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We publish strictly digitally every two months. Access all our past and current issues at theconstructdocuments.blogspot.com and contact us at construct.docs@gmail.com

Designed in Singapore

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CONSTRUCT 2017
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editor's note

Our entire history in a way is made up of constant articulation and re-articulation of Narratives—Narratives that work like tangling lines of stories that we tell ourselves to make sense of who we are, our purpose, and our relation to others. Stories woven, within and around us, as they give meaning to our very existence.

Like those who came before us, we seek to define the meaning of meaning itself. More often, we stop at the dead-end of Personal Narratives—as it is something that would comfort us the most, while giving stability to our sense of self. *That the world is a playground or a stage to which we would conquer from one level to* ***an****other.*

While on the other end of the spectrum, our Collective Narrative dictates who we are in the larger scope of things—w*hat song to be sung in what uniform with which color for which flags by whose father's fathers who had found which land…* There are more tangled strings between those Narratives than we would like to admit.

Yet often we choose to forget, if not ignore, the much subtler web of strings that strangles us in the first place: the materiality of the narratives or an entirely different history and context that by itself makes those narratives possible.

Our Reality works as our bounded Narratives and vice versa, our Narratives as our bounded Reality. We'd rather choose to belief that it's solely us the one who articulates how the world was/is/should be—while dismissing the role of 'the world' (or *things* that are beyond us) in articulating how we were, what we are, who we **will** be.

Would it be enough to just let ourselves get tangled in the mess that has always been? And if there are no better ways to detach ourselves from that mess, would there be a much subtler *blade* that we can grip onto in order to cut it off?

Let us hope and strive for it—that it's neither to give in nor to cut loose, but rather to refine and make them clear. And by that, we shall rearticulate what needs to be.

Chinese On The Train, 2011, Wang Fuchun



BRIGHT FUTURE

Now is a good time to be a historian:
people of the world / regaining their memories
& their imagination / Our confidence—
we flatter ourselves as if we were in some secret

No more cutting throats / we are better than that
The days are long gone
for the battles of the real story / But if we were
to carry out an operation / that require us to fulfill
our own lunatic wisdom & imagination / can we do it?

should we do it?

It's all exotic / how much stupider can we be?
A renewal of sectarian violence:
like circus tyrants, they are bestial and tender;
like sentimental magnets, they will occupy our territory
for a single second, or maybe for months

(maybe forever)

Intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time
Distances—
tumbled into nothing

Everyone in whichever part of the globe
has statistics of little purges / innovative bloodstains
in the atmosphere / encircled like language
or birds

And the content of corporate capital spreads routinely
& stubbornly across the surface texture / Emblematic subjectivity
in books of autobiographies / that sell like fucking hotcakes

SHE WHO WAS GENEROUS
WITH HER JOY

In the midst of
the madness of this cursed city's rush hour
traffic
a little girl no older than six
waved happily at me
from her brother's wooden cart

On a pile of battered cardboard
and deformed plastic bottles she stood
flashing her tiny teeth
as her long hair,
turned brown by the fierce tropical sun,
danced in the late afternoon breeze

I was ashamed
of the trivial nature of my concerns
I was embarrassed
It was truly embarrassing
to be one of many urban monkeys
sitting in our stationary metal cages

But then my anger gradually shrank to
the size of the little girl's palm
and by the time the cars began to move
it disappeared completely
so did she

The image of her innocent gesture
still keeps coming back like a friendly ghost
that appears in the darkest hours
to remind us that even
Hell welcomes
Hope.



**SCRIBBLES #1 —
CONVERSING WITH
CHILDREN**

The average adult tends to get offended when another adult treats him or her like a child. More often than not the offence is committed and received through language. To be more precise, the average adult tends to be offended by another adult who *speaks* to him or her using a language normally addressed to children—a language that is friendly yet condescending, loving yet suppressive, calculated yet superficial.

"Don't speak to me like that! I'm not a child!" the adult would protest. But doesn't that complaint reveal the true problem at hand? The fact that we, as members of the Adult Tribe, are offended means that we are fully aware of the existence of two very different languages that not only have particular functions, but also cast equally opposing impressions—namely Adultspeak and Childspeak.

