Neotropics:
A Romance In Field Notes
by
Susan Briante

deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purpurised flowers and black berries
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Notes:
Neotropics: A Romance in Field Notes is for Roberto Tejada. Certain lines in the “Rainy Season” poems are lifted or paraphrased from Psychoanalysis and Love by André Tridon (Brentano’s 1922).
12TH DAY OF THE RAINY SEASON

Irises rot on the altar of Our Lady of Remedies.
Sores in the back of my mouth cast doubt on the efflorescent body.
After downpours some trees synchronize their flowering.
What makes the masses into masses?
The bond is of a libidinal nature. Like the shivering leaves of a mimosa tree.
Chickadees fight in a puddle of gravel.
I carry a Nikon into the sanctuary.
Regard the saints with their gold leaf and neon, their porcelain gaze and silver plates.
But who watches over the woman going to bed in a motel alone?
Who is the patron of “Your finger is in my eye”? Light particles rinse marble arms.
A 20-liter tank of natural gas rolls across courtyard tile like a lung filled with bells.
Civilization, writes André Tridon, surrounds motherhood with many complications.
Lord offer us your patience, your therapy, an unlit candle, a suitable shutter speed.
A teenage boy tugs at his crotch, then gestures toward yellowing roses in the sacristy.

EVENTUAL DARLING

Trees step out of the DMZ to be named. Vague branches smolder.
Ginkgo and litchi, royal palm and teak, rise like an alphabet. I prune a grammarian’s path.

Leaves shaped like feathers, we call pinnate; palmate when shaped like hands. But nothing accounts for how we respond to their gestures. Silver backed, searing green. A meadow’s edge is arbitrary. And patrolled. I witness close-cropped hills unfold, anonymous, as a page torn out, unable to conjure up a face that could move me.

At a detention camp on Galang Island, Vietnamese refugees sculpt a Statue of Liberty. Pure products of motherboards and strip mines. Welding awl and machete. Our lady smiles, wide-lipped, broad-browed and innocent. She clutches a crude pine bouquet instead of a tablet; a parrot where she should hold a torch. The bird draws out its wings. What stories should we read from such plumage?

And yet we are best when adulterous, when we mispronounce or misspeak a phrase. On a day bed, we make love: eyes swollen, palms wide. And it is like clear cutting. It is like agent orange. Storms of seraphim. Clouds of flame.
3RD DAY OF THE RAINY SEASON

Mist treads down the mountain roof by roof to rest beside me.
White-tongued bougainvillea embrace a fishtail palm.
Romance plays no part.
Cuts of raw beef fill flatbeds hurling up the hill.
I sit with my legs closed, a single woman edging a plaza in Taxco.
My gaze zigzags like a taxi through the developing Tuesday.
A downpour rinses the municipal palace; ether stuns the cortex.
Dawn is a damp hand slipped beneath my knee.
A farmhand in front of a Banamex shakes water from the brim of
his hat.
La limpieza es calidad de vida.
A boy opens his mouth to swallow the droplets.
Exaggerated tenderness, writes André Tridon, is a cover for the death
wish.
Propane canisters rattle, church bells come ragged as a second pulse.
Romance plays no part.
Coming down the mountain like a fist I can feel inside of me, a kick.
Whole neighborhoods numb to the needlework of rain.

EVENTUAL DARLING

11,000 handmaids swaddle an intersection,
every hood ornament contemplates the manifest
ribs of a city--Kanpur--
factories blur across shoulders
in amber shawls, raw cotton, positively
erotropic it's easy to fall
in love, symphonies of iridescent trinkets
flexing tonic chords a wet nurse
on the western curb
arouses fender and jasmine,
glances off her driver's side mirror
billow and urge
as vendors flood crosswalks
hawking pigment and carrion.
Along the Pan American Highway, farmhands wade through fields of roses. 
Pills linger on the tongue like moths on water. 
Droplets of pollen slip from anther to stamen. 
I wait at a tollbooth with market bag and notebook. 
A stem's placability should not be mistaken for delicateness. 
"Breathe deep," the doctor told me and slid his stethoscope like a coin over my chest. 
A seat by window suffices to stitch the world together. 
I consider the number of heartbeats per minute within this pasture of traffic. 
Exaggerated mania for identification, writes André Tridon, is a symptom of weakness. 
Vaya con dios. Frene con motor. 
During a season of vineyard prescriptions, I sketch market produce and bullrings. 
When fertilization take place, ovaries swell, each petal folds like a fist. Before a sloshing door at the back of the bus, who wouldn't resent the IMF? 
Along the Pan American Highway, a beekeeper tends the blue cabinets of his hives. 
A billboard celebrates: 300,000 more miles of pavement. 

Nestlings idle, scatter, spark from a banyan tree in piston and parabola bent to ripening hydroelectric streams; canebrakes waiver with flight; tender chimes soothe the adolescent forest then launch at the least of a turnpike. 

