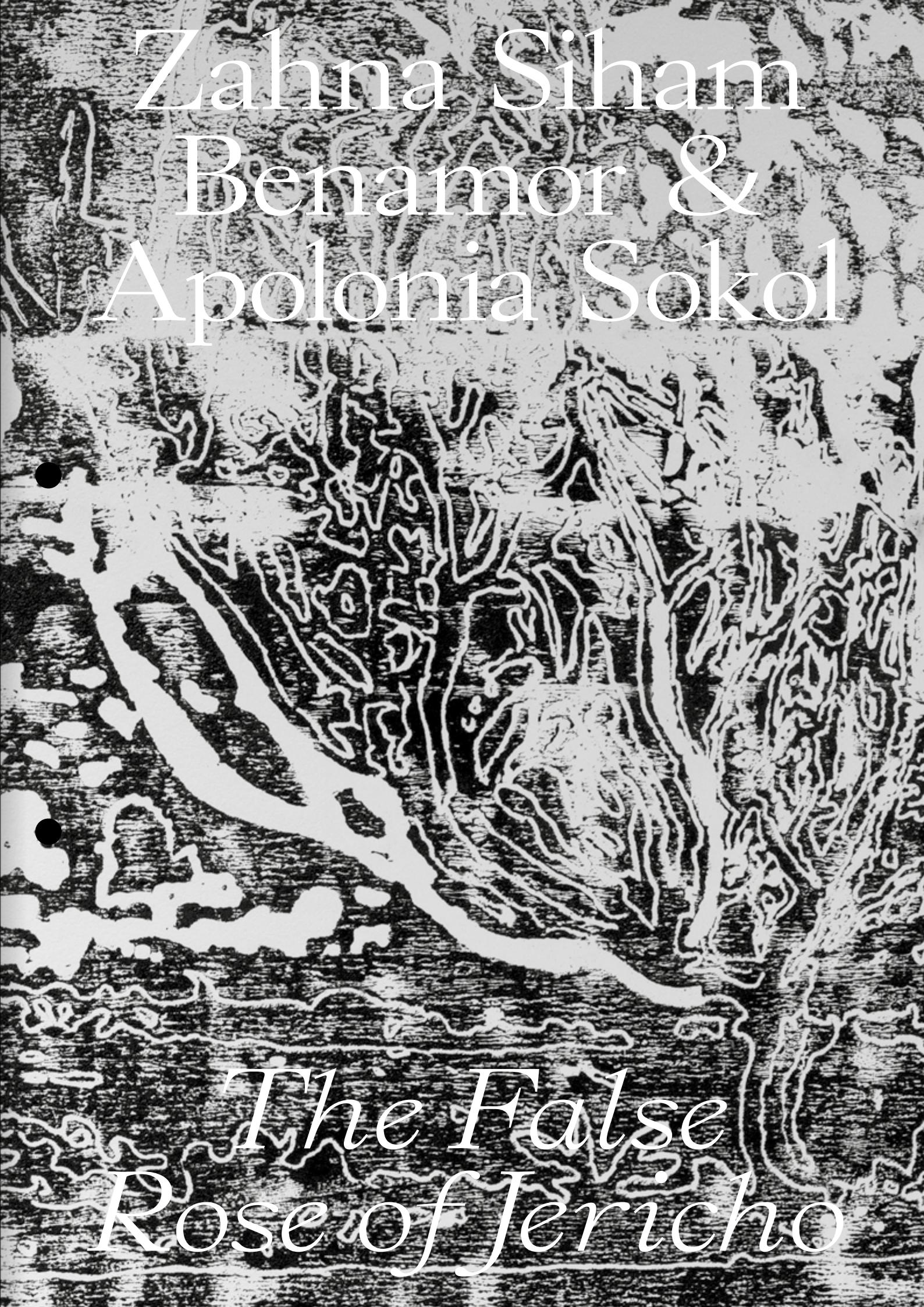


Zahna Siham
Benamor &
Apolonia Sokol



*The False
Rose of Jericho*



INTRODUCTION

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Zahna Siham Benamor & Apolonia Sokol
The False Rose of Jericho

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O-OVERGADEN
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It is a great pleasure to introduce this publication, a companion to the exhibition *The False Rose of Jericho* by Zahna Siham Benamor and Apolonia Sokol. Since 2021, O—Overgaden has, with the support of the Augustinus Foundation, published a monographic series in conjunction with our large-scale in-house exhibitions, aiming at expanding the conversations around each show and producing new, offspring material. In this case, the artists have contributed a conversation between themselves, while the publication also includes an essay about the Jericho Rose as a metaphor for resilience, and artistic companionship as an “affective infrastructure”, by scholar Anna Meera Gaonkar; a response to the exhibition’s motifs by artist Jessie Kleemann in a poetic-performative text based on the migrating flower and its pollination; and an extract from the book *Rester barbare* (2022) by French-Algerian author Louisa Yousfi, in the original French and translated into Danish by Zahna Siham Benamor. In addition to thanking the writers for their contributions, the O—Overgaden team for their remarkable effort in connection with the exhibition, and the Augustinus Foundation for the support, a warm thank you must go to fanfare, our graphic designers, and Anne Kølbæk Iversen, O—Overgaden’s in-house editor, for their exceptional work with this publication. Last, but not least, special thanks to the artists, Siham and Apolonia, for so generously sharing their work and material—from concept to extended conversation—with all of us, both through the development of their exhibition and this publication.

The first collaborative exhibition by poet and performer Zahna Siham Benamor and painter Apolonia Sokol builds on their long friendship, or feminist sorority. The show raises shared questions of exiled identities—from the rootless flower, the so-called False Rose of Jericho, to cultural figures or stereotypes such as the nomad and the wandering Jew.

In a new series of large-scale oil paintings, Apolonia Sokol displaces historical, patriarchal portraiture to enthrone the narratives of the two artists’ friends and family, alongside themselves. In one such painting, Zahna Siham Benamor wears traditional Berber wedding clothes while posing as an archer—a gesture taken from an Algerian dance of resistance. As with all of Sokol’s portraits, the painting is drafted in close collaboration with the subject. Here, Benamor takes aim at the viewer, as if she, a Danish author with roots in Algeria, needs to defend herself against potential attacks, even in her private apartment in Copenhagen.

The exhibition’s dark and cavernous main space emits Benamor’s new, raw and punkish soundscape collaging rai rhythms, strings, ambient compositions, rap, and poetic calls, summoning visitors. The audience is invited to sit on the floor, next to the record player as well as a real-life Jericho Rose and, on selected days, see the poet herself performing live. A core inspiration for Benamor’s music is rai, a popular type of Algerian underground music, which has often excluded its stars, mostly socially outcast women, from appearing on their own record covers. In the exhibition, a drawing of a 1990s LP cover by rai star Cheba Zohra substitutes her face with Pamela Anderson’s, raising the question of who owns the (female) image.

