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FINAL EDIT

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Titles of poems: conceived in the twixt
born of transgression
fissures
nomads
cannibal
to the limen

Biographical note: Alison Pryer has taught in Germany, Japan, and Egypt, and more recently at the University of British Columbia where she completed her doctoral studies. She is currently a full-time mother and occasional writer. Her work has appeared in numerous North American and international academic and literary journals.

This group of found poems explores the interrelated themes of identity, hybridity and liminality. They grew from a period of reading that I undertook in order to more fully understand my family's Anglo-Irish identity, and the significance of my "accidental" discovery of our Jewish heritage – a long-buried family secret. The seeming contrariness of my family's conflictive belief systems had always puzzled me, and I sought to make sense of our family's stories and silences in order to recognize their place in broader cultural narratives.

To my delight, I discovered that one may have a view of identity that is anti-essentialist. Rather than thinking of identity as located in immutable difference, in those all-too-familiar, fixed binaries – in our family's case, the dual polarities of Irish and English, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, etc. – identity may be conceived of as an ongoing process of hybridity in which one's sense of self is continuously made and re-made. In such a paradigm, each person's particular, subjective understanding of their ethnic, cultural, gender, and class locations provides a narrative wellspring of stories of self, which flow into and constitute the vast delta of cultural narrative. The narrative fictions of a hybrid identity are chaotic, however, and are often experienced as somewhat problematic. Different forms of culture do not fit together well, and do not easily coexist. Still, the continuous construction and reconstruction of an essentialist identity of solidarity and belonging – in quest of the immaculate, singular sense of "I" – is in itself an alienating and tedious process.

In the final three poems of this group, I continue my exploration of identity – liminal identity, in particular. For ecologists, the term "limen" describes the especially fertile area that exists at the border of two ecosystems. Social scientists also employ the

word “limen” to describe the frontier, the margin, the border between one thing and another, between this and that, known and unknown, knowable and unknowable.

Liminars are, of course, the people who inhabit this fecund space. Their political, cultural and social positioning, their consciously chosen non-fixity of identity, their heightened awareness and simultaneous disregard for institutional frameworks and boundaries, mark them as marginal to the mainstream.

I have long felt myself to be a kind of liminar – a person marginal in many subtle ways to the dominant society. Thus, the metaphor of the nomad, a territorial liminar, is one that resonates strongly with me. The nomadic Other, simply through being, is a disruptive cultural force, a presence that precipitates change and cultural movement. There is, however, much freedom and power in the liminal life. The true liminar will continue to abandon the centre, choosing instead to speak from the margins, regularly shifting locations, roles and voices (as and when required), continuing always to challenge the dominant culture around them.

A further note to readers – following the well-established tradition of found poetry, I did not compose the words of each poem. Rather, I have edited and arranged fragments of original theoretical texts to create new texts in new forms. All of the words of each poem were found in another text. After each poem I cite its original textual source.

CONCEIVED IN THE TWIXT

dis placement –
paradoxical starting point
for understanding the parameters
of being longing
(in the modern world) –
entails a challenge
to understanding
identity and culture.

identity –
conceived in the twixt
of displacement and reinvention.
representations of identity
are at best
a rear view
of the past pushing us forward into
the future.

Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The turbulence of migration: Globalizing, deterritorialization, and hybridity*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

BORN OF TRANSGRESSION

The boundary,
outer limit of a first person form,
defining space – a cluster – that is ours, my own,
cultured, safe, harmonious,
and their space,
other, hostile, dangerous, chaotic.

Every culture begins
dividing the world
into its own
– internal space –
and their own
– external space.

Turbulent processes of identity
need an exclusive boundary,
mapping us and them . . .
the hybrid, born out of transgression
of this boundary figures
danger, loss, degeneration,

but,
if
the boundary is marked and traced to solicit
(ex)change and inclusion,
the hybrid yields
strength and vitality.

Such uncertain value,
positioned always
in relation
to mobile purity
along axes of
in / ex / clusion.

Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The turbulence of migration: Globalizing, deterritorialization, and hybridity*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

FISSURES

Hybridity,
identity constructed
through negotiation
of difference,
the presence of fissures/
gaps/
contradictions,
(not a sign
of failure).

Hybridity,
(not the combination, accumulation, fusion or synthesis
of components),
an energy
field of different forces,
the chaotic movement of
assemblage,
a journey of initiation,
and process of change.

Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The turbulence of migration: Globalizing, deterritorialization, and hybridity*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

NOMADS

Nomads –
territorial liminars –
exist beyond the
reach of the law in a
t h r e s h o l d
betwixt and between
orders,
their marginality,
their distance
from centuries of power,
their social impotence
the source of their
liberty,
equality,
fraternity.

Norton, A. (1988). *Reflections on political identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

CANNIBAL

High theory –
a cannibal
assimilating all new all alien
bodies,
but nomads run faster endure longer
trips
than most,
are not assimilated
easily.

Haraway, cited by Braidotti, R. (1996). *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

TO THE LIMEN

O limen,
fructile chaos,
fertile possibly
always striving after new . . .
O limen,
storehouse of nothingness.

Turner, cited by Aoki, T., Low, M., and Palulis, P. (2001, April). *Re-reading Metonymic moments with/in living pedagogy*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Seattle, Washington.