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Collage, Networks and Space in Rachel Zolf's Neighbour Procedure

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In a volume which is attempting to address the Canadian-Jewish experience, it is a rather fraught enterprise to engage with Canadian-Jewish views of Israel through the work of one experimental writer. Rachel Zolf cannot be made to stand easily for Canada's Jews, and certainly not for any mainstream Canadian-Jewish attitude towards Israel. In some sense, she is part of a thread of Canadian-Jewish life, albeit one that has always been more or less writerly and intellectual. Her grandfather was Falk Zolf, who taught at the I. L. Peretz school in Winnipeg, and wrote Yiddish memoirs. Her father was Larry Zolf, the journalist and writer.[1] This filiative account of her background is much less frequently given than the affiliative one which places her in a third generation of Canadian radical lesbian writing, after that of Phyllis Webb, and then of Erín Moure, and has increasingly been seen her as a significant figure in innovative Canadian poetry.[2] This distinction can also be seen in the shifts in her own writing practice, one that moves from Zolf investigating Jewish through family ties, to her Jewishness being more explicitly bound up with her political positions.

Her first volume, Her absence, this wanderer (1999), provided a travelogue of a trip to Central Europe, a search for family roots and a confrontation with the absences created by the Shoah. Masque (2004) brought together the clashing discourses around her father's life. After these two volumes, stemming from personal history if not always entirely personal in tone, Zolf's poetry shifted to a much more impersonal mode, often generated or made up out of other people's words. Human Resources (2007) took on (in a number of the senses of that word) the language used in and for management and marketing. Neighbour Procedure used a linguistic collage to approach the politics of occupation in Israel-Palestine. *Janey's Arcadia* (2014) also collages text (sometimes imperfectly reproduced by OCR technology) about Canadian settlers and the still live political topic of missing and murdered indigenous women.

Neighbour Procedure is therefore part of a wider poetic project that addresses ethics, politics and history, touching upon questions of Jewishness and making use of collage. Zolf has stated her political position trenchantly.

> People love to claim how complex the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is; it's a great excuse to throw hands in the air in mock "but what can we do?," when in fact the core issue of settler-colonial occupation and attendant racist human catastrophe is so patently obvious, if one decides to look. ("Vocative Call")

[1] Rachel writes about Larry in Masque (2004), and about Falk in one section of *Janey's Arcadia* (2014).
[2] She has a page at Buffalo's EPC, and appears in Eichhorn and Milne's Prismatic Publics. See also her own interaction with Moure in Zolf, "Like plugging" and Moure.

In this article I will not engage straightforwardly with the politics that Zolf articulates here. Although they are part of the network of meanings activated by the book, my argument is that the book itself does not operates simply to exemplify these politics. Instead I will discuss the modes of discourse and of action that Zolf's collage makes possible. I want to argue that what might appear to be a strategy of "textualisation", addressing the Israeli and Palestinian conflict by recombining other people's words, actually does more than simply string together words into new groupings, but brings about encounters between groups and people. It produces a different relationship between "theory" and "poetry", and it uses the space of the page for other encounters to take place. I will consider in particular the relationship between the book and Judith Butler.

The collection began as a response to the war between Israel and Hezbollah in July 2006. Having completed a substantial part of it, Zolf then decided to visit Israel, but, rather than giving a travelogue, she decided to forgo any reference to it in the volume. Instead, she says, she

> went back to poems written before the trip, again all shaped from collaged documentary and other sources. While I left their syntax basically intact, I inserted semantic breaks that enact my sense of the unreadability of events. I use multiple forms that look like lyric, that look like story, that look like beauty… but the three line fragments that can be attributed to "me" in the whole book are "No beauty here," "narrative faltering" and "aware of the risk of these phrases." (Ibid.)