In the main space, giant hand-printed murals feature motifs chosen by the duo and drawn by Sokol, ranging from artworks in their own right to spatial backdrops of desert dunes, protest marches, and minarets from Tivoli, indicating Denmark’s colonial appropriation of cultures. The play with false and true imagery—from cultural clichés and class struggles to “wrong” depictions of the Jericho Rose—seems to ask: Who holds the power of definition and why call a flower “false” at all?

Within the painting series, a self-portrait by Sokol shows the artist nude, leaning on a walking stick, hinting at her Jewish heritage. Voluptuous and wretched, bordering on the grotesque, the image rebukes the female body’s seamless sexualization. Other portraits include Claude-Emmanuelle, a trans woman, shapeshifting into nightlife queen of Paris, and a portrait combining two different teenagers transitioning from child to adult. The exhibition thus assembles an intersectional collection of outcasts, creating a space where the exiled take center stage—a collective powerhouse of resistance.

Rhea Dall
Director of O—Overgaden, March 2024

Zahna Siham Benamor (b. 1988, DK) is a Danish poet and performance artist of Algerian and French descent, living in Copenhagen. Alongside this exhibition, Benamor has released the EP *Jeg kommer fra orkenen* (2024).

Apolonia Sokol (b. 1988, FR) is a Paris-based artist of Polish and French origin, raised partially in Copenhagen. Sokol is the main subject of Lea Glob’s documentary *Apolonia* (2023).

IN ANOTHER ROSE'S NAME

Anna Meera Gaonkar

In literature, many highly praised and carefully theorized roses grow. They are not, however, of particular importance in this context. The growth referred to by artists Zahna Siham Benamor and Apolonia Sokol in their joint exhibition *The False Rose of Jericho*, stems from a different historiography. It is a rose without an actual flower, a rose without thorns, a rose without roots in Western thought. This rose does not need solid ground from which to feed because, like other wind witches, it does not take root in the ground at all, but instead blows freely across barren landscapes.

The false Jericho Rose is often overshadowed by her famous namesake, the real Jericho Rose. The flower with the “true” name is said to originate from the city of Jericho near the River Jordan, east of Jerusalem, and is hailed as a more or less miraculous desert phenomenon in the Bible, where it dutifully manifests itself for Mary in several desperate situations.¹ The “false” flower comes from Chihuahua, a state in northern Mexico where the desert borders the US, evoking images of barbed wire fences atop huge iron walls. Unlike cultivated roses, none of the desert species were bred with particular ideals of beauty in mind. Both are so-called resurrection plants which, even after being dried into condensed balls of leaves for months, unfold and quickly turn green with only a few drops of water.

It is easy to get lost in the obvious resistance symbolism and photosynthetic impossibility of the Jericho Rose, but why is one false and the other real? Sokol ponders this question in an Instagram post about the exhibition.² She explains that the so-called false resurrection rose functions as a reminder in the exhibition: to take control of one’s own narrative and to become aware of who claims to have the definitive power to know the real from the fake. Benamor writes in a related post that “just as a flower cannot be fake, we give space to look at things without a final conclusion”.³

1. See Karin Friis Plum, “The Resurrection Rose from the Holy Land”, *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 20 March 2016.

2. Instagram post by [@apolonia_painteresse](#), 10 February 2024.

3. Instagram post by [@beast_from_the_msee](#), 10 February 2024.

For the two artists, the rose is, first and foremost, an image of indomitable resilience—not only in terms of individual resilience, but in terms of their years-long friendship, from which grew their collaborative practice and this exhibition. Benamor and Sokol explain on Instagram that their friendship has been characterized by periods of alternating hibernation and intense resurgence. We understand from their descriptions that the friendship has been challenged by their respective affiliations to Algeria and France.⁴ The brutal histories, including colonization and war in Algeria and not least the French treatment of the Algerian diaspora, continues to mark the Algerian population. For example, it has been less than a year since the police killing of 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk, sparking huge street protests and a heated public debate about structural racism in France. Although the two artists write that they have always broadly agreed—on anti-colonialism, on revolution, on a free Palestine—Benamor emphasizes that her friendship with Sokol remains untamed. It is a community “where there is room for rage, jealousy, ferocity, intellectual and artistic ambition, disagreement and difference”, writes Benamor.⁵

As a researcher, I have dealt with both the emotional politics of migration and the communities of art. Among other things, I have examined recent Danish works of art and cultural productions that deal with the experience of being regarded as a stranger in the country in which one lives.⁶ I have asked what such works and productions can teach us about Denmark as a national home and about the emotional consequences of racialization and migrantization—that is, the experience of *not* being recognized as a “genuine”, or “true”, Dane. Which communities do we need and which are we drawn to when we find that our surroundings are hostile to our presence? I have often answered these questions by focusing on the family and the home as more or less functional communities that can tell us something about how the material and affective consequences of migration are inherited and negotiated differently across generations. With my colleague Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, I have also worked with separatist collectives, consisting of artists and cultural workers who come together to organize themselves against their shared experiences of racial oppression and marginalization within the cultural sector.⁷

Yet I cannot quite make Benamor and Sokol’s collaboration fit into these analytical perspectives, because the friendship is, strictly speaking, neither based on norms of common parentage, nor shared origin stories, or strategic essentialisms.⁸ For the vast majority of us, friendship is the very first community we voluntarily enter into. It is an open and loving association that does not exclude other relationships. When Benamor and Sokol install their friendship in the art institution, they command in several ways their artistic, intellectual, and emotional presence in and attachment to the infrastructures of art. For the exhibition, the friendship means that the poet and performance artist Benamor and the painter Sokol do not flow together, but rather act as hosts and guests for each other and their respective practices. At the same time, they also invite others into the institutional context. They share their space by hosting guest performances by other artists and collaborators.

Sokol’s portraits of friends and other life companions also increase the visibility of women and of racialized and queer bodies—bodies that have traditionally been objectified, underrepresented, or made invisible in art history. In this way, the exhibition forms a kind of self-willed affective architecture at O—Overgaden.

