

# STACY SZYMASZEK'S *HYPERGLOSSIA*

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If we assume that food found in an Egyptian tomb is proof that the dead don't eat food, we only magnify the fact that we have no idea what aspect of funerary food actually gets consumed. A painting on the wall can be an endless feast. Stacy Szymaszek's *Hyperglossia* is the efficacy of such ceremony—her words are the receiving of extraordinary sustenance as they, in turn, feed their readers.

As the book opens, her initial persona ('she,' 'her') has died from a head injury. Her soul splits in two. Half remains in the tomb, awake while dead. The other half starts a new life—as a 'delog' (one who has returned from the dead) marked by former brain injury. Her particular lesion results in irrepressible speech capable of producing anatomy.

The content, sonics, compression and concision of the first poem are comprehensive of all that is to come. At first glance the poem may appear to be a fragment made of fragments. Here is the poem in its entirety:

ka ker flutt clutter head injry sincere corps  
compendia ah guardiam  
sachets of natron pork crackle armor  
bid  
ity

'Ka' is the Egyptian word for life-force (some say 'prana,' while others say 'chi' or 'elan'). 'Ker' is the singular of Keres and as such indissociable from doom and violent death. 'Flutt' is too near to 'clutter' to be read as truncated. Under compression, the 'u' of 'injry' is superfluous. 'Compendia' is the poem's knowledge of its generative force as hyper/hypo/extra-syntactic. 'Sachets of natron' were once stuffed into the thoracic cavity to desiccate mummies. 'Pork crackle' is a difficult-to-achieve crispness of roasted skin...in contrast to the 'armor' that partially lends itself to the apparent fragments 'bid' and 'ity' as even more morbid.

This is how it goes. To read her particular word usages I must hear all possible meanings of each word. An uncanny double register of the actual and potential is created. This is lexical hyperarousal. To accord with the poems I can only read each word as though I've never heard it before.

As the title suggests, *Hyperglossia* is involved in excess. It deals with pathologies. It balances. It at once writes a hypoglossia—a below normal word count. Its altered psychological, social or physical states have corresponding grammars, morphologies and prosodies. Anomaly becomes accuracy. For example, to my eye, generosity had never been generous until seeing Szymaszek's hyperglossal "ggenerosity." It's not a misspelling but an over-spelling that augments aptness.

The poems are, as she says, the making of anatomies by means of words. This happens quite literally. Even when I silently read *Hyperglossia* I have an exaggerated experience of the physical act of articulation (as well as the acoustics!). Words straddle material and immaterial conditions: "invisible doorsill grimed." There are, arguably, 4 known states of experience: waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and none of the above. *Hyperglossia* of course extends the list of states to include phantasm, mel-lifluousness, physiogenesis, present hereafter (perhaps a new grammatical tense!), personogony, syllabocoagulation, and so on—but more importantly the text intermingles the list. Intermingling of states—the pouring of one state into another—is the actual art of enlightenment (like Dante passing out during his hallucination known as *Divine Comedy*). *Hyperglossia* simply turns such art into a poetics...which implies the author has placed her person in peril (it would be impossible for actual poetry to somehow not be real—whether or not it uses fiction to address us, it defines itself as poetry by addressing what most pertains to us). This ordeal taken on in order to bring life to light determines the pathology these poems deal with. Sun City is existence in the sun or bust.

