

The Palimpsestina

Aryan Kaganof

“Birth was the death of them.”

Samuel Beckett, *A Piece of Monologue*

The Palimpsestina, about which I will speak today, is
constituted around an aesthetic
and an ethic of the fragment.

How is one to read these miners' disappearances,
this dimension of where things are *not* in the scene?
If that break constitutes something painful,
the source of that pain is not rediscoverable;
the pain is born out in the very ontology of the palimpsestina.

Any fragment bears each fragment's fragile mutilation,
which is to say the very form of mutilation, in them.

This mathematical transitivity is founded on grammatical
transitivity, and the *mise-en-abîme* of transivities
extends so long as the commanding officer's voice has not yet declared
'cease fire' to this expanded field of presences.

The Palimpsestina is
marked by forms of obsession,
repetition and rumination, the explicit chain
of names in the palimpsestina takes this broader logic
and literalizes, or radicalizes, presence,
a fitting anti-narrative for the palimpsestina's crumbling fragments
about Marikana.

I

dust

from the unconscious

festered

due to the gradual deterioration
of language and

is also

operating in

that asymptotic border zone

to complete the relational loop

again.

II

The palimpsestina reveals
densely packed dust
from the unconscious

We can now turn our attention to impersonal spillage
and a fragment
of *emergence*,
of *erasure*,
due to the gradual deterioration of
the unconscious.

the palimpsestina is
driven by the fear of
language decay and
is also an aesthetic-ludic practice,
operating in both the bucket
of forgotten miners
holding on
to fragments
from the unconscious,
to complete the relational (Möbius) loop.

Begin again.

III

incantation

erupts from the edge of language,
a threnody actually moves, not merely moving
gaps in ekphrasis and confession,
time unleashed from language as a means to an end
a way out of the machinic systems we claim to reject

schizophonic, ever-disintegrating form
without saying 'we lack language
adequate to history' we jiving.

IV

language-machines

making possible

a certain concatenation of events

a paranoiac system

belonging solely to the symbolic order

of the palimpsestina

The act of writing nevertheless finds mistakes, blunders,
ruptures, hiatuses, glitches, etc
threatening always to relegate language to
the impossibility of ending.

V

The palimpsestina reveals
something
catastrophic
densely packed dust
from the unconscious

We can now turn our attention to
a fragment of found text more
historically charged than
different images of *emergence*
of the traces of *erasure*,
known as *scriptio anterior* (former writing)

Colonised by the growing grime on the
crest of the koppie, signalling a sporous
invasion, suffering from cognitive dissonance,
this bucket of living death invariably shifts
my thinking to the fear of police and is also
an aesthetic-ludic practice, driven by impersonal spillage operating on the bucket
of forgotten miners in that asymptotic border zone

of fragments for the future to behold and decode,
since the the palimpsestina is driven by impersonal spillage
from the unconscious, there will always be forever lost parts,
but time is made visible (historical) through the evidence
in the koppie to complete the relational (Möbius) loop.

Begin again.

VI

a crisis in language

epistemological paralysis

of infinite transitivity

the presence of what is absent

(that justice which is not yet)

is something dizzying

of ontological

impossibility

the voice shouting 'cease fire'

is the only real thing

remembering

and anticipating 'the world'

VII

We hear in the background the sighing and groaning of other voices -
which gradually change into moans and shrieks.

The koppie is hiding a violent gesture,
identity the bogus nothing more than a Chat GPT nevermind
nevertheless yak yak yakkety yak in the vile bile tick-tiktoking Insta identity,
sometimes interrupted by a dry cough, zero point of which is all yada yada yada
groping around beneath more nevermind
traces of delulu sound mingle deliriously everywhere rapidly accelerating
post-human stroboscophiliamachinic bilebloodburst
behind the cutefaçade
decohere out of an irreducible difference vortex,
feedback, signal without receiver

Envoi

advancing identities simply transform
mind muscles into grid of flesh *and* an autopsy.

