, always. *I don't know.*

The small brown bird, bright on the crosswalk sign, peeking over. Pigeons, palomas. Go. To. Bed.

13 June: On the way back from the vigil I see a rat on the next corner I need to cross to, moving towards the ankles of a man about to step into the street. It is a black plastic bag.

15 June: One pigeon on the balustrade, turning from the east in circles. Up on the hills over La Tuna Canyon two ravens fly *pas de deux*. Wing-slip instead of foot-step. No hawks. No snakes all year.

16 June: Missing phone calls at night, two staccato text messages.

17 June: News. Missing phone calls mean *phone calls* and I check in at 8:30. The news isn't good. A and N tell me what we know so far. Later, at LAC/USC ICU Unit 5B, I gather that there has been a cough. No corneal reflex. 40 bed unit. How many hours everyone has been there. The characters of nurse, resident, attending physician. The bathrooms for visitors are often occupied. How swollen with fluids our bodies on life support. Lack of cell service on the 5th floor except near a window. How long until family arrive. How many surgeries so far. A's body and mine seated side by side, taking turns doing the leaning and matching up, taking the steadiness of next-to-one-another-ness where it can be taken. The medium gloves run out. Use the large or the smalls. The medium box is refilled. Count the times you sanitize your hands, once for every entry, once for every exit. There were two hawks this morning. Weren't there?—?

19 June: Failing to (lacking—missing) attend. "Present with..." "Hold space with..." blank. Blank with.

21 June: Yesterday, too, the pigeons outside the dark hospital seem to be their own tribe: different flights, different rustles. Same as the rest though, with the white, with the bright underwings. Not luminous glow. Not gentle in the night, no matter how warmly you tell about your day, no matter how deep the breaths are (regular, regulated), no matter that you only hand sanitize five times and your knuckles don't dry this time. (There's still tar or another carbon in a thick deposit inside your right hand.) The size medium box is full.

22 June: Hawks, hawks, then this heat, smoke dissipates, none. The high pitched noise in the courtyard is gone before I ask if anyone else hears it, too.

28 June 12:30 am: I'm smelling it in here, or I carried it home. I carried it home in my head or I carried it home on my skin. Or in it.

28 June 11:30 pm: Sarah answers, "I can be as explicit as you want."

29 June 12:something am: There's a bang on the door. Think of the color of the courtyard paint.

29 June: Thick slats of bright sunlight cut with the haint blue pillars in shadow. I re-read Sarah's long replies to my long questions. "Also respirations will be 30 seconds apart right before."

—  
June ends and the ravens ghost out.

—Rachel



## Early

June happens in the middle. May holds on hard: your mouth is always ready for communion. A lair guarded by beasts, that young feeling of inexperience and immolation.

You must admit, you like the monthly bleeding.

*I felt myself about to lose control*

A song about dancing girls, the cold empty house. You warm yourself by wearing eyeliner; you are aware this makes others warm.

*this terrible shadow*

## June, now

The sacrifice of water. Abstinence is watching the wilderness dry up. You turn away like the mother with the sickly cub. You keep walking toward some Summer. Small cries from the ground, from the old avocado and the datura feel like nothing on your heart.

Later, downtown, the yucatecos steel themselves against you, your curse of drought. You walked with bare arms down the street.

String lights on the yucatecos at night. The noise of mammals in the season of ripe fruit trees. Did you smell mangoes or did someone just talk about them?

RP: an abundance of I don't give a fuck.

*The memory of shared breath, the ashen lavender morning, the same color in your hair, a familiar mammal. You dream of running in forests on four legs and tearing into red flesh. Your thighs are red. The red swirls down the drain.*

### **June sits**

A garden of bodies. Steam/ it's too hot to drink but Ana is so nervous she has two glasses of wine. Rachel and Ana each with their arms gathered up like gathered wood, afraid of the forest of people. The lines in her work/ the lines in her work. Works hold hands like Aspens underground. How like trees, everything.

A girl slurred near your mouth: *You dainty. You so dainty.* The sides of her red smile curling up.

### **June, new**

The roof: red pebbles. Or chips. Succulents. Gin, eight avocados. Gin. My black dress. The darkness crept up, the chill settled/we went downstairs/a place full of witches  
*the next day everyone had fevers*

### **Junish**

The Chinese elm, an extension of the house. Ulmus Parvifolia. Single toothed leaves. *leather/ lustrous.* The bark: flaking, mottled gray wounds. Cousins: elm, hickory, ash. For cabinets, for climbing.

And then Santa Ana. Drive toward heat. A gallery, a fountain. So many brides. You do not have one/you are not one. Lights on strings, on dwarfed olives, their bark. The difference in translation: right here/over here/aquí/acá.