The first section, drafted in 2007-08, reworks "print and online sources of testimony, statistics, theory, story, fact and myth" (Nieghbour Procedure 81). All of these poems, as Erín Moure points out, are "in the form of single line stanzas, or in the form of long poems interspersed line by line with silent lines, thus all one stanza" (246). A major organising principle is the list of names given over a double-page spread, under the title "Grievable" (26-27). These names match with the list of ages on the following pages (28-29), and with the circumstances of their deaths under "Did not participate in hostilities" (12-13). They add up to a memorial to Palestinians killed while not participating in hostilities. In equally list-like forms, the section includes accounts of the so-called "neighbour procedure", the practice reported in some soldiers' testimonies in which the IDF use one Palestinian to gain access to his neighbour. It also includes other accounts of abuses. "At the gate", for example, is taken from a report from 2003, in which Nazih Damiri gives an account of being forced to perform a sexual act with his donkey at a border crossing close to Zeita. There are references to suicide bombings, but rather more cryptically – Sbarro pizzeria is mentioned a couple of times, clearly with reference to the

bombing of the restaurant in Jerusalem in 2001. The focus, however, is much more on what was done to Palestinians. The section as a whole more or less ends with this poem:[3]

Loss has made a tenuous we

A touch of the worst border my wound testifies

Names must break up and flatten my foreignness to myself

One is hit by implements given over without control

Exhausted not knowing why beauty is left of me what hair

Fathom who have wires in the other I have lost

Neighbour renews itself in the inexhaustible

Violence a sudden address from oil

Enthusiasm impressed upon concept

Impinging splinters oneself fallen

Mark that is no uniform

Write open and unbounded gap

Undone by the seal of the other

You are what I gain through this disorientation (30)

This final poem seems much more abstract than the concrete, albeit fragmented, details of the previous poems. It gives the impression of stepping back and trying to make some sort of sense of what has happened. The title suggests a focus on the effects of "loss," a greater degree of abstraction, and a less easily recognised sense of specific violent situations. The violence does not all seem to be of the same kind: some of it suggests the violence of torture, and some the violence of terrorism. Much of it is therefore "negative": damaging, frightening, and simply about being subjected to someone else's power. Some of it, however, might be called more "positive": a form of unsettlement which might endow one with greater insight or responsibility: "my foreignness to myself," "Undone by the seal of the other".

How this should all fit together is difficult to tell. There is very little sense of one line following on from the other. Without any conventional punctuation, the line breaks and the spaces between lines are the only indication of how these different units (which are not quite sentences)

[3] On the following page is a concrete poem playing variations on "Waiting" "Interrogation" and "Rest".

should be delivered. Zolf's own reading adheres to the Olsonian idea of line as a measure of breath – she audibly takes in a breath at the end of many of them. Even if each line is a self-contained unit, it often holds together material that does not quite fit together into a semantic unit. The first line ("A touch of the worst border my wound testifies") feels like two chronologically separate parts: the touch causes the wound that later testifies. The word "border" fits more easily with the first half of the line, but it is hard quite to make sense of what "a touch of the worst border" might be. The worst kind of border has touched me? Perhaps the word itself forms an uneasy border between "a touch of the worst" and "my wound testifies"? And what would the worst border be? One that absolutely separates and allows nothing to pass between, or one that fails to separate?

These fragments, then, connect and refuse to connect, sit uncomfortably together, make different meanings out of each other. This is true even of the title: "Loss has made a tenuous we". There are no "we's" in the rest of the lines, but rather almost entirely "I's" and its variants, along with "you", "one" and "oneself". So this really is a tenuous we indeed, one that perhaps needs to be built out of these "fragments" in which different pronouns occur. That also fits with the fact that it is hard to see whether the title means that loss has made the "we," however tenuous it may be, or that loss has made whatever "we" there is more tenuous.

This reading of the text has so far approached it as if it simply came from the pen of Rachel Zolf, but it is in fact a collage of phrases from Judith Butler, specifically one essay from Precarious Life: "Violence, Mourning, Politics".[4] Butler's essay, delivered three months after 9/11, was an attempt to suggest ways that being exposed to violence might not necessarily require a violent response, and that it might create a situation in which some reflection could happen, making Americans aware of their interconnections with each other and with others. Some of that sense might be retained here, but the language has often been made more "poetic": more concrete and more ambiguous.

"One is hit by implements given over without control," for example, is drawn from three different pages:

> I think one is hit by waves, and that one starts out the day with an aim, a project, a plan, and finds oneself foiled. (21) [describing the process of mourning]
> It would be too simple to claim that violence simply implements what is already happening in discourse (36).
> Violence is […] a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another (28-29).

