

**Barefoot in the field, I will feel the creditor-earth on my naked soles**

**Verónica Gerber Bicecci**

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**by Cristina Rivera Garza**

1. Nothing is hidden here, especially —as advised against by the authors of Great Literature in the twentieth century— the seams. Nothing of what we see is the result of the individual, mysterious and inexplicable genius of the author, but is rather a product of the labor of researching and selecting materials from a world that we share. All those materials are here, less for recognizing them than because we recognize ourselves in them. This is a conversation or an intersection, a happening whose script is barely sketched out by a set of decisions for which the artist nevertheless becomes absolutely responsible. But the experience is our own. The responsibility for that and its implications belong to us.

2. The opposite of the imperialist concept of giving someone a voice is showcasing the voices that already exist, or better yet producing the listening operation that allows those real, concrete voices to find others' ears. Rewriting a text is never an innocent practice. Those who rewrite let loose the tradition that the surpassing disaster has made invisible or mute. Those who rewrite unchain or unhitch, invoking less the ghosts of the past than the continuities from the past that forge a practice of resistance to and contempt for the present.

3. As José Revueltas might have put it, we must accept that we follow in the footsteps left by others. Those marks on the surface of the earth, which denote the absence of others, are part of the first great question about bodies: why are they no longer here? We are we here in their stead? Whose place do I occupy here? With whom do I share my existence at this point in the universe? Addressing these questions leads us to concepts of territory and of writing, which include the sediments of the soil and the air, and the human and non-human presences among them.

4. The future-tense conjugations of the verbs in the first part of *La compañía* and the visitations of a world to come in the haikus with which Gerber rewrites José Juan Tablada's original poems, including the intervened images of life on Earth that were sent into space on the *Voyager* probe's Golden Record in 1977, are indications that the activation of the archive not only moves toward

the past, but also reaches for the speculations of the future, where the threat of climate disaster and terricide looms as more of a probability than a mere possibility.

5. We are presented not with a ruin (if we understand the latter as Gustavo Gordillo suggests, as "dead objects from a dead past") but with rubble: material that is even more distant from form, and intrinsic to all habitable terrain, which results from the destruction of space without falling into the homogenizing sorcery of the past or the fetishizing effect of the present.

6. Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott argues that sovereignty and accumulation write upon the earth, albeit heterographically rather than directly. This involves a "secret tattooing" that leaves a trace "of the material impact of bodies in their distribution across a territory." There is thus no way to decipher such a tattoo, which we all share and which marks us equally, without unearthing the processes by which capital and its allies, the hetero-patriarchy and racism, accumulate. If we are interested in the question of justice, we must dig into the layers of material that make up the supposed immutability of our world, de-sedimenting the origin myths and the languages of violence with which they have been articulated.

7. Gerber Bicecci raises the question of accumulation over and over again, in every possible translation, including here the one carried out by the passage of time and the attraction of space. And the result is not only a collective deciphering of the secret tattoo with which we have been marked by exploitation and despoliation, but also something more. It returns to us our face and our body, together with the faces and bodies of others, multiplied as potency.

8. From the stratum of the planets to the infinitesimal existence of the microbe or bacterium, passing through the scale of the human body, Gerber Bicecci does not allow us to forget the present, the moment when the oracle's messages are generated and the moment, then, of the revealed danger. If we are to believe the projections of *La máquina distópica*, the web-based oracle resulting from a collaboration between Verónica Gerber, Canek Zapata and Carlos Bergen, in the year 2176, with 84% of contamination and a 1-to-1 replacement of human labor, the future will bring the following: "Barefoot in the field, I will feel the creditor-earth on my naked soles." We are here. This is what we share. This is our abyss.