



5. POEMS

georgia
park

“this food is all eaten too fast.”

bernadette mayer // [home clark's waiting for us]

“i learned how to swear without
flinching inside.”

wanda coleman // collage

5.POEMS

// I JUST GOT BACK

// HE SAID:

// MY QUIET OPERA

// NOT TO LOVE, THEN

// YOU GONNA EAT THAT?

I JUST GOT BACK

I just got back to the US
and someone said
“Are you sure you want to go back there?”

It’s getting kind of dangerous.”
This was an American.

I once crossed a border
with my hands and knees in the dirt
to get back to America,

where you can drink the water,
and there’s hospitals
and people speak my language
easily, free flowing

even when my own words tumble and fail me,
as when I’m dehydrated.

Where no one mistakes me
alone at night or in the morning
for a Russian

with all the implications
of being a Russian immigrant woman.

Where at least I could call the police,

although I wouldn't recommend it
for my baby brother;

him I've had to train in the art
of not getting shot.

Korea had signs up in Seoul
Saying: NO AFRICANS ALLOWED HERE,
for fear of ebola.

I was run down with a car in Costa Rica
by people sneering, calling *gringa*.
I was chased in Panama
and almost kidnapped.

In Nicaragua, the white man pedophilia
was rampant
so they thought I was with a sex tourist.

I dropped out of my own high school
Because they spit at me and called me gay.
I carry mace in the United States.

When people come near me,
I back away.

I'm not safe here
the way I had been in Asia
but I was well aware of that
coming back to where

my aging father is weeping suddenly
and telling all of his children to run, run to Canada

but I just got back here
to be with him
and I'm not leaving
ever again.

HE SAID:

“Maybe you’re surrounded by darkness
because you are the light
and you just can’t see it.”

Joseph—send me all your moths
so I can feel their wings
beat against my skin

they think my feeble flickering
is the moon but
it’s all glassed in.

MY QUIET OPERA

Today, I am sad.

The imagined opera singer
usually so reliable, narrating in my head
disrobes her largeness on stage.

Her fleshy intricacies
fall like dust stirred up
by a door opening
onto an abandoned scene.

Yesterday, I was happy.
Today the simplest words
thud hard in my chest.
The singer doesn't sing.

She stands, naked.
Today, I am sad.

NOT TO LOVE, THEN

He can't love himself
until he's filthy stinkin' rich
with heat, and a toilet.

I can't love me
until I'm published.

So we call to remind each other
not to love anyone else, then, either,
until these things happen.

YOU GONNA EAT THAT?

Hitting the road again for the first time
since I smashed my little Korean safety box car
across three lanes—the stars, the ocean,
and the goddamned highway.

The soup, before it spilled on my shirt
with a splattering burn to the chest
hung in the air.

For a moment I thought
about nothing. Then we hit.
I looked over and remembered when
I thought you were something
then all the sudden it looked
like spaghetti strands
were leaking out of your stomach.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR //

GEORGIA PARK is:

the author of
privatebadthoughts.wordpress.com;

creator of the feminist literary collective
Whisper and the Roar;

a member of Sudden Denouement;

and a performer with D.E.N.C.I.T.Y.
of Wreck Shop Movement.

Find her online at fb.com/georgiaparkpoet.

Submit your feminist poetry to
whisperandtheroar@gmail.com.



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