

EXCERPTS FROM

# LINGUA IGNOTA

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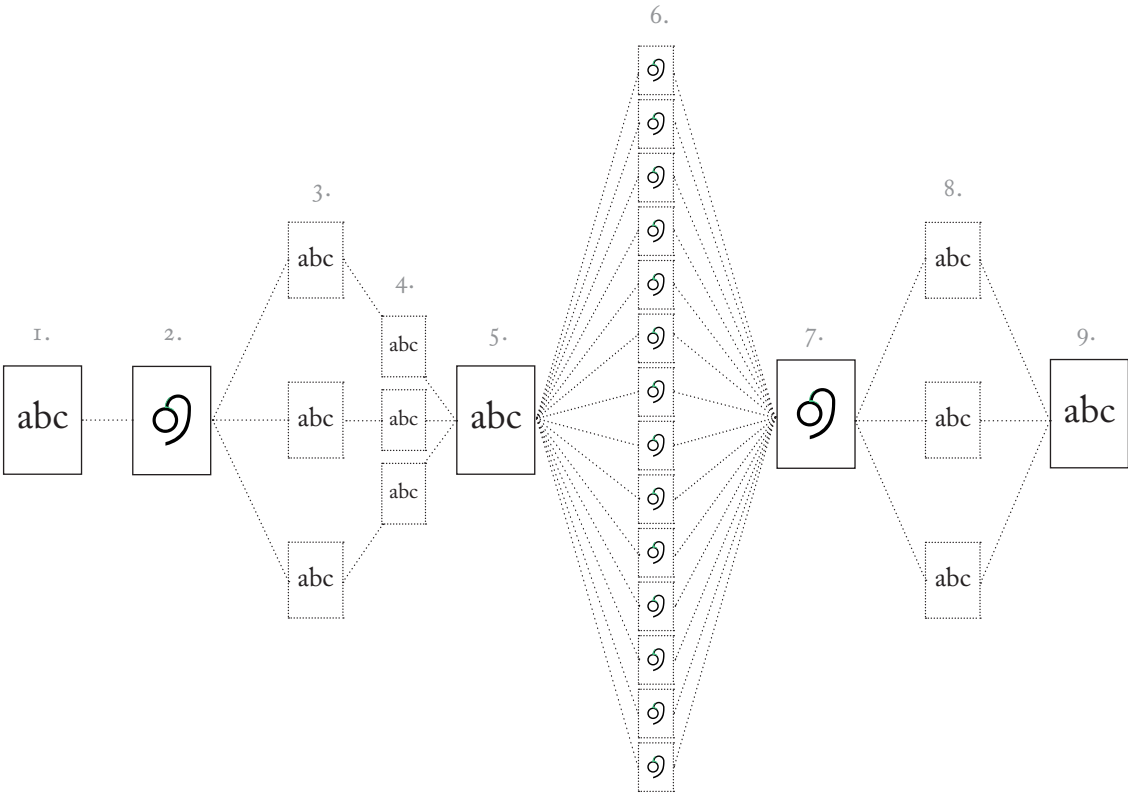
*Lingua Ignota*, translated as unknown language, poetically explores how language becomes known. In our first encounter, language is unfamiliar, but soon we learn how to parse it: we learn how to interpret. As interpretations become more complex, basic concepts combine to create advanced expressions. We learn from our community and compare expressions to settle on a shared vocabulary. Yet, even within that shared vocabulary, shades of meaning evolve or messages are reconfigured.

*Lingua Ignota* originates in translations passed between an author and a community of readers. English and Blissymbolics (Bliss) are the languages of this exchange. Blissymbolics is a non-verbal, graphic language made from base concepts that can be combined to create more complex ideas. It is an ideal material for *Lingua Ignota* because it is literally the poetry of our language processing made visible. To create *Lingua Ignota* the author learned Blissymbolics and composed a version of a poem in both English and Bliss. The original poem was crafted to maximize the potential for poetically resonant slippages of meaning between the project's three translation rounds. What is gained or lost in translation? Does the gain/loss influence how a community interprets a text? By averaging all translations of a line, *Lingua* gestured at a consensus of meaning: a social aspect of language formation. The community's role in deciding the final text also revealed the project's secondary motive: the literal unfolding of an author's text as it is re-interpreted and curated by a communal readership (and how the author guides that curation). The author may accept or reject the text; however, from the moment of its public release, the text lives beyond the author's intention.

