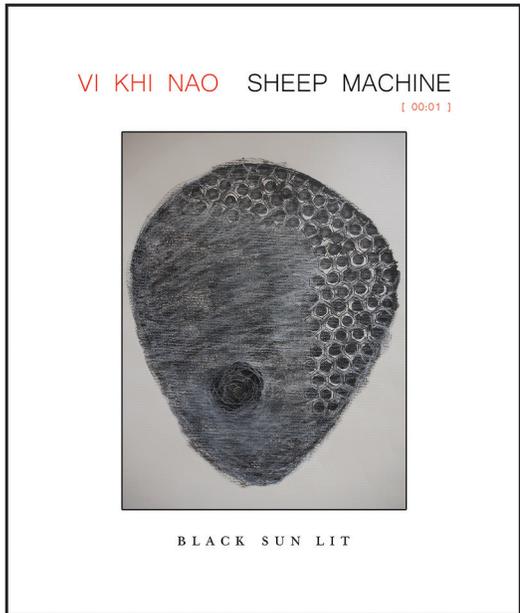


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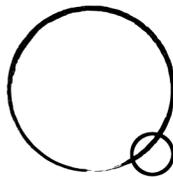


SHEEP MACHINE is a textual inscape, a poetically painted nonfictional pasture where mechanical violence and visceral fear coalesce into a kind of science prosody, a post-human panorama whose beauty lies in the ruins of reality it depicts. Influenced by Leslie Thornton's film of sheep feeding in a field as a conveyor belt of cable cars ascend and return from a mountain in the Swiss Alps, Vi Khi Nao takes perception into tumultuous terrains, into a pastoral-celestial void in which temporality is transcended, progress is a bourgeois invention, and god is a liability for our life spent in hunger and grazing. Vi Khi Nao's SHEEP MACHINE is grace said at the ontological last supper.



VI KHI NAO was born in Long Khánh, Vietnam. She is the author of SHEEP MACHINE (Black Sun Lit, 2018), UMBILICAL HOSPITAL (1913 Press, 2017), A BRIEF ALPHABET OF TORTURE (FC2, 2017), FISH IN EXILE (Coffee House Press, 2016), and THE OLD PHILOSOPHER (Nightboat Books, 2016).

SHEEP MACHINE by Vi Khi Nao
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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR SHEEP MACHINE

The unglamorous labor of “logging” footage is, like childbirth, often seen as a necessary torment best forgotten once its productive work is done. But in SHEEP MACHINE, a reverse log of Leslie Thornton's video work of the same name, Vi Khi Nao empowers this deceptively objective art of time-coded naming (“00:00 Pitch-black,” “00:01 This is wheat & grass”) with a wild heart, a deep ethics, and the slant-philosophical poetics that returns me continuously to her gorgeous, necessary (and frankly addictive) work. Nao demonstrates, again and again, how—when seen through her grace-shaped lens—“[e]ven wheat becomes wild.” —Anna Moschovakis

Vi Khi Nao's poetic ekphrasis of Leslie Thornton's SHEEP MACHINE is a visceral companion to an optical theatre of ordinary and extraordinary images that rub off the burning edge of consciousness. Frame by frame, the reader is taken to experience perception as beauty when “grass bends itself to experience paradise” or metamorphosis of sober solitude into ventriloquial mediation and meditation, “as if to breathe resurrection.” This is hallucinatingly generative work. Here's your flight through Vi Khi Nao's language machine. —Dong Li

Vi Khi Nao's SHEEP MACHINE feels to me like an intricate re-lensing of the very process of seeing. Beauty, and horror, can shapeshift from second to second. Beauty, or reality, can transmogrify from organic to mechanistic, word to word, image by subtly shifting image. The line between object as object—far removed and bucolic as a sheep in the grass—and object as something terrifying in its power to obfuscate, mesmerize, or horrify is constantly evolving in these pages. As Nao inventively and with painstaking patience transposes image to the obtuse realm of text, the gaze becomes an action we tumble into, that kaleidoscopes intricacies of vision—or in-sight—spinning away within us. In this manner the poet challenges us to keep our seeing alive: “To pull back the gaze is to say: I am done with being a machine.” —Dao Strom

SHEEP MACHINE is a series of ekphrastic poetic essays that act as a portal into the luminous power of perception. Within three minutes of observing hypnotic images of sheep grazing on a mountainside, we encounter a world in which blades of wheat “perform like semi-phantom needles, drinking in the earth's health and drilling the air with an intangible caress,” and enter a landscape where we are able “to see the terror tucked on the side of the pastured mountain.” Through diligent, rich, and elegant description, SHEEP MACHINE slides through philosophical discourse on suffering, volition, and intimacy. Vi Khi Nao's utterly original voice penetrates the mundane with brilliant, erotic, fanciful observation grounded in perspicacious humanity. Here is a gaze of dynamic stillness where we “[l]ook at how strong the shadows breathe on the insides of the sheep's legs.” As the seconds tick by in SHEEP MACHINE, we are drawn into a mesmerizing exploration of what it means to be profoundly and urgently awake. —Alison Prine