

Contraindication



Paul Murufas

Contraindication by Paul Murufas.

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illusions & actualities

I

the poet's passion
is fine dust
in a windswept world
which promises
her death

II

unshakable foundations
shake
& seize & shake
to maim
our vanities

III

this candle I have burned
down to the holder; a desperate flame
licking the last of its insane life.

words written for strangers
have brought me grief.

to flinch at the touch of a pen,
at my own hand

IV

this
mountain flower
will also be
drowned
in the floodwaters

V

better and better
you heal
uninterrupted

VI

the less they know, the more they will be paid to teach you.

approaching the absolute zero
we are rich forever

VII

from anarchism to asthma.

suffocating
in a badjacket
on a planet of snitches.

VIII

a hand wrapped
too tight
on the blade of a knife.

transferred anger
clinging to the gash
of its possessor

IX

frivolous notes
from the limbo
of being alive

winestems twisted
on the thumb
of a vacant heaven.

X

my illusion was corrosive of the real.

here, and here, and here, but impossible to point to.

the jasmine blooms
pressed between your notebooks
scented the air, but in a fantasy.
I was alone, out of the sun in a shadow.

XI

now that I have found you
we will both walk lonely paths.

can't see you the truth
without form or shape

or a corresponding lie
to degrade it

in the mass:
a solitude of myself

you of all people
were alone, alone, alone
a hundred times over
with your soul set fire
by ignitions of this rotting world

XII

buried ink stains are resurfaced
in an act of haunting;

an illusion an illusion. an actuality.

its psychedelic plasmas

lacerated
in their spiritual encounter

hands wrenched from barrels of icewater,

plunging down again--

people are trying to help me but i don't want to get better

my emotional life has
a journalistic inaccuracy.

god's not dead
but the christians

know he is half-dead
or badly wounded.

what you do next
is impossible

reverse engineer
a fix for these structural problems.

we are sewing
the stuffed animal a lab coat

☞ from here on
I refer all questions to the doctor.

brown eyes close in the sun
the heat could bleach even your mind

a lizard dashes
over rock

while I am humiliated
by the absence of a text message.

what is it when you hit
your breaking point

then revert to
the bending point

like that bible story, when the patriarch's

Contraindication

Started wanting to cry during our
mysterious tarot reading. How do you know
when The Queen of Swords is reborn
on The Star?

of course this was the least of
my troubles. Adjacent
to a gravitational
orbit but undefined by it.

no longer mystical theatrics
but a pathological theatrics--

--like shattering a bottle
 & sweeping up the glass.

an addictive tendency
murders
the creative tendency.

blank hours

scrubbed and unscrambled
 in the tilting bathwaters
 of oblivion.

such
 language
 doesn't deserve a keyboard

some tortured word
 born in
 contraindication

no longer return home.
you must now--hunching--

dig yourself a grave on the spot
or spontaneously ascend Skyward.

momentum of clarity
understood nothing from the beginning

The Mysteries

after Yiannis Ritsos

she lifted her hand to his arm--
or was it the chill coming in
from the other room. a faint

champagne bottle fizzed in
the background. Now there
were pretexts behind pretexts,

reasons for delay that folded in
upon themselves, in a sort of knotwork.
his train of thought

had been interrupted. Was it politics
that she wanted to talk about? No.
They had run out of time for trivialities.

A car alarm--for the second time--
set the dog off barking,
as one response triggers

another. She had led him by hand
down the stairs. Or instead, he had fallen down
them in surprise--those surprising staircases--

& been grievously injured.
Isn't that confusion--isn't that seduction
& confusion like reading poetry?

The Pattern (Ghazal Exercise)

O heart! O blood locked in this holding pattern--
bound to that valentine--pink paper, your folding pattern.

ambitious woman, can you win a whole life?
those bronze, those gold and silver patterns.

an iron nail pierced your foot twice.
bleed out--behold!-- a pattern.

like our damaged family tree trunk--
both our fathers, and their balding pattern.

once you cursed me with your steam--
burning water, in your scalding pattern.

hold it in and erupt, volcano.
from no action to a molten pattern.

or one thread before next--a dress weaver,
missing thimbles and her stolen pattern.

