

Rosa Alcalá

Undocumentaries

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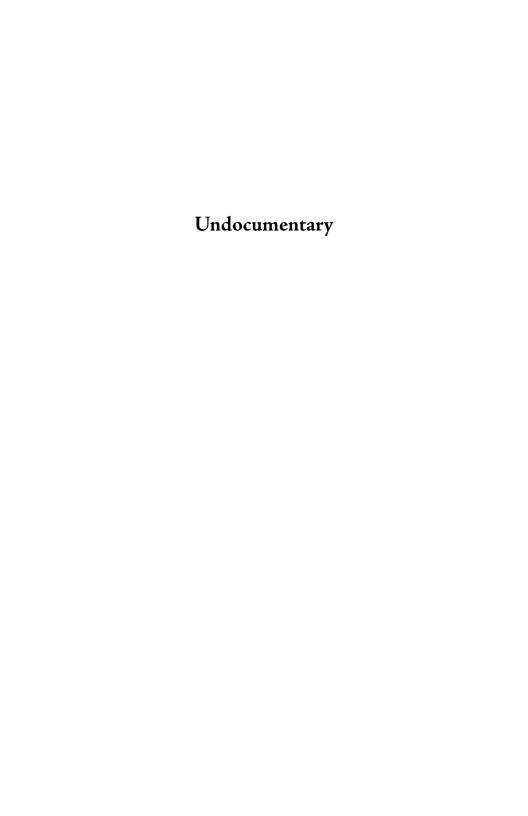
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Undocumentary

A girl like me falls in love with Yeats and never recovers from the stretch of recognition

more twistable now in parts made guilty by graduation and further distance from technical schools

there are perhaps questions of sincerity that leave me weak at the laptop

soft for those animal shapes ballooning into pity or pride

{A blame of labor raised me to tart up the phrase, to shove past the pardon into a belly alush with the fine dine of this land.}

Loop 1:

Minnesota men slice at the chests of pigs making musicals with their wrists

Loop 2:

After a flailing of sense, your chest contracts to grain the lung's last say

Keys strike against the footage of the past to defer the weight of the camera

Asking, who is the scab of me when no meatpacking walkout can suffice? Documentary: The lyric of unrehearsed chemicals acts out the tensions of progress into a brighter but stiller image called fact or archive

Undocumentary: The man who joined old world industries of textile to dirt trucked in from the Ramapos is not a video to behold

All those men, acres of previous dye operations. The import of their bodies distributed in lawns all over Paterson, their products overseas.

> (I meant to tell you the DEP's on top of it, now that the factory's gone bust:

The improperly stored chemicals "more than 140 55-gallon drums"* have memorized their plan in your absence.)

^{*} American Recycler, February 2004.

There is no retelling the desire to be pulled into a condemned building by a man who will soon live in exile, or the nest of baby swallows in the handicap stall of a public bathroom in Mesilla. You offer it and everyone's a little uncomfortable with this type of architecture. The night we took the train to Newark to eat rabbit there was nothing anyone could do about the rain. We were subject to families greater than nature, yet there it was every time we left New York. From PATH station to restaurant, the houses tried to tell you about me, but even now the details distill to a fringe of dented aluminum. So all this roundabout mess of trying to describe a machine that never shuts down, a father standing in two inches of water or sitting on a wooden stool, a racket of heat, is proof of nothing, except the drive of what can't be told, a screen pushing off the pile up of bodies.

A Girl Like Me

Child Interpreters

Experts say children lack the vocabulary and the emotional maturity to serve as effective interpreters. And two of every three mistranslations have clinical consequences.

—The New York Times, 30 Oct 2005

The ability to convey hairless —as all good messengers—the gestural roughness of things, to talk to the oddly shaped head of the martian, this is a boy's navigational mastery. This a training for the day a girl transcribes him, tissue by tissue, to make breathing count. When she lowers him into the bathtub and presses his mouth to what is (suddenly familiar). Have you ever lowered someone into a bathtub? A sick mother, a small thing? An injured bird until he's no longer injured, but dead. Two bodies, one lowering and one lowered, a multiple nakedness sucked into slots that swallow the overflow? You grow weak with distraction: if porn is a cancer, is cancer a porn? Is sex a form? And sickness? A girl fills the water with imperfect relations; what a boy says a quiet metastasis.

The same's true of a girl's wildly populated bedside. When here come the warnings

against gargantuan gossip, said to distract from the erection of columns, the laying of marble. Have you ever seen the common nude? Nude taxi drivers? Nude subway strikers and strikees? The bagel guy nude in his ambulant deli? Or the uncommon: someone riding out their dying year—nude? We think beauty a rabble, so we organize clubs against and for it. The doughy shirtless bang tensions from the skin of a drum, a suffragist lesions a remarkable ass or a portrait of Henry James.

A girl's trying to get somewhere and a boy's trying to make the building taller, and still, the hospitals keep reporting the dead. What a girl says is a fuel, when she is still a girl, to make a book that drives like a book. But hospitals are exemplary architecture, if corridors are your thing, if you like to be led, that is. She's blind-sided in one eye, her heart fashionably late, and the lungs? What are we to say about the lungs? A girl and a boy mate air to clinical consequence, offering vocabulary in such wrongly portions.

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The syntax of worry rewrites cellular codes. The past, a harrowing wave that never crashes, and true catastrophes rot floorboards without notice. This is the child to send into machinery, the one unable to distinguish the hazard of production from its twin sinister: a huckster parading the goods. All limbs being equal, a therapist suggests kindly: it's not a weakness, it's a sideshow.