

Dialogue in Translation

Recently I called up a number of friends and family and asked them what expectations they'd had growing up and how these expectations changed over time.

Duncan: the idea of falling in love with someone... I always thought I'd meet someone and we'd hook up & it never happened.

P-Butt: I expected that everybody would want the best for me—like the whole world wanted... it's in line with disappointment—that you'd be appreciated for what you do.

Grandma Pam: that you grew up and got married and lived happily thereafter. I expected easy street; I didn't know life would be so exacting, demanding, and difficult. (I read too many of Kathleen Norris's books...) I was a damnfool.

I wanted to know in what fashion their ideas of "how life goes" got translated into their experience.

Steve: timeframes—like at 21 be done with college, 22 be married with a family and house... I didn't envision being 24 & 25 and still in school still finishing a credential. Timeframes, you know, things just get moved back a bit.

Joel: It will have to be about religion somehow ... that aspect of religion—what you would hope out of religiosity—love, respect, nurturing—and then to witness the hypocrisy and neuroticism of it...

Deb: marriage—thinking that marriage would last forever and then realizing that it wasn't necessarily that way... when I was younger... when my parents got divorced...

either that or the tooth-fairy.

Often I've thought that what seems possible for us is greatly dictated by our earliest declarations and training.

Nanda: Because I had a critical upbringing, I expected the world to be an unfriendly place and it's not.

Jon: that you can change the way your society is run.

Laurie: I've come to realize that the validation I was expecting as a human being isn't always available, especially to women.

*tidal charts
numbered verse
red hymnal
operations*

Writing has become a means of unraveling (or at least reconsidering) my experience and how it is constituted. How do the stories we learn implicate us in them? In their language? In how we come to "mean" ourselves? Certain poets intentionally work to recreate tonal registers, sound, and how we're taught to listen:

Scalapino:
past pressure as 'the day' of crawling
to view swans
in one or at all.
swans rose
not dawn—being only.
—one's interior is in relation to swans.

Collobert:
inhabits the wait—
frames the space around itself
words as targets perhaps
concentration of scattered story
the living absolute—the writing there

so that to see it—knows itself there
—in the word—does not reach
completion

*sand from the toe
an old boot lightening*

oral history: pathology

As a woman writing, I recognize calls for a difference in vision and the necessary struggle with this—

we as occurring

ordinary & can be found

renewal/other voices

project

Oppen: One would have to tell what happens in a life, what choices present themselves, what the world is for us what happens in time, what thought is in the course of a life and therefore what art is, and the isolation of the actual.

The task becomes to reinvent what's possible; to blindside language to the point of being able to revive it, re-encounter it.

*the bottom fall out
house down tumble down
latticed overhang give way*

*the door off its hinge
where it wasn't once before
car trouble, noise measured distance*

erratum and inheritance

blossom

The process becomes an investigation of how poetry transforms/ absorbs/enacts language and the voices that shape us become the work and its versions.

*about an open mouth
the thoughts we bring
to our own concerns
translated*