

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## ATTENDANCE: May

Rachel & Rocío · Wednesday, July 6th, 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 Notes

### May Day

A mirage is either a swimming pool or a march for workers' rights. You come when called; your mother and father send signals of smoke and you come.

### May 7

A Junco = Palo Verde, says your father. He says that when it's full of yellow blooms the tree hums with bees. What are bees but daughters. You wish you were that tree.

The fields: not alfalfa but forage. What is the difference? The low wheat. Your father brags that on the other side their wheat would be tall and ready. As if the field still belonged to him a little. As if he owned anything at all.

The road narrows, the white peaks of the All American canal. Alamos everywhere, Juncos. You sleep in the adobe rooms your father built when he was a boy.

### Vernon

You instruct the room to map the body, to transpose the body onto the city. You make a map of a body that suffers cold, that burns with desire. Dendrites rise from your arms for touching. There is no touching. The field of care that is your arms. Your teeth chatter. You unfurrow your brow. You always look angry. This is what they say, anyway. The sharp points in your back shudder with cold. The navel contracts. You take inventory of your injuries and scars. There is not enough death anywhere to kill you.

### Communion season

What you remember: *hunger*.

\*

The thing about the body is dressing it. White, as in an injury. Eyelet, lace. You are happy to be veiled, to take the body into the mouth. You are eight years old.

Where in the body is that memory?

What is it they say? Kill adjectives? Or adjectives kill? Either way, something dies.

### **Garlands**

A namesake sings about garlands, a lifeboat, a port. A singer who is not the namesake conjures a familiar voice and sings about hard love and dead mothers. A twinge when your name is called, a name that floated over the sea before you ever lived. The song La Guirnalda, the summer days in Cudahy not drowning. Your mother's friend looking at you like she knows you and that your life will be difficult. She has only ever been kind.

Sometimes you and your mother laugh together. Sometimes she calls you the names of her sisters.

At the concert she touches your knee and says *esta tu la cantas bonito*.

*It is likely that I was conceived on the sea if not by it.*

### **(what day / no day)**

All the gray days. The aloe a hydra, or those digital images of hurricanes named after women.

You get on your knees in the wilderness. You pull weeds and turn soil. Tabula rasa/ when is there such a thing. *Everything has consequences. Everything.*

All of a sudden: Pilar Ternera. The refuge, un inframundo de carne.

A Plant nursery. Water floods the mouth. What was it the puritans used to say? Ornament is the devil. (garlands).

petunias / cosmos / dianthus

Petunias: related to tobacco and deadly nightshade. The datura and her trumpets signal dreaming and death.

Cosmos: from scrub and meadow. Leaves like bronchioles. Angelita's garden when she still had one. Remember her attendance. The palm that fell, the calendula, her citrus grove.

Dianthus: glaucous / spicy: what hybrids do. Tiny kites.

The mind wishes for the proper emoji.

### **Procession**

On Slauson is the fair, loud with banda de viento. On 60th street the palms and the willow sway with calm, the rosebushes shudder with the spring. The Virgin's procession traps you and you sing soul of my soul/how lovely you are. People come out of their homes and say her name as she passes. Someone hands you a yellow balloon. The wonder of the swarm / the terror of the swarm. You film with your cellphone. You finish the rosary. Your grip loosens on the string. You open your hand. You hear your mother call your name.

—Rocío

**4 May (Griffith Park)** Ah but that raven playing against the wind. At the top of the park hill, where the wind—strong and steady everywhere all day—is channeling up the side and pillowing over the cut of the hill. Dip-diving throat first, then in a quick twist flip onto its shoulders, still diving and surfing, then back to front ways then back to back wings. I didn't know it could be like that. I knew it played in the winds but not like that. It's worse than stabbing giddiness this time. It's WANT from under my chest cavity, a clench, a spurt, a drag of sensation down the inside of my back.