A scene or self or selection agglutinates as the syllables and semantics aggregate in situ. "indeterminate lexicon / seasonal concussion / defect of fixative / fact of hyperbole / THIS IS AN AILMENT WHICH I WILL HANDLE / work into a mass / and bind." One page per poem. The book is not a representational walk down the street. Nor is it a presentational world unto itself. Her exteroceptive field is mostly made of other texts. A passage as sweet and simple as

my head    leaks honey

on an alabaster

pillow

is steeped in surgical papyri, embalming manuals, nineteenth century enlightenment, and love songs recovered from vase fragments...all Egyptian. Analogs also hold the poems in place. They are recitals that give virtue to the ingredients they use. Constant use of container-words such as cask, vase, sachet, satchel, canoptic jar, amphora, sack full, bagfuls—all seem suggestive of form. Perhaps a poem is a scroll unrolled, an area of scent, vignette, "dream surgery," pharmacopoeia, or an anagrammatic exhaustion. It's the necessary turgor that keeps its form full and engorged. It exists to demarcate a permeable membrane. In this context it's fair to say (as the infamous W.J.M. Lovelt so aptly put it) "syntax is the poor man's semantics." In such unbounded semantics, the mummification art known as The Opening Of The Mouth Ritual is as real in its integration in *Hyperglossia* as it was when practiced on the deceased in the third millennium BCE.

There are name changes and character vestiges. Someone is "outfitted in plumes." A panther comes and goes. "verbal hippopotamus" makes a lone showing. By far the most prominent persona is someone (is a persona a someone?) called Eustace. Per-

haps the book would have gone on forever without Eustace (and in doing so, would not have ever been a book). “nom de plume / nom de guerre / perfect pseudo-cleft / what I want is want is // a storage locker / of schema / Eustace / superimposed / Eustace / chosen / for / closure.” Eustace is another delog...dead and back—well, the name has a long past complicating matters as phenomena in *Hyperglossia* is first and foremost a word appearing on a page. Eustace is a mnemonic device. The name ‘Stacy’ traces to the feminine Anastasia (meaning ‘resurrection’). As a boy’s name Stacy is a shortened form of Eustace. Eustace is Greek for ‘fruitful.’ The name itself is ambisexual. As we eventually discover in the poems, Eustace was first seen by the poet as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century encaustic painting of a North African boy named Eutyches. From then on he had the power to ‘place’ the poet. To diffuse her. To become her, and to eventually turn into a glaring liability.

physique

Still

a disjoined  
festoon

In one poem she makes a megaphone, then announces “MUTATO NOMINEE.” The full expression is: *Mutato nomine, de te fibula narratur*. A name change that makes the story apply to you.

Many historical personages are met along the way, but they do not necessarily constitute personae. Abde-el-latif, Imhotep, Rifaud or Champollion are details, brief animations, markers of place and time along journeys taken. They are scribal material...but not personae through which the person behind the scribe contrives identity.

So who is she? Who? Which ‘her’? Is the author in the book or just her surrogates? Can we add up all the personae and deduce or reverse-engineer a person? Are these questions the author herself asks herself? She’s the scribe of her poems. So who authorizes the scribe? From within the poems it is occasionally possible to surmise a social self functioning (and malfunctioning) outside the poems. The third and final section of the book (called Agora) behaves most like an integrated recognizable lyric somebody named Stacy Szymaszek.

ID of performer of demise disinterment the wrong

direction the answer constellation clay pigeon quickens

to sedentary phobic bird only way to repossess

amatory chest careen through deaths

In relation to her art her lesion produces an aprosodia. “She tries to grasp protocols of public speech, body language and garment, and wanders in and out of commerce and solitude with a set of difficult motives, such as: to elude detection and to find company.” Or, more accurately, the lesion in *Hyperglossia* can be said to produce a *hyperprosodia*—a heightened ability to comprehend and generate emotion through speech and body language: “my hand went / anarchic and / everyone applauded.”

*Hyperglossia* is a rare and empowering insight into the makings of what and who we are. We readers can take as prescription the words Stacy may well have written with regard to her own process:

take an item  
from the collection  
that will help you

(The food from the tomb that gets consumed.) As the saying goes: *When 'ka' acts, conscience has a guide, there is creativity and kindness, and all is well on all levels.*

I dilate to stave  
my whip kicking reproductive system  
sleep with a loot of musical instruments  
donate catgut  
from my eerie  
hereafter