Adultspeak, as the name suggests, is the language adults use to interact with one another, whereas Childspeak is the one used by children. Curiously enough, such a division is deemed necessary only to those who are conscious of the effects of both languages. When seen from this angle, it becomes clear that the group has drawn the line is also the one that possesses and exercises control over the other. The problem stems from the way we maintain our dominance over children via language. Our attempts may be intentional (with either positive intentions to assist, or negative intentions to oppress) or consequential (resulting from unquestioned cultural habits), or perhaps even both at varying intervals. But in all cases, there is a pattern that points to how we—adults—accept the division. And what can show this acceptance more than the way we talk to children?

There are two fundamental elements of Childspeak: tone and vocabulary. The tone that adults apply in language directed at children is either gentle or brutal. Either way, the adult is always in charge—as a nurturer in the former and as an authority figure in the latter. When a conversation is reduced to its extreme ends—as a site of complete comfort or that of complete fear—the subtle nuances that make up any meaningful exchange are totally eradicated. The child becomes stuck in a situation that is either this or that, black or white. The child is either consoled or scolded. There is no room to move, no room to explore possible meanings.

Childspeak is further constricted by the second element—namely vocabulary. How many times have we mimicked a child's mispronounced words in order to establish a particular connection with him or her? The resemblance of this common practice to its political variant is uncanny. Politicians who demonstrate their fluency in the language of the people essentially do the same thing on a larger scale. The goal is to gain trust. By mimicking children, are we not imposing a set of words that excludes children from what we would consider to be a "proper" conversation? This is not to say that we must immediately correct even the most innocent errors, but when we deliberately communicate using a language that think children will feel more comfortable with while simultaneously insisting on the fact that the same language is a primitive or underdeveloped one, we only create a contradiction that increasingly limits the child's understanding of his or her own reality. Yet when a child utters a word typically used in adult conversation—the most notorious example being the curse word—we are instantly horrified. Imitation, it seems, is a one sided affair. Adults, like garden variety politicians (who also happen to be adults), connect to manipulate. The child is forced to depend on the adult to legitimize his or her words—the very words necessary to make sense of the world—and as a result, the child loses his or her voice.

Language is a crucial aspect of a child's growth, meaning that the process should be accessible and enriching for the child. A possible reason why adults maintain the "childishness" of Childspeak can be traced back to their fear of children engaging in complex topics that are thought to be too advanced, or too mature. In this sense, adults are denying children certain truths by limiting the words that can be used to articulate them. The view that children should not be exposed to "mature" content misses an important point. Children are naturally curious. They ask a lot of questions. They want to know exactly because they know that they do not know. Unlike adults, they are conscious of what they lack, and they want to overcome it. Our response to their sincerity is nothing but cruel. In the name of protecting them, in the name of doing our duty as adults, we feed their hunger with half-truths or even blatant lies.

This specifically adult crime—that is, the crime of denying a child's right to grasp his or her surroundings—stems from our inability to distinguish between simple language and butchered language. Explaining complex topics to a child is challenging because there are not so many words to choose from. And this is why analogies can be so helpful. As adults, we should guide, rather than merely instruct. We need to be able to help children to relate to what is being said, to what *can* be said. Examples are everywhere, and most of the time, they are visible and easy to understand. This is what it means to explain something in simple language. Nothing is harmed. Nobody is excluded.

So the next time we feel infantilized, we ought to question the very fact that such a word can make us feel so humiliated, or even insulted. We have to think about out how and why our adult-centric society has made "infantilized" such an effective derogatory term. By taking these steps, we will be able to see the potentially damaging implications of its usage. If we don't start to give children the respect they deserve, we will always be far too ill equipped to converse with them.