VIII

incantation

polyphonic

“cutting-room floor.”

replication

erupts from the edge of language,

a threnody to snippets of dialogue

actually moves, not merely moving

gaps in narrative,

a landscape of ekphrasis and confession,

time unleashed from a dank, hiss (and history) of relentless radio static

escape from language as a means to an end

a way out of the “nothing, starts s e e p i n g through”

The palimpsestina forces us to reclaim

part of the machinic systems we pretend to reject.

schizophonic, ever-disintegrating narrative

created out of dispossession and estrangement

a form

without compromise

saying one thing

we lack language adequate

to history we living

(‘cease fire’)

IX

Here the reader begins
in abrasion
and line erosion,
as if the poet did not (completely) trust words.

Cartloads of bodies were
thrown into the palimpsestina

and very close to a barbed wire fence.

This palimpsestina is always about
our perception
again and again

Nothing happens, there is no entertainment.

X

The palimpsestina reveals itself again not (only) as erasure

Nothing ever disappears *completely*,

evidence of the catastrophic

two glass bottles of densely packed dust

The palimpsestina is driven by impersonal spillage from the collective unconscious

We can now turn our attention to preserving the

small tin containing a tightly bound cluster

of rusted evidence that will not be produced in court

and a fragment of found text is often more poetic

and more historically charged than a phenomenological experience

of framing different images of *emergence*

such as the painting term *pentimento*

whereby previous marks or forms emerge

by the effects of the traces of *erasure*,

known as *scriptio anterior* (former writing),

due to the gradual deterioration of infinite layers

of contents and contexts available

when all perspectives devalue their inevitable ruination,

the p a l i m p s e s t i n a is thus driven
by impersonal spillage from the collective
unconscious to
the koppie, and finally,
up to the *Stachybotrys chartarum* stain on the bootprints signalling a sporous
invasion, the palimpsestina is driven towards the unmasking of other
murdered bodies.

This bucket of living death overwhelms and nauseates
my throat and entrails, while my heart invariably
shifts my thinking to the fear of language and
the unconscious works across consensus reality and quantum time —

a temporal depth, the paradox of miners ‘deserted by capitalism’.

It is also an aesthetic-ludic practice, ie. the palimpsestina
is driven by perpetual spillage from the container of superfluous bodies
of miners’ remains
in that asymptotic border zone
between multiple levels of
traces of that process of transformation
clues in the fragments for the future to behold and decode,
since the palimpsestina is *a coding system*

Begin again.

XI

particled language

absurdity

meaning

framed.

volatile

degeneration

of the source

a dust of events

uselessly complicated

koppie.

meaning is hysteria,

and stuck together.

a network of mirrors

obliterates the contours

of the original fireline.

XII

task

language

incantation

violence

meditation

abuse

mass transformities

polyphonic

a text body whose shape its meaning doesn't quite fit

text created and then destroyed, relegated to the "cutting-room floor"

text-expanding replication

erupts from the constant and so on, and so on

at the edge of language

transcend language

into a threnody to failed and delayed liberation

not neutral

so fierce, so fraught

snippets of dialogue

but we cannot understand it

individual letters

an onslaught of scrolling text

the palimpsestina actually moves, not merely moving

through the gaps in narrative,

only a landscape of

koppie language.

The time of the koppie is always an ekphrasis and a confession,

time unleashed from chronology and prediction;

time which resides in a dank, hiss (and history) of relentless radio static.

escape from language that merely *means*,

language as a means to an end
a way out of the exhaustion of definition and concrete meanings.
Beckett tells us “nothing, starts seeping through.”

The koppie forces us to become part of the machinic systems we claim to reject.

schizophonic, pataphysical ricochet of puns and word-play,
an ever-disintegrating narrative

about the ever-disintegrating direction (‘south’)
created out of dispossession and estrangement.

a form
without compromise

saying only one thing

we lack a language adequate
to the history we are living.

black
refrain cuts off
raucously,
and suddenly,
They are laughing raucously

End of Part I

Voice-over: "It was a lovely afternoon,"
followed by fade out to an ostensible end.
(voice-over): "They are laughing raucously."

Here the reader begins with the confrontation
and the landscape is *in me*.

Several cuts to closely-whispered words of the barbed wire
resulting in abrasion
and line erosion, the breaking up of stanzas

into smaller phrases.
as if the poet did not (completely) trust words.

Through the movement of the lines of text, the reader actively
pushes the image into the background,
as it is impossible to concentrate on image
and text at the same time:

Cartloads of their bodies were transported
or thrown into the wasteland.

