Imperial Physique

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Published by Punctum Books

Phrydas, JH.
Imperial Physique.

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IMPERIAL PHYSIQUE
My love of Genet, in retaliation for your torment.
Your enemies, too, are mine —
LINGERING WILD

To make sense of a blood-drenched beginning...

- In the beginning, there is nothing. Only void. An animal creeps along a brushed, white path near rocks removed for the purpose of routing. Scent-made. These—the origin of trails—become easements of their own and are called logical. What is the logic of a smell? Tiny pores, when open, allow air to infiltrate and conform to spaces now occupied. Sharpened, the animal knows to turn left. The soil gives. Even a ground covered in small frozen leaves glows similarly, as if in levitation, projected from loam to the canopy overhead.

- Laid in patterns, “animal” is replaced by “individual,” later, “individual” by “group.” At some point, we begin to amass along avenues inherited without prior knowledge of the land and its ancestry. The animal waits as we pass—breathing.

- Along this land.

- Where wilderness lingers.

- Do you notice the city first beyond the brush? Or the forest first beyond the ridge of rooflines? Both presuppose a city.
you fuck the body to find its language
you splay the body to find its forms
whose forest exists at an edge or boundary; a secure distance. Imagine, instead, a city built in the forest — no building tall enough to penetrate the canopy. Would you feel more or less exposed here, where sidewalks blend under foliage lit from beneath by streetlamps?

- Every body yields:

- And it’s in the yield that you open — abreast, an invitation — the curl of skin around a fingernail or a trail along the hedgerows.

- The within is auxiliary.

- If the forest is the city, and the city forest, fences are superfluous. Yet, granite evokes a similar response, molding a curve as they obtrude from the surface. The subtlety of outcropping forms inflects an even more powerful hold at the edge of trees where the grey of sidewalk joins dirt without effort. Because concrete, when ending, knows nothing of the earth continuing underneath.

- To mark comes from the term boundary but also forest. We mark the limits of a land and extract meaning, territories, and trace small tracts for ownership. To offset the tendency to stray, posts and carvings act as guides: boundary stones, marksmen’s cautionary impressions. Beyond this, the margin: wildness and the sea.

- They built the city on soil too soft for foundation, red like clay, and the big-housed ones, when strolling, refrain from idle gazes. Stiff, they pass by tiny cafés, the street once covered with boot prints and dull ash, a violence in reverberation held deep within the soil. Marching tamped down the loose earth, once, like a thousand bloodied bodies in a heap: each face an occasion for color to surface under the water oak.
• They called this place *terminus* before a man arrived and claimed it as his own. His own, and then a daughter’s. A daughter’s, and then the sea’s.

• We enter this forest *without ever having left it*: moisture, swamp heat and sinew, roots twining underfoot as our hands become wet. In time, each file shifts into place, thin strips of bark along magnetic fields. A building rises toward the limbs of trees. Between, a damp remainder — echoes of running horses — a muffled cry. And the crowd, en masse, pulls the rope taut.

• I can’t help but watch the undulation of each pale denial caught in heaves that disappear along the horizon. Trees rise and obfuscate and calmly begin to settle along a low mist. Notice how the ridge flattens to the left, almost in waving, a sloping invitation to *go ahead, unearth*.

• Some draw lips back to smell the dampness underneath the matted leaves, a driving warmth. The hills solicit each of us to lie, and argil, molding to our silhouette, knows contour in advance. Because our bodies aren’t the first. A promise, tuning its rhythm to our own.

• These rhythms breathe in a stretch of grass along the field and contract at the pouring of pitch and the process of evening. Wooden shacks dot the roads along the periphery where country store barrels overflow with taffy. Shelves filled with wooden games and bottled sodas, while outside, broken windows lean against the siding. Piles of red earth line ponds filled with giant turtles some catch in preparation for a Sunday stew. Beyond, the newly tarred road glitters with splintered bone.

• On the other side of the city, a scattering of small buildings congregates along the tree line. Old enough to remember
how shoulders steam. Below, a cover of soft pine needles the earth.

- Here, cloth might be the closest metaphor since the city needs weft and weave to pattern. The suburbs cannot penetrate the pockets of people torn here and replanted and retorn and again and so colors rise and vibrate and clash. Descendants cause the big-housed one’s anxiety, sweat forming in defense. Discharge is quick and leaves no scar. It maps and ventrilo-quizeshem each into saying “this time, it’s something I ate and not...this place.”

- We long for the need to examine the wild’s edge where, beyond, child-sized animals crouch and wait.

- Vision proves touch; sensation, presence. A twitch among the shrubbery. A sound—a thrush.

- To breathe, we must slough off rough concrete, meadows yoked to blacktop as elm and dogwood watch in an ochre flurry. In evening light, systems appear. Neon lines map interior shifts where uneven bark leaves impressions on skin. The boundary between city and forest we want dissolved. Where language emerged to mark matter into mud.

- It’s counterpoint: kudzu along the lintel.

