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Flaming Red Wig

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FLAMING RED WIG

A Thesis

Presented to

The faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Carla Christina Howl

June 2009

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ABSTRACT

“Flaming Red Wig” is a collection of short stories and prose poems with a critical preface. Both the preface and the creative work explore notions of artifice, apposition and entering into a text (both written and character) with stillness or intrusion. I try to create an examination and communion with language on much the same level, ultimately yielding a musicality that creates a rhythmic discourse and dynamic between the significance and the notion. The title of my thesis refers to the obvious motif of artifice and the reoccurring theme of emotional pain attached to gender and humanistic role within specific time frames.

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Preface:

The Mirrored Axis

Susan Howe, in *My Emily Dickinson*, views Dickinson's poetry as a cultural inversion with her use of intertextuality as distillation, multiplicity of voices – a pulling together of various texts. Dickinson is working deliberately to further dislocate an already fractured ontology; maybe even her own fractured sense of being gives her poetry agency. Dickinson's writing process, and the matter of her poetry, is a poetics of revelation, an emptying of the self through the placement of analogous thought, and unification of multiple voices: "This is the *process* of viewing Emptiness without design or plan"(Howe 21). "The acre gives them – Place - / They - Him – Attention of passer by - / Of shadow, or of squirrel, haply - / Or boy –"(Dickinson). Howe informs the reader of Dickinson's writing process and process of meaning behind her poems by creating a "secret history of the dividing line"(Frame Structures) between herself and Dickinson as a mirrored axis, a "protosemantic" of between and transits. Part One of *My Emily Dickinson* suggests (of Dickinson's writing) that "there is a mystic separation between poetic vision and ordinary living" (Howe 13) and the gathering of voices and texts fills the otherwise empty transits of design. Howe suggests something similar of her own writing in the essay "Incloser." "My writing has been haunted and inspired by a series of texts, woven in shrouds and cordage of classic American 19th century works, they are the buried ones. They body them forth...By choosing to install certain narratives somewhere

between history, mystic speech, and poetry...[these] paradoxes and ironies of fragmentation are particularly compelling”(2). Howe’s use and view of intertextuality in both her own poetry and Dickinson’s fits well into Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia in relationship to the novel, not poetry. Bakhtin’s heteroglossia allows the reader entry into the novel through the conceptualization of dialects elaborating on other dialects as a form of dialogic invention, or entrance into the dialogic imagination.

Even though Mikhail Bakhtin’s concern in “Discourse in the novel” is to define the novel as artistic prose and an insufficiently respected genre as art form, he is also interested in defining poetry as well. He frequently defines the novel by contrasting it with poetry. For Bakhtin, the novel is a stage for heteroglossia, a forum where the enactment of multiple social languages struggle within any given utterance. “The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of voices, artistically unified”(262). But, poetry is the attempt to unify language, to strip it of its multiple voices. Poetry is the artistic discourse meant to eliminate heteroglossia and create a standard language. “The unity of the language system and the unity (and uniqueness) of the poet’s individuality as reflected in his language and speech, which is directly realized in this unity, are indispensable prerequisites of poetic style” (264). Artistic prose recognizes heteroglossia while poetry does not. Bakhtin’s theory in relationship to the novel seems to run parallel to Howe’s interpretation of Dickinson’s poetry (and of Howe’s own approach to writing poetry) within the concern of prose focusing on language as image, turning language itself into an object, while poetry focuses on the object-as-image. “A failure to understand languages that are otherwise generally accepted and that have the appearance of being

universal teaches the novelist how to perceive them physically, as objects, to see their relativity, to eternalize them, to feel out their boundaries”(404). In relating Bakhtin’s theories of the novel and poetry, to the argument that this turning to language as image is the primary concern of both Dickinson and Howe allows the appositional approach the arena for performativity. Howe deciphers Dickinson’s poetry appositively allowing the language as image to become “[t]he space of the page as an active stage”(Swensen 631). This approach is seen again in Howe’s *Frame Structures*. In the space where language becomes the image the experiment of the idea is the truer interpretation at the point of interstices, where the multiplicity of languages are the multiplicity of ideas. "In poetry all things seem to touch so they are" (Pierce-Arrow, p. 13); and "Approaching poetry all things seem to touch so they are" ("Either Ether," 112). Because it is the sense of the word that can’t be by itself, the apposite touches the point of interpretation. Susan Howe explained her intentions in writing *My Emily Dickinson* and approaching Dickinson’s poetry as apposition in *The Talisman Interviews* as an attempt "not to explain the work, not to translate it, but to meet the work with writing--you know, to meet in time, not just from place to place but from writer to writer, mind to mind, friend to friend, from words to words. That's what I wanted to do in My Emily Dickinson." (Howe 50). Howe’s critique meeting/coterie collaborative writing with Dickinson’s poetry as a parallel unification and inquiry rather than a palimpsestic interaction returns the interpreter to the space where the dialogic imagination can transform and jolt new dialectics of language as image, as idea into consciousness. “By subtracting the ordinary from words, Dickinson produces a ‘shock’ that ‘converts’ them (etymologically, to turn around, transform) to ‘a new way of perceiving.’ The method by which poetic language shocks the reader into

new awareness (that combination of psychological and imaginative interaction we call perception) is thus performative”(Hogue 53). Charles Bernstein in *Artifice of Absorption*, considers one of Dickinson’s poems where it “enacts an ‘impossible’ preference not to represent the world or look at it as if it were a representation—that is, something one can look out *onto* – but to dwell *in*.”(25). More importantly, “the poem registers (and that’s the precise word for it) the need for *jolts* against the conditions for absorption, a radically antiabsorptive poetics meant to contrast sharply with what Susan Howe has described as the “polished, pious” work of, for example, Anne Bradstreet”(25).

I would not paint-a picture–
I’d rather be the One
It’s bright impossibility
To dwell-delicious-on-
And wonder how the fingers feel
Whose rare-celestial-stir
Provokes so sweet a torment-
Such sumptuous-Despair- (Dickinson)

“Now draw a trajectory in imagination”(Howe 27) where enactment of a word and the antiabsorptive Dickinson jolting meets the concept of the palimpsest, the reinscribed rather than the appositioned. This new stage is where Howe played out her imagination with the poetic approach “as spiritual activism and...performative transformation... [a] visionary”(Hogue 52).

demon darkened, intelle
 cfooted if rays were singing vespers in t
 e declining and fall of the city first started t
 ---able
 moment of conception are recorded:
 of conception at the first moment of
 if the first of evening, as I sat

 al the place anc
 y
 teenth of Octo
 musing in the C

In apposition there is a stacking of ideas that suggest an affinity for spatial disjunction. Dickinson's use of dashes are a form of apposition where meaning can move forward or back implying an analogical relationship between what voices and ideas have been established and the possibility of what may come. "What is interesting is that she found sense in the chance meeting of words. Forward progress disrupted reversed. Sense came after suggestion"(Howe 24). The corporal resonance of language-as-image suggests a body of senses in Dickinson's "The Spirit is the Conscious Ear. / We actually Hear / When we inspect – that's audible - / That is admitted – Here -" Here is a typological reading of the body, the senses are vehicles of something "escap[ing] all transcendence of the subject as well as the object, as opposed to operating as a subject or an object...good or evil desires...Nowhere better than the related/narrated...that which is a life within"(Deleuze). The narrated and related become the anatomie of the subject or object but as an image. "For other Services – as Sound - / There hangs a smaller Ear / Outside the Castle – that Contain - / The other – only – Hear --"(Dickinson) outside and inside listening to another voice mind imagery the analogy of the anatomie of self are methods for introducing multiple voices. Almost an "Analytic of the Sublime": "the sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every

standard of sense”(Critique of Judgement Book 2, Kant). The feeling of the sublime reasons the reader to a further disjunction. The disjunction itself is how Dickinson incorporates heteroglossia into her poetry. In returning to Bakhtin, disjunction is a language and voice in which both Howe and Dickinson participate. “More often than not, these languages do refract, to one degree or another, authorial intentions”(Bakhtin 321). Their poetic disjunctions function as a refusal to appoint linearity and authorial intention -- without linearity the transits are reopened for reinterpretation and possible estrangement from the poem’s original message as genre occurs. Fissures of thought, moments of vulnerability only strengthen the foundations of the seemingly foundationless. An almost implicit or posited figure in this analysis is Gertrude Stein who represents this seemingly foundationless foundation. A simple analysis of her motivation in relationship to audience helps further define Howe as poet and Howe’s relationship to Dickinson as critic.

What Howe attributes to Dickinson’s poetry vis a vis a Gertrude Stein disjunction is what Howe contributes in her own poetry. But, Stein’s unstable linguistic system is overtly irregular because it is overtly a material poetics in that the emotional resonance is in the transits for Stein as the poet (or playwright) and the reader (or audience). The possibility for intertextuality as an analogy for the self is what Dickinson restructures.

According to Steve McCaffery in *Prior to meaning* “the protosemantic informs and structures the domain of ‘betweens’ and the periplications produced in transits, flights, and deracinations. If a tangible contemporary poetics emerges from these threads, it would probably comprise a synthesis of force, kinesis, and perturbation; a poetics of pre-established alterities but also the retinal grounded more in reading than in

writing”(3). What McCaffery gestures toward is a material poetics of unstable linguistic systems like that in the poet Charles Olson’s claim: “[t]he real life in regular verse is an irregular / movement underneath”(10). Stein is always aware of her audience and makes unorthodox syntactical choices not to distance herself from her audience, but to remain in constant communion with, and in a way, in control, of her audience’s intellectual and emotional apprehension of her texts. As Howe mentions in her introduction to *My Emily Dickinson* “Emily Dickinson and Gertrude Stein are clearly among the most innovative precursors of modernist poetry and prose...subversion attracted the two of them...[Dickinson] exploded habits of standard human intercourse in her letters, as she cut across the customary chronological linearity of poetry...Gertrude Stein...verbally elaborated on visual invention. She reached in words for new vision formed from the process of naming...dislocation”(11). Both Dickinson and Stein invent an emotional image extended out of dislocating syntax and punctuation meant to awaken the reader into the visual imagination.

