

The Yellow Automobile

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

I left Chile 7 years ago.

I left Chile and landed in the Alpine Mountains, far from civilization, surrounded by animals I had never seen in my life, and not knowing a single phrase in what would be my new language.

I left Chile 7 years ago to begin a new life. I left without knowing what would happen next. I left.

That moment of my life is materialized in this play.

The moment I decided to take the “yellow automobile parked at the edge of the highway.” I decided to write a play that would speak of the instant we face the bifurcation, the sharp curve, the unknown route. That blurry instant in which we take the flight to jump down the cliff.

This play addresses the suspended instant before the change.

It also talks about apathy, rusted emotions, contradictions, and fear. That's why, in this play, characters roam petrified by terror and transgression, characters that walk against time, trying to answer the existential questions that every human being faces.

These questions have been formulated a thousand times and answered by philosophy, religion, and politics. Questions we've all responded to as we lash out in the dark, in the middle of grim nights; where, incandescent light, infinite highways, and furtive encounters are fertile ground to tackle mortal risks we can no longer regret.

THE PLAY

It's a simple story. It's about an abandoned automobile on the edge of the road. Its doors are open, the keys are in the ignition, and the radio is on. Three people arrive at the location separately. It's two men and a woman who see themselves obliged to decide what to do with the automobile and their lives.

The automobile is a metaphor; while these characters are in the midst of a crisis with their lives breaking down, they stumble with the possibility of change.

The automobile represents the possibility of an escape and a new beginning. The automobile represents the movement that contrasts with the stagnation of their lives.

The highway and the night are transit points where the most significant transgressions can be allowed and leave no trace. It enables these beings to a radical transformation without the obligation of tackling it publicly.

Because the radical nature of decisions carries consequences, accepting failure, accepting recriminations, and bear the damage the other causes.

Free from that burden, “the incapable man,” “the lost woman,” and the “lone man” no longer have an excuse to evade their ghosts.

It's a simple story. It's about three human beings try to deal with their existence.

CHARACTERS

The beings that inhabit this story represent three different ways of living stagnation and crisis. While the two men don't take the leap they long for, the woman wants to enter the action at all costs. The men are prisoners of their fears, while the woman is a victim of the circumstances she can't deal with.

Three points of view regarding the same existential crisis where the escape routes endanger rationality and logic: the men have the possibility of finding some way out through reasoning and reflection they don't hesitate to evade;. At the same time, the woman confronts a crisis that runs through the human condition. She doesn't depend on science or reason. She cannot have children, and it makes her lose control without knowing why.

HENCE, WE ENCOUNTER:

A "lone man" who has decided to get out of his abyss, accepting death as the only solution. In his state, the grief of existence and the lightness of his relationships give him no other choice. Life is, to him, a synonym of routine and exhaustion, a mechanism he can't run away from.

An "incapable man," a victim of himself, feels shame due to his incapacities, not trusting his talents, and, above all, lacks any sense of resilience.

A "lost woman" whose body carries the frustration of a societal role she cannot carry out. A woman trapped in an illogical circumstance: on the one hand, she wishes to be a mother and follow the biological course of her nature, and on the other, it's that exact nature that does not allow her to fulfill her role. It's within that game that she tries to control everything to understand and give sense to her role as a woman.

In the end, this triad transforms and develops a bidimensionality that contrasts with the social roles that have been established for each gender. In the play, masculinity questions the notion of courage and the containment attributed to it, while femininity challenges women's social roles regarding their reproductive capabilities.

Crises can translate into a suspended time. In a precarious balance. In an instant of bedazzlement before catastrophe comes.

I try to translate these images in words in the text through a fractured and intimate language, blank spaces, pauses, and impersonal, insecure, nocturnal places.

I use words to convey cascades of melancholic ideas that begin to shape the world of each character, choosing words that pretend to make the action and movement palpable in their minds, contrasting with the petrification of their bodies.

It's a language that leaves loose ends to reaffirm the lack of clarity during the crisis and open the space to interpretation that each person can establish from their experience and current state.

The text can resonate in many ways. The words were chosen and weaved for this to happen.

THE YELLOW AUTOMOBILE

(Abstract)

by **Sally Campusano Torres**

Translated by Bruce Gibbons Fell

June 2016

The Yellow Automobile

SYNOPSIS

What does a man do after finding an abandoned automobile with the keys in the ignition on a deserted highway in the middle of the night? Does he take it for himself? Does he abandon it? Does he call the police? Thanks to this discovery, a *lone man* faces the duty of making a decision, of understanding where his limits are, as well as his will to change the course his life had up that moment.

However, this decision is even more complex when an *incapable man* and a *lost woman* arrive at the same place. These three desperate human beings unveil their fears and contradictions and finally make a drastic decision regarding their truncated existence.

Ultimately, the yellow automobile is the obstacle these three human beings face in the escape they have undertaken. This obstacle will make them face apathy, lack of courage, and emptiness.

CHARACTERS

The lone man, escaping his life after a frustrated suicide attempt. He wears office clothes, a tie, and elegant shoes.

The incapable man, walking down a solitary highway in the middle of the night. He wears sneakers, an apricot-colored t-shirt three sizes larger, and a khaki pant that doesn't look old but doesn't seem new either.

