

Those that smile
Those that bite
Those that nourish
 the coral reef in the well
Those that love the innards
 and the mess they make
Those that cut freedom 'till it fits.

See this well,

I WILL NOT PASS

Anna-Louise Crago is in the long process of relearning the history of the lands called "canada" and busy being inspired by the writing and words of Patricia Monture-Angus, Dionne Brand, and the publishing of SisterVision Press among others. She has an appetite for activism and is presently in a longue et douloureuse lutte contre l'université d'ottawa for the bigotry she suffered at their hands. She is 17.

ERICA DESJARDINS

tongue in cheek

my coffee break out back beyond
the music and i am blowing
 smoke—all by myself in the dark
a chain of perfect 000's.

he walks over and places
his arm over my head and his
hips are level with my mine
and he says heh i hear you are bi
 lingual and he moves in closer to my belly
 button and his chin grazes my
 space and he says god i'd like
to have all those bodies
of knowledge
 howdida get that way?

+ because he signs my paychecks
i say i found out about my persuasion & proclivity
 for languages in school but i don't get
 much
 chance to use my dexterity in tongues
round here and my eyes meet his flat blue ones.

and he tells me i musta been born
 into that kinda family or
with some kinda brain gene
 that makes people quicken in that way.

+ i say i did learn some from granny

and he asks me if i get around much
 to using it

+ i say well one is for trade you know
just to pass & survive you've got to
 speak what everyone else does but the

 other well
it is the grains, the fabric, the skies &
my poetry and the dirt.

and he says yeh i really want to learn
 another language and he asks for a
 cigarette and
snakes a grin and tells me he has been to Mexico
twice.

+ i say now i go away for those intense
 courses because i don't want to forget
how to use it and right now—here
i can't afford the time & space
 to practice.

and his arm slips down
my shoulders and he says
heh can you teach me to be bi
 lingual and i wanted to say i did have
another language when i was younger
 but this will complicate things for him.

erica desjardins is a graduate student, living and working in British Columbia, who has found reading fiction and poetry (especially Dorothy Allison and Cherrie Moraga) to be more effective and affective than "theory" to make meaning out of her complexities.