



Wastories (working title)

by Eva Reiter, Lucie Taïeb & HYOID



New piece by composer Eva Reiter (AU) and writer Lucie Taïeb (FR), for five singers, electronics and video (Anouk De Clercq).

performers: HYOID

Naomi Beeldens, Fabienne Seveillac, Andreas Halling, Gunther Vandeven, Pieter Stas

Premiere: Fall 2024

In the fall 2020, while we were researching contemporary authors who wrote under the formal constraint of the lexicon, we discovered the work of Lucie Taïeb, French poet, writer, and translator of contemporary Austrian authors. She published an essay in 2019 on the former largest open-air landfill in the world: Freshkills, located on Staten Island, New York. Taïeb has been interested in the subject of "waste" (in all its manifestations) for some time; she began writing about it a few years earlier in *L'ordure alphabétique*.

Eva Reiter, Austrian composer and multi-instrumentalist, is also fascinated by the subject of "waste" in her work; she sees connections with her interest in "sonic leftovers" and making music with low-fi, renovated objects and instruments. That Taïeb is also a translator of contemporary Austrian writers makes for an interesting connection with these two creative partners.

This collaboration will result in an evening long performance for 5 singers, musical objects and video; based on a polyglot libretto that will be developed together with the five singers of HYOID, most likely under the form of a lexicon.

Here is an excerpt an older text of Lucie Taïeb already focussing on waste: "Poetic Lexicon of Waste", and her introduction to the text:

"As a writer, I am obsessed with the ideal of a « complete » perception of space, a perception which would include forgotten memories, buried secrets, despised places, without any hierarchy. Such a perception would probably be unbearable in its exhaustiveness. I do yet believe that literature has the capacity to extend our perception of what we consider as "real", allowing us to *experience* and therefore to face reality in its multiple, even uncomfortable aspects.

Regarding the topic I am currently working on – waste – my goal is to challenge our collective ignorance and blindness towards discarded matter through the elaboration of a poetic lexicon. This is a hybrid project in which I address waste-issues from different points of views and disciplinary fields, mainly geography and literary studies. The primary object of my concern is not the literary representation of reality, but reality itself: waste flows, waste management facilities, local and global waste issues. My research aims to understanding our relation to waste in its spatial dimensions, as they partly explain its invisibility: waste can be considered as displaced matter which is kept out of the sight of those who've discarded it, but continues to exist in the areas devoted to its management. I therefore question the aspiration to live in a waste-free environment, as it means ignoring the places and people directly impacted by the presence of waste. The issue at stake here is both ethical and political: does our common world stops where the territories of waste begin? If there is such a thing as a mental geography of « our » clean (versus « their » filthy) world, how could literature challenge this perception of space?"

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Do not shit on the streets, for Jove's wrath may then come upon you! Whether Ancient Rome was exceptionally clean or shamefully dirty is still a matter of discussion. I assume there has always been – and probably still is – some tendency to keep the waste, excrements, corpses and remnants of our everyday life within our reach, a tendency public policies and economic interests have always tried to thwart. Yet it's not for reasons of hygiene that shitting on Roman streets was so fiercely forbidden, but such manners would make the collection of the precious fertilizing matter much harder for the private traders who were in charge of the business. All this reminds us of the only certainty we may have in respect to waste: from the very beginnings of Western civilization, there is an intimate bond between garbage and money.

Childhood

Childhood is an age with neither law nor hierarchy between objects, things, and matter. The leaf and the feather are picked off the floor and slipped into the pocket or put in the mouth; they now are "mine", or maybe even "me"? Nothing is dirty and nothing clean.

Here is the child, sitting by her wooden colored blocks, holding them out to you, showing them to you in her open hand and then setting them down and lining them, creating an order that exists only for her – an order she'll have such a joy to destroy, at the very moment the line comes to its end and there are no blocks left.

Another scene emerges from this one, another child playing, remembered not from what I've experienced, but from what I've read – or more precisely: from what I've experienced, while reading.

"Each time the boy picks up an object or pushes a truck across the floor, or adds another block to the tower of blocks growing before him, he speaks of what he is doing, in the same way a narrator in a film would speak [...] There is no fixed center to any of this [...]. There is no law of nature that cannot be broken: trucks fly, a block becomes a person, the dead are resurrected at will." (Auster, 1988, 164).