The lost woman, desperate and overwhelmed. She wears black stilettos that are 20 centimetres high.

The Yellow Automobile

A four-door yellow automobile. The doors are open.

An open space and music playing from the automobile's radio.

The song is Serge Gainsbourg's "Du Jazz dans le Ravin." It plays on loop, without stopping, from beginning to end.

Écoute

C'est toi qui conduits ou moi ?

C'est moi, bon alors tais-toi

Y a du whisky dans la boîte à gants

Et des américaines t'as qu'à taper dedans

Écoute

Écoute un peu ça, poupée

T'entends ? Mon air préféré

Mets-moi la radio un peu plus fort

Et n'aie pas peur, j'vais pas aller dans les décors

Soudain

Juste avant Monte-Carlo

C'est ça, c'est ça c'est l'manque de pot

V'là qu'la Jaguar fait une embardée

Et droit devant la v'là qui pique dans le fossé

Et pendant que tout deux agonisaient

La radio, la radio a continué d'gueuler

Demain on les ramassera à la petite cuillère

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCENE

The lone man:

There's a car at the edge of the cliff. It's a compact, yellow car. Its doors are open.

There's no one inside the car. It's just there, on the edge, on the limit, about to...

Fall, yes, fall.

There's no sign that anyone had been there recently.

It's... an... abandoned automobile, yes, exactly that, everything that entails calling it an abandoned automobile.

And since it is abandoned, one would tend to call it an automobile and not a car; it is

a

way

of

validating it, of making it exist, even more so in the state it is in

Stranded

there

Right on the edge of the road

In the portal of emptiness

The auto-mobile does not move,

The auto-mobile does not stagger,

That is why it is impossible to predict the exact minute it could fall.

I try to get closer.

2. THE QUESTIONS

The lone man:

I think of the reason that makes a person abandon an automobile by the edge of a cliff, like this.
Drugs? Suicide? Homicide? Hiding a body and coming back any moment? Almost about to fall,
With the doors open
With the lights out
With the radio on
With the keys in the ignition, it seems.
It seems like the keys are in the ignition; I do not know
From my point of view, from the existing distance between my body and the object
I can't manage to... see... to... make out if the keys are hanging there.
I think they are.
It's just that when I look from the corner of my eye
There is a sparkle
A slight, minuscule, almost non-existent glow of something metallic that is just in that place
In the place where the keys should be.
I would like to know if the keys are there
Since the auto-mobile
Has been abandoned
I could take it
And
Drive it on the road.

3. A ROAD THAT OPENS

The lone man:

The road at night

if I drive down the road at night, no one will know it's a borrowed car, no one will know I'm driving an abandoned automobile,

That we're two abandoned ones driving down the road, without a set destination,

I could go far

I could reach the edge

of

the

sea

with

the

abandoned automobile

and I could abandon it again

or maybe stay inside

and open the doors

so a wave can come, and saltwater can carry

the sand and the seaweed

through the 4 doors

and flood it

and erase any kind of trace.

I get closer

I look at it

the terrain is vertical

I think I could fall down the cliff at any moment

and then the automobile

and I imagine myself falling, rolling, tumbling

and the yellow automobile moving on top of me

I stop right before I get there

I feel someone is looking at me

watching me from a sheltered place

I feel eyes on my back as if waiting for me to fall

as if waiting for me to create the catastrophe and make everything begin to roll and tumble and burn and get destroyed

I stop.

I do not wish to be the one who causes things, the protagonist, the creator of the tragedy; I have never wanted to be that... (I promise I have never wished to be that).

That is why I am here in the middle of the night looking at an abandoned yellow automobile with its doors open and the keys in the ignition, seemingly.

I stop

I can see a suitcase in the backseat from here

it is a suitcase that seems to be carrying weight

there must be objects inside the suitcase

things that say a bit of the person or people that have left the car adrift in the middle of the night

I look

I watch

I get close

a strange body terror runs through me

I break out in cold sweat

my feet are hard, and they stick to the floor without letting me move forward
I raise my left arm slowly and stretch it out
my fingertips brush the upper edge of the front door
but I cannot take the step
it is the fear, the panic, the terror, the reluctance, the unwieldy and horrible habit of not doing a
thing, the apathy in making a decision
siento que si tomo la puerta con todo el peso de mi mano
I feel that if I hold onto the door with all my hand's weight
the story
my story
this story
the narration will transform and will never be the same.
I breathe in, close my eyes, and I realize yet again that the music on the radio keeps playing
I cannot make it out
I do not know
It is music from faraway
Anachronistic
A celebration of lights in the middle of the cliff
A parenthesis
A pause
I feel my back is wet, I feel my shoes are too big, I feel my stomach tighten, I feel a lump in my
throat, I feel the automobile is talking to me; what a stupid idea, imagining that the automobile is
talking to me!
This confirms that I am not in my right mind
that it is best to disappear
to abandon everyone and their urge to protect me
to abandon her and her need to save me
I feel the automobile wants to fall, I feel I have to push it, I feel that I should maybe fall with it, I
feel I have become desperate, I feel I'm drowning. I faint.