Example of translation interface used by participants (lines 1-5)

Complete project available at: [samanthagorman.net/Lingua-Ignota](http://samanthagorman.net/Lingua-Ignota)

# VISUALIZATION OF PROJECT FLOW



1. Author's Text
2. Author's Symbols
3. Round 1 Participants' Translations
4. Round 1 Participants' Revisions
5. Round 1 Consensus
6. Round 2 Participants' Translations
7. Round 2 Symbols Consensus
8. Round 3 Participants' Translations
9. Round 3 Consensus

## AUTHOR'S TEXT

1. Language as proverb is cumulative metonymy.
2. Out of many mouths exchange opens and axioms accrue.
3. To parse a message, sift the language for its subtext.
4. Reading is a levy holding against its own purposes. (see example below)
5. The fissure originates at the source.
  
6. I approach you in the metonymy of another language.
7. My message unravels in the netlace of your transcription.
8. There is causality in this.
9. Your reply is language unknown.
10. In translation we are completely alone.
  
11. To write I must imagine your reading.
12. By deciphering the text's body, you become its marrow.
13. For this translation I give an imprecise gloss.
14. A word's gesture is too small to contain the mnemonic that holds us.

# AUTHOR'S SYMBOLS

1.  $\vartheta \rightarrow \begin{matrix} \uparrow \\ \times \\ \leftarrow \end{matrix} \curvearrowright \quad \overset{\vee}{\text{Y}} \circ \triangle \gg \Delta \quad \hat{\phi} \quad \hat{\text{I}} \times \boxtimes \quad \overset{\circ}{\text{I}}_{\div \square} = \square.$
2.  $\square \rightarrow \quad \times \overset{\circ}{\circ} \quad \updownarrow \quad \hat{\square} \quad + \quad \hat{\triangle} \text{!!} \quad \hat{\text{I}} - | |.$
3.  $\hat{\div} \vartheta \gg \downarrow \square \quad \backslash \quad \downarrow \overset{\square}{\otimes} \quad \hat{\psi} \quad / \quad \vartheta \gg \quad \perp \quad \square \gg \overset{\circ}{\text{I}}_{\text{天}} \backslash \square.$
4.  $\circ \square \quad \hat{\phi} \quad \backslash \quad \square \hat{\Delta} \ll \times \approx \quad \hat{\cup} \ll \quad \perp \quad \hat{\Delta} \gg.$
5.  $/ \quad \overset{\vee}{\text{M}} \text{—} \quad \hat{\text{T}} \rightarrow \emptyset \quad \gg \quad / \quad \overset{\circ}{\text{I}}_{\text{天}} \rightarrow \begin{matrix} \downarrow \\ \times \\ \leftarrow \end{matrix}.$
  
6.  $\perp_1 \rightarrow | \quad \perp_2 \quad \ddagger \quad / \quad \overset{\circ}{\text{I}}_{\div \square} = \square \quad \gg \quad \vartheta \square \cdot \perp_4.$
7.  $\perp_4 \quad \downarrow \overset{\square}{\otimes} \quad \perp \hat{\Delta} \# \quad \square \quad / \quad \# \gg \heartsuit \times \perp - i \text{—} | \quad \gg \quad \perp_2 \quad \smile \text{+} | \overset{\square}{\otimes}.$
8.  $\otimes - \text{(?)} \quad \hat{\phi} \quad \square \quad /.$
9.  $\perp_2 \quad \downarrow \overset{\square}{\otimes} \quad \hat{\otimes} \quad \vartheta \quad \perp \square.$
10.  $\square \quad \smile \vartheta \quad \overset{\times}{\perp}_1 \quad \hat{\phi} \quad \square \langle \heartsuit \text{!} - \times \perp.$
  
11.  $\backslash \quad \perp_1 \quad \text{!!} \quad \hat{\otimes} \quad \perp_2 \quad \circ \square \downarrow.$
12.  $\langle \quad \smile \perp \vartheta \quad / \quad \backslash \square_+ \quad \square, \quad \perp_2 \quad \hat{\phi} \rightarrow \square \quad \perp \quad i \text{—} |.$
13.  $\gg \quad / \quad \smile \vartheta \quad \perp_1 \quad \updownarrow \quad \neq \text{H} \quad \square \vartheta \text{—}.$
14.  $\backslash \quad \div \vartheta_+ \quad \downarrow \otimes \quad \hat{\phi} \quad \times \overset{\vee}{\text{I}} \text{!} \quad \hat{\cup} \quad / \quad \vartheta \gg \perp \square \rightarrow \quad / \quad \overset{\times}{\text{L}} \overset{\circ}{\text{—}} \quad \overset{\times}{\perp}_1.$

## ROUND 1 PARTICIPANTS' CONSENSUS

1. Language of imagination exists to encapsulate the sum of its parts.
2. Freed voices share openly and ideas multiply without limit.
3. Organizing a discourse, leak the language for its inspiration.
4. Reading is a dam holding against its creator.
5. The fault begins at the core.
  
6. I approach you through the abstraction of my language.
7. My writing unravels inside the collective spirit of your writing's echoes.
8. Unthinking destruction exists in this.
9. Your thoughts are spoken freely.
10. In conversation we are lonely.
  