Benamor and Sokol’s artistic strategy resonates in many ways with what cultural theorist Lauren Berlant calls an “affective infrastructure”.⁹ Berlant is concerned with the conditions of today’s political struggles against normativity, and emphasizes the importance of challenging society’s apparently solid infrastructures, here defined as everything from roads and institutions to the family unit. But, for Berlant, the task of creators of critical social forms—such as artists and activists—is not only to pass judgment on the existing infrastructures, but also to propose alternatives that can affect the harder and softer aspects of sociality. If we follow this thinking, various forms of non-sovereign relationality can help to make the infrastructures we know porous, so that they can eventually be reshaped.¹⁰

Art theorist and curator Daphne Dragona writes with reference to Berlant’s concept that, because the existing infrastructures are connected to power and privilege, the role of art must be to expose these infrastructures, their faults and the need for “alternative architectures of association and resistance”.¹¹ Regardless of whether the affective infrastructure takes form as a counter-infrastructure or as infrastructural interventions,

8. The concept of strategic essentialism is borrowed from the literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; see *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, Routledge, London, 2012.

9. Lauren Berlant, “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol.34, no.3, 2016, pp.393–419.

10. Ibid., p.394.

11. Daphne Dragona writes in English on architectures of association and resistance; see “Affective Infrastructures”, *Transmediale*, no.5, 2019, archive.transmediale.de/content/affective-infrastructures-0

Dragon’s point is that these practices can teach us how alternative social forms can be installed in the environments we already inhabit: “Technological or not, physical or not, already existing or not, the affective infrastructures are protocols that we need to build, modify, or reclaim as joints that will bring and hold different worlds together.”¹² The productive capacity of the affective infrastructure, then, is that we in communities can learn to live with and survive the broken but nevertheless enduring infrastructures we share and which shape our lives.¹³

Benamor and Sokol’s project can undoubtedly be read in many ways. But if we understand *The False Rose of Jericho* as a kind of affective infrastructure, then the exhibition and its project seem like an independent architecture that unites several artists in a critical and edifying collective project without the aim of domesticating internal differences or disagreements.

From Berlant we can learn that infrastructures, no matter how fleeting they appear, have both material and emotional consequences. Infrastructures affect us, whether we interact with, in, or around them, voluntarily or by compulsion. In the best cases, affective infrastructures can perhaps help to renew the foundations of consciousness, the history writing and the traditions we more or less unconsciously build upon.¹⁴ And so we return to the false rose and Sokol’s call to scrutinize who has the right to decide what is real and what is fake.

Thinking of the fake resurrection rose as the flower of resilience, I cannot help but think of Amina Elmi’s final pages from the epilogue in the poetry collection *Barbar* (2023), which I quote in full here:

I have grown from many lives
death brings rebirths
it is the planning of my life
which makes me buy the flowers myself
I feel like a black mrs dalloway
without mrs
in my next life I will write this story

Wingbeats in the air, we dodge them. Grow old together.
Changing this country’s self-perception.

I want my obituary to say,
“she lived her silences loudly”.¹⁵

12. Ibid.

13. Berlant 2016, p.395.

14. The idea of renewing foundations of consciousness comes from the Black radical thinker and geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore, who also writes about the infrastructure of emotions in “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence”, in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, eds. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, Verso, London, 2017.

15. Amina Elmi, *Barbar [The Object of Silence]*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2023, pp.114–16.

THE COLORLESS HARD SPIRALS WITH THE HANGING THREADS STILL SWIM IN THE SEA OF PLASTIC FLOWERS

Jessie Kleemann

There are enough plastic flowers that will never be able to be placed on the grave you will (not) get, on top of a pile of stones in the barren soil, thin and hard and with no prospect of being able to grow on a fertile and lush base with long snarly roots and hair yearning for a sun that warms the soul as on a spring day, where arms and hands are snaking in freedom, in love. You will not get that! It's probably a shame for you (so primitive and un-peasantly, no, I guess it's just un-Danish). Now we come to save you, for we must plant ourselves in the midst of the glory. It has been legally established that we may come and take exactly what we want. If you are to be fatherless, there are no obstacles—understand that! We are the good ones, and we are also white, which means the utmost purity of human DNA. Just taste the word. And again, if you have forgotten, with the word came the light. Now there is no more darkness and you will be happy, consider that for a moment. >well, no, but you will be happy someday!<

The thing about language, so we say, is that when it hasn't come with you along the way—like when you're traveling and have some luggage with you and discover that it might have fallen off—it's gone, like psst, quietly away. Like when a leaf falls from a flower. It will feel like a loss that can be felt within the flower, if you are the flower yourself and think you miss it, physically. Something missing. Here in the innermost core of what is me, what is you. Perhaps this is also why we sing of the flower in all its phases and colors and scents and in its death, and then when we wait again for its new life. Its resurgence as life itself. The flower, whether it is now found as a rose from the Middle East, and has actually migrated to the northern continents, or as a bell flower, it is likely the same. We still have the joy of waiting for the resurrection of the rose in the Arctic. It sounds strange, but then I think, "why not?" Why shouldn't we wait for the Jericho Rose? Everything moves with the wind, but also by colonizing, like mushrooms do. Why is it hard to understand that we all come from over there? From *OVER THERE*.

Naasunnguat illit takorloortarpakkit, you are like the most beautiful flower I can imagine, also sung as a farewell to a dear deceased at a funeral, or on a quiet morning, when the flowers slowly and imperceptibly begin to wake to life again after the long hibernation.

After all, it is not just the flowers, but also we who awake, and not as undead zombies, walking around the street and mirroring ourselves in equally silent mobiles with all the feeds that keep popping up, to check, how that war is going, and the new war, and how much closer it is coming towards us, are we going to live, die, shall we flee, where shall we go? There is only the Lomonosov Ridge, yes, then there is the aeolian, the African dust, the direction it blows, and the sea, we have not quite exhausted it all. We don't know when a rose will come that will grow up and unfold itself, after being tormented, cut, cleaned. Or does it come from down there in the ground, does it miraculously come up from the sea like another siren?

The colorless hard spirals with the hanging threads still swim in the sea of plastic flowers. They believe themselves to be alive to hear stories about the lives they lived and the lives they themselves prevented from growing somewhere; a place they did not know existed, like living gardens of seeds that should have been scattered, *too vigorously encouraged to propagate*, no, no, there came a doctor, came two, came three, came more. Each and every one, a so-called savior, each with their own authority came and said, "now it is too soon, now, now it must stop! You cannot, you must not grow bigger or increase in number!"

Look around, we cannot reach around the globe, others have walked before us, the arms and legs cannot, but we walk up and down the street. Shouts. Shouts. Shouts at the wall that surrounds the castle. Shouting at the silence. It's like that which we know, we think we know. We will be silenced to death.

Yes, and every day we wake up again to a world, after the hard winter, just like the flower. We also sing about having roots. Nunarsuaq sorlaqarfipput.

