

Preface

Just over a year ago, I entered into the process of editing this special “poetry” issue of *Streetnotes*. A lot has happened in that time in and on the streets, as well as within poetry. When I sent out a call for work, I began the document with the following two epigraphs:

Empire means to prepare against. The empire is fear.
Embracing our fear, a deep mourning emerged, the
Skyscraper Blues.

— Cecelia Vicuña

The task of the poet is not different from the work of history,
which also discovers rather than invents: history, like poets,
uncovers, in ever new situations, human possibilities
previously hidden.

— Zygmunt Bauman

One by a poet about empire, and another by a philosopher about poetry, which seemed a fitting place as any to seek work within the theme, “Poietic Polis.” I chose these two words to set a course for the “making” of poetics that lingered in and on the streets, within/out empire. I asked poets to consider the following list of starting points: cartographies of place; places of power; forgetting / memory; territories in resistance; witness / prophecy; the police state and white supremacy; gentrification; decolonization; history / now; revolutions to be taken up; systems to be shut down; aesthetic / anaesthetic; confronting power in defined/marked territories; and climate change.

As you will soon see, the work I received was many of those things and none of them. This journal acts as cartography of a certain time, and is its own polis; its lines of poetry map the avenues of its citizens’ making/thinking. I encourage you to explore and take flight over the many dazzling places therein.

Derek Fenner, Oakland, CA, May, 2016

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Vicuña, C. (2012). *Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña*. Brooklyn, NY: Ugly Duckling Presse.