Stein’s use of the perpetual present tense displays an actuation of strategy, a disjunction in the process of the line. The instability of emptying the sentence of its syntactical complications only to create an elementary minimalism that seems convoluted by repetition, but the repetition is simply lyrical movement allowing the reader momentum. In Stein’s “Stanzas in Meditation,” the perpetual present becomes rhythmic with the recurring gerund form every other line: “liking” and “coming” and “knowing” so that the pleasure for the reader is in the sound and not the content of the stanza. The reader is compelled through the “Stanzas” in an almost empirical haze. By stanza III, Stein pulls the reader into a narrative of personal pronouns where each remains a generic

reflection of whatever can be potentially attached as meaning. “He” could represent emotion. “She” could represent the intellect. This reflection creates a binary that can refract or become an interstices, a between space, where the reader can interpret empirically, metaphysically, or rationally.

I term this occasion of interstices Protosyncopation because this is the original moment when the intellectual and emotional matter of the text, performance, or plot structure is syncopated with the reader or audience’s intellectual and emotional matter. So, the syncopation is in the syncopation. According to Gertrude Stein, from *Lectures in America*, the audience’s sensation or emotion in relation to the play is always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. Just as Emily Dickinson’s dashes project the reader forward and back simultaneously into a decomposed connection with the past and present. Your emotion, as a member of the audience, is never going on at the same time as the action of the play (93). As readers, one way to develop a sense of exchange between the stage and page is to think of the drama as constructed of actions, and words and ideas that yield action. Between the words and actions is a protosyncopation, a moment in time when the emotional equals the intellectual. The emotional impact of reading the poem as a reconciliation of contrarities by having the imagination become the equilibrium and allowing it to decide whether it will be bound by the linear progress of the poem’s action or to keep several interpretations alive at the same time.

Dickinson’s almost esemplastic illuminations of analogies represent a comparison with the pluralistic and a gathering together of the pluralistic while maintaining a Heideggerean “openness to ...mystery.” Inside the possibility of mystery is a vastness of

imagination and interpretation that could possibly invite a closure to significance.

Dickinson resists closure by agitating the re-habitation of history. "Pain – expands the Time - / Ages coil within / The minute Circumference / Of a single Brain"(Dickinson).

Howe, in *Frame Structures*, utilizes her own history as a line between her poetry in the self of the poetry. "Look down a perspective of twenty centuries. Idealism a mirror where everything disappears to nothing Realism [Fragment/slash/quotation]"(Howe). The rehabilitation of history in *Frame Structures* functions as a distancing device while the rehabilitation of history in *My Emily Dickinson* functions as a unifying device. Moving toward meaning in the interstices occurs in the historical and exposure of the multiple languages and voices by existing in the poem. Both Dickinson and Howe are omnipresent in their poetry, but as subversive dislocators of possibility. The fact of Howe's critique of Dickinson functioning more as a reflection of her own is its own language of comparison by analogy -- An analogy used by both the poets and maker of the comparison and the relationship in the critique is the dividing line between the poet and author. The poet is not the visionary who aligns herself with the periplications of poetic threads that won't lead back to the reader. The author is simply not a visionary but a posited reader of the poem in the case of, for example, Puritanism (author) echoing through Dickinson's poetry or the hauntings of the *Lavinia (author)* in Howe's poetry. In the case of Dickinson and Howe the translation of a historical reality causes poetic legitimating of inertia, but not at the loss of power. "When we move through the positivism of literary canons and master narratives, we consign ourselves to the legitimation of power, chains of inertia, an apparatus of capture"(Howe, Incloser). Dickinson is now a powerful literary canon where jolts and mystic speech have become less jolting than unifying. Howe

participates in this literary canon by aligning herself so closely with Dickinson that there are portions of *My Emily Dickinson* where the two writings become almost indistinguishable. Ultimately, Dickinson and Howe are languages unto themselves absorbed into the act of criticism.

An Effect of Coherence

An effect of coherence but also of crescendo, amounting to a kinesthetic sensation of rigorous equilibrium. This is all part of his:

Primacy of the General Concept

He said, “were good silk used for flowers we would not be here now lacking realism.” “It’s all in the eyes,” she said. “Viewing is primary -- the scenery must be walking into the eyes and collapse into the senses and “yes,” He adds. “You have excelled in wearing your trousseau, as in all parts, an affect of the crescendo. I can see your garden and quite well I might add.

“since one never points to the overview of the whole nicely drawn with”

Isolation and Lighting

Elysee seems to be a kind of, she interrupts, moreover, she interrupts.

What is the meaning of this?

He clearly advocates love in the area around the garden. And surrounded only by herself she emphatically endorsed tearing down the garden and posting a poem mined and memorized around his memoirs entitled “vast zone” I like that. I like that very much. Your taste for grand effects is grand and effective. Similarly her mother’s garden was consulted by the big bad wolf of the woods with his fangs dripping mud, mercy. He was caught at the site as a result, defanged, and replaced by a howling kitten. He wrote:

The Taste for Grand Effects

Begins with gentility. This also lacked realism. In any case, princely stature is scarcely encouraged as we can see in the window following the space in which her garden should be. She uprooted, guarding herself against the primacy of the general concept, isolation and lighting, and the taste for grand effects. She is now part of his memoirs having an effect of coherence but also of crescendo, amounting to a kinesthetic sensation of rigorous equilibrium.

Extracts From a Life

Childhood

At seven years old Mary did cartwheels wearing a dress without panties underneath. Her brother William caught her, called her a sinner. Then, went to their Mother. “Exposing herself?” Mary’s mother asked. She could not picture in her mind what he was talking about. “I will show you,” he said and dragged her out to the front yard where Mary remained doing her cartwheels up and down the front lawn. She now wore a pair of cotton pants and a respectable form-fitting shirt. “Mother,” William insisted, unbuckling his belt, “she had on a dress, a dress, not what she has on now, but a dress,” he whispered the next words to her, “without underwear.” He too wore no underwear and pulled his feet out of his pants. Their mother looked at him, concerned, with her head slightly slanted to the right. After the pain of nine children passing through her body, their mother was quite tolerant of her children’s indiscretions. Mary’s brother was not as tolerant. “Mother. She must have changed her clothes.” At that moment, their mother realized she had left the chicken boiling on the stove for too long. She turned to walk back into the house. “She’s a little exhibitionist. This isn’t right. Mother, it’s sinful,” he yelled after her. Their Mother knew the chicken would become dry. William did cartwheels in Mary’s direction hoping to flagellate her with his belt in the heat of the day. She met him while working in a little corner of Nordstrom, near the front entrance, to the left of the shoe department selling World Cup soccer T-shirts. He came in for a pair of shoes. She had, maybe, 2 soccer fans buy a 10-dollar T-shirt in a six-hour shift. She spent most of her time at the register counter writing people-watching observations down on a Nordstrom Co. pad. Large feet. She noted. It didn’t take long for her to notice him

insisting on looking at her. She didn't mind. She had an excuse to look back at him. He wore a pressed pinstriped business suit with a neutral colored tie, black slacks, and reading glasses. He had dark hair cut close to his head, sharp bone structure, but soft brown eyes. Yet, it was his height she loved. He had long, sturdy legs. My God, men have no shame. She wrote this down. He had looked up at her dozens of times already. As she finished writing the word "dozens" she heard a man's voice ask her if she had been following the soccer tournaments. She looked up quickly and discovered it was he, pinstriped love on sturdy legs. "Oh, no," she stuttered, "I just needed a job. I'm getting paid eight dollars to do nothing really." He smiled. She noticed his eyes were slanted. Lovely, still noting: sexy hot dog. She quickly fantasized that he was a doctor or a lawyer. He looked exquisitely put together, meticulous, professional. She asked him what he did for a living now that her interest was sinful. "I'm the manager of a small computer shop." The words "manager...small...and shop" stood out in her mind and she felt a surge of disappointment run through her. But he looked so important she thought. She had been wrong about almost everything. He was already deceiving her.

Mary could hardly stand when her mother tried leaving her at the first grade classroom door. All the memories of comfort—waking up early in the morning, lying down next to the green living room heater, while her mother made oatmeal came flooding up. She vomited on the last step of the four stair staircase leading up to the first grade classroom door. Her mother frantically called for help. Mrs. Crutchfield (first grade teacher dressed in a habit "don't call me sister") came running quickly out the classroom door and stood

in silence. Everyone felt very sorry for Mary. All 25 of her first grade classmates looked hollow around Mrs. Crutchfield as she poured sawdust over the stairs.

He was 29 years old, too young to be married and divorced, she thought, and to have a child? He told her he had been married for a short time and had a three-year-old boy. “Where is your boy now?” she asked. “With his mother in San Francisco. I rarely see him.” She could see his sadness, but couldn’t help but be happy for herself. If she dated this man, she thought, maybe even fell in love with him, she didn’t want to have to deal with a child and an ex-wife. She was 23 years old, fresh out of college, and wanted to go to graduate school. She sold soccer t-shirts to pay for application fees. She wouldn’t mind a man coming with her, to help her and protect her. She didn’t want an ex-wife or child interfering with her plans. She knew she could fall in love with this man. He carried an innocent sexuality with him that could be opened and closed quickly like an umbrella.

By the fourth grade Mary enjoyed sizing people’s wrists with her short fingers. At recess, she set a goal to size ten people’s wrists by the 10:30am bell. She especially enjoyed sizing the boy’s wrists. She would say, “If my fingers can barely go around your wrist it is because you’re strong like the incredible hulk.” The boys liked this and encouraged her to size them several times over and tell them how they were like different superheroes. She imagined Brad Generro taking her by the hand and flying over the classrooms and everyone would try to cheer them back down to the ground but they were too high on love and she was light and not alone.

He told her his ex-wife left him for another man and took his boy away from him. He told her about his ex-wife's brother committing suicide. He told her he hung himself in his father's closet with a hanger. He told her he was impressed with his courage to die such a slow death. He told her, in order to test his own courage, he took a hot iron to the tender skin of the inside of his arm. He rolled up the long sleeve of his starched pinstriped business suit and showed her brown dots in the form of a wide triangle scarred into his skin. He told her he wanted to know his pain. She wondered if she could make love to him by noon.

Mary walked through the narrow hallways of the Parochial school she had attended now for six years, including kindergarten. She noticed a new boy from a distance. There was something strange about his face. He had very thick, bushy eyebrows. He continued to walk closer to her and intended to pass her in the narrow hallway. He noticed Mary's fear when she noticed his eyebrows connected creating a monstrosity of a bush at the top of his face. Mary had nightmares about the one-eyebrowed boy. When she saw him on the school's blacktop she put her sweat-palmed hands into her uniform sweater and squeezed the fabric until her hands became dry. He had her in an unlocked broom closet behind the first grade classroom. Sister Mrs. Crutchfield could not hear her screams.

