

Zoo

Bill Horrigan

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I am I because my little dog knows me.

Gertrude Stein

What does the lingua franca of caged animals sound like? To notate it, you need first to travel intercontinentally from menagerie to menagerie (skipping the razor-sharp sorrow of any city under siege, its human citizens starving into sub-human, its caged mascots 'bereft of anyone to please...' [do we eat them or do they from kindness eat each other first to snatch us from our own abjection?]). If nothing else, you'd learn that the gestures of the indentured catapult you back, always, to the habits and accents and devotions of the place you thought you'd disowned.

A paradoxical commentary on the nature of warm-blooded desire, **small lies, Big Truth** has the feel of first-person video despite the absence of revealing pronouns ascribable to the woman who earlier had looked through the camera lens. Slightly, this relates to the admitted redundancy of the term 'first-person video,' but it's also a discursive distinction found in Silver's other work, which persistently reminds viewers of the subjective presence of the maker yet at the same time inhibits most generative assumptions of certainty and identity even as she discloses herself within the image frame.

Silver's in-progress **suicide** pushes that disjunction to its limit; it is, as she says, a "faux travelogue narrated by a suicidal filmmaker as she travels aimlessly, contemplating her likely demise." It has the draw of lucid trauma as Silver's character (it's her, it's not her) finds herself, for no apparent reason, and to no apparent effect external to her, moving within worlds expressing varying degrees of pleasure from her presence. As the sibyl at Passport Control is instructed to ask: Why are you here?

Cities on the move, artists under the bigtop, news on the march: **suicide** lurches from here to there, tracking the path of its inquisitive commentator, fearful (she's Jane Fonda in **Tout Va Bien**) of becoming a correspondent who no longer corresponds to anything. Or, rather, to anything beyond the humanity she evidently shares with the people encountered in her travels to whom she cannot (oh, by the way...) make herself functionally understood.

Partly scouting far horizons (ones proverbially in constant retraction) and partly assuming the quizzical brief of inter-continental guest-worker, it's the suicidal woman's burden to possess whatever she sees in her travels that's not second to her own nature. To the extent that she succeeds (questing: is this the 'real' Osaka?), it's a success immediately enlisted to further fuel her itinerant delusion, her endless 'displacement,' her convulsive if mechanical 'transfer' to the next way-station.

It is, in its way, a canny evasion of suicide: too soon for that, or too late; and Silver's work,

then and now, continues to engage in the fascinating charade ensuing from her sleight-of-hand insistence (plausible, as far as it goes) that "I am not I." It's her camera that does the walking, and its great maw feeds on the time-shifting expanse of continental drift.

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