

*Leo cie lo ... A Series of Artefacts
from the Near Future*

*Cenóce mozar ze iadari ten te careb ie mo vai
ebtamar ast daz colmar ten ie vanza mie halca ge.*

*(Missive back from Second Speaker, written in the
Shared Language from a Future in which we are
Thriving as a People.)*

ONCE WE WERE ISLANDS

<https://doi.org/10.51897/interalia/KNAL3921>

abstract

The article centres on the analysis of a speculative (non)fictional text written in the Queer language Damiá by Dogai Bor (a.k.a. Chris Gylee), Second Speaker of the first Damiá speech community, with translation notes, a fictional frame in Finnish, a phonetic transcription, and a link to an online dictionary. Chris has been learning the constructed Queer language Damiá since January 2020, but in external communications and the various artworks that have been produced since, it has mostly fallen to Aslan, as First Speaker, to explain the functions and origins of the language and to lead on writings and translations. This text marks a turning point where Chris speaks directly, as Second Speaker, by writing a new text in Damiá using the skills he has attained over his initial years of study and creation in the language. As the Second Speaker takes the position of writing from a speculative future, what do they have to say about Damiá and the speech community from their unique position? How does their specific knowledge relate to notions of Queerness and Queer separatism? Do their words offer any map towards an alternative future?

The text becomes a speculative (non)fiction lens that blends truth and sci-fi by writing back from a future moment in which a Queer, Damiá-speaking, separatist community is thriving. Imagining this moment provokes a confrontation of the gap between this position of thriving and our current state, as well as possible paths between the two. The text is written entirely in Damiá without translation, but includes access notes to the reader and a link to the online Damiá dictionary. This text functions opaquely, and does not offer easy accessibility in English (or any other prestige languages.) What does this perceived opacity offer? In what ways does the text and the gaps in understanding resonate with the reader as they undertake the (perhaps daunting) process of decoding and translating using the basic tools provided?

ONCE WE WERE ISLANDS,
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keywords

queer code, invented language, futurity, speculation, queerness