

Joan Retallack

THE WOMAN IN THE CHINESE ROOM
A PROSPECTIVE

Intersperse entries & numerals from notebooks
(back to Chicago (Chinese story in tact (quotes
from assorted pm sages
= Manual text ?

She is captive in China
" " " " a moment in history
" " " to a sense of history

but in the way a wordswerve could turn a century's prose for a second
or two away from history first from property then ideas then property
as idea then idea as property

creating parallel texts left and right full of opposing forces in a sad
space of alternating dire lexical black and white squares

the flat degraded feeling in telling the story or describing the passage
and/but they are very proud of this Searle says suppose that unknown
to you the symbols passed into the room are called questions by the
people outside the room and the symbols you pass back out of the
room are called answers to the questions

She-?.
how do you know the person locked for all those years in the Chinese
room is a woman there are few if any signs if she exists at all she is the
content of a thought experiment begun in a man's mind this is nothing
knew and perhaps more complicated

She-1.

now that we think we know that the world is not all that is the case the case in question the space of the case sad but fierce with light upholds the dark it seems to utter itself must there be subtitles must there be translation she thinks she knows but doesn't want to accept that in order to write or read or speak there must be a division between light and dark

imagine that you are locked in a room and in this room are several baskets full of Chinese characters she is glad they are Chinese of course glad to continue Pound's Orientalism there will be no punctuated vanishing points she is given only rules of syntax not semantic rules she is relieved of the burden of making meaning she need only make sense for the food to be pushed through the slot in the door it is thought that these are situations more familiar than we would like to think them to be in the new technologies and to men more than to women but it oddly feels quite normal

She-2.

what's to keep her from responding to their cues with syntactically correct non sequiturs in effect surrendering they might ask does the past tense give you vertigo she might reply there's no sense in knowing what day or night it is they're always changing

She-3.

yes it gives me vertigo knowing they've all been locked in that prose for centuries by comparison this makes the Chinese room feel full of breath of fresh air the point has been made that this prose has justified the violence and then it's been made and they can say oh that point has already been made

She-4.

is being too careful not exploring the other possibilities but this could be serious it might not be the thought experiment he thought it was or it might be irreversible once set in motion vert-I-go not abject advert to yes Duchamp turns out all along to all along have been all along Fred Astaire and Kate Smith coming over the mountain is Gertrude Stein

For the Woman in the Chinese Room: assemblage manc enhance sil-
houette 3 millimeter aperture in iris relish chalice in ken off shore

vegetables were being smashed hard to find dotted lines and arrows
from aesthetic to ethical to spiritual to penthouse level the woman
with four shopping bags said I don't want your money I just want to
tell you that I dreamed I went to the Hilton Hotel because I knew God
was there I knew He was in the penthouse I tried to find the elevator
but they stopped me they wouldn't let me past the lobby

vivid stupefy suffice perturb brance

More Orientalism: the Japanese say *mu* to unask the question
aqueous tenuous hush tuh

in this story to describe roundness you may have to think about a
square you may have to retreat from decorum or just spell it out pho-
netically you may have to find an Oriental Jesus with a vertical smile
you may have to calculate the rectilinear coordinates of a blue duskless
mountain with the distance of a female Faust

excessive evil nonsense Agamemnon lemon mythos ethos logos pathos
fauxed yes/no nothing no thing to be gained do not reach out do not
attempt to grasp let it slip by

mbers shoul ha gn

uides

e

ity

f

ected

ultra horizon breaking either/or parapet
blank dark returns new page tilted
speaking blank strange northern apple
in stant pivot sigh then of (blank)
toward 13 squares 13 syllables 3
points blank clear between bracket
asked light light 20 thin flips blank socket
ancient coil's pro's cunt's critique's pure reason's
blank erosore blanke paw thumb Hegel
blank remedy beard agenda dramb
fraucht ergle gloss remainder squat
in history's twitter rut she blank
twi-lips pensive grim reminder mirg mirror
blanck trace there pocket vox map
thing I ness inging hind able isible erved
protentending crack blank fast air cont'd
quiet putt rusted civet beast or breast