

*rules for a language recovering from genocide*  
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Survivor Testimony: Edith Coliver

after edith coliver

remember, / language is a weapon / language is a knife in the dark  
language is a name (mine) / language is an echo (edith,  
edith, edith) / language is a blade sharp against my lips

i learned this at the united nations / i am i was  
a translator / i translated hermann goering's testimony  
i translated his war crimes i translated the blood on his hands  
i translated his words his horrors his brutality savagery

and it was all in my mothertongue

and i give this testimony in what is not my mothertongue  
i give this testimony in the tongue i learned when i fled  
because my mothertongue is horrors my mothertongue is

i sat down at night and touched my bloody lips  
which spoke the language that now had words for  
völkermord words for massenvernichtung words for  
shoah words for holocaust from the greek meaning  
burnt offering—

i open my mouth. my throat is choking with the horrors  
i spoke. i open my mouth. the blood is on my tongue  
like night and fog the blood is on my tongue like

burnt offering—  
which is my mutilated lips. burnt offering—  
which is six million deaths.