When she went home that night, (she lived with her parents to save money) she told her mother she had met a very handsome insane man at work. Her mother told her she was

happy for her and kissed her forehead. “Maybe he’s not so crazy. A woman alone is incomplete. Remember how your father once loved me.” In the night she dreamed of hot irons and floating ironing boards. She had a feeling when she went into work the next day he might show up. Her mind insisted on picturing him. So handsome, she thought, strange, but handsome. She could not wait to return to work and her lunch break so she could slide into a bathroom stall to lift her skirt and think of his skin and fingertips.

At Santa Sophia Academy’s sixth grade camp, a bearded camp counselor called Mary a tease; she did not know what he meant. It was 1983 and Mary liked the lace bows Madonna wore in her hair, so she wore them too. The 27-year-old camp counselor held Mary’s 11-year-old already womanly body during the trust games. I like your smile and the line of your lips. No one seemed to notice when he pulled the bow from her hair as she stepped on to the school bus.

She could see him standing outside of Nordstrom’s glass doors. At first, he stood, then paced, then purchased two drinks from the Nordstrom Espresso-bar-on-wheels. When he entered, she noticed a large, white envelope under his right arm while the drinks occupied his hands. She had already forgotten how handsome he was. “I hope you don’t mind that I came back to see you,” he said. She smiled and said she didn’t mind. He asked if he could set the drinks down on the register counter. She said yes. He set the drinks down carefully and handed her the large, white envelope from under his arm. “I hope you don’t

mind.” She opened the envelope and found a series of photograph sheets, pictures of his boy. “I thought you might like to see my boy.” She didn’t. “He’s getting big,” he said and looked down at the rug. She was indifferent. She said, “He is a beautiful boy. He looks just like you.” She smoothed her fingertips along his hand as she returned the photos to him. He stayed with her until her shift was over. She wanted to love him. He supplied her with non-fat milk Café lattes because she was on a very strict diet. He wanted to please her down to the milk.

After her shift was through, she asked him if he would like to come to her sister’s home with her. Her sister lived near the ocean. He said yes and followed her closely on the highway. When they arrived she put a Barbie bicycle helmet on her head while she hoola hooped for him. She wondered if he liked the way her hips swayed and the fact that they were alone. She would try to make love to him. He would say no. “I’m still in love with my ex-wife,” he said.

Mary’s Mother wanted to send her to an all girl’s Catholic high school—Our Lady of Peace-but the tuition was far too expensive. Instead she went to the local high school, Mount Miguel, where she wore red lipstick and a padded bra. Fights broke out in the quad every lunch break and she hid under an old dilapidated stage to avoid being trampled; twenty-five half eaten sandwiches lay with her while the next three years of her life was performed.

In college, Mary majored in The Performing Arts and hoola hooped while reciting a dramatic monologue from Medea. She managed to get herself into an all girl Parochial University. All the young women loved her Medea.

Mary decided to perform a last recitation for him before holding his head under the waves until the moon dripped a halo around her head.

Hot-Petalled

We were having a good time among Sara's azalea flowers when those hooded girls came writhing into our Eden. Our burning Paradise filled with Inferno flowers. Sara was never an analyst of sumptuous secrets. Not daring at all. A bloated bullfrog. I used to bring her bouquets of roses to quench her deeper devilry want. You think you have instant access to my blossoms she used to say. Stealing her stare head on alit her fury. Maybe I wasn't good enough to the girls. My child's fearless step into the sun came with Sara's own rebirth. The children were always hooded because I didn't want to see their delicate faces. I used to fold them up in their blanket and read *Rumpelstiltskin* to them in their white room. I was a type of ventriloquist father, wooden as pretend. Breaking up with Sara resurfaced her homicidal undersides. Seizing my arms, rending my skin like a pileated woodpecker. She told me at the core of who she was hurried a prism of controlling eyes. They are after me like dragonflies, like hairy pterodactyls. Who? I asked, cooling the red color painted so solid on her face. Don't cry. Don't be sullen. I planted catalpas for Sara on the sunny side of her garden, at an angle, so she wouldn't step on the flung down heart-shaped leaves, its branches flinging themselves at the surrounding lilies. After we were married, her father came to me and said: "Son, she is a little out of her mind." He crushed the lily on my lapel while embracing me. His love swayed a heavy tangle of nerves in the pit of my stomach. My altruism would save the day. Your future's injury would not have to do with my touch Sara. And your trousseaux becoming plutonium was not my fault. I whispered this to her in my sleep. How could I make Sara happy? What did it take? What it took. I met her during my own mental

defloration. I was mixed up somehow with the spinning of loss. My father had died two years earlier, at the same time I met Sara. I climbed to middle age without answers and watched the mouth and gestures of silence. I was old without a word in my heart. Sara sang to me seven times in the park air near a waterless fountain. She simply electrified me. No one could meet my lips open, then feel moved to ask for my underthings. She did, through many tomorrow's yesterday and today and back again. It is not as if I could gloss over her distressed spirit with veils of flirtation. She was also filled with an inexplicable anger toward love. I imagined us together among a troupe of clowns. I mean love not to be a carnival. My mother threw off her caress when my father left her there – at the doorstep- not fulfilled. I don't want to make the same proleptic mistake now. Sara tells me with an angry fever: "You are not around me much, why? I am here, all on my own. Have you freed me from that steadied whole?" I knew I had to leave when my glare breathed out and down at her. I became livid and gleamed, dripping wet from the same anger my father had clung to, brands of bitterness were handed down from one generation to the next. I want the anger to stop with me. I want to knock the old size bone of sadness out from the middle of what I know. I stayed with Sara. She carried the same sad, blue scent. Neither one of us were whole. Nobody told us how to be whole. Her question was radioactive. It left me with more questions about love being a nuclear decoy. I went out looking for more than shoulders to love upon. I looked to alchemy's dreams. What did I find? Self-transmutation is the only vein to pulse within. I found a stair from my old home, when I stepped down, it turned into a wheel. It carried me to a new land to begin afresh, to begin a veil-rending of my already tightly woven notions of love. Spooky. The girls find us in the garden, among our azaleas. I will tell you.

She tried to lift her eyes to something else something more than her heart felt she didn't want to go on she had killed the child for her future and what could she do she could not go back in time she could not make him love her she could only die as well and live again

Cow Milk

She had nothing to say except to lift the heaviness of her breasts up with the palm of her hands and sigh and sigh again thinking how they could have been used and used again. If I would have had my child, she thought, they would have been viaducts of nourishment, she smiles. "I am clever," and smiles again. She sets two empty coffee mugs out on the coffee table. She will not make the coffee until later. Fresh, she thinks. It is now 3pm. She and Charlie always have their coffee in the evening, so they can stay up late in the night making love. Sometimes. Love, she thinks, how much I want him to marry me. She looks at her thick fingers and imagines a modest size diamond on the finger which contains the vein that is connected to the heart. My heart, she thinks, has been broken so many times. This thought makes her sad and she shifts her large hips quickly in discomfort and one of the coffee mugs falls off the table on to the living room rug. It doesn't break. It cannot break, she thinks, I wish I had carpet around my heart. She picks the mug up off the floor and washes it meticulously for Charlie. She replaces the mug to the coffee table and lines the two mugs up side by side so both handles point to the right. What a pretty couple you make, she thinks. What a pretty fucking couple you make. She doesn't start getting angry until around 4pm. "Charlie" she yells, "Charlie!" The

practically empty room tosses his name back and forth from wall to wall and yells it
itself. She smiles and smiles again. How can you hope for something when hope dies at
45, she thinks. He doesn't love me. I'm too old for this. You're my last train Charlie dear.
CHOO FUCKING CHOO she screams. Can you hear me Charlie? Can you hear me
Charlie dear? She unlocks the front door; the only door to the outside of her one-bedroom
apartment, and sticks her head out into the musty corridor, "Charlie dear," her voice
deepens. "Charlie dear," her voice heightens into a whisper. She smiles and smiles again.
She closes the front door and locks it twice. She heads straight to the bathroom now, the
bathroom mirror. She likes to look at herself. She likes to be reminded of how life has
damaged her; not necessarily damaged her beauty. She was never beautiful. She wonders
if Charlie would have liked her better as a brunette, she thinks – doesn't matter. And she
pulls at the many strands of gray, wiry and brittle hairs hanging close to her tired eyes.
She pulls at the loose skin around her blue, tired eyes. I wonder if my baby would have
had my color eyes? Oh, but Charlie's eyes, are such a wonderful color of gray, she thinks,
like the color of the sky. "Too complicated," he said. She touches her breasts again.
Filled with fat, she thinks, no milk in this cow. She laughs and laughs again. She hears
some shuffling coming from her bedroom. She opens the door very quietly. Charlie is no
longer sleeping on his side, but on his back now. His soft breathing reassures her of his
love. She doesn't dare sit next to him or lie near him in fear of waking him. She lingers
silently in the bedroom doorway for several minutes until her ankles ache. She finally
closes the door softly, softly, careful, so not to wake him. He is not due back to his wife
and kids until 7pm.

Flaming Red Wig

Her parents named her after what they got drunk on when they conceived her. That night, Jon, her father, rode her mother like he did his Harley until he came, upon the cops and dropped his knife out of fear. Debbie, her mom, was filled with Brandi, in the corner of a smoke thick state prison visiting room. She brought him jellybeans of all colors, the colors of children's toys. She kissed him open with what he thought was a jellybean in her mouth, but she passed him a lude with her tongue, shoved it right down his throat and said "I love you" as she pulled her slippery mouth away. He smiled. She smiled. They kissed behind the smoke. They made love behind the smoke. Debbie was 14 and a half when she had her first baby. She doesn't remember how it happened. She believes all of her children came from Jon like a golden prayer from God. And it seems that they all did because Troy, Brandi and Tory all have their Daddy's eyes: blue like the sea lit by the sun, on fire with blue, blaze blue.