**16 May** And: [Redacted]

Also: How thinking the writing much differs from a hand writing. Much as thinking the prayer is another thing besides praying it—*saying it* rather than composing it—utterance

**19 May—21 May. Orlando. GP and K.**

One time, and I'll never forget this,  
 That's all right it's just a plain old lake.  
 And the house that you're looking straight at is where Bull Jones built—  
 And Alli smoked like a stack.  
 Falling down drunk—  
 Lake Virginia where your mother swam across the lake—Fleet Peebles was the swimming teacher,  
 he taught everyone in Orlando how to swim.  
 I was three—I don't remember.  
 M went, took lessons, but he never did swim across the lake—Kingsley was always independent—  
 That was a mistake.  
 Yes it was.  
 I think the hospital's up further.  
 We had a time finding it but somehow we did.  
 Because it was Larry and Charles were born, and then David.  
 No I was I'm older than David.  
 There's the Albertson Public Library. That's where I found out John F Kennedy, the president was  
 assassinated.  
 And Betty Jane Mann went to St. Luke's, but I was not of the in-crowd.  
 No you're thinking of Andy and Kitty, I mean Andy and Maud.  
 I lived with Grady, and then she got married, and took the car. And then I lived with Jackie. All the  
 parents in town thought we were really racy.  
 And that monkey puzzle tree is still there.  
 That was Hilbert and Viola's house.  
 And we had all those citrus trees, they're all gone now. But I remember one year we sold all our  
 oranges for \$70. To a packing house.

—Rachel



attendance

## May Poems

### Mammal (12)

done with bones  
 done with cracking out marrow  
 done with skin  
 done with sucking blood to surface  
 coming to muscle  
 coming to tendon, ligament, flesh muscle and teeth in it  
 back teeth, cleated molars  
 biting up into and down into  
 sinking one's teeth into  
 and keeping them there  
 relaxing the jaw and easing the pressure  
 leaving them gentle in their own marks  
 wishing almost to lose the teeth,  
 again have hard smooth ridges,  
 gum the muscle,

to teeth on you

\*

### **Bees and (4)**

Camellia in her garden  
 (Two houses east and it would have been paved under I-4)  
 She had all kinds, they both say,  
 but this is my grandfather's mother.  
 Variegated, red, pink—  
 more colors, more than one,  
 streaked.  
 The one left is white.  
 Account to me the smell.  
 Whipped butter and sugar  
 over green broken plant stalk  
 Sweet and pungent, K says.  
 It perfumes the car  
 an invading aggression  
 an infiltration that hits high and middle in the sinuses  
 recirculating in the cavity right on top of the front teeth  
 under and flanking the nose.

\*

### **Osprey (2)**

On the osprey days it's swimming, delight in the water right at the break. Atlantic Gulf Stream  
 May temperature—warm enough to forget—sand and waves gentle at the moment. The osprey up  
 and down the shoreline, north out of sight, then south out of sight, and back, and back.  
*And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

—Rachel

### **Ornament**

Bruises appear where there has been cataclysm  
 blight / bloom  
 flood / drought  
 the landscape marks itself  
 to remember the blush of pleasure  
 of small suffering  
 a swirling hurricane  
 blood rises to the surface to say  
 here was the hand of God  
 writing a psalm  
 both giving and taking away.

\*

### **My Other Country**

A desert east from here, south from south  
 what is a border but a line in the sand  
 my other country / flayed god of spring  
 (what to do about my wilderness)

\*

*a grove during the enchanted hour:*

*In May you faced the cotton field and pulled hot oranges from hot branches. The haruspex commanded it, your hands burning with flesh, pith. The bitter smell in your hair, smeared on your bare thighs. You believed you were asleep, dreaming of eating oranges, the heat was so intense.*

\*

The workers cutting azahares/ the wild oils loosed  
 the wild language of my name.  
 My mother wore azahares in her hair  
 when she was a bride, as brides do.  
 In my other country – that body, a desert, a place of longing

\*

*the haruspex compels = winter is delayed, the spring approaches early*

\*

a compass, broken (what witches' hammer)  
 points west and north  
 by cartographer's incision  
 and home is a body  
 a country is a body  
 a body of course is a map  
 a map of course is a poem.

—Rocío

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