

## SOME THESES ON THE NATURE OF THE TENT

Madeleine Stack

It was possible to discover who was responsible, but we didn't have the means, or it was not possible despite us having the means, or it was possible, but nobody told us, or it was not possible and nobody told us but we found out by our own means, and through these means we found that it may someday be possible, but we did not have the means to find out when.

An embarrassment of riches, he said. And I: it is. An embarrassment, I mean.

From the position of utter deprivation a question arises. Of the bankruptcy of the discourse, but also of its fraudulence. Of the dryness, of the fact that it wasn't cooked through that night, of the nearness of an idol, of the chimeric, of the ambiguity between invocation and dismissal, of a seminal text, of the 'end' of 'utopia'. The man was a mere abstraction in universal clothing, then pure beginning. It was required in order to wage war in a more efficient way, a euphemism for your intervention, the politics of recognition. Think violence removed from bodies removed twice from bodies.

This rhetorical path: 'they' ambushed her car. 'They' wrapped, in a communiqué, the softened edge of conflict. 'They' make links, use images, chose rhetoric. 'They' are, they invoking the rights, the rights left of men?

It's unseeable, undoable, unfathomable, unspeakable.

The difference is time. What is the quality of life time, time spent. As if life should be earned.

## TENTS INDICATE A RELATION TO CONTINGENCY

I do what I always do when trying to get inside something. I look at it from above. Google Nauru, Manus. We enter a gridform. Exist within a world within a word, exert an ancient feeling on the new.

Writing letters: language throws itself up against this wall. The wall of unknowing, of silence. Everything in this language – 'they' language – is euphemism, obscurity, willful obstruction. Of the horror. That's the vault in me I'm talking about it. The obstruction, the obscuring. How to use words when they own all the words. 'They' own the world. And who steps where onto what ground. Language is a continuous process of theft, theft of meaning.

It's a deterrent. Death a deterrent from escaping death. Horror a deterrent from escaping horror. Torture a deterrent from escaping torture. On and on, like this.

The process, we must respect the process, the process in its stalling, in its refusal, in its years and squalor, it's a process, a process of elimination.

Time is spent, here there is nothing to spend it on but wanting.

## AUSTRALIA HOLDS ITS SHAME IN ISLANDS ON THE ISLANDS THE SHAME IS HELD IN TENTS

Translation of beings into bodies, this collusion, we stand bewildered. I walk around in the map, step forward and back; the world warps. It's an intricate framework onto which is hung a sheath, the banalest of evils.

In the ire of the militant image, planetary globetrotting vs spatial containment. Asserting, via mimicry, the establishment of a new paradigm. National tents vying against one another. How many islands can be built around a fortress? Like a body that has been punctured so many times it resembles a tattered flag, beyond the limit of human tolerance. Maybe, for some, there is still a light at the end of the tunnel. The problem is surviving the tunnel.

Power is the option to reduce the possibilities of others, possibilities that allowed you to gain power and so keep it. 'Economic migrants' as if money means nothing. 'Australian values' as if those ever included a closed-door policy. A utopian impulse gone horribly awry, glitched:

### THE TENT FINDS ITS EMBLEM IN THE 'PERHAPS'

Distinctions between inside and outside cannot be clearly marked.

Anyone might sleep here. Wake broken and streaked in the face. Heart pulped in the hot uncaring morning. The machine was built by us, we can dismantle it.

Unlucky, a convict, ironic, radiating. We were so ashamed then there in that moment, a collective shame. To have come on a boat and for the boat to have sunk was just enough. I'd die to be not lost again. Thumbing some fucking Murdoch rag, unceremoniously winded by heartbreak on the dingy tram. Running out of ways to maintain an opaque relation. It is not by accident that we live in such a harried moment. How, in it, is it possible to care about others and the world. To carve out that potential in us. The abyss into which we fall, the morass that we are causing.

Out of ammo, the regime is out of fashion. People know. Knowledge is not the problem. Action is not the problem. Thousands line the streets. Doctors put their collective foot down. The slow-burn realization that they are not listening.

Horrors, useless and exorbitant horrors, baroque constructions designed to make life as miserable as possible, *a deterrent*, as inhospitable to life as possible, *a deterrent* –

'The Stranger'. Who frames 'the stranger' in the public mind. Our problem is not that hordes break down the fortress walls, the walls of this huge sparse nation. The problem is already inside, closing the door to our humanity, closing the door to our neighbours, this senseless rhetoric.

The fact that we're humans spoils this plot, harbouring futurity in our little squeamish hearts. Beginning to sense how a we could be.