I met Brandi in the fourth grade; she looked like a girl wrapped up as fine as the finest gift. She was so lovely: long, beach-sand colored hair and German tough skin with rose color on her cheeks. We became friends because all the other girls were jealous of her and stayed away. I was too, but I was better at fighting it than the rest. She was smart too, so that meant pretty much everyone hated her, even her mother, even me, sometimes. Growing up, her daddy was in and out of prison as many times as he tipped his glass for more and more

Brandi became more beautiful and intelligent and in need of attention as we got older, leaving grammar school, attending the same high school together. We went to parties,

parties held by young men whose fathers and mothers had gone to Mexico and Palm Springs to fix their marriages and left the house empty except for the liquor pantry. She always wore a certain shirt that fell off her right shoulder, just enough to show her collar bone, bony and fleshy at the same time. The boys, they really were boys, tried hard to kiss her there; her collar bone, sweaty, just a little, by her fifth beer. She monopolized their eye's focus. She always wanted to become an actor. I stood by and watched. A lot of the time the heavier girls get stuck watching, she did, I watched.

I spent the night at Brandi's home often. My parents were always in Europe getting drunk on their own cobblestone streets. I was left to be taken care of by my older brother Ralph. He was taking karate lessons and practiced too much on me. Brandi snuck boys through her window. In the dark, I could hear the smacking of saliva and teeth together. It became a familiar sound I could fall asleep to. When I woke up he was gone, and another year. Her back pressed into the mattress made no sound.

We were sixteen now. I had just gotten my license. Brandi, her sister Tory, and I were riding fast down the freeway, fearless, young, fast. Even though Tory was two years younger than Brandi and I, she had learned from Brandi's example, but had gone beyond, and the young fourteen year old could flirt like a prostitute, with an urgency, as if her life did depend on it. Trucks kept honking as they zoomed by my Honda Civic roller-skate "lawnmower on wheels" someone once called it. One brown truck with three young men with short hair cut like three big thumbs stuck in the cab stayed steady next to us: 60...65...70, my engine was ready to give. I lifted the ball of my right foot from the accelerator slowly and the thumbs kept up my speed. Brandi and Tory were leaning out

the right window trying to grab a piece of paper being passed to them from the brown truck stuck to us.

“Stay steady, I almost have it.” Brandi pushed herself out farther, far enough where the wind slapped her skin, squinting over her dry eyes, she felt for the piece of paper and held it until her fingertips turned white. She sat firmly in the passenger seat laughing so that her head flew back.

“It’s a fucking toe tag!” she yelled in my ear and I slowed down more. I didn’t like them. The three of them were morticians and had drawn a diagram of who was sitting where in the truck. Each gave their name and phone number and specific instructions that they only wanted the two blondes to contact them. I am not blond.

That same evening, Brandi contacted the driver. She liked the driver, his name was Dave. He was tall, dark and Portuguese. They made a pretty couple, good lovers, horrible husband and wife, even worse parents. Brandi and Dave married in the pink chapel of love on the corner of where there is a lot of crack, above the street. Her stomach shot out like quadruplets. The bridal gown she sewed herself was made big enough to go over her stomach, and no collarbone. What made her cry most at her wedding was not the fact that she was getting married, but because her daddy was sitting in a pew with his sturdy legs spread apart, long stringy pony tail dripping off the back of the wood and smiling like the day he took that special jelly bean lude. He was out of prison now, after six years, serving time for what Brandi told me was a bar fight ending in her daddy stabbing some man in self-defense. Her daddy had a comforting smile. When Brandi walked down that aisle she smiled at her Daddy because she loved him so. She smiled at her Mom because once she

walked out of that chapel she left behind the beatings, bruises and at least the phone could be held away from her ear.

Brandi's mom took to slapping her daughters and her eldest son, but he got married still in high school and he was out of that house living with his new wife who had had three abortions and blamed them all on him. Debbie was a frustrated woman without her man. If the girls room was not "picked up proper" they got ten slaps on their back from the back of a brush. She did it in front of me when I was at their house. I thought she was going to start doing it to me. She didn't like the way I swept the kitchen floor. She knew that she could get us to work long hours for a few hours of freedom.

Sophia is the name of the baby brought out from inside Brandi's sixteen year old belly. She is beautiful and fragile and is dressed up before she goes to bed. Brandi ate too much, cooked too much, and cleaned too much. Dave stayed away from her too much. He didn't beat her like her Mom, but he looked at her like he was better than she, like her Mom used to do. It took Brandi three years, tamed as an apron, before she put on a flaming red wig, got drunk on half a bottle of Jaggermeister at a bar with a rock band playing, and fucked the lead vocalist until her wig fell off. When she found out she was pregnant she scooped up Sophie off the dirty floor and left Dave behind with the corpses.

The rocker was far from being a rock and roll star. Well, he was like a rock and roll guy without the money to hang a star on him. He had dark hair, red eyes, and liked to sleep with J.D. more than Brandi. One day, he told her he had a gig in Florida, and never came back. Brandi thinks he O.D.'d on stage like a young soldier in battle. Even though Brandi had a good brain, she couldn't get a job that made more than 7 or 8 bucks an hour tops. Dave decided if she could afford to fuck around she could afford to support Sophie

on her own. She had to give her second baby away, to a dentist and a dentist's assistant. It was as if they were taking advantage of a kid in order to get a kid. The three of them made a deal: they paid for her hospitalization and a couple hundred bucks worth of groceries. Brandi called the second baby Max for nine months, "whether it's a boy or a girl, the name is Max." She gets pictures of Alexis in the mail every year with no return address. Max, or Alexis, looks like Brandi's younger half with her blaze blue eyes and her rose petal cheeks. I got to hold her before they took her away. Brandi cried when I held this small life in my arms, weighing nothing, she felt so heavy.

"You are strong Brandi."

Brandi fell down hard this time. I was falling too. I had just graduated from college. I didn't want to graduate. It was like diving into quicksand - head before hands. The two of us went out a lot leaving Sophie with her granddaddy. Brandi's Daddy was no longer with Debbie because he fell in love with the girl next door. He must have been about forty. She was our age, 21. We could have partied with her, but she was already partying with Brandi's dad. He drank, snorted, had sex a lot, and managed to stay out of prison. Even though he broke people's legs for a living he was as gentle as a nun with Sophie. Brandi and I drank through a year's worth of nights before her daddy couldn't take care of Sophie anymore. He was driving through winding roads at 65 mph trying his best to get up to the cross at the top of the hill before it disappeared. His mind was winding from what he put up his nose that afternoon. I believe he did make it to that cross, only soaring, like an impatient ghost.

I didn't go to the funeral. Every year on the day her daddy died , she called me up, had a taxi transport our drunk bodies: Bar. Bar. Bar. "We're not going to die like my daddy," she said, laughing while she cried. I held her hand tight on those nights.

Things got a little better, Dave decided to help out. He took Sophia four days out of the week so Brandi could work. This helped and it didn't help. It gave Brandi more time to think and more time to smoke pot. She found a studio above the red C of Cafe Exotic; Jason lived next door above the X. He was twenty five, soft spoken, wrote poetry, played the guitar, had no pictures on his small white walls. I met him the first day she saw the studio and decided to rent it because Jason stepped out, said hello, and showed us the washroom and his place: "It's not much."

What was much though, was the amount of pot they smoked together every Tuesday and Thursday night. She invited me a few times, but pot makes me fall asleep. He told her about a rose he gave to the woman he loved. She grabbed it from his hands and her fingers started to bleed. He cried every time he told her that part.

It had been a couple of weeks since I had heard from Brandi. Eventually she did call, cursing like a devil was in her mouth.

"They're taking him away. He has a sheet on. Please, come get me please!" She sounded like she saw her daddy come through the slide up window of her slanted studio. I drove up to a scatter of lights. Frozen and white she grabbed hold of me.

"What the fuck is going on?"

"I found him dead. Hanging."

She had not seen him all day. It was Tuesday night. She faithfully went to his door. Knocked. No answer. "Jason," she called. No answer. Light on in the bathroom. Door

open. She looked. Jason hung from the shower curtain. His brown hair poking his eyeballs. His knees almost touching the tile. His pants down around his ankles. His scarecrow arms down at his sides.

“He was jacking off.” It seemed that she never blinked her eyes, not once, as she told me this. “Take me away. I want to be around people, living, breathing, drinking. Get me out.”

I put my sweater about her, took her over to my friend’s house, a friend I knew in high school. His apartment complex circled a slab of cement where cockroaches scurried to the dark center.

“Do you know Johnny Jackson?” she asked my friend. “Call him, I want him to come over.” The minute she found out he was coming over she ran to the middle, to the cockroach ring, and stomped on them barefoot while beer sprouted from the can’s mouth. When I left, she said she was staying. She had sex with Johnny Jackson that night on the living room floor with dead cockroaches stained to the bottom of her feet.

One month later, she called me, laughing:

“Steve is a great guy! He’s Japanese American like your boyfriend! We’ve been having sex, but using condoms. I’m fertile Myrtle, you know.”

“I’m happy for you Brandi.”

“I’ve been seeing him for four months now. I can’t believe I’m not pregnant yet.” One week later, she called me, laughing: “I’m pregnant!”

Encyclopedia Entries

Altu Music 1: In Altu, musical and vocal instruments have a ritual and symbolic significance. According to the existing history, the music of the indigenous Altuians began when the first timetone player evoked the spirit of sound by scattering ears made of clay across the ground. The timetone player then strapped large, heavy wooden blocks to her feet and began stomping, thus creating vibrations. These vibrations caused the clay ears to shatter. If the atmospheric conditions were proper, and the vibrations made moral sense, Moseculo appeared. Moseculo typically dressed in an elastic gown fashioned from taut skin. Young children ran at Moseculo and bounced off his gown. They pulled at and strum leftover sinew and pounded with their fists on tightly stretched areas of the gown.

This ritual continued until the timetone player stomped the clay ears into dust. At which time, timetone pupils poured the dust into a long, hollow bamboo pipe and blew the contents into the roots of the pino tree. The pino's leaves sang a utilitarian melody, something of a repetitive chant.

Mosecula Secula, an Altuian composer of the time, first noticed the pino's song while walking briskly to catch her child from falling out of a tree. This was in the afternoon. It was hot. As she ran, Mosecula Secula heard the sound of one foot passing the other and, in her mind, calculated the temporal rhythm of her feet rising and falling. She named this split-second beat a polti rhythm, after her child Poltipompa. Witnesses recall that Moseculo appeared then for the last time, because Mosecula Secula had saved her child and in the process invented a polti rhythm. All this created the proper

atmospheric condition, the vibrations made sudden moral sense, and Moseculo's gown dissolved in the mid-afternoon heat.

