

like a feather

A performance by Gregory Tara Hari

With a text inspired by
Crowded House, Fischer Bettwaren AG, Jürgen Drews, Gölä,
Juliette Armanet, Barry Manilow, Sabrina Carpenter, the Internet.

This work is dedicated to animal welfare and to all those who have been
discriminated against and marginalised by cultural appropriation.

*Everywhere you go, you always take the feather with you.
Everywhere you go, you always take the feather.
The feather, the feather with you.*

I mean, I'm not an ornithologist or even a plumologist, but I can tell you this – I know a thing or two about feathers. You might think that feathers are just beautiful and gorgeous, merely for decoration, but no, no. There's more to it than that—or underneath the feathers, the so-called down feathers. Well, in that case: "Rise and shine and spread your wings."

Feathers protect against moisture and water, cold and heat, or they serve as camouflage. Feathers come in different shapes, colours, sizes, and lengths – no two are the same. Feathers are unique in their design but only have real use collectively.

There are two types of feathers: the so-called vaned feathers, which cover the exterior of the body, and down feathers, which are underneath the vaned feathers. Then there are contour feathers, flight feathers, filoplume feathers, semiplume feathers, and bristle feathers. Endless varieties of feathers, an endless amount of feathers – feather upon feather, like a well-filled, well-stocked down pillow.

Da werdet Daune und Federe vo tote Tier g'wäsche, tröcknet, entstaubt und sortiert. Da chönnt sie d'Qualität vo de Daune und Federe ussueche, zue luege, wie 'nes Duvet oder Chüssi herg'stellt wird. Au d'Füllmängi chönnd sie uf Wunsch selber bestimme.

Das isch eusi Bettware-Reinigung. Wenn s'ich telefonisch tüend ah'melde, chönnt sie grad debi si und zue luege.

Now back to the essentials: a bird's feather dress weighs about twice as much as its skeleton. So if a bird has a skeleton of, let's say, 2 kilos, then its feather dress weighs 4 kilos. Is that correct?

And a person's skeleton makes up about 12% of their body weight. So why don't you do the math yourself – thank you.

Speaking of feathers – what are you actually sleeping on? On a straw bed in a semi-insulated, charmingly renovated barn? Or on a sprung bedstead from 1900, with a mouldy horsehair mattress placed on top?

Ein Bett im Kornfeld... Probably not! All of you sleep with your fat asses wrapped in feathers! Have you ever thought about that? Shame on you!

These poor feathered animals! Now imagine this: they grow up in a breeding centre, with no exercise, no room to move—let alone breathe. They are bred to be treated like shit and to have the delicate feathers cut off their delicate bodies while still alive. Born to give down feathers to others—for a warm, cosy down duvet, an even cosier down pillow, and then, of course, the great down jacket from Moncler and the down gloves from Bogner for an extended ski weekend in St. Moritz or Chamonix.

Has anyone ever asked me for my opinion? Is anyone interested in my opinion, my rights, my well-being? I, the feathered animal, the silly goose, the stupid chicken—I, the fluttering, chattering, feathered creature. I wish all those who are bedded and covered in down feathers tonight horrible, terrible dreams. That Mother Holle snows into your hut. That you freeze in the night, your feet as cold as icicles. That you all wake up ice cold and almost frozen to death.

Now let's take a step back. Take a deep breath. And from the beginning again, please.

The ancient Romans in ancient Rome—or anywhere else in the Roman Empire, it doesn't matter. Yes, the Romans back then also used feathers to sign things. For example, a big fat contract. Important things were signed—things that decided war or peace—with a pen made of a feather. Light as a feather. Goose feathers have been used for writing in Europe since the 4th century AD.

In the West, in New Rome—what we used to know as Constantinople—Constantine the Great is baptised and becomes the first Roman emperor to make Christianity the one and only religion.

In China, the Jin dynasty is facing troubles due to political fights between the northern barbarian tribes. And further north, there's archaeological evidence that shows the existence of three ancient Korean kingdoms.

In Egypt, the demotic script is replaced by the Greek script. Historical fun facts—all written down with a feather, for us to remember and reflect on.