We wake up to the new wartime, and must once again wait for a truth commission. Truth Commission. Let me say it one more time, our request for a reconciliation commission was rejected. Now there is only a truth commission to go by, because everyone knows that if nothing has been committed that you have to come to terms with, then it must be turned and rotated, page after page must be read with a magnifying glass and written down, and the right questions must be asked in order to initiate a hearing. As you know, those who want to decolonize hold on to the wrong assumptions, things they took for granted and incorrect narratives they see before their eyes. The street. The square. Christiania. Outside the shopping malls. The enclaves in Copenhagen, Aalborg, Nuuk, Iqaluit, or in Anchorage, all these places, or non-places with corners, stairwells, centers, meeting places, and shelters that you ignore and don't want to be known for.

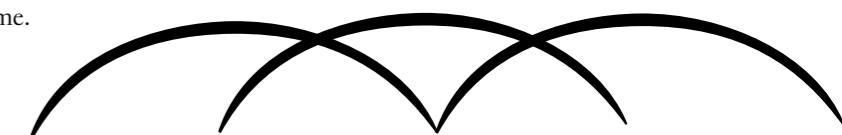
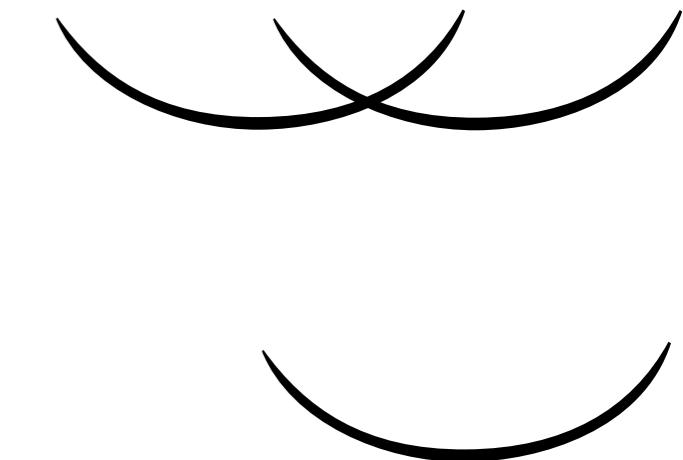
It happened in different times, they say. They are from another country, they say. They have a different culture, they say. They have a different language, they say. We haven't done anything, they say. Yes, the layer cake is filled with all these superlatives, filled to the brim with sugar marzipan, chocolate truffles, coffee, and fruit jelly like marmalade, giant lakes of cream, and when it gets too tall, it will make a crater where the cake will begin to crack, collapse like another methane tank that has lost pressure. Pfff!

Or is it the community that you are not a part of, because the language did not follow on the journey? This is perhaps why the word "commonwealth" is so difficult to learn the meaning of, simply because the declaration ultimately became a document, a handshake, and a paragraph. Classified and archived. People are people who live, people who educate themselves, people who work, people who travel. So they live, they are mobile. So it is. In the same way, "Inuit" means people, but what does it mean if people live on the street, and not in a house, not in an apartment, a commune, not in a village, a family. Are they no longer Inuit? People? Mensch?

We have learned it well; the colonization has worked. See. Read the scripture. To write and spell D-E-N. Den. M-A-R-K. Mark. Denmark. (It is allowed to read it aloud!) Enthusiastically encouraged. As stated in many a report. Try this exercise one more time.

To be a good Dane is to be a good Danish woman, a good person, a good they and them, and to be a good Dane is to be a good Danish man. If you have learned to behave in a Danish way, you may become a good Dane. Finally, the e is in place, you can see (or read)—yes, keep it, it has to be right. Otherwise it will be wrong, and wrong is that which we don't want, that's how it is, and that's how it will be right. Right. Wrong. Rechts. As everyone knows what right means. It's blowing to the right, and therefore probably not more correct. I take pride in being wrong, fehl, verkehrt, falsch. Those were probably the flower's own words, if it could speak. The stem of the rose would sting and cut, the blood would drip from my fingers, thumb, and forefinger and it would not raise its voice, but the wound would tear deeper little by little, deeper than anyone can see. The inflammation will take root.

I would cry my tears, they would roll a little hot, then cool, and not a single knot would flow from my throat, my eyes would fix on your gaze. You see. I see that you see.



EXPLODED ICONO-GRAPHIES

CONVERSATION WITH APOLONIA SOKOL
AND ZAHNA SIHAM BENAMOR

Anne Kolbæk Iversen

Thank you for talking with me about your joint exhibition at Overgaden, *The False Rose of Jericho*. The exhibition draws on a number of cultural and personal references, including the portrait tradition in art history, rai music, the Chipko movement in India, Tivoli Gardens, the desert, the library, and the Jericho Rose—both the so-called “real” and the “false”. Would you like to say something about the different iconographies and mythologies you each draw on and how they converse here in the exhibition, and also about the displacement of motifs and the negotiation of the so-called “real” and “false”?

Zahna Siham Benamor

If we start with the desert image as it appears in the exhibition, it comes from something quite personal. In Algeria, coming from the desert is considered something negative. My father came from the desert, my mother was from the city, and there it was common to look down on people who are from the periphery—as is also the case in Denmark, by the way. The desert is, on the one hand, something physical, geographical: *Saharawi*. And it has always been a form of insult that I have also been called “Saharawi”. To say: “I come from the desert” is to take on something that I have been scolded for being—to be from my father’s lineage.

But the desert, for me, is also a philosophical and ethical framework. I say in my poetry, “I come from the desert, from nothingness” and with that I have the idea that you can wipe the slate clean, create a *tabula rasa*, a new place from which to begin.

Apolonia Sokol

The desert is an important element, but water is also very present in Siham’s poetic universe. Purely iconographically, I have tried to create a desert that could be an ocean. I printed one of the boards upside-down so it looks like a mountain. So, actually, it is a free space. When I was in the desert, I was told that the sand moves in a certain way that is repetitive. After three small waves, the dunes, comes a big one. The sand acts like ocean waves. Sitting on a dune is like sitting on a wave. The sand is constantly shifting and nomadic peoples are shifting with it. One follows the movements of the sand. I see that image as a free earth, a moving, floating earth.

(ZSB)
I also write about the cave, a reference to the Algerian writer Yamina Méchakra, who wrote a book called *La Grotte éclatée*, which is a story about the war of liberation.¹ In it, the cave is where the wounded go, but it’s also a prison, because they can’t move and are trapped there. Then an illegitimate child is born, a bastard, and becomes an image of, or a reflection upon, the time after liberation and a critique of French colonialism. The period after the war of liberation can be seen as a birth, and the new Algeria as a child. I am inspired by and reuse Méchakra’s idea of the cave as a place for the wounded and exiled, but I freestyle over it and use the cave as an image of something positive being born and a new world where the wounded can create a new and more humane future. The illegitimate child is my take on the child born in Méchakra’s tale, and is about being born into and standing on the threshold between a time when its status was illegitimate and an unknown future where its identity has not yet taken form.