Altu Music 2: The music of the indigenous peoples of Altu. The area and the surrounding area's music has as its distinguishing feature a rhythmic complexity common to no other area. Polti rhythmic counterpoint, where twelve or more locally independent attack patterns are superimposed and exposed, is realized and laughed at by face claps and allowing moisture to drip from cupped hands. Tears, tears, tears, drama, drama, drama. Qussaba, caval, and a variety of tuned and non tuned nostril hoses are used to elevate rhythms into the angel's sky. The remarkable aspect of Altu polti rhythm is the discernable coherence of the resultant rhythmic patterns – dispatterns, C patterns, D patterns: Pitch poltiphon exists in the form of parallel and C pattern D parallel intervals (generally 23rds, 24ths, and 25ths) overlapping choral laughing and dawul solo choral response (occasional simultaneous independent far flung thigh licked melodies) the C chord higher with hair on thighs, lower without hair on thighs. The Lord's chorus – enter. Kissing, kissing, embrace. Scene. In addition to body, many ground instruments perform simultaneous extraneous melodic functions. Common are the Mizaf hard wood slabs, once thrown down a hole in the ground resonates through the dry day ground and dissolves at top speed into the blood of the pino tree, leaves sing at time on time.

Dating: The mind filled act of hanging high-heeled sedimentary strata from braided Altuian donkey ass hair. This is love – now. On this basis the age of union between saline souls is about 100 million years. Computations for the erosion method of dating are founded on the assumption that he or she is capable of living in the pits of hell. The chief methods for absolute dating include:

1} Assisting pain of lower shift side mind matter yellowed from under solar exposure leaking length of lid half quart 1.

21} The preceding method has been discounted as highly unreliable.

2} Encouraging radioactive shaft to explode when stated: Please keep your hands to yourself.

21} The preceding method has been counted as highly reliable.

3} Never forbidding the act of nipping on the lawn.

21} The preceding method has been changed from unreliable to reliable.

Ramayana Sheep: A place to sit when happiness gets tiresome and industry won't rest its head. Diamonds are processed under city skirts and the Bible as a place of refuge may not be enough. The seat itself is the height of your own influence. The conversions under the wool cloth, deteriorating with extravagance, covering the high chair or low chair (also depending on the clay of your mixtured bones) is fast and attacking. They are trying to kill me. The one who sits the longest wins a Rococo rug to be ridiculed on and indulged by Lully the harpsichord maker on ewes Wednesday. The durable lounge can be dug up from the rammed earth when happiness is at its most tiresome. Diamonds are dead

harmony in the country. Cattle manufacture the grazing seat for the particularly contemplative poet involved in animal rights. The gluteal region is known to soften, like regaining lust, when seated on the Ramayana Sheep too long. The prelude to being seated is a novel waltz, slow, with no shadows. Sometimes the night gowns itself, slowly, over the seat and the seated curl clocks under their arms so time is always several minutes longer at rest. God help us.

Cuddapahalebro Hi: The area and the surrounding area's music has as its distinguishing feature a rhythmic complexity common to no other area. Polti rhythmic counterpoint, where twelve or more locally independent attack patterns are superimposed and exposed, is realized and laughed at by face claps and allowing a ball of air to ooze slowly out of moist cupped hands, qussaba, caval and a variety of tuned and non tuned nostril hoses. The remarkable aspect of Ubarian polti rhythm is the discernable coherence of the resultant rhythmic patterns – dispatterns, C patterns, D patterns. Pitch poltiphon exists in the form of parallel and C pattern D parallel intervals (generally 23rds, 24ths, and 25ths) overlapping choral laughing and dawul solo choral laughing response and occasional simultaneous independent far flung thigh licked melodies – the C chord higher with hair on thighs, lower without hair on thighs. In addition to body, many ground instruments perform simultaneous extraneous melodic functions. Common are the Mizaf hard wood slabs, which once thrown down a hole in the ground resonates through the dry day ground dissolves at top speed into the blood of the pino tree which leaves sing at time on time.

Layered voices

Stein's Obstetrical Rotation. Now, Sir, Finding I was incapacitated to amuse myself, I divided mankind into two parts the merry and the furious: I am part of the furious. Saltpeter and clean linen. These two sets of men, notwithstanding, they each of them shine, in their respective characters, are apt to bear a natural aversion and antipathy to one another. I don't care. In any case, my grade school teachers told me nothing I remember will ever happen. A cluster of starlings in the palm of my hand belladonna. (I will tell you this: I have never told anyone else.) a body resumes motion, some wind up on train tracks left by you a vestibule of devils giving birth to one another this is heaven to me merry. After all, if a man's temper were at his own disposal, I think he would not choose to be of either of these parties; since the most perfect character is that which is formed out of both.

February 1664

Opium Supper

Many times, when my father lived, he whispered his wish for a fourth son into his Somerset Syllabub. He drank his "Somerset," as he affectionately called it, each night into the late hours. I thought, What good was I? A son of seven and twenty makes for business and familial pride; I could not make anything or anyone. "Poor acarpous Anne," my father must have thought me deaf as well as dumb. Father, and family (mother found her voice in the heavens I hope) pronounced my past husband dead because he could not continue to be wed without children, so he could discontinue to be with me. I may be two times dark: a black widow with nothing but spider webs inside me and I am also not a tree that yields fruit.

All of this did not make a Cain of me either: neck curved from walking with my head down and under someone's hand, always being leaned upon. No, I stood tall with the spine of my books keeping me straight, the pages and thick, and thick thoughtful words all a part of me. I did not spend much time at the dinner table, something about the talk of money made me lose my hunger for food and conversation. At sup the family men spoke of nothing but business and "How to keep our money," one brother said. "Trap the money," second brother said. "Feed the money," third brother said so the desire for money became fat and infected with greed, buying and selling, and when my father gave his last breath, well, my brothers sold that too. They tried selling me in exchange for some opium, but I cracked the cobble footpath as I ran away.

October 1664

Pepys Peeks

If the sidewalk could talk, if the sheets could speak, if the windows could translate words blown in from the outside, I would ask. I would ask if this man met many beds and when he returned to his own were there tears. I am more simple now, a little mad, angry, humbled and wed into simplicity. My second husband, no more than a carpenter, knows nothing of my past (which will do, being if he knew I had brothers with money I would have to do more than the more I am already doing.) He found me in a tavern, a silly punch Bedlam bawd I must have seemed to him, too old to be a woman of the town, but at least I have a name. I should not call myself Bagwell, but well bagged or Queen of Bagnios. I am called my husband's fair-skinned tool, used for advancement, to lift ourselves up from the muck in the streets and Pepys will assist.

My husband walks me to the street where Pepys sits with words in his sight and a liaison on his mind and the inactive pen creates language of amour not meant for documents. I feel as if I am the crooked, deformed child earning more pity and money for my husband. I have lain with Pepys many times and he calls me a modest woman to make himself feel better: "you, my dear," he says, "are a modest woman." And my busk falls to the floor with a crash. My body is not relieved from the strain. The strain will continue. His hands are not rough like my husband's though; they have not known the strain and they smooth across my body, but do not soothe, and he tells me of the petticoats and the white silk gauze that belong on my frame. His mouth moves faster than his actions because I have neither seen nor touched the silk. When I am with Pepys I do

not eat bread and cheese, but mutton and veal, and drink wine from thick glasses. I will continue. I want to forget Mooregate and the alehouses ail me blowing coal smoke from the streets and I still inhale the melancholy. And the wine noises carry me down the footpaths of my thick blackamoor streets, but I am not there, I am inside the shops, at St. James, Pall Mall, at the opera. I box these ideas up and give them to myself as gifts. When I unwrap them, I hope to find myself inside myself again and again.

THE BIG SHOVE. I sometimes wonder if Pepys has visited the opium pleasure gardens. If he has met my brothers not knowing we share blood and my brothers not knowing Pepys and I have shared flesh. Together they see God playing harpsichord fairy music under the musical bushes. I can shove my husband into Pepys's arms and my brother's arms and they can squeeze each other into liquid and I will laugh with my hallucination of this hallucination for my reality is far from a funny real. Laugh. Yes, take these opium - based nostrums to cure your stupidity, but it will not work, your stupidity is too strong a disease. Would I be burned alive if I said all this to your white expression on your face, slowly turning red from anger, embarrassment or arousal? At least, Pepys, you have one emotion which may be differentiated from another. My husband stares into his rum like God is swimming in it or into his wood work like Christ were hammering along with him. What can I do with my days and my struggle that circles itself again and again and again? Am I feeling sorry for myself, whining? Or releasing the press or peine forte et dure put on my chest like a pudding shield by man, woman, myself or God or all. This falling asleep and numbness of the mind where an alone bed is my safe God.

December 1664

Words

In my time alone, outside pushing through Pepys, I discovered words. My husband did as well. He discovered certain pages of my journal. He laughed. Pepys comes to laughter when I speak, but he smothers the sound when he sees I may not be willing for the bed that night. My husband speaks to me in passing; Pepys passes up speaking altogether when we are at bed. He feels me on the outside, not the inside. I detest extremely when he en supprimant le sujet du sexe dans le langage francaise. He says we are having a little affair of the heart. I would say it is rather failing me. I have decided upon a new place for my diary; one my husband will never seek to find: near our bed. He sits in front of the fire after a twelve hour day to warm his bones. He finds it difficult to leave this heated hearth and my bed remains cold. The cold is inside and outside my rational feelings, but no man would term feelings rational, only the mind, that which I should not contain. I believe my mind was meant for a life beyond where it lives. I know my husband would find great amusement in what I say. I have read Milton in my little house with little time and telling little to no one. I have forgiven Pepys for wanting only flesh and I am dead to the thought that his wife sorts cards near the window listening for footsteps that arrive only after his shoes have wiped their souls on many mistresses doorsteps.

