

HADASSAH EMMERICH

Unless they are cut back regularly or pulled out of the ground altogether, weeds and plants take over their environment in a struggle for survival through proliferation that in their own way match the vicious, bloody battles of survival of animal species able to rip flesh from one another. The explicit form of this Darwinian fantasy of violence is as understated for vegetation as it is in Hadassah Emmerich's vast, expanding, proliferating, variegated and multiple entanglement of lines that are simultaneously representations of vines. But it is there nonetheless, mixed with a palliative and decorous seductive sweetness of a flower sprouting from the wild growth of a plant reaching out without any end other than its own continued expansion.

Emmerich's work does not just depict or utilize the wild jungle of plant life struggling to grow through, on top of, and around one another, the archaic sexual organs of their flowers and fruits exposed and fully opened to the world in this struggle, be it momentarily and with fragility, in contrast to the hidden and protected genitalia of animals whose aim under instinctual functioning is monotonous. Emmerich's art is rather another variation of that growth, one in which the supposed decorative surplus of the flower usurps its dependent manifestation on the vine and becomes the very condition for its continued proliferation and extension. The decorative elements – the swirl, the curlicue, the overlaid batik patterns, the dripped and spattered paint, and so on - are here a fecundity that precedes growth rather than a sprouting at a belated moment of maturation like a fruit ripe for the picking.

You could call this drive vegetative or machinic, and it is. Yet it is also a spider's web capturing elements which, if they are of the right density and weight, remain suspended in it, holding them without integration or coherence in a construction until they are digested by its fabricator. And digested they constitute the raw material for further elaborations of that net(work) of capture, the entanglement of lines, colours, words, memories, products, shapes, straplines, images, poetry, histories, East and West, the painterly and the graphic, the meaningful and the meaningless intertwined such that they can never let one another go again without losing their integrated combination and remorseless interpenetration. Again, as with the common ascent of plants to the sun, the incorporating tendrils are meshed together in helpless dependency such that one can never be separated from the other without the destruction of each and every element. The fantastical construction of Emmerich's entangling of the ornamental and the oriental breaks through the visual and semantic barrier of the line and the word, the image and sense-datum, organization and untamed proliferation.

Not quite lost in a maze of images and precepts of a commercialized or poetic, in any case pre-ordained, relation to the cultures 'of the East', to a signified difference of Otherness or the past configured through exoticism, mystery, seduction, this vegetative-decorous centreless web of entanglements sprouts a mutated, sometimes sweet and sometimes bitter, fruit of its own. Enmeshing, swallowing and spinning out reveries for times past, passions melancholically lost, and of those caught in histories not of their own making, Emmerich recalls the difference between a contained yet seemingly more empathetic past coded through the cute re-assuring homilies of a Coca-Colonial form of commodity trade, in which

the other was at least maintained as a nationally differentiated consumer, and the disputed present of an apparently remorseless globalizing investment sector, for which cultural differentiations serve only the more or less indifferent intertwinings of transnational capital in its own vegetal growth. Of these mega-forms of entanglement she asks: what now for the markers of difference that have until only recently constituted our bastardised ethno-cultures?

Suhail Malik