Snake Villanelle (after Sylvia Plath's "Medallion")

The serpent eats its tail upon the rocks
arranged grotesquely by a child's hand near the fence
stoking my passion, which locks and unlocks.

dinner demands silence; it never talks.
blind to the white-out sky above, immense,
the serpent eats its tail upon the rocks.

while a migrating bird swarm honks and flocks
& flees this country rapidly, a weird inference
stoking my passion which both locks and unlocks.

without a wound, a snake may have a pox
& slither two sunsets west from its parents
where the serpent eats its tail between the rocks

& doesn't recall when it outran the dog and fox
creatures far more vexed by the oakwood fence
stoking two passions, the locked and unlocked.

& basilisks consulted for my starry talks
have swallowed a receipt which they were lent.
The serpent eats its tail upon the rocks,
stoking my passion, which both locks and unlock.

Drones II, a workshop exercise

After Nomi Stone's "Drones"

I. The imagination does not

A sea of lies and compartmentalization.
More dead civilians are not
explicitly popular on social media.

Trigger, spin, release: *Drone enters stage left*
The curtain falls.

Death of a family offstage.

Curtain call: rapturous applause for the brave pilot,
His brave family, & all of their innumerable sacrifices

II. When reason taps out

the Gorgon stare. I stare there.

A robot and a man kill together. They kill so well.
Patriot mommys baking a pie for the soldiers
of Creech Air Force Base: *Indian Springs, Nevada.*

The United States is too geographically vast
for a revolution at Indian Springs: overfar
to affordably U-haul a guillotine.

& the opposition

dies

on the road to the desert.

III. Ash

"You served your country
& now we're going to *give back* with our lowest rate
On car insurance"

Absolutely impolite to call an air force pilot *those fascist sacks of shit.*
Of the 372 images I encounter today
Will I see

Ash & blood in an eye-catching video

red dust in the air, like powdered sugar *removed due to terms of service violation*

The government censors reacting quicker than the leakers,

quicker than “an uproar on social media”, in an article

Whose video is *removed due to terms of service violation*

Terms violated by

over-honest videos of police shooting teen boys in the back (“*our heroes in blue*”)

‡ cellphone footage of a mosque bombed March 23rd (“*their outstanding service*”)

Plug the leak! Before we *demoralize our troops, demoralize law enforcement*

Before we *contradict the official spokesperson for CenCom*

Before we *start to see an erosion in respect for authority*

before the kids put down their Instagram and pick up a rock to throw.

2018: further meditations on drones

I

the buzz of hell. of the devil on triggerhair.
shame generated noise scorned by the future animal

II

the police drones hovered benignly,
their motors buzzing with an insistence
poets of the future
will avoid referring to as

fascistic

in their actualized fear
of fascistic robotic police tools

III

a twister game of boots and necks.
All the exploited
tangled on precarious dots

overhead, the buzzings of hell.
devil on triggerhair.

steel rotors & velvet gloves.
A package, delivered.
with fascistic insistence.

in cooperation with our partners in the military.

IV

therewasaproblemtherewasadrone

an unverified instruction. *proceed to--*

[indistinguishable]
target target target. some adderall-induced codeword

ssssssssssssssss

tinfoil waterfall
in his ears.

V
operator gazing vacantly,
enviously across wormholes & Godviews
& the length of a life

A deathly sweat, in microtorrents,
dripping
from the construct's animator

No up or down votes on the murder sprees.
with fascistic insistence. Death itself, empowered,
& beyond representation.

the distractions.

an image of a real dog
augmented by the superimposition of a dog filter.

a picture of your friend
and a virtual conversation
about where your
friend and your other
friend will get coffee.

a real dog and a real person
with the dog filter but not that
standard dog filter, a pug filter,
because your friend has a real pug.

paranoid poem for times of turmoil

“My childhood was happy. It had nothing to do with the way I turned out later.”