November 1666

Green

My husband, Pepys, and weakness are absent from my mind when I attend my bower. Trees suck air without selfish intent and I wish to become one of them. They are beautiful without having to make themselves so. God granted them green skin and simple bodies and the rain from the skies are not tears on their leaves. I smile at the sun and it shoots me alive with yellow bullets. I am not a woman here, nor am I a man or wish to be; I am alive here, very much alive. I am not trapped inside Mrs. Bagwell, the one who laughs for Pepys - for her husband's sake, nor the one who is a recipient of laughter for her husband's amusement's sake. I forsake nothing here. I am free. And still, sinew's intrusion. If I am playing a role, dressed up in doll frills as your lover, I must be a type of child, and am afraid that these gentlemen believe it to be true. But I must not be a child if I am capable of having Pepys consider my husband for advancement. I must not be a child if I sleep in this bed and you do not hold me like an infant.

I am dark with envy when an equipage passes and someone is on the way somewhere, away, traveling a distance from where I stand on sinking ground wanting to fly. I will see Pepys no more because I feel he is getting bored with me; my only sadness is that he did not get bored sooner. My husband believes his advancement will come in infant steps. I can only hope the advancement does not involve an infant. Pepys may be of no use. If someone would have inquired of my opinion I could have attested to his uselessness from the onset.

Silly Sinking

During the height of something she wanted to fly up to it. It took wings-didn't it. And there were none to be found in the shop. Everyone is going bankrupt. Everyone is dry. Everyone called her silly. *How funny you are.* She was a hard worker when there was something to work for. On the lonely London streets she broke open the day. So lonely and the window from the wind bends back and forth and wants to break and hide. Hello. There is nothing. Here. Take my hand. There is thick sorrow. Leave me. In. the night.

At St. John's Wood she lived frightened by the forces of the push and pull and the silence of the closed mouths around her. Where is tomorrow? She kept asking – at 30 years old where do you go. Do you look up or down – dance a little – swing in the sunlight. It is now 6. Oh. 2. I have no story for you today. Sounds of the winds talking, screaming a little. I have nothing to say. But something is angry out there. A soft icy prick of wind at my neck. And the church bells ring as if she is hanging out the window of the pensione near the Duomo. Some Italian teenagers are peeling the poster off the board outside, a young singer advertising his voice from mute paper. They must like him. They must really love him. They are rolling him up like Jesus' live sea scrolls – in concert. Two teenagers stood in front of the other two teenagers looking out for the carabinieri.

“Yo no se”

She doesn't feel right in the shoes she has to wear in this life. Others smile. So much. Fun. “And she is just – silly,” she said in an English slanted speaking say you love me. Up underneath the manipulation of the minute – how she could keep him hanging.

She would hang up on him. He would call back like a man without a mind. The ringing continues, reminding me of no one. Help me come alive. And where is my soul on Wellington Road? I spent my time in phone booths crying into sound breaks scratching into each other.

“Fuck you,” I said.

“Fuck you,” he said.

£500 later. Money well spent.

0) I have an idea about you. It is not a very nice idea. I think you are utterly and completely insane. The other day, I saw you kiss your mother on the forehead. Don't you know you are not a child. You have such false feelings for her. Show your mother some respect. Kiss her lips next time. Kiss her so a bit of blood goes back to her brain. Give her something to remember before she dies. Affection goes a long way. You should know that. Do people generally look like this? Opening their arms up to surprise. I think I like frames around my dialogue. Some sort of logical device: “The sky is moving up to another level. I bought a ticket. It is supposed to take me with it.” She works in L.A. now. Moved out of London. Fresh air. Finally. One. Two. Three. One) again.

How can you tell me you are here. Everywhere. Hovering near the streetlights licking electricity your mouth moves slowly with a penchant for purpose. I can meet you there. Yes. Near the streetlights. You will tell me: I have so much to tell you. You will tell me: Listen to me. Now listen. I am a religion. And then you will say nothing. And you said nothing. I have forgotten what it is like to borrow you – to buy – little pieces of you sold

for pence. I will kiss you to heal the commerce coming at me like flies. Today is the day for healing. You are simply not well. Your mind. It is simply not well. You have told me this before, make up something new. I am bored with this, not well, not well, give me words I can stand on like a Chicago bridge and your thoughts can flow under my feet. Words are magnetized and they remain even after the mind has turned off.

1) I saw you for the first time talking with a friend's friend. White wine, then red. You bent your head to the left when concentrating on her lips moving. You held on to her kneecap like a plastic lid flimsy in your fingers. I heard all of it before. Do you like or lack religion. Her lips moved with your mouth and she was swallowing up your words and her tongue stung like your licking of electricity. And she disappeared. Do you realize that? Do you realize you completely consumed her. Oh well. I didn't like her much anyway. Something about her lips, too thin, words are no good when they have to ooze out, seep out of the mouth. Written. You are yelling again. Stop that. I snapped myself in two for you. I can't remain here. I can't remain rooted to you.

Is that so.

I can't continue. Do you see? Do you see. I felt for something that day. You unbuttoned the top button of my blouse and said you were too shy that night.

Is that so.

All of this spoken with the thin-lipped woman in your stomach. I didn't try any further after that. No more pancakes, no more belt buckle arrangements, no more candy from a china cup. I have you. Do you see. Do you see? Near the streetlights. I am another one of the women word after word, one rolling on top of the other, story upon story. Then there

is silence and no more sight. No. There is far more. I looked you up in the sky but you weren't lighted. I am well. Under the air. You call.

I love you.

I want to love you.

I don't know.

The phone is easier, watching your mouth produces a rapturous pang. Maybe if I left you on the ground. At zero. Tell me how easy it would be. Sometimes I ask you if you will get any easier. And you say, only if you do. On the lonely London streets we broke open the night. It was colder then, a man huddled with himself in an indented doorway, a scarf below his eyes, and somehow I wanted to tell him, at least you are on your own. Drop a second into his till. I have many minutes for you. But it comes at a price. Leave my pockets empty. You held my shoulders as you carted me in front of you. The hungry mouths said stand by my side. Where would you like to eat you whispered from behind. Somewhere small with noisy waiters and swinging kitchen doors and backdoors. I am not in your stomach. I am in my mind. Not on Mondays, but Tuesdays, and with or without food my mind never starves. To death. I understand. I understand the movement into missing. Not the missing inside someone's absence, but the missing in someone who is simply plucked away. Like feathers. I will never wear the boa you gave me for Christmas again. Absolutely crushing. The missing is too much at nothing but zero.

A Little Less Than Ground Zero

I went out looking for my mind the other day – turning to night. I walked up to the BP and the night was near to something small. I thought I could light myself up and

recognize what had been dark for so long. I remember empty crisp wrappers with past due consumption dates stamped into a cartoon talk bubble coming out of a Spice Girls' mouth. Everything was empty at the BP including the man behind the counter. Saving room. He kept shoving pounds down his pants – getting bigger and bigger and fatter and fatter by the moment. He expanded with hot greed lifting up, hovering over the cash register like a used car lot's blow-up mascot. I could have stolen a lot of currency that night. But the rate of exchange was too high. I walked back to my flat and took the escalator rolling down to ground zero.

- You know, I thought of you the other day, picturing you with your red wine stains on your fingertips – or was that blood? You are always scratching at yourself – sometimes you scratch at me and I shut you off like a light. I can do that now. I have trained my mind to make you dark or dim.
- You stood outside after a slight snow calling up to our fifth floor flat window: “I am locked out!” You screamed. I let you in 10 minutes later. I only wanted to see you from the outside one more time.
- What is it you are doing to me?
- Here are your shoes.
- Let it linger, just a little longer, a piece of long silence for you and a short strand for me.
- “You have a nice day” and “Please, you have a nice day.”
- This *is* about thinking as a non-normal human being.
- I think so.

- I walked back to my flat and took the escalator rolling down to ground zero.
Shrinking.

I imagine my face being slapped often. I sit on my couch alone when my head turns abruptly to the left. As if sound did it. As if air pushed my face. No one is there. No hand. But there is pain. I imagine being slapped. And then I pretend there are apologies.

“I like you like canned meat. I can open you and eat you any time.”

I think you are very clever. I like your fingers without tips from pressing carpets into the seams of walls and concrete. You work so hard. Then you come home to me.

“My fingers are tired. Kiss them.”

And I do. We have been together now for five years. Half the time has passed since I will leave you. I only leave the stone red walls to make a left on Circus Road, buy some time, load the refrigerator, and leave you again and again. How fine it is to see such disaster in your eyes. No. A dream to toss you into. I am slapped now. No one is there. I sit next to silence like a disrespect for sound. I walked Shrinking back. Zero.

I must be shrinking tonight. I feel my features smaller and dimmer than the last party we had. I hate descending the stairs on your behalf because less than half my body is present, below my knees present. It's all part of the game baby you say (I hate that) and I say it is fine because you are on your way up. You are the up and coming lawyer and I am the wife of the up and coming lawyer and if you are coming up now I am not ready to face your friends. I have no face tonight. Who am I tonight mirror? And stop laughing. Stop making me feel stupid. Mamacita saw before Granddaddy. He didn't mind and wobbled

behind her with a piece of wood in hand and momma told me this story. She was never happy with a sailor from Oklahoma. "Hijita, get yourself a man with money or a man who lets you walk in front." Money came first before walking first and I learned how to walk a different way like the other wives: "Having a private trainer has connected my mind and body so much, not to mention how he fucks." The red on my lips and if I put it on just so. "So what do you do with your time? Do you have interests of your own? Are you going to have a child soon?" Maybe this lipstick will seal my mouth shut. I can't listen anymore and my ears are shrinking into wax to add to the candles on the candelabra on your great great grandmother's antique vanity. And you walk around this great house with a piece of me in your hand illuminating the staircase down, down, into the papers and the paperwork and the work of the hour or the day and blow me out. I believe if I apply my make-up very slowly I won't have to make an appearance because if my appearance is not presentable then you would rather I not present myself and what a present that would be to me to tissue off what is on my face now, to come clean, to see what color I am. When I take myself off what is left. I am not this simple. I am fire. I am looking for you too close from where I am standing. Now I won't have to step down. You are too high. My eyes are no longer blue. They are turning green like money. No. My eyes are green. Fidgeting with this face. What a face I have and you hold this face like a prize and if I were to crash this face would you stay alive? The face underneath the one I put on tonight will be the same face I put on underneath the face I wore last night. This face is the one you will find in a sandbox. My face. Hair. Silk. Silk feels different these months, now that my skin is familiar with it. Suits, slices of the earth colored brown, black, beige, basic for work. My work. A teacher. All these children, in - out of the class

the high schoolers run, they are already having sex. What joys are left in the later years? The joys of the years before. You are long gone in the days and the nights with so much work. We used to hand each other peaches, cold peaches after love. I think I hurried to marry you because I had very little as a child, very little food, many brothers and sisters, but not much food. I look like a bowl of fruit with this mixture of color on my face. Love me, love me with your mind, blood, bones. Hear me teach sometime. You would see the words roll off my tongue, so slippery and wise. Read me. My words. I used to do the cottage cheese dance for my mom when I wanted cottage cheese. I twirled round and round until the cottage cheese was in my hands and mouth until I turned into butter. I won't dance at these parties. Now my face is finished. My body in silk armor. I am done.