Under latent sky, streetlights flame in ochreous, tar thick veins; cutaneous roads fleck the feathered night; positivists consent: each wingflash mars the ink-blot tropics. 

Brasilia! 

Brasilia!
5TH DAY OF THE RAINY SEASON

Between the window washer and curb, a galaxy swirls.
Between windshield and rag, office towers sway.
Old ladies pluck orange candies from pink market tubs.
Passionflower vines capture red and blue wavelengths of light.
Any search requires a preposition as in “Estoy buscando a mi amigo”.
Tradewinds skirt a Flamazul truck with its license plates from the interior.
Water trembles in a cistern with nothing to heat it.
The frigid woman, writes André Tridon, is a cripple or a neurotic.
Jacaranda trees bloom like lightning strikes.
“To the girl with the prettiest eyes,” he says handing me his knife.
Nutrient cycling occurs through a process similar to valet parking.
Between my lover and myself, a preposition stiffens like cinder block brick.
A guard in a bulletproof vest hoses a pick-up.
Every time he's out of my sight: “Estoy buscando a mi querido”.
The window washer slaps a twisted red rag against the curb.
A broom licks the sidewalk. A slice of flesh-red mamey slips from his blade.

EVENTUAL DARLING

A spire, a scalpel, a needle or the flagpole in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral,
the horizon pitches south, demands and remedies written out long hand on cotton sheets
bleach scented, sweat damp as mothers-in-law before the National Palace sell plastic flowers
from a wrought iron fence, indiscriminate in class or species, soldiers lower the flag in spread
and crease, a fevered palm unfurls in a gesture, in a fresco, of nation building towards me
to transmit infective histories (just a twinge) the Keynesian vaccine inspires steeple
like the Pemex Tower or the Torre Latino or a tar-driven scourge of rooftops.
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Eventual Darling

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EVENTUAL DARLING

Cables of dust bind the farmers’ wives to plastic flowers, pesticides, bikes,
to plastic sacks of cassava; in slipknot and pitch, the present perfected voice of Agence France-Presse slingshots through east Kinshasa.

Inside the canvas, a picture does not finish.

Shepherds of reflex and deviation with preferences for “sticks trowels, knives,” with preferences for nipple clamps and half-light, chase flocks of pandemics across withered earth
to swat and prod at syphilophiae scars,
while the rooftops of a processing plant glisten like hand mirrors,
while the tanks of a refinery shimmer like a silver backed comb.
Notes:

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1. Mary Burger, Eating Belief
2. Camille Roy, Dream Girls
4. Fanny Howe, parts from Indivisible
5. Eleni Sikelianos, from The Book of Jon
6. Laura Mullen, Translation Series
7. Beth Murray, 12 Horrors
8. Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Audience
9. Laura Wright, Everything Automatic
10. Lisa Jarnot, Nine Songs
11. Kathleen Fraser, Soft Pages
12. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Draft 43: Gap
13. Nicole Brossard, Le Cou de Lee Miller/The Neck of Lee Miller
15. Adeena Karasick, The Arugula Fugues VII-VIII
16. Aja Couchois Duncan, Commingled: Sight
17. Lila Zemborain, PAMPA
18. Cheryl Pallant, Spontaneous
19. Lynne Tillman, chapters from Weird Fucks and “Dead Talk”
20. Abigail Child, Artificial Memory—vol 1 & 2 ($6 set)
21. Deborah Richards, Put A Feather In It
22. Norma Cole, BURNS
23. Jocelyn Saidenberg, Dusky
24. Gail Scott, Bottoms Up
25. Carla Harryman, DIMBLUE and Why Yeli
26. Anne Waldman, [THINGS] SEEN/UNSEEN
27. kari edwards, a diary of lies
28. Bhanu Kapil Rider, from The Wolf Girls of Midnapore
29. Rosmarie Waldrop, Trace Histories
30. Tina Darragh, from rule of dumb
31. Chris Tysk, Mother, I (fragment of a film script)
32. Jennifer Moxley, The Occasion
33. Zhang Er, Cross River, Pick Lotus
34. Tonya Foster, A Swarm Of Bees In High Court
35. Lauren Gudath, Animal & Robot
36. Alice Notley, IPHIGENIA
37. Caitlin Mcdonnell, Dreaming the Tree
38. Eileen Myles, We, the Poets
39. Suzanne Wise, from The Blur Model
40. Lydia Davis, Cape Cod Diary
41. Elaine Equi, Castle, Diamond, Swan
42. Maggie Nelson, Something Bright, Then Holes
44. Julie Patton, “Car Tune” & Not So Bella Donna
45. Joan Larkin, Boston Piano
47. Anne Tardos, A Noisy Nightingale Understands a Tiger’s Camouflage Totally
48. Michelle Naka Pierce, 48 Minutes Left
49. Veronica Corpuz, Untitled
50. Leslie Scalapino, ‘Can’t’ is ‘Night’
51. Jen Benka, A Revisioning of the Preamble
52. Susan Briante, Neotropics: A Romance in Field Notes.

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