This
is not a love song
but a 'cease fire',

You are left for a moment to linger and/or endure
and very close to a barbed wire fence.

The events at the koppie threaten to elude our perception again and again.
Nothing happens, there is no entertainment.

XIV

Envoi

constant restatements or
reappropriations or
accumulations of
perversities

black bodies
invisible black
“No more laughter, prepare for tears.”
But this is immediately followed by
laughing.
They are laughing raucously.

End of Part 2 Part 3 Follows

XV

The task is not only to change the world
but also to find an adequate language
with which to understand
one's own participation in it.

ANDRIES NTSHENYEHO

killed by police.

Language that is an incantation
against the power structures
that continue to propell
our society toward violence.

ANELE MDIZENI

killed by police.

Language that allows for a meditation on the theme
of power: in politics, in the subjugation
and abuse of other cultures,
and in our divided selves.

BABALO MTSHAZI

killed by police.

Language that is astutely attuned
to the pressured, violent,
mass transformities forced upon us.

BONGANI MDZA

killed by police.

Language that evokes the polyphonic,
the democratic,
the multitude.

BONGANI NQONGOPHELE

killed by police.

Language that, by inviting
multiple interpretations,
invites the reader's participation
in the creation of multiple meanings.

BONGINKOSI YONA

killed by police.

In the palimpsestina each object, image, instant,
becomes hyper-loaded with language,
roiling inside a text body
whose shape it doesn't quite fit.

FEZILE SAPHENDU

killed by police.

In the palimpsestina, language becomes dismantled
and reassembled every instant by what it *isn't* :
suggesting reams of text created
and then destroyed,
relegated to the "cutting-room floor."

JACKSON LEHUPA

killed by police.

This text-expanding replication goes so far out
that no matter what is in the palimpsestina,
there is always more beyond it,
giving definition to the space
of the as yet unseen self.

JANAVEKE RAPHAEL

killed by police.

Referred to by Deleuze as the “out-of-field,”
this space erupts from the constant awareness
that around the seen there is a larger set,
and around that a larger set, and so on, and so on.

KHANARE MONESA

killed by police.

Here the horror of unspeakable violence, and the joys
and challenges of reclaiming the body and sexuality
after violence, lie in what ends up *not* depicted
in the palimpsestina, what is always just there
at the edge of language, off-page.

MAFOLISI MABIYA

killed by police.

This “out-of-field” language always sets the tone,
a deep-seated feeling of regret or nostalgia or love
or hopelessness.

MAKHOSANDILE MKHONJWA

killed by police.

The poet's response to history is to transcend language,
to convert language into image,
and image into music —
and not just any music,
but a love song to liberation.

MGCINENI NOKI

killed by police.

Language is not a neutral tool,
the history of the peoples who belong to a language
and the hegemonic forces that would suppress
or obliterate both the language
and their people
are what make the palimpsestina so fierce, so fraught.

MODISAOTSILE SAGALALA

killed by police.

The palimpsestina contains
snippets of dialogue,
but we cannot understand it.

MOLEFI NTSOELE

killed by police.

We are compelled to see
the individual names and letters,

all the letters of the alphabet,
perpetually and indefinitely.

MONGEZELELI NTENETYA

killed by police.

The narrative, when it does come,
is delivered in an onslaught
of scrolling text.

MPHANGELI THUKUZA

killed by police.

The textures of the lines and stanzas
start to take on a strange form,
as when you stare at a word too long
and it begins to morph
into something unfamiliar.

MPHUMZENI NGXANDE

killed by police.

It is as if the palimpsestina
actually moves,
is not merely moving.

MVUYISI PATO

killed by police.

Everything comes to us
through the holes,
in the seepage,

through the gaps in history.

MZUKISI SOMPETA

killed by police.

There is no narrative,
only a landscape
of the massacre of language.

NKOSIYABO XALABILE

killed by police.

The time of the palimpsestina
is always 15:53,
Thursday 16 August, 2012.

NTANDAZO NOKHAMBAMBA

killed by police.

A dawn of singular intensity; both an ekphrasis
and a confession, a meditation and a mirror on time;
time unleashed from chronology and prediction;
time which resides in a dank, drunk, sordid hiss
(and history) of relentless radio static.