Rather than being "hit" metaphorically, one is hit by "implements", changed from the verb in Butler to a noun with a much more concrete sense of "tool" or "farm implement". Words with which Butler

[4] Sixty-nine of the poem's ninety-four words are almost certainly from this essay, with a further twelve function words (such as auxiliary verbs, prepositions and pronouns) that can be found there and only thirteen lexical words not appearing at all.

is attempting to theorise grief and violence at a general level are used to describe what seem to be specific acts of violence. The suffering inflicted by grief is recombined directly with the suffering of physical violence. However, elements of the academic prose (the use of "one", the passive, the last four words) remain to give this line its somewhat more distanced tone.

In that sense, Zolf's procedure should not be described as taking "non-poetic" material and working it into poetry. While some of the changes do fall into that category, she is also interested in the way that "theory" offers a language that has its own poetic. Zolf actually sees theory and poetry as working in very similar ways.

> Basically what drew me to theory was the difficulty of it, that it enacts its own difficulty. People have said before that theory when it's written well is like great poetry. What I like about theorists such as Derrida and Deleuze/Guattari is that their form embodies their ideas. (Eichhorn and Milne 190)

Indeed, Zolf's move could be seen as asserting that theory can provide a language for poetry. However, she does also make it more difficult for it to be "theoretical", refusing to allow it to occupy the realm of abstractions, concretising it and scattering it through with other words. These words not taken from Butler mostly recur from earlier in the text, especially from the poem "A failure of hospitality," which has enough phrases from its source texts about suicide bombing to still hint of those kinds of attacks.[5] Instead of standing completely back, therefore, Zolf seems to be immersing herself in the details of violence, as is also suggested by her use of a variant of the term "tenuous we" in describing the after-effects of a suicide bomb.

> During a suicide bombing, the body, in an act of sublime necropolitics, becomes the ballistic weapon, and the primary target isn't the victim/enemy but the witness who must attempt to make meaning from shards of bodies melding in a precarious we. (Noone Bears Witness)

Zolf's comment here does run the risk of seeming rather flip, even if the idea is more or less correct: a suicide bomb is a kind of message sent to the people who survive it, one attempting to evoke visceral responses of fear and panic. But such meanings are rarely the kind of meditation that Butler proposes: faced with the actual wreckage and mutilation of a bomb, the emphasis is usually on reconstituting what happened, on rescuing survivors from it, or on recovering bodies. All of these could be said to be a form of making meaning: reading the signs that are there in order to be able to act. If Zolf is aligning her poem with this kind of meaning-making, then it clearly is something much more visceral than what Butler proposes.

Using theory in poetry, therefore, does not produce the same result. Butler's politics are fairly straightforwardly integrated into her essay, however realistic or practicable those politics might be, or

[5] "A failure of hospitality," references the suicide bombing by Hanadi Darajat, who blew herself up in Haifa's Maxim restaurant in 2003, quoting the phrase "her body full with splinters" from her "martyrdom video". In earlier forms of the poem, it was even more clearly a pendant to "Loss has made a tenuous we", with more phrases shared between the two. They appear facing each other in Eichhorn and Milne 210-211.

whatever those politics have become.[6] Butler also has a fairly clear sense of what she means by "loss has made a tenuous 'we'": "my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a "we," for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody", she says immediately beforehand (20). Zolf, who may well share much of Butler's position, in her poetry produces something that it is rather less easy to place politically. Is it a vision of a possible politics of coexistence based upon shared vulnerability, or one in which vulnerability makes that coexistence impossible?

Butler has contributed rather more than a theoretical framework, or even theoretical vocabulary, to Zolf's project. The epigraph to "Shoot & Weep" is taken from Butler, although it is deliberately chosen as an unsophisticated one: "… feel compelled to learn how to say these names?". Butler has also written part of the book's blurb. They have even performed part of the text together: "Jews in Space", from the third section of the book, a dialogue between "[t]wo women, aged fifty to sixty-five, partially clad, in the locker room of the downtown 'Hebrew Y.'"[7]

Zolf appears rather nervous about their performance – nervous perhaps more for Butler than for herself. She admits that they haven't practised, offers to share her copy with Butler, and tells her to come closer to the microphone. Butler, who is of course a constant "performer", slips into her role very happily indeed, relishing playing a Yenta-ish role and assuming a Brooklyn Jewish accent. Zolf, usually a very accomplished reader of her own poetry, is thrown by what Butler is doing, almost corpsing at points. Although she too puts on something of a voice, it is not clear that she would have done if Butler hadn't. In this section Zolf takes the first line:

> I was thinking of pitching a story to the Globe's travel section so I can get it paid for.
>
> Good for you! But you know … you'll need a unique angle when what matters isn't infinity but a language cleansed of all magic.
>
> I'm going with my daughter, who's measuring dust flows above the Mediterranean.
>
> There – you can write it from your perspective and her perspective.
>
> And my niece who's bringing a barbed-wire mezuzah, a dollar bill and a tiny Torah scroll from Bergen-Belsen.
>
> That's your angle! Write it from your perspective, your daughter's perspective and your niece's perspective floating and looking at our peaceful planet while eating kosher nosh and reciting Israel's Declaration of Independence!

Butler's own performance, which is on the surface untroubled and artful, might itself be said to be something of a misstep. She acts the poetry rather than reads it, and tends to exaggerate its comedy rather than letting the strange range of affects play out within it. Butler does catch something of the

[6] On this, see Butler, Parting Ways, and for a critique see Nelson.
[7] Zolf gave a reading at Berkeley of the entire text of Neighbour Procedure ("Holloway Series").

tone of one part of the dialogue, which does seem rather more comic than the other, but it doesn't quite fit with the poetic, melancholic tone of the other part, which Zolf reads. And Butler's reading seems to put Zolf off, to make her feel that she has to perform in the same way. "Jews in Space" draws some of its material from the story of Ilan Ramon, the Israeli astronaut who died in the Columbia space shuttle accident, and the disturbing details of Holocaust artefacts are drawn from the list of objects that he took into space with him. Clearly, the list of artefacts does have something of the absurd about it, and says something strange about the interpenetration of Israeli, Jewish and post-Shoah identities. But Butler is perhaps a little too keen to play it for laughs. This is a story marked by death.

Butler's taking on a stereotypical "Jewish" persona strikes me as an attempt at expressing affection, a means of asserting her own Jewishness and knowledge of Jewishness. Sarah Dowling suggests that a "large part of the comedy of Butler and Zolf's exuberant performance comes from the lampooning of identity categories that have considerable overlap with their own" (188). But it is a very small step from here to mockery, to associating fears of antisemitism and genocide with exaggerated "Jewish" characteristics. Delivering the word "lebensraum" in a Brooklyn Jewish accent seems particularly problematic. Here a number of difficulties emerge in Zolf's project: the difficulty of criticising Israeli policies and simultaneously asserting a Jewish heritage (how is the latter being mobilised in concert with the former?); the difficulty of collaging different kinds of discourse together, especially ones of the Holocaust and Nazism with Zionism, and the difficulty of collaboration, in which her collaborator might end up changing even the way she positions herself.

This performance too acts out the relationship between "theory" and "poetry", even if it is through the bodies and actions of Zolf and Butler rather than their texts. They throw each other off as much as they help each other. They undo each other, more than they simply explain each other. The embodied nature of this interaction is also significant: a kind of communal identity is being created in this performance, one that it not under the control of Zolf or Butler, but occurs in their encounter. Expressions of Jewishness are negotiated, performed, and go awry. A theoretical identification also has a kind of identity politics to it too, with all the attendant difficulties that come with putting politics into action.[8]

The path that this essay has traced so far from a discussion of linguistic collage to a reading of an encounter between poet and theorist helps demonstrate, I think, that collage needs to be thought of

[8] This applies to other political and identity positions too. Zolf has suggested that there is a particularly close relationship between "Canadian avant-gardists" and "Continental philosophies" (Eichhorn and Milne 190). "Theory" might therefore be said to provide ways to be both Jewish and Canadian. Zolf links herself too with the poetics and politics of M. NourbeSe Philip and Margaret Christakos's constrained and recombinatory practices ("Irritating" 30-31).

as more than a textual technique. It is not only an aesthetic strategy, but also a political mode. Collage implies what Marjorie Perloff describes as a kind of "flat screen": the existence of different elements all on the same level, without a hierarchy of importance (196). It allows different elements to coexist without one necessarily taking precedence over the other. It relies less on the lyric "I", and thus allows the poet herself to step back from the words on the page and not have to claim that she is expressing herself. Zolf says that she used "the collage method to engender a deliberate distancing effect" ("Coach House Books"). Collage also provides a way for continental philosophy to exist as one discourse among others that has no necessary priority over the other parts of the text. It spatialises language, emphasising rather more its materiality, its existence as something imprinted or stuck onto something else – thus the page is not a 2D space but in some sense 3D.