(AKI)
One actually says in Danish that it is an “inauthentic” child.

(ZSB)
An “inauthentic child”, yes, exactly.

(AS)
It reminds me of the false Jericho Rose—what is real and what is fake. The rose exists, just as the child does. It cannot be fake if it exists—

(ZSB)
I also think of the illegitimate child as one of the outcast, exiled identities, which at the same time has something fruitful in it, which I also feel is there in our exhibition. Seeing being outside as a point of view and asking: where do you go from here?

In addition, there is a form of class criticism embedded in the imagery that comes from the desert. A criticism of the idea that you only feel you are something when you own something; that you must own land to feel like a worthy part of a community—that it is the new gold. And the fact that it is someone else who has determined what ownership is, also becomes an argument that you are nothing. It is also an argument that is being carried by another civilization. So, when I say “in your logic I own nothing, but I come from the desert, I own something nevertheless”, it is a form of reversal.

(AKI)
Can you recognize some of the thoughts about conversion and reinterpretation in the portrait of yourself as the Wandering Jew [in Danish often called “The Eternal Jew”], Apolonia? And would you like to tell us a bit about that motif and the story behind it?

1. Yamina Méchakra, *La Grotte éclatée* [The Exploded Cave], Editions S.N.E.D., Algiers, 1979.

(AS)
The Wandering Jew is a personification of the Jewish story of escape. In the history of Europe, the Jews were not actually allowed to own land, so they wandered. From the 1300s to the 1400s, Poland was the only place where people were welcome to settle. That place was called Polin, a mixture of Poland and Lithuania. Polin also means “here we have a sanctuary” in Hebrew, and was also known by the Hebrew name Po-Lan-Yah, meaning “here God has rested”. That history has been forgotten, and I want to remind us of it because it is in my name: A-Po-Lan-Yah. Ahasverus—the name of the eternal Jew—is an antisemitic cliché, and he is often caricatured and described as a vile foreigner. Using the term “the Wandering Jew” is an insult that I take upon myself and reclaim by wearing it on my body. I think it is quite beautiful that the eternal Jew has forgotten death and thus continues to wander for all eternity.

(ZSB)
That he is sentenced to life.

(AS)
Yes, if you reverse the rhetoric. It is beautiful to be sentenced to life, but it alludes to the curse of living forever. According to the Christian myth, Ahasverus was an accomplice in the crucifixion of Christ, and because he refused to help God he was sentenced to life and to wander the Earth for all eternity. I thought it was important to be able to carry that iconography right now—also due to the current situation of “war” and the cancellation and harassment that takes place when you speak out for a ceasefire. I hardly dare to speak about the situation in Gaza because I have been threatened. Like many other people who have come forward, I have been bullied and intimidated to the point where it is affecting my economy and my life. But as an indirect victim of the Holocaust and someone who still wanders the Earth—a wandering Jew who does not own land because I have lost all culture and identity through genocide—one should be able to speak out about the conquest of land and mass murder without being called antisemitic. Siham has pushed and supported me to give myself permission to speak with that voice, and permission to express the identity that I have never really expressed before.

(ZSB)
In any case, I think this is part of the quality of this exhibition. I think that the fact that we come together as Arabic and Jewish people who have origins in these two places, from which we are at the same time culturally disconnected, has also been a way of saying, “I am these things” and to try to apply them in the present; to look at how we are both part of the history of displacement—also in light of what is happening today. At the same time, it’s important to say that those paintings—both the one you made of me as a warrior and the one you painted of yourself—of course lean towards something personal, but I think it’s just a reversal of a stereotype. We all carry these stereotypes and, in a way, taking them on can be empowering. “I am this person, haha.” It’s a cliché, and somehow also

a bit funny, as if you’ve asked “am I old?” with the painting, and in that way have created your own type.

(AKI)

Yes, it is another thing that you have depicted yourself as quite old.

(AS)

Yes, the Wandering Jew is old because he cannot die, but at the same time, my Wandering Jew is a woman. In Western art history there has been a huge fascination with representing young, dead women—Ophelia, for example, who is drowning [*Ophelia* (1851–52) by John Everett Millais]. I have been fascinated by a book called *Ouvrir Vénus* by Georges Didi-Huberman, in which, for example, there is a discussion about the anatomical dolls that doctors used to learn about human anatomy and the functions of the organs.² Some of these were almost hyper-realistic; their skin was made of wax and they had real hair. According to Didi-Huberman, they were created that way to satisfy a perverted fantasy about the dead young woman who had to be opened. The list of beautiful dead ladies in Western culture is long. But the elderly or the dead, or the old, are very rarely represented. I thought it was obvious to paint her as old, and maybe she’s not even old enough. Her breasts are sagging due to pregnancy. She also looks a little pale, but she has strong legs because she walks. My mother has offered to lend me her body for the next work. I’m looking forward to it.

(ZSB)

It’s like the picture you made of me: I’m a bride, but I stand and shoot. Does it change something or fuck with the expectation of what is right or what is beautiful?

(AS)

This is also what lies in the title of *The False Rose of Jericho*. It’s about reclaiming the narrative. And all the iconography in the exhibition is something that could be clichéd, but is really something else.

(AKI)

I think it is quite interesting that there is a resistance in what moves, because you often think of resistance as something that is fixed. Perhaps you also point out that there is a resilience and a resistance or a rebellion in the fact that one reinterprets, wanders to another place, moves oneself or displaces something.

(ZSB)

Exactly. Another image we have in the exhibition is a drawn reproduction of the cover of an album by the rai singer Cheba Zohra. When I looked on Spotify to find the singers that I listen to, that I also listened to when I was a kid in the ’90s, I found that it was, for example, Pamela Anderson, or some other white woman, who was on the cover. And it seemed like those were the pictures they used back then.

2. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Venus: Nudité, rêve, cruauté* [Opening Venus: Nudity, Dream, Evil], Gallimard, Paris, 1999.

If there had been a collaboration, the man was actually depicted, and the woman was a picture like this.

(AS)

From something that looks like an Ikea commercial. They are all very Scandinavian-looking women, some blonde types who have been cut out with scissors maybe.

(ZSB)

And at first I thought that maybe it was actually to protect the women, that they used a different image, because in the 90's there was an Islamic political party that was on the rise. But afterwards I thought it was also a way in which the women had been made invisible.

(AS)

Well, it is raï music that expresses resistance, something that comes straight from the gut. It has a lot of strength in it, so it must be difficult to protect the musician.

