

GUANTANAMO

LES FIGURES
PRESS

FRANK SMITH

TRANSLATED BY VANESSA PLACE

2015 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation Shortlist selection

2015 Best Translated Book Award Poetry Longlist selection

In January 2006, responding to pressure from the American press, the Department of Defense released three hundred and seventeen verbal trials from Guantanamo naval base, the prison camp used to house accused terrorists. From these documents comes *Guantanamo* by Frank Smith. Appropriating language from the interrogation minutes, Smith shapes these questions and answers into a literary world as faceless and recursive as the interrogations themselves, leading us away from the comfort of reason and the hope of resolution. In this bilingual edition, translated into English by Vanessa Place, *Guantanamo* unsettles the categories of law and poetry, innocence and guilt, translation and interpretation.

Guantanamo
Frank Smith
Translated by Vanessa Place
Introduction by Mark Sanders
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ABOUT FRANK SMITH

FRANK SMITH is a French journalist, nonfiction writer, and author of multiple books of poetry including the recent collections *Guantanamo* (Seuil, Coll. 2010), *États de faits* (l'Attente Editions, 2013), and *Gaza, d'ici-là* (Al Dante Editions, 2013). He has worked as a producer for France Culture since 1999 where, after collaborating to create the programs *Surpris par la nuit* and *Surpris par la poésie* with Alain Veinstein, he codirected *l'Atelier de création radiophonique* for ten years. He also heads the book/CD collection "ZagZig", that he founded with Dis Voir, a publishing house, and contributes to *L'Impossible/L'autre journal* (led by Michel Butel).



PRAISE FOR GUANTANAMO

“A mutant offspring of Kafka, Lyotard, and William Carlos Williams, Frank Smith’s volume haunts the precincts of a world-class ethical blight. Poignant, disturbing, and skillfully translated by a leading voice in contemporary thought, *Guantanamo* remains the name of pernicious irresolution and offshore strike back. Our own rogue penal colony, *Guantanamo* becomes the site for provoking a cannonade of interrogatory language and testimonial breakdown. Facing the Military Tribunal’s relentless pursuit of unnerving detail, Detainee, in a sudden if unbearable ironic swerve, asks as a final plea to be deported to the United States—home ground of his dream world. As if all this torture had been merely an initiation, a hazing ritual souped up by the protocols of some border patrol bureaucracy. . .”

—Avital Ronell

“A composition with a strange status, which lays a finger on the heart of the links between humanity, justice and language.”

—Blandine Sorbe

“I love when something not alive can make me feel like it is hiding something, like I have to read what is just underneath the actual image on the page, and *Guantanamo* is overflowing with such layers.”

—Blake Butler, *Vice*

“In one of his early poems, José Saramago wrote that ‘we are used to licking the hands of the powerful.’ Frank Smith’s *Guantanamo*, in Vanessa Place’s superb translation, is a sickening reminder of just how dirty those hands are.”

—David Shook, *The Huffington Post*

“Smith’s mesmerizing book entangles the reader in the unknown men’s fates, and forces us to confront the perverse logic of the prison by enacting it.”

—Cora Currier, *The New Inquiry*

ABOUT VANESSA PLACE



VANESSA PLACE was the first poet to perform as part of the Whitney Biennial; a content advisory was posted. Place is also a conceptual artist, a critic, a criminal defense attorney, and CEO of VanessaPlace Inc, the world’s first poetry corporation.

Les Figues is a nonprofit literary press dedicated to creating aesthetic conversations between readers, writers, and artists.