While collage is a technique that stretches back throughout the twentieth century, the difference now is that almost all of the sources used are immediately available to a reader. The entirety of Judith Butler's essay is searchable on Google books, and all that is required is a degree of patience to search through every phrase. So to model the reading process as initially trying to make sense of it and then doing some research to look into it further is a rather artificial one. It is now possible to search while one is reading. The book does not need to be seen as an autonomous object, but can function as a node which immediately offers the possibility of tracing links to other sites. Striking phrases function like hyperlinks, albeit searched for rather than clicked on.

Equally, the internet provides the mode by which Zolf herself works. "The search engine revolutionized research and I'm an investigative writer." (Royal City Writers). The Internet is the fabric out of which the book is made, as well as often being the means by which readers can make sense of it.[9]

> [I]n general the poetry of redirected language deemphasizes prosody and figurative language, and both its authors and readers are assumed to be online, networked, and actively switching among content-streams. (Reed 774)

The book, then, is made out of a set of connections. But rather than seeing this as a dissolving of boundaries of selfhood, identity and community, I want to argue that some of the connections play a crucial part in Zolf's identity position. Jewishness is less the sense of individual self expressed in the book, or as part of the content of the work,[10] than in the connections that Zolf makes. The multiple links with Butler, which assert a kind of Jewishness at the same time as they create problems for it, are available to readers via the internet. The process of searching for Zolf and Butler provides, much more easily than the theoretical texts from which she quotes, their joint performance.

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[9] Sarah Dowling points out a similar case with "The barber" (202-204). Brian M. Reed identifies some of the translations of the Qur'an used as appearing in the comments section of a page on Jewlicious.com (765).
[10] Carol Zemel reads the Jewish identity of a number of Canadian Jewish artists in the way that they deal with Jewish themes such as "diaspora, identity, ethical practice, and gender" (14).

Reading the book as a node in a network makes it harder to see as an object in its own right. Indeed, as Brian Reed argues, it becomes harder to address conventional aesthetic questions within it. And yet the question of aesthetics is not as straightforwardly excluded in the way that he suggests. Firstly, there is the aesthetic of the phrases themselves: often what turns a phrase into a "link" is the striking quality of the language (presumably part of the reason why it is extracted from its source material). What is more, the network is in a strange dialogue with the quality of the book's design: like all Coach House books it is printed on very heavily laid paper, with very prominent chain lines, and crisply printed type.[11] Some aspects of the book are visually quite striking, such as the list of ages given partly as a set of figures, and partly as the words for the numbers: two columns of different width, whose asymmetry seems to call for contemplating the double page spread as a visual object (and that might call to mind the pure forms of concrete poetry such as Eugen Gomringer's "silencio").[12]

Zolf's interest in the space of the page goes back to her first collection, Her absence this wanderer, in which a line drawn on the page is a spatial fact but also stands for lines of poetry, as well as a cutthroat gesture, and a bloodline. In Masque, different collaged discourses in different typefaces occupy page space in different ways. In Neighbour Procedure, a rather more sophisticated approach is taken. In particular, Zolf draws upon the work of artists to provide a visual dimension to her work. Just before the final section, "L'éveil," an image of what look like gridlines is printed on the facing page to the subsection title. The two lines, each little more than a millimetre wide, with coordinates printed next to them, intersect in the middle of the page. However, they are not simply neutral lines. A change from a darker to a much lighter hue is discernible on the vertical axis just above the horizontal. The faintly mottled quality of the darker parts hints at something more being shown, but mostly concealed: the crosshairs, black and white, and limitations of printing pictures of Coach House's Heidelberger printing press make this nigh on unreadable. The odd proportions of the lines, with the vertical less than two-thirds the length of the horizontal, have the dimensions of a landscape picture rather than the squared-off ratios of a grid.