(ZSB)

Yes, but it's also quite funny, because they all talk about fornication, drinking, sadness, desire and things like that. And it really made me think, "God, what conditions must they have been living in?". It is an invisibility, which in some way has probably been a protection for them, but I have also tried to find information about these women and there is nothing. And I even found out that many of the women have made some beats that other raï musicians have become famous for.

(AS)

I think that's exciting, speaking of iconography. Because what you're talking about, it takes us on to intersectionality. From a white feminist perspective, one could think "no, it's a shame that her face is removed" and "she's been made invisible, that's so terrible". Conversely, one might think that it is actually just as much an invisibility that a white woman has to be half-naked all the time in order to be able to sell various goods—that her image is no longer her own. Pamela Anderson is an icon, and she can be used on this raï LP cover, but she can also be used for anything: porn, commercials, movies—and now with AI, there are no limits to what it can be. I think it is interesting—speaking of the false Jericho Rose and our exhibition purely conceptually—that the power that may be in the image is also taken from the people who are in the image. Pamela Anderson, for example, has no power over her own image.

(ZSB)

Well, I also thought about how images are used so much that they almost become gimmicky, and I also think that the reason that maybe one chooses a woman who looks like that is that she kind of stands for the "neutral", "objective" and "beautiful" woman who somehow does not refer to anything. And then you think, "why doesn't she?".

(AKI)

I would like, in conclusion, to have you say something about how the exhibition, in addition to building on your friendship and collaboration, becomes a platform for new communities or collaborations.

(AS)

Well, in the middle of the room there is an installation by Siham, which is a sound work. You can sit around it. It's almost like a Bedouin campfire in the desert. So, you can sit around it and tell each other stories. It is also a way of drawing attention to the oral tradition. It is a way of resisting categorization, as with the fake or the real rose for example.

(ZSB)

Yes, living language. That, I think, is both in the poetry and in the figuration, in the prints and also the paintings. There are these iconographies, but it's all sorts of different people who represent us and represent different things within the images. So it's a physical space for diversity that is already like an expanded space from our friendship, a space for communities at the intersections between old, young, depictions, covered, and naked bodies. So then it becomes a space which people can enter. It's an open space—of course for the guests who come in from the street, but we've also invited a collective separatist BIPOC circle to come in and take over the space. They get their own keys, and then they actually have their own writing circle in here. We just invited them in to use it as a room. And I myself hold a writing circle once a week. The room is a platform for the living, so what will happen depends on who enters the room.

(AS)

It's so beautiful.

UNE ESPÈCE DE BARBARIE

Louisa Yousfi

Je témoigne d'un peuple que plus personne n'a hélé à sa force et à sa dimension exactes.

– Sony Labou Tansi, *Encre, sueur, salive et sang*¹

Kateb Yacine, de son propre aveu, est un barbare. Avec une simplicité déconcertante, il a déclaré: "Je sens que j'ai tellement de choses à dire qu'il vaut mieux que je ne sois pas trop cultivé. Il faut que je garde une espèce de barbarie, il faut que je reste barbare."² La formule est belle, percutante. On croit la comprendre immédiatement. La culture est une glotonnerie qui rend l'esprit obèse et impuissant. La barbarie, une vitalité primitive qui permet l'écriture vraie, le geste pur, la poésie. Paradoxalement, on est tenté d'y consacrer une gloste érudite. Kateb Yacine réactiverait-il ainsi le couple nietzschéen Apollon-Dionysos pour dire la tension intime qui agite le geste créateur entre l'ordre et le chaos, la mesure et l'*hubris*, bref entre la culture et la barbarie? Il ne fait aucun doute que la conversation aurait lieu, une main au menton et le cul confortablement assis, dans une ambiance qui serait l'exacte antithèse de "l'espèce de barbarie" qu'il convient de garder pour avoir encore des "choses à dire". Non, la formule de Kateb Yacine ne peut souffrir un tel traitement. C'est une formule magique.

Qui est Kateb Yacine lorsqu'il dit devoir "rester" barbare et "garder" une espèce de barbarie? La question est cruciale. Kateb Yacine est un Algérien, réduit au statut d'indigène par l'administration coloniale française. Mais son indigénat jouit d'une particularité: issu d'une famille de notables, il fait partie de l'élite indigène, ce qui lui permet de fréquenter l'école française où il apprend l'histoire, la littérature, la poésie et la langue de l'empire colonial. Transposé à nos jours, on dirait qu'il est un indigène "intégré": pur produit de l'école républicaine, il maîtrise la langue avec aisance, peut citer Victor Hugo dans le texte et tenir avec les Français une agréable conversation. Mais Kateb Yacine a tellement de "choses à dire" qu'il sent bien que la conversation cultivée n'est pas un terrain favorable au développement de son art. Avoir des choses à dire, c'est tout sauf converser. Car c'est toujours par effraction que le barbare surgit dans la conversation. Dérobant la parole aux bien-parlants, il lui insuffle une force nouvelle en la transfigurant en événement – plus exactement, en attentat.

This is an excerpt from Louisa Yousfi, *Rester barbare*, La Fabrique Éditions, Paris, 2022, reprinted here with the author's permission.

1. Les Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2015, p.50.

2. Entretien avec Jean-Marie Serreau, France Culture, 23 février 1967.

Ainsi se déploie l'horizon esthétique katébien : la barbarie comme un lieu d'énonciation à partir duquel l'intempestif "poète-boxeur" saccage l'ordre des choses pour le rendre à sa vérité crue. Soit. Mais on retombe dans nos travers de conférenciers. Non, il n'y a pas que cela dans la formule de Kateb Yacine. À elle aussi il faut faire cracher le morceau. Révéler non pas seulement ce qu'elle dit – qui appartient à l'auteur, sa conscience éclairée – mais ce qu'elle "a à dire" qui nous appartient, à nous qui la recevons et frémissons de complicité confuse à son contact. Qu'est-ce qu'elle nous raconte cette formule, de nous, de moi? Car ce n'est pas seulement comme prescription esthétique qu'elle nous frappe – "il faut rester barbare", mais comme récit politique.

Au commencement, il y a les verbes: garder et rester. Ils sont intéressants, ces verbes, pour l'antériorité qu'ils marquent. Ils font comme si Kateb Yacine était d'abord un barbare, avant d'être un homme de lettres reconnu. Mieux: ils disent qu'il est en train de perdre cela, cette barbarie originelle, et que c'est une drame et pour l'homme et pour le poète. Un drame pour qui a des "choses à dire". Mais que perd-il exactement, le barbare que la civilisation n'a pas manqué d'entraîner dans sa course vers le progrès humain, le nourrissant généreusement des richesses culturelles qui font la fierté des empires, à commencer par le français, langue superbe et chargée de siècles? Lui qui a vraisemblablement trouvé en cette langue un moyen d'exprimer son génie, applaudi des deux mains par les Français eux-mêmes? Que perd-il exactement, Kateb Yacine, fils de son père et de sa mère indigènes, que le gratin littéraire parisien considère comme le "Rimbaud algérien"? Les rimbaldiens s'exclameront peut-être: Harar³? L'analogie est irrésistible, mais Kateb Yacine a sa propre histoire avec la barbarie. Littéralement.