A Man in Blue Trousers

A man in blue trousers and a white jacket appears in the doorway. His heart hanging from a thick cord of intertwined fibers of flax. Only dark space on each side of the doorway except for the single light bulb hanging from the same flax cord. He seizes forward, angry, with a hollow wooden cylinder in his hands. Recognized, in the circular empty space, a listener wearing a translucent cravat. Nothing is in color. What could be a yellow cravated listener is a young woman, only sixteen. "You can have mine," she says. Her heart is small and black like an old avocado. He closes the lid on the wooden cylinder, no longer hollow, and this heart.

The man loved her, but he was old and no longer vital. She spoke to him softly: "Can I? Could I please borrow 5 dollars?" He patted her head and handed her a crumpled bill. She stretched the bill and stood on it for a few seconds. Although she only weighed 98 pounds, she was able to flatten the 5-dollar bill. She kissed him, this old man, her lover, on the left cheek, while standing on the balls of her feet, on the five-dollar bill. She wanted her heart back.

She violates K with a ferocious voraciousness by taking money from his wallet without him knowing. She thinks he is senile. He knows what she is doing. He says nothing. He sees the calaca coming. She is tired.

She is wearing Russian sable while watching a La Jolla Playhouse contemporary musical rendition of Hamlet. It is summer and the sun still sets late. The theatre air conditioning is broken. She kisses him under the moonlight. He is born new.

Imitating Exercise 2

You are not Gertrude Stein. Use proper punctuation. I succumbed to all the seductions surfaced in the modality of your speech glistening sentimental. You broke glass from across the table. A collusion: Sir, Upon reading a Spectator last week, where Mrs. Funny Fickle submitted the choice of a lover for life to your decisive determination, and imagining I might claim the favour of your advice on fresco themes of Goethe in flames and the man painted in chalk won't move (gluttony unzipped his skin)

I mean of course eclipsing the edge of the word the fiction of nothing in an affair of the like, but much more difficult nature. By God pay attention you are charming (tonight I will kiss you indiscreetly) I'll make a blanket of moss for you.

We will sleep in an iron corset's garden. Metaphysically, I called for pen and ink, In order to draw the characters of seven humble servants, Whom I have equally encouraged for some time. But alas! It is pleasant not to be asked for metaphors and meanings. When I look up techniques become ornate and decorative absorbed in residue.

While I was reflecting on the agreeable subject, And contriving an advantageous description of the dear Person I was most inclined to favour, I happened to look into my glass Swoon falls apart fills space the sight of the small pox, out of which I am just recovered, Tormented me at once into catastrophe, With the loss of my captivating arts, and my captives. I need to sit down.

Sir, I worked for the mines digging through clay and bones he found me

green brushing off gold leaves and roots. Intoxicatingly attractive, a trifle heavy, a
microcosm of memories reflect off of the echo of us.

I cannot remember kissing you, the actual warmth of your mouth.

I do remember the evening's color cherry comings and goings tunneling into a
symmetrical sigh inward, telescoping images.

I have thought it very odd of late, To hear gentlemen, instead of their usual
complacencies, Fall into disputes before me of politics,

A symmetrical kiss now or else weary me with the tedious repetition

Of how thankful I ought to be, lips in two parallel rows equaling a memory

And satisfied with my recovery out of so dangerous a distemper: Animate, no movement,
not present, dream sounds. This, though I am very sensible of the blessing, yet I cannot

but dislike, Because such advice from them rather seems to insult than comfort me

Towards summer and my memory will fail me again. Reminds me too much of what I
was.

Your most obedient humble servant,

unfortunate

The Discipline of Discourse

Chapter 1: Inter-disnarrated-double-voicing or That-which-is-difficult-to-say

The verbal aspect of discourse is concerned with itself (bad verbal, selfish verbal, you deserve a spanking) as a subject based in naming or, as Soleski, Tzvetaya (b. Bulgaria, 1932-) claims the phrase as, “naming calling” (basic translation).

Antecedent _____ Postantecedent

Fuck you _____ No, fuck you

No, fuck you _____ Fuck you

(Example of difficult-to-say)

Parallelism is not disjointed between antecedent and postantecedent. “No” is the fundamental structured theme connecting the first component to the second and the second to the first and back again and back again(example of double voicing).

“Scratch my back,” she said in Yiddish.

Anticipated response: “And I will scratch yours.”

Space

“Keynahora.” Actual Response.

Parallelism is disjointed here because anticipation becomes the true engager. Anticipation is only material to the senses. It is only subversion and transconcretization and throwing herself into sex with a theoretical aim. The self-reflexive deployment of the subject, once naming or name calling, becomes mother tongue, ma lalemande, an interlanguage of German crossed with French. That is verbal textuality. A mouth over a mouth is verbal textuality as well.

Chapter 2: Autobiographical text. The self in discourse with the self.

Saliva: The contradiction between the written and the spoken; deconstruction or metaphysical; pen activator.

Blood: Opponents are equally forceful in manifesting their objections; Pen prick.

Semen: Pen Prick.

The Pointed Glass

The pointed glass hangs downwards drops a pool of unbroken needles surviving fascicles
of pain velvet gray sky towers above the light from fire pillars of molecular energy
of caged rage and the retribution of the civilized demon enthusiasm
Gingerbread changelings plywood gurneys ash soup quiet
Remains the Holy war the polluted spell the hierarchy
of polluted deceptions blood donors gather around
the potomic swathed in dust apprehensive steel
sheltered Next stop Subway triage the weeping
sun fuel laden missiles primitive hearts reside
in the odd parts mast shutters vulnerability
fly 77 paper relics bank hard violence

gossamer
red heads
shed skin
sinew circles
and jump
window flames
take the death
to church street
splintered soot
ash gray Tuesday
east

The paper relics created a white cloud
Ballooning through the stampeding people.
The white cloud river rushes through stampedes
of expense reports: Where is my calculator? Where
is my baby? A pall of sadness crawls over the city lights.
The cars and the life settled into the smog of doppelgangers.
How to survive now Bellona? Fly into apotheosis higher still.
Insist to resurrect plodding on regeneration isolated in the presence
of silent expectations. Complex gambits present in every instant circum
scription forward. Deterioration is no longer industrious new buildings proposed to
modify the senses new strength and the repetition of sustaining forward what life holds as
good

Excerpts From Lives

Ignite the Kiss

I see the expression on your face as my eyes slide the paper's edge -*An Unwritten Novel*.

Wading through air, your eyes drown for Minnie, long sockets sinking to the water's feet as its body subsumes you--unaware and unknowing, you blind by sleeping. She married your Father, her Father's objection. Thackeray's notion: your father married to Carlyle.

They are so much the same – selfish, complaining: “I was not as bad as Carlyle, was I?”

Julia? Your mother reassured him, assured him again. “No, no, dear, not as bad.” She never met Carlyle. Cheyne Row was cold. Sir Leslie might have thrown copies of his

Dictionary of National Biography at Julia, maybe at you, too: “This is a sign of my genius.” The last of the papers flying. Complain. Never admit to mental illness with blood the color blue. No imbecile, Lord High Chancellor, or even an alienist psychiatrist.

Sir Writer. Sir Selfish.

The doctors, Sir Savage, Sir Craig, and even Sira Octavia Wilberforce, say you suffer from melancholia, or “folie circulaire,” a “saturated solution of grief” which “causes as it were, a delusion to crystallise and take a definite form.” Dreads, horrors, suspicions fill the patient's mind. Voices threaten, warn, accuse and vilify.

On all those faces marks of reticence. “Ah, but my poor, unfortunate woman, do play the gamedo, for all our sakes, conceal it! As if she heard me, she looked up...” Stultify.

SmotherStifleSuffocate me. Stiff-necked today. I gluttonize priggishness. Nice-nelly I am. You amputate my final word dripping at the end of my tongue. Here is a kerchief.

Virginia? Virginia? “Eastbournezigzagging”

Take responsibility for leaving life a bare bone. Homescrapes butterflies under boot
yellow flower hang still in the night. Eastbourne. I read your stories on the omnibuses as
they pass me by. Zig. Off the motoromnibus as they pass me by. Zagging. I could,
myself, run shrill sound over rose sand for you, run over L.'s rotund aspidistra, fronds of
rhododendrons giving off primitive light. Would you like that level of violence? I was not
there when the claret-colored curtains catacomb home remained still over plate-glass
windows, still over stone in wool pocket, Monk's House at 11:30 a.m. Walk barefoot into
the river. 11:31 a.m. One last glance at awkward feet that carried your long body for over
fifty years. 11:32 a.m. Feel the cold stones beneath long feet, dibbling into fleshy arch. I
am cold now. 11:34a.m. Colder, looking over halcyon river, calm? Remember the sound
of waves "breaking, one, two, one, two...behind a yellow blind" in the nursery at St Ives,
on the north shore of Cornwall. "The purest ecstasy I can conceive." What time is it?

BLUE

*THE POINTED FINGER*nails of glass hang downwards. The light slips off the glass, and
drops a pool of blue. All morning ten fingernails of lustre drop blue upon marble pool.
Feathers of parakeetscriesharp blades of palm treesblue, too; blue needles glittering in
the sun. Evening comes, shadow sweeps blue over sea's mantelpiece; lace surface of
ocean. It's night; stars unbroken - needles drip blue blots. Virginia? I know no time but
now

I see you do not want to see color any longer. I see you. I confound you? The mind, a
matter of its own. The obsequy for matter, yours to reason. Declivities of your conviction

began with "incestuous brother" George, fourteen years your senior, breaking the hymen of your mind. Matter? Enjoyment of your body? I won't call you cold goat. Leonard, the mongoose, mastered you, the mandril. Mind's matter decaying made pet positions reverse. You were the first to dislike Freud. You, the first to publish Freud. He repaid your kindness by telling you kindly, "George used you as a whore" under the heat of the sun on Hampstead Heath. Freud set your past on fire.

