

## THE TRACE OF HOSTILITY

The papery porousness of the inside of the house reminds her that this is not her home. Not really. She has lived here for almost five years but remembers her foreignness every time she walks around the corner, from the living room to the kitchen, as she runs her right hand along the wall looking for the light switch. Waves of high-pitched whistles that pierce through the cold glass rattle the window frame as she puts the kettle on for tea. Half-open blinds sway with deceptive softness. The slats pick up highlights but cast no shadow. Even in the relative comfort of refuge after the fortune of upward social mobility, the trace of systematized hostility contours the edge of the wound that has healed over.

Every once in a while, a dull bang: perhaps a young tree branch knocking on the window, or one of the garbage cans falling over. She turns her head. The Global News weatherman reads the official wind warning as a digital glow casts shifting, abstract colour fields on the recliner in the other room. Perhaps an inappropriately abstract thought for an old piece of furniture given to her by Inland Refugee Society when she moved into her first basement suite eleven years ago. That humid shithole by Metrotown Station she blames for her allergies.

The weatherman says a low-pressure system will move across the South Coast tonight. Ahead of the low, south to southeast winds 60 to 80 km/h have developed... Winds will ease late overnight as the low moves into the interior and weakens. Another bang. The kettle is on but will take some time, so she walks back to the living room. She turns off the television and picks up the stapled photocopies of that speech she could not find in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* That speech, 'Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence', she had to print off the Internet. She goes over the same paragraph, underlined and highlighted:

*Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.<sup>1</sup>*

Why is the enemy always a he? It's too late to re-read the whole thing and the kettle is desperately whistling in torturous harmony with the wind outside. She decides against tea, turns off the stove and the light, and comes back to the living room to sit in her usual, awkward position. It will make her left knee hurt tomorrow. She opens the laptop. YouTube knows the familiar keywords, completing her thoughts in purple sans-serif typeface.

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<sup>1</sup> This speech was delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4 1967 at Riverside Church in New York.



In the pixelated footage pirated from the Reuters archive, the event is edited together in a two-minute-and-eighteen-second clip. The Saddam statue stands, raising its right arm up above its head with an open palm. Three men in civilian clothing on top of the base try to secure a rope that hangs loosely around its neck. The shot widens to show more of Firdos Square as a crowd forms. Below, a man with a sledgehammer pounds the base. Another bang. She mutes the laptop and keeps watching. A tank moves closer as more people gather. Two soldiers clad in dull, light brown fatigues climb towards the head of the statue on the tank's ladder. One civilian remains at the base, waving his arms wildly from behind the ladder. The soldiers wrap the statue's face in a U.S. flag; arms rise from the crowd, fingers pointing and waving side to side as if saying: *don't, move it over*. A man surrounded by two journalists holds the 1963 version of the Iraqi flag, the one without the *takbīr* in Saddam's handwriting between the green stars. A quick shot of the crowd shows a couple of people clapping.

The soldiers tie a heavy chain around the statue's neck. A wide shot of the Square shows the space cleared of people. The tank has retreated as well. The low quality footage gives the monument the illusion of becoming animated, shifting slightly forward. From a closer angle, the chain noose is visible, attached to the tank, pulling. The hollow figure breaks at the left knee, quickly shifting from portrait to landscape. The horizontality of Saddam's toppled likeness seems ridiculous, as if offering a handshake to the crowd throwing rocks and rushing beneath. Another bang.

The space between the half-open blinds projects a flickering red light into the kitchen. She looks up.

### **Francisco-Fernando Granados**

**FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS** works in performance, video, drawing, and multidisciplinary critical practices. Granados has presented solo projects at the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Satellite Gallery, Vancouver, the Harbourfront Centre Studio Theatre, Toronto (all 2014), Katzman Contemporary, Toronto (2013) and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver (2011). Recent performances and screenings of his work include: The Art Gallery of Ontario, Inside Out LGBT Film Festival (both Toronto, 2015), Breaking Voices Boundaries, Houston (2014, 2015), MOCCA, Toronto and De brillator Gallery, Chicago (both 2014), among others. Granados' writing has been published in magazines and art journals including: *Canadian Theatre Review* (2015), *KAPSULA* (2014), *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* (2014), *Drain* (2014) and *FUSE* (2011). He is a member of the 7a\*11d International Performance Festival Collective and teaches at OCADU and University of Toronto Scarborough. He lives and works in Toronto.