11. Writing I mindfully imagine your interpretation.
12. By dissecting the text's body, you imprison its marrow.
13. For this translation I release an immeasurable dictionary.
14. A miscommunication's force exists infinitesimally containing the stories that embrace us.

ROUND 2 PARTICIPANTS' CONSENSUS

1.  $\circ \rightarrow \square \triangleright \triangle \hat{\circ} \triangleright \square \div \Rightarrow \text{I} \oplus$ .
2.  $\square \nearrow \leftrightarrow \hat{\circ} \downarrow \hat{\Delta} \sqcup + \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \text{H}$ .
3.  $\hat{\circ} \rightarrow \setminus \text{I} \leftrightarrow \text{I} \hat{\psi} \setminus \text{O} \Delta \gg \square_{3+} \mapsto \hat{\Delta}^*$ .
4.  $\hat{\circ} \square = \setminus \text{I} \sim \hat{\Delta} \rightarrow \ll \square_{3+} \Delta$ .
5.  $\setminus \text{---} \hat{\Delta} \oplus \triangleright \setminus \text{H}$ .

6.  $\perp_1 \hat{\Delta} \triangleright \perp_2 \square \rightarrow \setminus \text{I} \text{H} \triangleright \perp_{1+} \#$ .
7.  $\perp_{1+} \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \rightarrow \square \setminus \text{I} \hat{\circ} \oplus - \square \triangleright \perp_{2+} \hat{\Delta}_+ \text{H} \rightarrow$ .
8.  $\text{I} \hat{\circ} \text{H} \triangle! \hat{\circ} \square$ .
9.  $2_+ \triangle \hat{\circ} \hat{\circ} \hat{\Delta}$ .
10.  $\downarrow \square \text{I} \hat{\circ} \text{H} \perp_{12} \hat{\circ} \text{H} - \text{I} \hat{\circ}$ .

11.  $\setminus \hat{\Delta} \perp_1 \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \perp_{2+} \hat{\Delta}$ .
12.  $\langle \text{H} \hat{\Delta} \setminus \oplus, \perp_2 \hat{\Delta} - \text{H} \setminus + \text{H}$ .
13.  $\gg \setminus \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \perp_1 \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \setminus \text{H} \hat{\Delta} \rightarrow \square$ .
14.  $\setminus \text{O} \rightarrow \text{H}_+ \triangle! \hat{\circ} \text{H}!! \hat{\Delta} \text{I} \hat{\Delta} \setminus \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \hat{\Delta} \perp_1$ .

## ROUND 3 PARTICIPANTS' CONSENSUS

1. Visionary speech becomes united metonymy.
2. Free words lift open and secrets replicate infinitely.
3. Parsing a dialogue leaks the message for its inspiration.
4. Reading is a river resisting its birth.
5. The earthquake conceives at the core.
  
6. I travel toward you escaping the homeland of my story.
7. My writing unravels into the public soul of your writing's echoes.
8. Thoughtless destruction exists in this space.
9. Your legs are speaking out.
10. Within conversation you and I are lonely.
  
11. Writing I thoughtfully envision your reaction.
12. By cutting the book, you break into its spine.
13. For this discourse I open a boundless guidebook.
14. A misspoken flaw is minuscule encapsulating written content that shields us.

**AUTHOR'S TEXT**

Reading is a levy holding against its own purposes.

**AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION****ROUND 1 PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS** (*of Author's Translation*)

- Reading is a barrier containing against its creator.
- Vision exists as a dam for the sea, containing nothingness against its will.
- The story of the flood is dammed by the edges of the writer's opinion.
- The need to see places a levee containing against its imagination.
- reading is the dam that contains -----
- Reading is a boat protecting against its design.
- Reading is a dam holding against its decision.
- Reading can be a hurricane barrier - don't let your artwork be constrained.
- Readers create a barricade barring against their decisions.
- Read to know a family home against floods held against its creation.
- Read to invent shelter from the storm, a gutter against its fear.
- read living a house foundation against floods contained despite it's resolution.
- literally be a rock ridged cabin battling the rushing rivers dam it make up your mind
- i in the central self of protective self water body set against what sun

**ROUND 1 PARTICIPANTS' REVISIONS**

- Reading is a shelter from the storm, a dam against its fear.
- Reading is a levee holding against its imagination.
- Reading is a hurricane barrier empty against its creator.
- Reading is a dam withholding against its creator.
- reading is a dam that conatains creativity
- Reading is a dam holding against its decision.
- literally be a sheltered cabin battling the rushing rivers dam it make up your mind
- Read to know a family home against floods held against its creation.
- Reading is a boat protecting against its design.

**ROUND 1 CONSENSUS**

reading is a dam holding against its creator.



