

Imagine



Renaissance

# **Imagine Renaissance**

Naomi Buck Palagi

Copyright © Naomi Buck Palagi

Locofo Chaps is an imprint of Moria Books.  
More information can be found at [www.moriapoetry.com](http://www.moriapoetry.com).

Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

Chicago, USA, 2017

Cover art by Nicolas Palagi 2014

Thanks to the following for original publication of these poems:

“radio ii” first appeared on Lin Brehmer’s blog for WXRT Chicago

“radio, news” first appeared in *Masque & Spectacle*

“prayer” first appeared in *BlazeVOX 16*

“We can’t let him dominate our imagination.”

-Pete Buttigieg, Mayor of South Bend,  
Indiana, on fighting Trump’s agenda

“Say I am you.”

-Jalalludin Rumi

radio ii

*January 2010*

on a morning when anything is possible the sun is shining  
in january and the radio whispers *I love the smell of bacon  
on a woman* on a morning when anything is possible the  
coffee is bitter and the donut too sweet but it's cold outside  
and the bank said one zero degrees at seven fifty-five and  
grandma's hair is like a little boy, like our little boy, who  
lights up when he sees her and screams in utter  
joy at the triceratops on his wall on this morning, anything  
is possible the keys under tori amos' fingers bump each  
other like bubbles while the cords in her throat vibrate like  
our little girl who plays with sound like a toy like a puzzle  
like playdough to be molded you can feel the vibrations  
in her small chest *I love the smell of bacon on a woman*  
which makes me laugh out loud and I wonder if this is only  
because of the caffeine from the bad coffee but the sun is  
shining and it's the middle of january and I'm driving down  
ridge road the ridge of the sand dunes the highest point  
between here and somewhere else a beach really, in the  
middle of this crapped out life, this crapped out city where  
the windows are boarded up and we are all  
hoping obama will still love us, will still  
save us because this morning, anything is still possible and a  
beat up early hybrid car is a workin car isn't  
snuffy and poofie anymore it's a *workin* car, like *de-troit* and  
a steel mill worker, it's beat up and so am I since I drink bad  
coffee and make nothing and don't  
sleep enough with our two babies but grandma came today  
and is making pot roast and my husband dreamed last night  
about making love to me so this morning, smell of bacon on

a woman, or smell of gasoline on my gloves, smell of bad coffee on my breath, the sun is shining on the crisp air, on the salt smudges on concrete and shot cars, and anything is possible

radio, news

I.

Imagine me

sitting at a chipped laminate table, an old farm house.

Legs slouched open under grey skirt.

This morning I wasn't even sad.

Imagine me sitting there as

door to the living room

bangs shut. Door to the

bedroom bangs shut. Door to the backyard bangs.

Hallway door already shut. "*When one door closes...*"

A squeak.

Me looking up tired *what now*, seeing door

to the basement swing slowly open. Me

sluggish, watching the door which has stopped moving.

Imagine me sitting there

into evening, staring at the door. At the black space behind

it. Imagine

a whippoorwill

calling outside, me

startling.

Some focus startles back into my eyes.

The kitchen very dim.

Imagine me  
slowly

getting up. Going to the sink, turning on the tap. Metallic  
odor to the water. Sliding

dirty dishes into the sink as it fills. My back

to the basement door. My back

watching.

Each dish I hand-wash slowly, soft

circles on flat surfaces, slow swirls in dirty mugs.

Listening.

I put on the kettle, place a bag of tea in a  
heavy mug, just washed. Imagine me.

Wanting to  
open a window but not wanting to know if

it is sealed  
shut. My back

to the basement  
door. The kettle hisses and I jump, I

turn it off. Pour it steaming  
into the mug.

The whippoorwill calls.

Hands covering but not touching the mug I stare  
out the window. I have never seen the whippoorwill. The  
radio kicks on, staticy,

news about people rounded up, lies,  
fear, but  
*what now, who won what, what is lost?* I  
walk over, turn off the radio.

Unplug it.

*Whip-poor-will.*

*Whip-poor-will.*

I drink tepid tea, stare out the window.

Watch me

as I start to drink the  
last sip but pour it  
back from my mouth into the cup. and now

Watch me

turn  
toward the basement door.

Walk toward it.

Set

cup on floor  
at top of stair.

It is dark now in the kitchen.

Darker in the stairwell.

II.

Pause. Let's take a breath. I wasn't sad this morning, and

the news is not all bad. But

polite doors have been closed, a darker door is opened.

Something moves. At some point,

we must learn more,

and I've left a sip of myself at the top  
of the stair, anticipating return. Imagine

me returning.

Imagine

me gone in the basement for hours, the tea getting  
colder on the stair. Imagine

me gone for days, weeks. The tea

evaporating little by little. Months going by. The tea

to guide me home

dried up and gone. Imagine

the whippoorwill

calling and me not hearing. And now,

imagine my return.

III.

Imagine it with drawn, haggard lines on my face.

Imagine it with great voracious slug-creatures  
attached to my legs. Me, gathering strength to  
pull myself up the final stair. Me reaching the top,  
flailing, knocking over the mug,  
lurching to the door, all the doors, trying to unlock them  
and all of them stuck shut. More  
creatures  
oozing up to the kitchen, filling it, me trying to get  
out the window. The window

stuck. Whippoorwill

calling lonely in the distance.

Creatures

silent.

Suck out all the air.

Imagine me,

IV.

Imagine.

Watch instead an imagine of my return.

Watch an imagine of my return, haggard lines on my face.