"Get thee to a nunnery."

"My terror of real life has always kept me in a nunnery."

Supposesupposehush!

"Patience, as Carlyle would say – in Italian."

Suppose death

Hush!

Swam naked

HushHush!

God grew your atheism.

"Rest is the treatment required. No mental work permitted."

Must write. Must read. Can't breathe.

"No, maniacal-depressive insanity can't get out of bed."

'Eggs are cheaper!' That's what always happens! I was heading her over the waterfall, straight for madness, when, like a flock of dream sheep, she turns t' other way and runs between my fingers. Eggs are cheaper. Tethered to the shores of the world, none of the crimes, sorrows, rhapsodies, or insanities for poor Minnie Marsh; never late for luncheon...never utterly unconscious of the cheapness of eggs.

Miss Thingummy volunteers to be your Dr.: "write with mad fever." *curious visions in room, seeing sunlight quivering like gold water on wall. I hear voices of the dead here.*

And felt, through it all, exquisitely happy."

First breakdown at 13: Duckworth, your loving half-brother, comforted you-in public.

Attack #1: At Burnham Wood, you lie in bed listening to the birds singing in Greek and imagine King Edward VII lurking in the azaleas and using the foulest language. You throw yourself from your bedroom window and brush off your knees.

L. notes: “*raving mad*”

Asseverate the firelight of truth. Swinging moods of fearful beauty--life.

L. notes her blood. L.notes her penchant for collecting stones.

EastbourneEastbourne.

Attack #2: Sordid mouth. Sordid belly – demanding food. Your belly only craved 100 grains of Veronal. Keynes from Barts pumped stomach. *The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, one is born here, helpless.*

Insist on knowing the mark on the wall, not a nail, but a snail.

Meinstead knowam ceilingwhat? Surea surfacewhat desiresif strewnin sorrowcrash.

The velvet skull-cap and furred slippers are ready for you Madam. Please do not go outside.

Supposesupposehush!

Think of the resplendent applewoman who opens the door to bliss Madam.

Attack #3: Your mother, stirring beside regret, is not really in the room; you talk to her for three days straight. Doctor Doctor she enters a state of garrulous mania, speaking wildly, incoherently and incessantly, until she lapses into gibberish.

ZiggingEastbourneZagZiggingZiggingZiggingZigging

Darling V. Eat something. You must gain some stones.

Darling L. I plan on it...

Cricket Bloom

Becket, Stillorgan born. Pale, long, thin, constantly crying, sickly baby. He said, (maybe at birth) “After all, when you are in the last bloody ditch, there is nothing left but to sing.” At age 69, did he play back the autobiographical tape he may have recorded on his 39th birthday? Joyce waited, with his finger inserted between pages 11 and 12, for him to be his eyes, residua of past impressions. “In the writing, the good things will come.” He stuffed that thought in his trouser pocket. He studied a portrait under a microscope and had a dream about a young artist, shaking his wife at midnight: “Will you listen to my story?” “Yes,” she said, “Yes, I will. Yes.” The mystery of “joyeux”

Krapp ate his banana, even stroked his banana, according to his last tape. Beckett warned him not to slip on its skin, his own skin. Stuff that thought and the banana in waistcoat pocket. In the dark, he pops a cork, behind a drawn curtain. Spool five: “Slight improvement in bowel condition...hm... memorable.” Broods. Farewell to love. *One dark young beauty I recollect... incomparable bosom, with a big black hooded perambulator, most funereal thing. I looked in her direction; she had her eyes on me. And yet when I was bold enough to speak to her she threatened to call a policeman. As if I had designs on her virtue! (laugh. Pause.) The face she had! The eyes! Like...Chrysolite!* Fast forward thoughts on spiritual life, impatient. Get to the stuff that matters: sex. “The sound of a bottle against glass, then brief siphon.” Speaks one last time into virgin reel: “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago.”

Hard to believe a knife, when missing the heart and its purpose, can only say: “je ne sais pas, monsieur.” The knife bleeds the things I feel. Bloody ditch. Can I sing you a bleak song?

Kafka's Entertainment:

You should have never said yes. Describes himself: *useless stake covered with snow and frost, fixed loosely and slantwise into the ground in a deeply plowed field on the edge of a great plain on a dark winter's night.* Insurance agent by day. I wonder if Stevens, with the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, would have offered him a job, one with time to write, as a perk. I read that Kafka entertained himself by imagining different ways in which he could die. One of his favorites was “stretched out on the floor, sliced up like a roast.” In Prague, a walk-in freezer, Kafka liked that. His fiancée saw him 12 times during a 5-year engagement.

“Two selves wrestling with each other,” you said. What if you had burned everything?

There are Two men with the same Name in Buenos Aires

One born in a garden, the other under a pile of English books, Jorge Luis Borges classifies books at a rate of a hundred a day. Everyone smiles at this man with the same name as the famous transformer of fiction. Mouth clothed, buttoned just so, in his middle-aged skin his mother checks his dress before he leaves on his hour-long streetcar trip to the libreria. On the streetcar, he drinks *The Divine Comedy*, eats *Orlando Furioso*: late afternoon snack of a man of labyrinths. *Yo te Quiero Mama*. His mother lays clothes out for him each night; he lives with her most of his life. He and Kafka have that in

common. Does he, too, imagine himself a sliced up roast? Borges reads too much, constantly filtering words behind sockets, gouging them out. "Gloster, mi amigo." The people on the streetcar at noon blame their lunchless stomachs for visions of Gloster. Borges takes the black-ink fountain pen from his shirt pocket, sketches scenes from Shakespeare's plays onto the bottom right corner of a thick writing pad, thumbs the pages quickly to show the boy next to him a rough sketched moving picture. The boy laughs loudest during the tragedies.

Routine: Morning: barbers for a shave. Bookseller's for a browse. Afternoon: comida con mi madre. Evening: library work.

Into the night, words sleep from their pages.

Are Those Your Children in the Copper Faded Picture?

Federico Garcia Lorca murdered. *The essence of Spain, its vitality, its profundity.* Granada is your blood, your veins, spilled onto the page. Blood wedding: dirt, thick, sangre, dripping toward the boot tip of your murderer. Extinguished. How can your children see? Where do they live? In the *House of Bernarda Alba* and *Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias*, left by you? Granada /gathers your children into the sun. One summer, a poet born--not in Madrid or Barcelona, or Buenos Aires, but in the heat of the Huerta de San Vicente whitewashed in the defiance lifting off *Yerma* and *Gypsy Ballads*. Resurrected--again.

Little Peep Shows

If Simone de Beauvoir used her opera glasses today to spy on strangers, she would see the dust of the past. People existing, entering a cyclical reinvention. Little changes, except the speed a word can travel behind a screen. She might ask whether life can be observed behind a computer screen. Some life can be found in the roundness of the zeros and the rigidity of the ones.

Ah, but zero infinitely circled Sartre and Beauvoir's love. They kept separate residences, never married, took other lovers. And what of Jealousy's sumptuous seeping? Signing a "two year lease" is the answer to beginning a life-long love affair. She was of Sartre, rightly dubbed "la grande Sartreuse"? He moved her mind at the speed of fire. They combined heat and dismissed it as a conflagration. The secret to their love: recognize raging destruction as a whisper, and it becomes powerless. Condemn yourself to death at birth, and life becomes limp intimidation. If Beauvoir (and Sartre) both believed in a godless world, and that we are solely responsible for our own actions, who did they hide behind when day's light inevitably exposed bloody lines in the palms of hands? Behind each other, perhaps. Her bones and his ashes turning in the grave they share as I say these silly notions of them. Maybe she would have liked to put me in her crotchet bag and think me wise for contemplating lesbianism. Believing in the second sex as the first sex and coming of age through the slow stinging lick of rejection is still the oldest and best known technology. Liquid in the lick, freezing into a single solid word: Yes.

Yes, Joyce laughs, yes.

Her hemispheric pull of the pen necessarily magnetized to paper, slowed down, electrical word-lusting mind generating a snap in ordinary time, a slap for a lie. She must have said "How dare you" *taissec-toi!* as Sartre's 11 o'clock lover left his Montparnasse flat with her thigh high stockings fallen at her ankles wearing one shoe with a broken heel on her left foot.

We have seen woman as flesh in the embraces of the woman in love. Woman is related to nature. She can hold the keys to poetry.

And she did.

*"I am the necessary angel of earth,
Since, in my sight, you see the earth again."*

Auroras of Autumn

From: Wallace Stevens *The Necessary Angel*

Carnival Gestures

Leave tomorrow's gloss of yesterday on my
Doorstep. Knock.
Be sullen.
I am the vein you gleamed through
When the dripping roses
Sang a blue caress
And electrified.
No one answers.

Somehow, the scent of your proleptic
Fever stayed
And then moved for silence.
I painted you in my mind
So many times.

A loss for lips.
Size me around and around.
Here I am in the days
Altruism,
Folded in your bone touch.

I have so much to tell you
Rumpelstiltskin – like
Spinning skin
In our white room
With a wooden wheel in the middle
Of today.
I want to know the future's injury.

My ventriloquist spirit

You want to know why today
Is a decoy?
I will tell you:
Fold me up into a blanket,
Find me surrounding your shoulders in a
Woven flirtation.

We are now in the land of love.
The troupe of clowns.

I Know It's Poetry, If the Top of My Head Feels Like It Were Taken Off

Your Metaphysical imagination. Why only six of your poems published--out of over 1,500? "Judge tenderly of me!" The world is not interested in stopping one heart from breaking. Surgeons are not careful--they will cut anything writhing beneath the scalpel. Editors are not careful. Your dashes scarred.

Letter: 863 poems copied and recopied, until God's signal--near perfect.

You: a part of this earth, a part of heaven in your attic, in a "gossamer" gown and "tippet" made of "tulle," coverings of diaphanous heaven.

The world: Bound together with thread into *43 fascicles*. Two hundred and forty unfinished poems and four hundred works scribbled on grocery lists and envelopes.

Exaction is the miscarriage of earth.

“But”--God exists.

The snake undulates your words: “Zero at the Bone.”

*A word is dead
A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it Just
Begins to live
That day.*

And who am I to have the last word?

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