Searching for the coordinates takes one simply to a more-or-less empty part of Israel, on the outskirts of Ashdod, and next to what is listed as an archaeological site Tel Ashdod. Here, googling is no substitute for reading: the acknowledgements reveal that it is "a crosshair from a photograph of the former Palestinian village of Isdud referencing its longitude and latitude marks," taken by Elle

[11] Coach House's dual role as both publisher and printer places it in quite a different position from many contemporary publishers of poetry, who operate a print on demand service. For this latter practice, the material object of the book is much more straightforwardly part of a digital network.
[12] Here this layout might be contrasted with the rather more literal and less satisfying gesture towards individuality in *Janey's Arcadia*, where each name is given in different "handwriting".

Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky.[13] In their installation project Isdud (What Isn't There), Sawatzky and Flanders documented sites of Palestinian villages that no longer exist. These are all landscape photographs, emphasising their horizontality, with a clearly delineated horizon. Aside from the ratio of the lines, however, the look of these crosshairs encourages the reading of this vertical picture as one of horizontal space seen from above (like a satellite picture or a map). Although most of it is not legible, the change from light to dark, which is most likely the horizon line, reads as some kind of boundary. In that sense, Isdud truly becomes a non-space: an imaginary map where the boundary between land and sky becomes a boundary between land and sea, or one type of terrain and another.

The cross hairs form a template for the rest of this section, the one Zolf started work on the earliest, in 2006. Her initial idea had been to take words from four newspapers for each day of the July War: the Globe and Mail, the Beirut-based Daily Star, The New York Times and The Jerusalem Post. The page forms a kind of map, with the words from each newspaper placed in a quadrant that corresponds to their home countries' relative positions to each other. Thus, the Globe and Mail is "north" of the New York Times (just as the Star is north of the Post), and both North American papers are "west" of the papers from the Middle East. (Zolf was deliberately drawing some kind of equivalence between "Canada and Lebanon[,] both being northern neighbours to 'supersized' southern presences." (84)). The site of Isdud/Ashdod on its imaginary pictoral border becomes figured as the point at which the four discourses meet. This is not a point where a border is located, but it is made to stand for one.[14]

The following is an example of one page:

[13] Zolf's choice of Flanders and Sawatzky also seems part of creating a kind of virtual queer Jewish community (Flanders was born in Israel). See Azoulay and Flanders; Flanders.

[14] Michael Greenstein sees Jewish-Canadian writers as unproblematically postcolonial, hybridising and deconstructing the spaces of empire.

Day Three

rhetorical escalation

measured

unequivocal

itching

our field of action large

our actions diverse

every tree a target

first her head

then her arms

torn pages rustled eerily in hot wind

signed, Israel

language added

blurring the lines between root causes and consequences

I mean it's a resort, not a war zone

quiet as the panic buying ended

I thought you were going to ask

about the pig

it sometimes seems that time

collapsed

if your position
a full page
how can you make it into a sticker?

each of our soldiers pure gold

I don't want
anything
to breathe

The different spaces on the page call attention to the different kinds of writing occupying them. The Globe and Mail section seems mainly to be about language: "rhetorical escalation," "measured," "unequivocal," undercut by, or reduced to a final, minor bodily sensation: "itching." The Daily Star seems to go in the other direction, from bodies to words. Actions, probably military ones, which take trees as their targets, and probably bodies too are followed by "signed, Israel" suggesting the country acknowledging the actions as its doing. The Times is less easily categorised, although it has a clearer sense of things people say. There is an oral quality to both "I mean it's a resort, not a war zone" and "I thought you were going to ask about the pig". Other lines appear to be somewhat stock phrases used in opinion pieces ("blurring the lines between causes and consequences") and to report on financial

markets (“quiet as the panic buying ended”). The Jerusalem Post too has more of a sense of being made up of different voices than just the journalist’s, an intuition confirmed by the fact that the quotation “If your position is a full page, how can you make it into a sticker?” is from a Jewish American film maker (Brown).

Questions arise about how one might read this aloud: should each part be taken separately, and if so in which order? Zolf herself takes perhaps a rather surprising route: she just reads across. What seems to be a spatial organisation on the page, with possibilities of moving in two dimensions is, in her reading, changed to a linear one, which follows the conventional routes. The lines, and the spaces between words don’t seem to make much difference. Zolf reads at some speed, jumping across them, blurring the boundaries. The language becomes rather more disorganised. What seem to be identifiable as a clear grouping of different modes of writing (presumably chosen to be such) start to blur into each other. Word and action start to interweave: “our field of action large | rhetorical escalation | our actions diverse”. “Rhetorical escalation” serves as an aside on the language being used to describe actions, but also indicating action itself, which “escalates”, and which has a rhetoric of its own.