-Roberto Bolaño

in the quarantine, i can nurse a dying dream
my tunnel vision, my science fiction and noir

now everything's falling to pieces-
i am looking for the winning scratcher
stuffed into a trashbag of hopes and failures

you were the one who told me
that god was like the lottery
and would give me a second chance.

i was resigned to drowning in the disaster
my horoscope said “run while you still can.”

then we ran out of coffee,
the neighbors were watering their lawns
and putting out a fire on the sidewalk.

the next day things were totally back to normal,
everyone was taking their pills on schedule
and we did laps around the bed and then slept again

a writer once told me to dive into my craft,
with no swimming lessons and without an inflatable vest

next i was being waterboarded by the muse
in Guantanamo bay, renovated as a space station
to save Earth's reputation

i died and came back to life
as our rocket left the earth,
and saw the angels
but still woke up as an atheist

now i can sustain momentum
long enough to scream in space
and disintegrate in a dust
on the thruster engines

she said love was like an oil spill,
we would all be sorry afterwards
but they'd never turn the drills off

that was the last thing i remember,

before the memories i ruthlessly suppressed.

i picked you flowers in heaven—
you were an angel and i was bucket of water.

then we were washing the walls off,
graffiti marks and oil paint running down a rag

first i was writing a novel,
then it turned into the vietnam memorial
and nobody cared or could tell the difference

i am joining a conspiracy of fish
to smash the windows out
at Aquarium of the Pacific

don't let them see you flop
I want to believe
we can find a way out to the ocean

now the informants
are jockeying for position,
pushing and shoving
for a handler in the highest places

they'll throw us all in a mass grave
and someone

will pay a robot
to kick the dirt in.

i am melting like a gram of heroin
someone is sucking me up a straw
on the strength of a death wish

soon we'll be closing in on it,
and live with the risk
like a bank robber out the door.

i've overcharged the batteries—
someone clean the acid
from my metal disc

a spider's web is spun
& spun & spun

& spun again
when the fly
breaks bad
for the long haul

a poem could explode at the end
they've left me here with the matches
and no plan B

underground, in the bunker,
digging out a tunnel to the planet's core

poem from the future for an imaginary friend

and on that terrible day
you said something funny which stuck with me:

"we'll go the way of credit cards soon–
all they'll care about is the numbers on the side of us."

and i think you're right,
and it's better if we all died in a fire
which would be more of a justice than anything
recorded for a court stenographer,
courtly bailiffs,
& the post-metal detector audience at the courtside

which is all besides the point
if your more immediate struggle
is flying too close to the sun

or running
out of oxygen
in an under
water cave.

my voice is too loud, and

even a poem can be too political, and get ruined–
but on the other hand, you could ruin a poem on purpose,
and be famous for ruining everything–
which would make more sense than alarm clocks,
or the total cost of a root canal.
numbers, numbers!
in the future i will drive around a chariot of dinosaurs–

"my other car is the extinction of all life on earth"

and no one will laugh, because they'll know
to keep
their mouths closed
in a dust bowl

a better use of my talents

once i was a lover of poetry,
and the cinema,
but now i think
a better use of my talent
would be slamming my head against the wall.

we should watch the news:
you'll say "I just can't believe it!"
and I will measure the painkillers.

now I am buying a parrot
to chew through the walls
of this edible cage
and flap around my head
while the ceiling fan gives me a haircut.

but wait—
you are leaving, headed out the door,

and the parrot squawking
no such thing as a free refill
there's no such thing as a free refill there's
no such thing

studies in nature

I

once a woman came into my home
& told me there was a ghost behind her.
and how do you evaluate that neutrally

II

phones make us worse than the animals.
or not as good,
if you forcefully change
Perspective.