A corridor, we pushed the tables. Each clay pot a spikey button cactus. The careful pots of tomato and squash, velvety leaves, like hands. The potted paradise. Succulents. Rachel suggests theft. Pluck a little cutting here and there to plop into my pocket.

Geranium: Mediterranean, cleft leaves. Five petals like hearts, propagation. "the crane" beaklike seed. Mouse moth.

Here is the north.

### **June says oh now we are using names?**

A fathers day- cachanilla: pluchea sericea. Siempre verde silvestre. Chozas- construcción de café cenizo cenizo/un verde grisáceo. Hojas lanceoladas "*sus flores presentan un arreglo- corimbo*" eyes- axles. Only things tear. *Dense impenetrable thicket* (thickets).

### **June says oh now we are using dates?**

Hot at dawn. Attendance at the emergency vet. The soft pink tile, the leafy fichus in a plastic pot. What wounds are. You water the yard, as if it won't be evaporated in a few hours. The thirst of the wilderness, how generously it continues to work even when I withhold water. What will become of us in this desert place. The theft of water, the ghosts look out from the high places. You feel them everywhere.

You get Coco home and clean the house good. The floor so clean and cool you lay your body down for hours and only blink awake when you think you hear your phone. Out in the world, the wall of heat. Mexicali.

*During the hours of heat, I would go outside for little whiles to feel the intensity, like being underwater. I would go the citrus grove and face the cotton field. I would eat hot oranges as bidden by my grandmother. I get up from the floor and am compelled to the kitchen. I tear into an orange and eat it over the sink in longing for that other place, the place on my body that remembers such a heat.*

### **June: a fire, out there/ a full moon.**

Out in the world, a fire near the rock quarry, near the creek of white stone where your father took you as girls. The terrible plume of smoke/east. You imagine the deer, the coyotes running away.

You figure maybe squirrels, some raptors in their nests, didn't make it. You ask for stories of fields in a wild place. You think of earthquakes often, you want the rain. It seems impossibly far away. In Altadena the dry hillside and chaparral. We stand in the road in bare feet like girls. The moon floats up, yellow as a house. We lay on the hot driveway and murmur to each other. Wild things rustle in the plants.

\*

For days and days you move pots to the farthest part of the lot: an old trunk we used as a table, the echeveria and potted palms. The plumeria I started from a cutting. This is your summer place. As if summer could be a place. The land of summer. As if summer was not a season in which things also die.

—Rocío



## June Poems

### A wild place / tiger lilies

You remember that year / the way your relatives became afraid of you  
here is black magic, inky as pens (you wrote your name in blood that first time)

\*

*I felt myself about to lose control*

\*

in that dark you could see; *animal*  
and then you really asked for it (the tear or break)  
you never get sick / you only get injured:  
arachnid blood vessels, small bursts of lightening  
the blush of a wound you never felt (being born).  
You must admit you like the monthly bleeding  
the way the red swirls down the drain.

\*

*Outside, tiger lilies arrive  
the rust color on my bare thighs / the blood that returns.  
How I like it, lit up like a flame.*

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### Brides

Nearby, the citrus groves shudder with desire,  
azahares give themselves up  
fall into soft piles of death and sex  
brides float made of plaster / shards of glass  
*what are wives anyway you are not one you don't have one*

how sharp that weapon / how white your teeth  
 (one cannot help but stare).  
 When you were a girl you played the Nayarita bride:  
 for sixteen breaths  
 you hurled yourself nowhere, perfect—  
 the others swooned and rose up with sheathed arms  
 touching palms folded into heavy hems  
 blossoms falling from your eyes  
 sharp teeth of desire,  
 your fortune a pile of salt.

—Rocío

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### bees and (5) / Like petals

Yours was like petals, you text in the morning. I wait to write back: *haboob*. August 2003, up on the hill behind El Paso, roiling back on itself, irreversible, awe-some, stunning, covering the outskirts of Cd. Juárez and then the center and crossing the seven bridges and upon us, nothing in our bodies but thrill of fear and thrill of joy.  
 hab?b

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### Gastropods (2)

Walking up the high end of Loma Alta, cement smooth retaining wall head-height over the sidewalk.  
 Always, the other retaining wall, along Lorena between 1st and Chávez; stacking over head-high.  
 A snail on the wall, and another, wait—  
 heat and dry drew out their slippery life.  
 Dry shell, dry glue, and at some time, soft sound splinter, smooth carbon, weightlessness.

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### End June

skin tender  
 tenderizer  
 pigeons on the balustrade  
 peacock who won't speed up out the road  
 if skin can be tired  
 if fatigue is heat between muscle and bone /  
 / layer where it should touch bone  
 the meat on the bone  
 the meat falling off the bone

—Rachel

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