

Éireann Lorsung and Ben Weaver
Ghent, Belgium, and St Paul, Minnesota

Dear X,
a catalogue – (trees, flowers,
birds, bugs, sound,
other animals)
map drawing –

Dear X
As you know
the thing works
like a receiver –
across distance –
the body, I mean

Dear X –
To walk into rooms
where you lived
requires tolerance
for pain –
in only half-light

Dear X
the desert
train pulling into
LA next to empty
concrete canals –
5:15am –

Dear X –
you (my past)
walking by me on
this Seattle street
(with whose
manners & Southern
voice I would have gone home)
No question –

Dear X –
that O'Hara
poem! Those early
mornings we walked
on the railroad
tracks!

Dear X
my entire
right side
tingled where
it encountered
your body

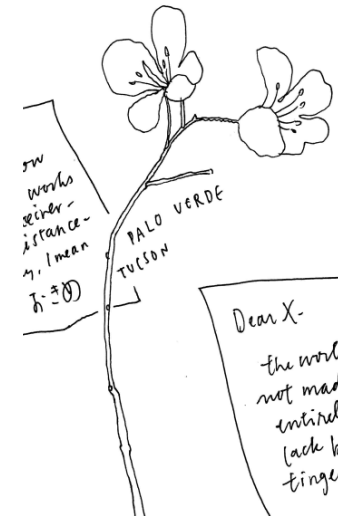
Dear X
the world is
not made
entirely of your
lack but it is
tinged by it –

Dear X
cheap stationery in a drawer at
the hotel in
Little Tokyo, maybe 50 years
untouched
me, too –

Dear X –
Outside a
Baptist church in Venice
where worship & pain
sound so alike –

Dear X
in the desert,
the huge city,
the train, the
forest in another
city
always

Dear X –
Desert elements
are thirst
& longing
& palo verde –



Dear X, ^{1,2,3}
a San Fra [...] feelin [...] (As if [...])

Notes:

1. We asked Éireann Lorsung for some background to these letters, and she sent us the following. Some editing has occurred:

'The *Dear X* pieces are by the writer Okime Irotok, whose work is the subject of a dissertation by , the main character in *1873*, a novel I'm working on. That novel is about earthquakes and archives, compression of time and space. Irotok's work is about fragmentation, loss, coming of age in 1960s Japan, sex, and travel; she is mainly known for her confessional, four-volume roman fleuve *The Lost Novel*. *Dear X* is from a collection of epistolary non-fiction called *Letters to X*. 's dissertation is about coincidence and accident in Irotok's work.

As an outsider I'm sure I could argue for the inclusion of these fragments in a tradition of Japanese poetry (given Irotok's self-identification as a Japanese writer, despite the fact that she lived outside Japan for much of her life), but Irotok herself always described *Letters to X* as 'epistolary non-fiction' or simply as 'letters'. In her unpublished dissertation, wrote 'In their brevity, the letters in *Letters to X* call early [Japanese] poetic forms to mind, but they owe as much to late-20th century literary theorists and to the verse structures of interwar cabaret music'.

These letters are also part of a diary I kept during train travel in the western U.S. (which forms the basis for another project-in-progress, a book of essays called *The Book of Simultaneity*). These fragments somehow exist both in a book of epistolary non-fiction first published by Kodansha in 1978 and in my notebook from last summer, and they are in effect two separate things—Irotok's book and my notes—and 's transcription of them, printed here, is its own, third, thing.

The musician Ben Weaver is making an album using images and language from the diary I kept. His song, 'Dear X', speaks to Irotok's book although I know Ben has never heard of it. Other songs I've heard from that album (it's still in progress) are about train travel, agriculture, loneliness. Pretty fitting, really, for Irotok's work. This album will accompany the eventual publication of *The Book of Simultaneity*.'

2. Éireann Lorsung's most recent book is the poetry collection, *Her Book* (Milkweed, 2013). She is the editor and publisher at MIEL, a small press and journal publisher based in Ghent, Belgium, whose work is very fine indeed and available from miel.ohbara.com.

3. Ben Weaver is a singer-songwriter from Minnesota who also draws and writes and rides his bike. His records include *The Ax in the Oak* and *Mirepoix and Smoke*. For this issue of *The Letters Page*, Ben has made a version of the song 'Dear X' exclusively available to you, dear Reader.

If you are looking at this on a screen, then click this link to hear the song.

If you are reading on paper, but have a suitably equipped smartphone device, point it at the Quite Ridiculous code thingummy below to hear the song.

Otherwise, just use this web address: <http://bit.ly/1j9ZIYD>