III

rage and despair,
they run in the family--
termites chewing
on the bitter wall.

IV

paramour to the seaweed.
kissed by leeches
swallowed by a fish.

V

if you want peace
someone hands you a microphone.
if you want to scream
they put
tape over your mouth.

VI

human before human.
ancestor of ash
from the boiling mud

VII

nobody trusts the snake
but the snake charmer

and the snake charmer's apprentice.
a necklaced friend
tongue to cheek in his sleep.

VIII

sentinel of the waterfall
nourished vapors
hidden in the spill

buyers and sellers

I

the easiest way to get something is to take it from
somebody else.

II

what I can't speak, I can't poison.
days grown long
spewing venom on the wind.

III

I am selling a coffin on the internet for \$500.

IV

the dealer used to say
a cop was not a problem.
I was always overthinking things back then--
like rolling a balloon between my gums.

V

this may be the floor,
but they tell me
that there has to be
a ceiling.

VI

I'm not buying what you're selling.
unless you are selling cigarettes.

VII

gain without purchase.
delinquent & petty
in the smallness
of their conspiracy.

VIII

I am not so fragile as to run at the first sight of trouble.
twisting & thrashing

against frozen stone
in the labyrinth.

IX

nothing will be free if you always remember to pay.
like election day--
when the devil dresses up
& they throw a party.

X

for my final trick
I'll romanticize political violence.
they'll say
 oh
 that's so fascinating,
 how you're angry.

XI

from affirmation to acidization.
burning on the sheets
in the room filled with broken things.

XII

and now every sort of fascism
will be acceptable & encouraged
just so long as it is barely disguised

XIII

a prison grows
from the outside in
I don't need to speak
for the breeze to move

XIV

a soothsayer for my soothsayer.
how did we get
to this privatized wing
of the hospital.

XV

now this bag of feelings
will be shredded in the trash compactor
recyclable in nothing
irreducible

personal vendettas

I

exercise in my anger.
you & you & you & you
who have wronged me

II

you were further away
than the stardust.
where oh where
did they polarize
our electrons

III

i still have scores to settle.
they've written me off,
they've pushed it aside to the margins

IV

one poem for the wolves
torn to bones
under rigorous analysis

V

bad form in a social setting.
stunning disregard
for the comfort of others.

VI

a multiplication of vices.
self-inflicted
assassination of character.

VII

in my dream i was on trial.
the 2:00am
emotional indictment.

VIII

she said "something just feels off",
& that's one way of putting it.

a charged-up language
of blowback & collateral damage.

IX

i could be more specific if more specific was what i wanted to be;
no, you don't have to explain, i understand well enough.

X

my work-out routine—
shift blame slowly from the right shoulder
to the left.

XI

It's not a purge
until you're really clean.

but I suppose you would know

about scenes

‡ their vicious in-fighting.

XII

turn up heat
in the search for self
leave me on to boil
in this act of reduction.

XIII

something dear to me has been misplaced.
in one of these wooden drawers,
or with me when I left here on vacation

XIV

Next Rest Stop 22 miles—
I resolved to myself that I wouldn't rest any time before then.
‡ even after, I wouldn't rest at all. not even when I got out of the car,
and laid down in a bed or on the floor,
I wouldn't relax, or rest,
‡ nobody would ever get the jump on me-- I would already know--
‡ I'd be gone-- I'd be down the street, turning over a fruit stand ‡
diving into the water--only to resurface under a dock
‡ then plunge under the water again—
‡ disappear, always awake ‡ never resting at all

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About the author

Paul B. Murufas is the author of four self-published poetry chapbooks. In 2018, he released *i tried to help you but then literally fascism* a visual poem featuring original photography. You can read it for free here. His nonfiction writing has covered a range of issues, including surveillance, the environment, police brutality, and the drug war.

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