Of course, there are other ways of reading these lines, and Zolf’s reading of them does not need to be definitive. But the same procedure of blurring lines and being less able to tell where the boundaries lie takes place on the pages of the book too. Days Four and Five, over the page, dispense with the lines (although the chain marks in the paper stand in for them to a degree), and the words begin to line up, until in Day Five all that separates the fragments from the US and Israel is a small gap. It’s also a little bit difficult to tell simply by eye whether the first line (“this is my first war” (79)) is from the Post or the Star: measuring or lining up pages together tells us that it’s the Post. But precisely because it is hard to place the voices (except in the fact that they mirror each other), this does not seem to me to straightforwardly give a sense of Israeli and American voices in dialogue and excluding everyone else. Rather, the process of breaking down of boundaries is made much more uncertain: perhaps about the breaking down of the power to maintain borders, perhaps of the ability of power to cross borders as it chooses. Some narratives might be said to take the space of others, but once they are difficult to locate in space perhaps they become more vulnerable to being read otherwise.

The use of the space of the page, then, and perhaps even the way that this interacts with the particular quality of the paper is central to the meaning being generated by this collage of news. In that sense, the book does have a function as a material object, as a site at which different voices encounter each other, with their coexistence (or failure to coexist) being only readable through their spatial relationships.

As the connection with Flanders and Sawatzky shows, Rachel Zolf is not alone among Canadian Jewish artists and writers engaging in criticism of Israeli policy. Nonetheless, this position is often at odds with other Jewish organisations and prominent figures in Canada. The recurring arguments over the place of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in Toronto Pride (in which Flanders has sometimes served as a spokesperson for QuAIA), and the controversy over another more recent collaborator, Reena Katz show the difficulties of asserting a Jewish identity and positioning oneself as a critic of Zionism.[15] Harold Troper argues that Canada's Jewish community forged its identity in the struggles against antisemitism (some of this documented, or perhaps even publicised, by Larry Zolf's journalism and interviews with neo-Nazis) and in defence of Israel. Jonathan Rosen claims, therefore, that it is harder to criticise Israel in Canada than in the US or Israel.[16] In Zolf's case, however, I am unaware of any controversy over her writing. Does the fact that Zolf has not received this kind of criticism indicate a measure of success or of failure on her part? That it has succeeded in presenting the politics of occupation in a way that does not simply reproduce fixed political positions? That poetry does not occupy the kind of public space that art, demonstrations or conferences or public lectures do?

Zolf herself is quite clear that poetry cannot have any obvious political effects, but the fact that her poetry does exist in the public sphere is also significant. The way that her two most recent books attempt to provide some memorial space to the dead is entirely bound up with the idea that these names are being expressed in public in some way. Other public effects might also be to encourage people who are already probably predisposed to do so to take some action, or responding a political climate where the government takes little interest in either of these groups (Dart; McDonald, ch. 10). Here, even if the sphere of literature is relatively narrow, it nonetheless opens out quite easily into other spheres (again, perhaps made easier by the internet).

But the book might also be said to consist of other, more indirect, effects. In connecting herself with other queer Jewish figures, Zolf is constructing a particular kind of community, an idea very important in many conceptions of poetic practice (e.g. Silliman). Models of online activism or even of diasporic networks sustained across cyberspace could be referenced here. But it is necessary to draw up on these with some caution. The poem is not mobilising networks to struggle for a Palestinian state, or for the boycott of the Israeli state. The book operates as a site of encounter. It proposes a kind of experience for its readers, grounded in a material text. Indeed, the poetry might itself be a meditation on the possibility of constructing a community, whether Jewish, queer or political. In these contexts, at least, the sense that collage might be a form of neighbourliness, modelling both its own potential for uneasy coexistence and for a vulnerability does not seem to be a

[15] On QuAIA, see Poisson. On Katz, see Lu. Judith Butler too has been involved in controversies, e.g. about speaking at the Jewish Museum New York (Kaplan) or in accepting the Adorno Prize (Landes; Leibowitz).
[16] See also Schoor; Moses.

naive literalisation of a metaphor. Whether it could form a model for Israeli-Palestinian coexistence is more dubious.

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