PHUMZILE SOKHANYILE

killed by police.

The palimpsestina's attempt to escape
from a language that merely *means*,
language as a means to an end,
language that stifles
as much as it could possibly liberate.

SEMI JOKANISI

killed by police.

The palimpsestina seeks a way out
of the exhaustion of definition
and concrete meanings
(‘cease fire’).

STELEGA GADLELA

killed by police.

Beckett tells us ‘To drill one hole
after another into language
until that which lurks behind,
be it something or nothing,
starts seeping though.’

TELANG MOHAI

killed by police.

The palimpsestina therefore exists
within a multiplicity
of positions,
modes,
and liberatory impulses,
modalities.

THABILE MPUMZA

killed by police.

The undecidability and multiple subject positions
in this palimpsestina are not postmodern strategies
of evasion but culturally specific modes of challenging
the relegation of private and public,

personal and political,
to separate spheres.

THABISO MOSEBETSANE

killed by police.

Here the muddying of the distinction
between freedom
and oppression, politics and sexuality,
victim and victimiser,
violation and the violated is methodological.

None of it meant to be.

Subconsciously. Inevitably.

THABISO THELEJANE

killed by police.

The palimpsestina forces us
to consider our own complicity;
to examine the ways in which we,
quietly and through inaction,
become part of the machinic systems
we claim to reject.

THEMBINKOSI GWELANI

killed by police.

At once strange and estranging, the palimpsestina
is a schizophrenic, pataphysical ricochet of puns
and word-play, allusions and collusions,
superimposed into an ever-disintegrating narrative
about the ever-disintegrating direction
called "*South Africa.*"

A namestate created out of
dispossession and alienation.

THOBISILE ZIBAMBELE

killed by police.

The poet
is no stranger
to estrangement.

JULIUS MANCOTYWA

killed by police.

The palimpsestina constitutes a life long search
for a form that might create the internal imaginative
condition for the refusal of oppressive state narratives,
and a determination to live, love, and speak
without compromise from the ground
of that refusal, no matter
how estranged or estranging the results.

JANEVEKE LIAU

killed by police.

If the palimpsestina is saying any one thing
it is that we lack a language adequate
to the history we are living.

HENRY PATO killed by police.

MICHAEL NGWEYI killed by police.

PATRICK AKHONA JIJASE killed by police.

CEBISILE YANA killed by police.

KHAWAMARE ELIAS MONESA killed by police.

JOHN LEDINGOANE killed by police.

THAPELO ERIC MABEBE killed by police.

TEMBELAKHE MATI killed by police.

SANDI TEYISE killed by police.

MLANDULI HENRY SABA killed by police.

Then the word was made flesh
Words like bullets shot
Will it be your turn next?
To be killed by police?

XVI

If this palimpsestina is unrecognizable in its mode of address,
if the semiotics of the death count
become pure cadence and rhythm
to which no response is possible
or adequate (the truest sense of the monological),
this is not a case of form obliterating sense,
but of the sense of deferral functioning
as the impossible assimilation of this massacre scene
into the word 'democracy'.

As the meat of the decaying palimpsestina fades,
we hear of the hillside post-mortem that it is
all "hair and skin and blood
and flesh and them and them and them..."
and suddenly,
They are laughing raucously

But this is immediately followed by
laughing.
They are laughing raucously.
repeated and slowed down,
beyond which there is nothing.

Voice-over: 'cease fire'

XVII

We are therefore ill-equipped to read
the ephemeral traces, non-appearances,
self-erasure and the violent disappearances
that structure the destructured palimpsestina;
built on ruins, it is constituted
around the koppie's devastation of origin or presence.

this bucket of living death overwhelms
and nauseates my throat and entrails,
while my heart invariably shifts my thinking
to the fear of language, since the palimpsestina is *a coding system*.

There will always be missing, dispersed, or forever lost parts,
but time is made legible through the evidence
of dust in the palimpsestina
in order to complete the relational (Möbius) loop.

Begin again.

The line, *They are laughing raucously*,
repeated and slowed down,
beyond which there is nothing.
They are laughing raucously
the unconscious
functioning as a methodology
They are laughing raucously

End of Part 3 Part 4 follows in a few minutes