Tout indigène aristocrate qu'il est, Kateb Yacine descend dans les rues de Sétif, le 8 mai 1945. Il est alors âgé de seize ans et participe au cortège nationaliste des manifestations organisées pour fêter la victoire des Alliés. L'histoire est connue: c'est un carnage historique. Plusieurs dizaines de milliers de morts algériens. Une répression hors du commun. Kateb Yacine échappe à la mort mais pas à la prison. C'est là, dans l'enfermement, qu'il date sa rencontre avec l'Algérie, "la vraie", en chair et en os. Celle de son peuple meurtri, déshumanisé, mais inébranlablement révolté. C'est là surtout qu'il fonde son destin d'écrivain public, de scribe, de kateb⁴: il va écrire au milieu des analphabètes, pour les analphabètes – Deleuze dirait "à la place des analphabètes" – et il va le faire pour les venger. Pour venger sa race, sa race de barbares.

3. Harar est la ville d'Éthiopie où Rimbaud a "disparu" des radars, après avoir abandonné définitivement l'écriture et le monde littéraire parisien.

4. En arabe, *kateb* signifie écrivain.

Aux yeux de l'administration coloniale, c'est exactement ce qu'ils sont : une sous-espèce cantonnée au stade primitif du développement humain, une masse informe et moralement abjecte. Quand ils ont l'air inoffensifs, ce sont des sauvages. Quand ils se rebiffent, ce sont des barbares. La distinction n'est pas anodine et il faudra y revenir. Ce qu'il faut retenir ici, c'est que "barbare" est une identité historique qui lui saute au cou dès le berceau pour le recouvrir comme une seconde peau. Mais elle n'est pas (encore) une carapace, loin de là. Elle est un anathème imposé par la civilisation occidentale. Au delà de l'Empire, c'est la zone du non-être, là où il végète, lui et ses codétenus : paysans, étudiants, camarades révolutionnaires. Tous des barbares. Son statut social n'y change rien. En prison, il comprend qu'il n'est jamais sorti de la zone, que tous ses efforts pour parler la langue du civilisateur et maîtriser son monde sont impuissants face à cette vérité : barbare je suis, barbare je reste. De cette révélation, il tire un serment : barbare je suis, barbare je veux rester. Dans l'offense, il ouvre une brèche. Kateb Yacine s'avère un spécialiste en la matière : prendre l'arme de l'ennemi et la retourner contre lui. La langue française comme butin de guerre. Les codes du roman français cassés en "polygone étoilé"⁵. Le barbare comme fierté. C'est une stratégie vieille comme l'oppression : le retournement du stigmate. On attrape l'insulte, on la retourne, et on lui fait dire le contraire.

Ça a l'air simple comme ça mais la méthode est périlleuse. Cela exige un certain art. Nombreux sont ces peuples alchimistes qui ont procédé au miracle : transformer la souillure en fierté, l'infamie en noblesse. Si la stratégie avait une devise, elle s'énoncerait ainsi : "oui et alors?" Là aussi, c'est une formule magique. Barbare, oui et alors? En dépit de l'évidence, ce "oui" ne valide rien. Il s'amuse. Il rigole comme un gamin insolent qui maîtrise l'art d'agacer. Quand il a fini de rire, il regarde l'accusateur au fond des yeux et achève : "et alors?" Le trouble est jeté. Il dit : un autre jeu est en cours, un jeu caché, avec des règles inconnues de vous. Qui ne ressent pas l'air frais qui vient de souffler? On croirait qu'on vient d'ouvrir une immense fenêtre en plein hiver. L'air est glacial, il gifle le visage. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on respire. On pourrait en faire un dictionnaire de ces formules magiques. Il s'appellerait par exemple *Dictionnaire des formules magiques*, sous titre *Le Nègre t'emmerde*. Voilà. Le barbare vous emmerde, aussi. Qu'est-ce qu'on respire.

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5. Kateb Yacine, *Le Polygone étoilé* (Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1966).









Cheba Zohra

Cheba Zohra

Habibi Gialan Dagen

Cheba Zohra







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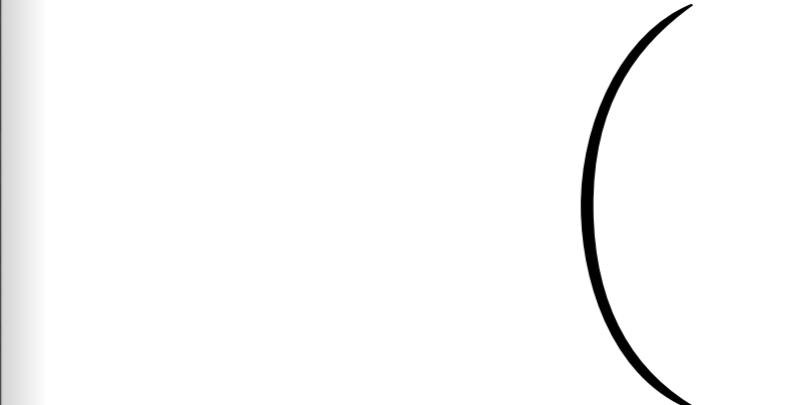
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overgaden.org



Senuil, 1966).

5. Karteb Yacine, *Le Polygone étoile* (Paris: Les Editions du
4. Pa arrabik betyd der kæde "den der skriver".

vi virklig trekke vifter.