Still from 'Taipei Story', dir. Edward Yang (1985)



WE ARE AS DEAD AS WE CAN BE

"[…] don't talk to me of the sea while we are in the mountains. This is a different landscape. There is a desire to kill here. And this desire ties us together as sinister brothers of the sinister failure of an entire social system. I too would like it if it were easy to isolate the black sheep. I too see the black sheep. I see quite a lot of them. I see all of them. That's the problem."[1]

— Pier Paolo Pasolini, the last interview, 1st November, 1975



Still from "Taipei Story", dir. Edward Yang (1985)

"Defeat is among us, and war, and prophecy." That's a line from Muriel Rukeyser's poem *1/26/39*, the feminist poet and activist. She wrote the poem as she was thinking about the (failed) Spanish revolution. I'm pretty sure you've never heard of her, and I am here to brag about it.

I was thinking about that particular line a couple of days ago, asking myself whether the words followed a sequence, or whether they could only be taken simultaneously. That is, were they like marks on a calendar, or were they a kind of cacophony; a form of sky, an enormous black sky at that, in which we are all basically like haloes or pinpoints or stars, and so to be destroyed.

There are no simple answers to questions like these. To try and find one, I roamed up and down around Senayan the other day, alone with an empty plastic bag in my pocket, like an absolute madman. I didn't tell anybody, not my friends, not even my family. I turned off my phone, and stood outside for around three hours, screaming Rukeyser's line in my head (leaking a bit), over and again, until my head hurts and my voice began to fall apart. Luckily, there were only few people around that day, and they're not sensitive or curious enough to hear it.

Because in the third hour, things began to go wrong.

Rukeyser's words had started to become weird shreds of impossible meaning, that once it's spoken, it could never be repeated. Because once they had been spoken, all else would disappear. Like Taipei Story, the sky immediately became a hoax, and the stars became nosy guards. There is no escape plan. We are all trapped in this mess.

I held my hand in front of my face and could see nothing but a bland white light, like a murderer's mirror, a vicious and impassible glass. Not glass, a gaze. Not a gaze, a glare. Not light, but "prophecy", a word that for the past few months I've only been able to associate with future politics. Why? Well, "prophecy" implies a prediction of the future via excessive and possibly aberrant interpretation of all available elements of what we like to call the present. And who are exactly the current powers that survey and interpret the present to such an aberrant and excessive extent? It isn't poets, as far as I know, and it isn't the dukun either.

Anyway, whatever.

I kept screaming, past my whole voice, my entire body, all of my borders. By borders, of course, I mean senses. And I thought at this point, of Marx, when he talked about the five senses, imaginary or otherwise. You know the passage, I'm sure of it. If not, well that's too bad. One more thing to add in the list of things that I can brag about.

(*And the cut that it implies in the sensory calendar*)

Because these days I very much doubt that I can say with any certainty that I have five senses. Certainly, as I screamed out Rukeyser's line it seemed I had only one. That's right, *future politics*. That one enormous black sky, one enormous pit of cancelled language, one enormous voice rasping out one final, incomprehensible sentence.

It was mid-day, but it was very dark. There were no stars. I think the buildings were burning. I stood outside them, inventing language. I was wondering if that bastard we called Sun was ever going to return, and what it was planning on doing when it got here. What was I talking about? That's right. I was talking about prophecy, about defeat and war, about how nobody knows what those words really mean, and what they will come to mean.

SAMBUTAN

Selamat datang di masyarakat
Kami harap anda betah disini
Anda diperbolehkan untuk jadi diri sendiri
selama masih dalam batas suci
Pastikan anda mencintai tubuh anda sendiri
jangan terlalu berlebihan
atau nanti akan kami lucuti
Kami akan menggeretak anda bila tersenyum
dan bertanya kenapa anda bersedih
Kami akan bilang bahwa anda tak berharga
tidak boleh bersuara
dan kemudian membiarkan anda
menangis di pojokan bersama yang lain
Kami akan bertanya tentang pendapat anda
tapi tolong sesuaikan dengan pandangan kami

Selamat datang di masyarakat
Kami berjanji tidak akan memperdaya anda

UNTITLED

Hope comforts us
like an air-conditioned hell
we like to spend time there
but we don't want the misery
of thinking about the false one
if we had high hopes
we'd fall down hard

imagine bungee-jumping
without the safety rope



DEMETRIO DI GRADO

RIBELLI (REBELS)

A4



DEMETRIO DI GRADO

COLLEGA IL PASSATO CON IL FUTURO (IT CONNECTS THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE)

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