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## Bloody Tongue [at Language's Edge]

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Panel: At Language's Edge

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ko ko thett

### Bloody Tongue [at Language's Edge]

[1]

The edge of language is the edge of the seal adhesive of an envelope you lick to en-coffin the corpse of a poem you wish you had never written. While tonguing and wetting the triangular edge of the envelope, you don't realize your tongue gets cut. By the time you sense a taste of warm salty-musty liquid on your palate, it's too late. Squeamish as you are, you have already swallowed the blood of your own tongue. I am talking about bloody tongue.

[2]

When the mother tongue embraces you like a failed state, she will never let you off. Bloody tongue, they say, is the sword of destiny against "the wooden tongue" of tyranny. Yet, history has proven that it is bloody tongue that gets cuts after cuts after cuts after cuts after cuts. Again and again and again and again.

[3]

Why are you having recurrent nightmares in which you are thrown into a ring to find yourself wrestling with the two post-modern Goliaths: the mode of production of poetry and the commodification of poetry?

[4]

you've come out of the closet  
the closet is very crowded

Yet you can't escape. Everywhere you want to go—margin, conceptual, post-conceptual, alternative, queer, underground, is packed. Your presence in the margin is not welcome. You have just become another widening factor for the very margin which has now invaded the main page.

You do what a wolf does when it finds a goat hide. It chews on it while sleeping on it.

[5]

how do you write history  
in a language that has no  
past tense?

[6]

You say bloody tongue is a silver bullet for what you call "creative angst." Once you suggested to a poet in writer's block that he betray his own bloody tongue. Just go out on a date with another bloody tongue, you said. How come a poet ended up in a writer's block in the first place?

[7]

What do you do when your first bloody tongue says, "I have a book," and the second one says, "There

is a book inside me.” Your mother tongue says, “I go to school.” Your second tongue insists it should be: “I school to go.” Each time you utter a sentence, your second bloody tongue utters another sentence in inversion. The split of your bloody tongue will turn your tongue into a snake tongue.

No worries. People will read you as if you were the Venomous, the original.

[8]

Look what I have done to Maung Chaw Nwe’s “Fish”:

### **Fish**

All my life  
I haven’t caught a single perch  
Look now,  
the entire universe hangs twitching at the end of my line!  
As I reel the damn whale in,  
my rod  
bends into a rainbow.  
I turn into a fish

[10]

As far as I am concerned the most unpronounceable and untranslatable word, yet the most useful cure for creative angst, is *Perkele*! *Perkele* means “devil” in Finnish. Some people believe *Perkele* is the original name of Ukko, the Zeus of the Finnish pagan pantheon. When you say *Perkele* in agony, with a rolling rrrrrrrrr, Satan and God will be at each other’s throats in their scramble to your rescue.

[11]

I may be able to Burmese my English. I may be able to English my Burmese. But I will not Finnish my Burmese. Nor my Burmese Finnish. *Perkele*!

[12]

The Samsara is long, and endless. And we don’t have all day.

[13]

You ask your lover,

“What have we done to deserve this?”

“Poetry,” she says.