Endless fighting. Endless signing of treaties, contracts, capitulations too. If we hadn't had these feathers to sign and end things, we would still fight over Alsace and Lorraine with Germany, Joan of Arc might be still alive, we would still think about to sign or not to sign the peace treaty of Versailles after World War One and if Napoleon really should receive 2 Millions francs per year for stepping down as emperor, as written in the treaty of Fontainebleau...

With this in mind: thank you, dear goose, for your honourable service in the name of law and order and piece. And ye-es, thank you also for keeping us warm in wind and weather and for giving us endless cosiness. Thank you, dear goose.

One last anecdote about the Romans, and then I'm really done, I promise: the Romans also used feathers for other things.

No, not that, you naughty minds.

No, they used the feather when they felt sick. A Roman would stick a feather down their throat when they felt like throwing up. A bit strange, I know. I'd rather stick my finger down my throat.

Always in my mouth, no – not downstairs!

And while we're at it: it's just a guess, but feather dust-ers may have been used as an early form of a vibrator—to tickle particular parts of your body. I'll let you use your own feathery imagination.

Or in the Rococo period, it was very fashionable to learn the profession of feather decorator—or plumassier, in French. One could do marvellous things with feathers. So opulently decorated, to match the corpulent hips, the head adorned with all kinds of stuff.

A bit like those savages—though of course much more elaborate than those wild folks. Much more skilful, much more talented than those “primitives,” who wore almost nothing but feathers on their heads, half-naked in the wilderness. They most probably copied it from the Rococo people—those “Indians.”

I wanna marry barefoot, with the warm light of the Californian sunset on my face and the fresh ocean breeze. With flowers, and maybe a feather in my hair. I am wild at heart. I love to be outdoors. Into the wild. I'm authentic. Native. I am ethno. I am spirited. I am spiritual. I'm an open-air kinda gal—doing yoga in the desert, hiking through the fields, dancing into the deep dark night, with a feather dipped in deep dark blue indigo. I am indie.

And for our honeymoon, I'll go to Thailand, because all my friends are going there too. On an abandoned island, far from civilisation, far from electricity. And we'll make our own dreamcatchers—like the ancient people did it. HULU!

Who here hasn't dressed up as an Indian before—or shall we say it correctly, Indigenous? Who still has such a costume stowed away somewhere in the cellar, or knows someone who does? Who among you hasn't dreamed of riding on a horse in the vastness of the prairie, with a feather in your hair, to fight the evil white man...

*Flèche en opale dans mon ovale
Tout m'étale au visage pale
Drôle de fleur, un indien dans mon cœur
Flèche en platine dans ma poitrine
Pointe sanguine, épaule féline
Drôle de flore, un indien dans mon corps*

*C'est lui, l'amour de ma vie
Je sais que c'est lui, tout m'le dit
En lui, tout est infini
Le jour comme la nuit, je suis à lui*

I mean, ok, back to the feathers, what's wrong with wearing feathers in your hair like Juliette? It's not like I'm constantly adorning myself with other people's feathers.

How bad can it be to dress up like Pocahontas for the annual Carnaval Tropical or Fasnacht? Huh?

I can't wear a feather boa for the Ladies Night at Kaufleuten or the Swinger Foam Party at the Club Graz? God damn it, but as a winged Icarus is possible, isn't it? Or as Asterix with a cute helmet with wings, that works too? Or as Ganymede, a cute tight twink embraced with the big wings of Zeus, in the shape of an eagle. Oh Daddy!

Or as a tender David who didn't want to tussle with the well-armed Goliath. The massive Goliath, killed by a sling-shot, now lies at David's feet. The long feathers of the dead man's helmet now tickle the inside of David's tender thigh. Mmm, Goliath!

Common man, that's all a bit too gay for me. I'd rather be in drag as my alter ego Lola Lumumba.

*Her name was Lola, she was a sniff-girl
With yellow feathers in her hair
and a dress cut down to there*

I mean Lola, without feathers in her hair? She would look terrible, horrible, disgusting.

*Feathers and passion, were always the fashion.
And then Lola fell and drowned.*

Yes, why don't you stay where you are? Serves you right. Like Icarus who wanted to reach the sun. That's what you get!

*I feel so much lighter
like a feather with you off my mind, uh.*

*Floatin' through the memories like whatever,
you're a waste of time, uh*

*Your signals are mixed, you act like a bitch.
You fit every stereotype, send a pic.*

I feel so much lighter like a feather with you out my life. With you out my life.