Det er det. Barbarene siger "fuck dig, ikke tilbage. Nu kan
over magiske formuleringer og have underkritisk Fuck dig.
formuleringer Den kunne for eksempel hedde Ørlog
og rammer ansigter som en lusning. Hvor vi dog kan
et eksempel vindue midt om mitcen. Minden er iskold
mækte den friiske luft? Man skulle tro, vi havde åbnet
med regler, som ikke er mindre. Kan vi nu ikke
fortælling. En anden leg er nu i gang, en skjult leg
Forsyrlsen er midtrulle, og den skaber en anden
at træce. Når han er farlig med et le, kigge han sin
Hun ler som et uarigt barn, der har mestret kunsten
bekræfter dette, ja, ingenting. Han har det sjovt,

Barbara, ja, og havd så? Det er også en magisk formulering:
lyde: ja, og havd så? Det er også en magisk formulering:
til en noblesec. Hvis strategien havde et motto, ville dette
forvandle en besmittelede til en stolted, en tingagtelse
alle mytiske urbefolkninger af markat til skue, at
farer. Det krever en vis kunst, Det lykkes for nogle
Det virker simpelt, men metoden er ikke uden

den den modsatte betydning.

imod formerselsen, vendet den på hovedet og giver
undertrykkesen; delouement af stigmac. Man tager
stolted. Det er en strategi, der er ikke så gammel som
ihans værk. Koderne i det franske sprøg bliver smadret
krigsbytte. Koderne i det franske sprøg bliver smadret
vende det imod ham, i at bruge det franske sprøg som
sig at være en specielist i at række fjendens våben og
Barbar er jeg, barbar er jeg, barbar er jeg, Barbar er jeg.
Foran denne arbejdsstue sandhed allegger han en ed:
ikke denne sandhed: Barbar er jeg, barbar er jeg, Barbar er jeg.
civiliiserede sprøg og beherske dres verden rumfer
sig uden for zone. Helse hans indsatser for at tale det
Det er i fængslet, han forsæt, at han aldrig har henvæget
kammeraten. Hans sociale status ændrer mitet.
fast i hæt, er, at barbar er en historisk identitet, der
også vil vende tilbage til den. Men vi skal holde
er de barbare. Denne distinktion er ikke ligegyldig,
uskadelig, er de vildemand. Når de bider fra sig,
et primært stade i den mænneskelige udvikling. Det er
en formes af moralisk afskyelige masse. Når de virker
de et. Det er en underlegen race, der bemandet sig på
I den koloniale administration er det netop det,

hævne sin race, sin race af barbaret.
analfabeterne - Deleuze ville sige "i analfabetenes
stec" - og han vil skrive for at hævne sig. Han vil
Haen vil skrive midt i blandt analfabetene og for
sin sande begyndelse: som en, der skriver, en kæde,
også her, han ofte nylige fortærskebne tager

DE FAIRY EL HAPI SPiD AL

HENGEND WIBS

PLASTIK-BLOMSTER-HAVENT

Jessie Kleeman

Det med spørgst, siger vi, som det er, når lige det ikke er kommet med hen ad vegen, som nær man er paa rejse og har forskeellig bagage med, og opdager, noget af det masker er faldet af, det er væk ligesom, inden i blomsten, hvis man selv er den, det er ligesom fyrisk. Noget der mangler. Hjemde i den indreste- inderette kenne af det, der er mig, det, der er dig. Masker er det os så derfor, at vi besynder blomsten i alle dens fascier og farver, duft, og i dens ded, og bagfæter, når vi igen venner på dens nye liv. Denne gennopstæcen som livez selv. Blomsten, om den nu findes som en rose fra Mellemosten, og ligefrem er vandret over til de nordlige konventioner, eller som en klokkeblomst, det er nok det samme. Vi har endnu den glæde at vente på roses genopstandelse i det arktiske. Det lyder mere klogt, men så tænker jeg, rose, alting vandrer med vinden, men koloniensig os også, som svampe øer, hvorfor er det svært at forstå, jo også som en afsked til en kær afled ved en begavelse, eller som en stille morgenv, hvor blomsterne langsommest af sig i blomstrene. Og det er ikke kun blomstre, men også os, vi vægnet, og der vágne op igen efter den lange vinterdrøvle. Og det er som uvrirkelige zombier, der går rundt på gaden og spjæller os i den ligesa stilte mobil med føeds, nemmere kommer den mod os, kommer vi til at leve, Lomosovsbyggen, ja så er der eolian, det afrikanske snart ikke udspillet det hele. Vi ved ikke, hvordan stov, i hvilken retning bleser det, og havet, har vi der bliver ved at poppe op, for at checke, hvordan der bliver ved at poppe op, for at checke, hvordan spjæller os i mon flygte, hvor skal vi hen? Det er kun der biere med den krig, og den nye krig, og hvor meget der bliver ved at poppe op, for at checke, hvordan

Der er plastikkblomster nok, som aldrig vil kunne
lægges på de grøve. I (ikke) kommer til at få, oven
på en buntke sten i den gylde jord, tynd og hårdfast
med lange snærlægatlige rodder og har høgeblade efter en
sol, der varmer sjælen som en forårssol, hvor arme
I ikke! Det er vel nok synd for jer (så primitive og
ugænender slynge) sig i frihed, i kærlighed. Den far
Nu kommer vi og redder jer, for vi skal plantere os
selv midt i højligheden, det er stadsfæster ved lov,
at vi må komme og tage ligesætter ved lov,
være faderløse, der er imgen hintrængter, først da det
Vi er de gode, og hvilke er vi også, det betyder
selveste renheden i menneskets dha. Samme liges på
ordet. Og endnu engang, hvis du har glemt det, med
og I må være lykkelige, lad det stå et øjeblik.
>na, ikke, men I bliver lykkelige engang!<

Ja og hvæt dæ vaghæt vi op i gæt i en vedgen, enten
den hårde vinter, ligesom blomsten. Vi syngej jo os så
om at have redder. Nunneruað sortadarrípput. Vi væghe
op til den nye krigstid, og skal endnu engang vente
på en sandhedskommission. Sandhedskommission.
Lad mig sige det en gang til, vores ammodning om
en forsønningsskommision blev alvist. Nu er der kun en
sandhedskommission at gå med, for alle ved da, at hvis
ikke der er lykke betegnet noget, som man skal forsonne
sig med, så må det vende os af drægs, der skal læses
stilles de rigtige spørgeundersøgelser at komme i gang. De som vil alkoholmiser sig holder som bekendt
fast i de forkerte forholdsregler, ting de tog for givet
og forkerte fortællinger, de ser for deres øjne. Gaderne.
Tovret. Christianshavn. Den for storcentrene. The Mall's
Europaen. København. Alborgh, Nuuk, Iqaluit, elle
Anchorage, alle disse steder, eller ikke-steder med
hjemre, trappegangen, center, samlingsstedet og
schelte, man kigget væk fra og ikke vil kendes ved.

Ellers bliver det forkert, og forkert er det, vi ikke vil have, sådan er det, og sådan bliver det rigtigt. Rigtigt, hvis den kunner tale. Rosens stilk ville strikke og skæred blodet ville dyppet ud af mine hægre, tommel - og pegeminger, og den ville ikke have stemmen, men saret ville flænges dybere lidt lidt, dybere, end nogen kan se liges her. Det betændte vil slå rod.

Jeg ville græde mine tårer, de ville trille lidt varmt, så ka' køle af, og ikke et eneste kyst ville strømme fra min strubke, mine øjne vil føeste sig i dit blåk. Du ser.

Jeg ser at du ser.

I EN ANDEN ROSES NAVN

Anna Megera Gaonka