- I allow vines to grow over my doorframe— an intention to perform the forest in the city when the limits are horizontally skewed toward a history of slaughter. The line between trees and sky hides clusters of dull green. Taking stock, we’re required to spatially orient with each step. To tense muscles and scan; to tense muscles and re-scan; like this, until you reach home, leaving the city at your back to administer at will.
• Walking under constant shade, I attempt to retain a sense of me with an impossible, almost futuristic hunger. And yet, words fail to shift meaning in such exchange—a slight gesture—a bent leg. The wild exposes a sudden refusal to allow the back and forth of eyes—acts of compulsion. A desire to acquiesce.

• The how-to guide on cruising on blood-soaked land.

• Does containing a wilderness change its name? In a peripheral field, haze takes the form of minor bodies. A rock from which a metal rod protrudes anchors the scene. Heat moves likewise, a sweet dialogue amid a fringe of magnolia while someone dallies as if collecting sap.

• Maps are drawn with simple leg movements. A straggler only need rest beside a fence and take note.

• The sidewalk leans forward in an uneasy pitch.

• Subtle agitations drape like threads woven at the city’s limit. Where blacktop crumbles into bits of teeth, finger bone, and nail. Silent, we twine root systems along rock walls—useless: inoperable and knotted at the ends. This the city tells us. To shield the big-housed ones from flashback paranoia.

• We recognize these knots not through faces or clothing but reassembled movements: positions, dances. Stiff odor tilts just as much as ritualized breathing. Bodies in heat while, just beyond, sidewalks reappear among footprints and the echo of streetcars. Little glows of lamps, floating orbs like midnight flowers surveilling such intricate elaborations.

• Hiding enacts the hunt, while looping remains pivotal. To track sensation, witness how fiddlehead ferns cover the bank under tulip poplar and loblolly pine. Where roads mask trails
(Warm the air to contain the trajectory of sound)

A closed space, close enough for another's air to breathe across your cheek, where movement unfelt inspires perspiration, sticking in its place after the body is gone. A minute gesture leaves its mark, a small spot of unknown odor, clinging moisture on your shirt, or heavy shorts.

The smell of a

Fluid uses for erosion

Body opaque - transparency of admission

Reading

Cracking in dry heat

Salt smell
that bend along the riverbed. The pulse of crickets bridges and breaks harmony, each small gesture an invitation to stay.

- This rut, a line pressed into soil, an escape route: the soil-piled sides—fountains of stone—higher than eye-level. A ledge to survey the landscape still secluded from above.

- Strangers convene along these routes in view of a meadow or abandoned city plot ringed with a fence. We come together, aware that buildings and trees are not synonymous but retain causal relation; one, and then the other, and then the one, infinitely.

- *Bewilder*: to lead astray; to lead into the forest; to lead into the wild.

- Some of us remain indoors, while others take backroads under cement overpasses. Out from the intensity of the sun, kudzu and other vines stick to cool walls with tuberous feet. Thin tunnels, dirt roads, graffiti misspelled in contrasted shade, occasional signposts with raised gold letters tell the names of minor battles, creeks, and only the palest of the dead.

- No wind to shake draped branches, the roads continue until red dirt obscures Google-able names. If you wander far enough, you might find the tendency to skim instead of dig becomes a burden felt along your shoulder blades.

- The origin of language, where granite uproots trees at sites of heavy violence—where lines press and remain. The cuts endured long after and were discovered, some years later, wrapped with twine and cast in cement.

- The foundation of houses along the ridgelines.
• Under the floorboards, the walls are clay and sweat like us. Regard the earth dismissing its structural employment as it slides down to the cement floor.

• Worms chew on loam. Wolves rut in wet leaves.

• A fence elongates peripheries here as cracked cement fades into dust. Each gash of construction reddens the lumber stacked nearby: Walmarts, motels, displaced burials. Creeks intimate against the bank hidden from road sun. A mess of fern and winged sumac. Around the bend, smoke tarries against the green. We cannot see heat in such heat, brush burnt in daylight. Apple trees, sumac, and the lingering from a limb of severed twine.

• I know simple words braid them, passed down through families too fragile to whisper any account damning their own. They inherit fracture along the thin veneer of false steel. To not shrug off but inhabit the place between strangling hands or a spit of land where blinding sun is less a cause for concern than the rising tide of a mob in advance. A scoff in another room.

• And even now, buildings compete with encroaching pine-wood as cicadas hum regardless of larger bodies stalking below.
Absorptivity is at its highest at the resonance frequency, usually near or below 100 Hz.

"An example of proper sympathetic resonance is a windowpane rattling steadily at the very low powerful sound of a bus or truck engine going stationary. The rattling will usually occur at a higher harmonic of the sound made by the engine. As soon as the driver changes into gear the rattling will stop, often changing its rhythm before it stops altogether. Powerful sopranos bursting wineglasses fits in to the same category - sympathetic resonance at a distance."

-Arden Wilken

Failure of the original Tacoma Narrows Bridge