Walking up the stair. A storm in my absence, kitchen  
window broken. Shards of glass  
glitter in the sink. Dampness on the sill where rain came in.  
Imagine me,

coming up the stair, my face worn from  
travels, a leaf  
tangled in my hair.

One hand curled,

disfigured. A butterfly

fluttering above me, blue.

Up my back  
and along my outstretched arm a massive  
boa snake,

wound loosely around my damaged arm, its head and  
tongue pointing eagerly forward. Imagine a

jungle  
climbing behind me.

I bend to retrieve the empty mug, I smell the faint scent

of tea. Imagine the boa flicking its tongue toward the  
scent.

Noise wells up from the  
dark basement. A raincrow call. An  
elephant trumpet. I am pushed

forward now, my face  
relaxing, my eyes

bright and focused, the jungle  
filling the room and bursting  
the doors open and suddenly

we are outside and jungle  
keeps coming from the stairwell, we fill out, we spread  
out over  
used-up farmland; now watch me

walk. I walk and walk and  
walk. I am growing tired but do not want to stop motion,  
the motion is good. Clouds have gathered.

Clouds gather.

Thunder rumbles in the distance and it is hard  
to distinguish in the rumbling of the earth what is  
thunder and what is great motion of jungle. Rain

begins to fall.

I slow, and stop.

The jungle keeps moving.

Butterfly takes cover under a leaf, boa  
slides off my back and arm, it keeps moving. I hold

my cup empty to the sky I tilt my head. I watch  
rain fall toward me

from such distant heights.

V.

It is not wrong to imagine such things.

VI.

A whippoorwill calls in the growing dusk.

## prayer

Let me not be driven by fear. Yea though I walk through the valley of darkness, let me use my eyes to see the glint of water-swept rocks. Let me use my cheek to feel the whip of animated wind. In my hand I clutch a stick of smooth-carved wood, and should I lose this stick let me not forget the knife in my pocket, to cut another.

Let me not be driven by fear. Though the path meander through tallest trees, let me look upon the panther with awe and care, and let me not panic, and give it fright. Though I be alone, let me not abandon the voices in my head, who speak to me, and give me comfort, the living and the dead, those who speak in the world and those who have never been.

When I tire, let me sit, and rest. Let me drink from my skein, and let me eat from my pack. Let me not be driven by fear of famine, for if I have never hunted, I can learn. If I have never cultivated, I can stay, and cultivate, and fill my pack. If I am unpleasant to myself, I can bathe in cold streams and be refreshed.

Let me not be driven by fear. If I take fright, let me run, and build my energy and strengthen my muscles. Let me take a side path, and find a vista. Let me gasp. Let me notice the difference between near and far, between cliff and sky, between an oak leaf, and a pokeberry. Let me smash a pokeberry onto my skin, to see the bloom of purple. Let me rub bare feet on moss, then re-lace my shoes and send

breath to the legs that that will carry me forward.

Yea though I walk through the valley of darkness, let me not be driven by fear. Let me consider myself, and the many lives that have made me.

If I am harmed, let me wash the wound. Let me tend it, with care and curiosity, so I do not fear it. Let me raise it, like a child, til it grow and leave me, or til it learn community within me. Let me know the world. Let me know myself, and let me remember the space between my molecules, between all molecules.

There is much mystery here. Let me be alive and wonder.

## Locofo Chaps

2017

Eileen Tabios – *To Be An Empire Is To Burn*

Charles Perrone – *A CAPacious Act*

Francesco Levato – *A Continuum of Force*

Joel Chace – *America's Tin*

John Goodman – *Twenty Moments that Changed the World*

Donna Kuhn – *Don't Say His Name*

Eileen Tabios (ed.) – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry*

Gabriel Gudding – *Bed From Government*

mIEKAL aND – *Manifesto of the Moment*

Garin Cycholl – *Country Musics 20/20*

Mary Kasimor – *The Prometheus Collage*

Iars palm – *case*

Reijo Valta – *Truth and Truthmp*

Andrew Peterson – *The Big Game is Every Night*

Romeo Alcala Cruz – *Archaeoteryx*

John Lowther – *18 of 555*

Jorge Sánchez – *Now Sing*

Alex Gildzen – *Disco Naps & Odd Nods*

Barbara Janes Reyes – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry, vol. 2*

Luisa A. Igloria – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry, vol. 3*

Tom Bamford – *The Gag Reel*

Melinda Luisa de Jesús – *Humpty Drumpfty and Other Poems*

Allen Bramhall – *Bleak Like Me*

Kristian Carlsson – *The United World of War*

Roy Bentley – *Men, Death, Lies*

Travis Macdonald – *How to Zing the Government*

Kristian Carlsson – *Dhaka Poems*

Barbara Jane Reyes – *Nevertheless, #She Persisted*

Martha Deed – *We Should Have Seen This Coming*

Matt Hill – *Yet Another Blunted Ascent*

Patricia Roth Schwartz – *Know Better*

Melinda Luisa de Jesús – *Petty Poetry for SCROTUS' Girls, with poems for Elizabeth Warren and Michelle Obama*

Freke Rähkä – *Explanation model for 'Virus'*

Eileen R. Tabios – *Immigrant*

Ronald Mars Lintz – *Orange Crust & Light*

John Bloomberg-Rissman – *In These Days of Rage*

Colin Dardis – *Post-Truth Blues*

Leah Mueller – *Political Apnea*

Naomi Buck Palagi – *Imagine Renaissance*

More information on Locofo Chaps can be found at  
[www.moriapoetry.com](http://www.moriapoetry.com).

Locofo Chaps