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Trick Rider

Abstract

Trick Rider is a book-length poem in four sections, which uses characteristics of the epic and gothic, as well as strategies of chance operations, to explore the compositional process in relation to time, how time is experienced during the writing process and is communicated through the text as an object and through the process of reading. The polyphonic speaker of *Trick Rider* is a stunt double and experiences doubling, being both representative of and an outsider to the community she channels; this tension is simultaneously cause and effect of the text.

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Dean J. Saitta

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TRICK RIDER

A Dissertation

Presented to

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jen Tynes

June 2011

Advisor: Eleni Sikelianos

Author: Jen Tynes
Title: Trick Rider
Advisor: Eleni Sikelianos
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ABSTRACT

Trick Rider is a book-length poem in four sections, which uses characteristics of the epic and gothic, as well as strategies of chance operations, to explore the compositional process in relation to time, how time is experienced during the writing process and is communicated through the text as an object and through the process of reading. The polyphonic speaker of *Trick Rider* is a stunt double and experiences doubling, being both representative of and an outsider to the community she channels; this tension is simultaneously cause and effect of the text.

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"well there are millions more of dead women not just the few you are hey nonny."

-Alma, or the Dead Women, Alice Notley

The Fabulous Bilocation of B. Lee

"They had made her a veil out of a mosquito bar so the auger holes in her face
wouldn't show."

When the body in question is fully peopled, we like to call it a *way*. I know she

is holding up one end of our caravan; I can see the rock glitter in our treads,

the ceremony moving down the line, shedding consonance and tension.

There's a long way to travel between the off-looking mountains and the

on-looking lake. We prepare to put on a performance like a rabbit skin. First

remove it from the story. When the ceremony reaches me, she has buzzed

out of it like a dry fly. I say *B. Lee, B. Lee* to call everyone in.

pea-stone pea-stone

pea-stone although

they lack image-forming

eyes in the face it looks

like movement practice

contractions neon

flags as indicators

the road crew's maternal

artwork sacrilegious body

fluid soaks the grounded

wire hawk face tic

tock took down with one

leather glove on her

arm the fit regains

its raptor natural

tongue movement face

rise from feathered

pea-stone engine

pop a tire iron as

prod on the ground water

breaks B. Lee un-

earths quick.

Week one of our residence 21 bats tangled with the big tent; week two we were put
upon by 21 flying squirrels. I scrapbooked segments of eyes and hair and telling
detritus. I sang why oh why would you tell this kind of story. Week three has
been a cloud of whippoorwills who leave burn marks on the dishes; we have to dust
every surface with black pepper, and still all the stomachs flop and gurgle. I can't go
to sleep. I can't be myself. I keep hearing things. I'm just repeating what was said.

to extract my tongue just up

the body how narrowly it missed

the middle, whippoorwill O

moment of betray what

swallows have large gaping

points of the body. A shivering chain

into holes they create O

grieving process, vinegar

night jar or whippoorwill

hurricane in. When the body first sank

or warning comes when

the body. How narrowly it missed.

I'm not trying to mythologize anyone. I want to glisten between the membranes of cause and effect. I don't mean *I* would glisten; I'm still totally lonely. On the penultimate night we stood around the newly lost body and performed all our stories until it sunk in. The smell of loam and the stink of cinnabar like an indentation in all our pillows, the size and shape of the bitter-sweetest head. That is what I mean when I say it all sunk in. None of the bellies that once filled out the narrative would be taking our names anymore. The body took all of them and B. Lee was what was left. B. Lee left us the same way. We had rehearsed a dozen times and still the underbelly, or parallel experience. I'm a half-inch shorter and that is why it felt different, when we carried it together.

Caul licked and cow

headed toward a billowing

outwardly: B. Lee goes

unresponsive every time

she faces lightbreastbreathing

plants in

the window bend

toward it better

a floating

shrapnel chemo

therapy later for

now golden bobcat

beginner tracks harden

& encircle the body

cycle the fern fronds

up the backs and tender

is the biggest

organ how B. Lee's

skin became another

place to story

kiss not story

tell.

In a time of crisis the body has to be careful not to step too far out into the road.

When a participant needs to uncouple, they go down to Memphis for a little while.

Maybe when the body comes back she'll be able to see and say where we're coming

from, the indentation that signifies a hitchhiker's presence. The planting of light jars

all over the tent doesn't make us any more synchronized. When I step out of my

mark and into hers, I cannot expand on the glamour. Don't misunderstand me; she's

a whole village. She doesn't misunderstand me.

The scabbing forms a white

stain on

the parachute, parachute

body and a white-out mind

has bagged and gotten

indirectly like a warning

it's hard to remember

larger, actual

the beginning of the story

ankle bones

weighted runs all over

the place their empty

parachutes a crust

borne body we claimed

of priors, deviled

bowls and fiberglass

take the care away

as our own took up

from the beams of from where gowns over

even they are yellow petals stuck to action

dead they send the rainy animal

from the moon "you" burn out notices like whelps

have problems with watching

this is not our hideous

wrapped around her feet

this is not our skinflint

body look at the stitches.

When you read me by yourself in some clearing beyond our ranges, I feel a little
fragged. Tracing the shadow of our sightline, you just make another shadow. I fall
inside like a well falls inside the ground. What I'm saying is, I know how to write this
and talk to you at the same time. It's been 17 days since we rode the body into town
and no one has dictated anything on her. We need a good recorder like we need
some mother. My oratorical style is the sound a cat makes sucking out a baby's
breath, the hiss of hot formula against a blue wrist, plus I always imagine I'm
significantly taller. We will all be straight as arrows when she gets here, and
pointing in all different directions. I will cross paths with you and lower my
binoculars so you don't feel anything too quickly.

In this hollow there is only one
building one room
school house has turned
into shelter shell-lined
and cushions and everything written
in pink dust across black boards

B. Lee is starting

not only to be but to see

where three girls with their backs

to the room were delivered home.

Where the deep polished rift

of the lectern used to cradle.

A girl shovels the black belly central

into the dark B. Lee

is beginning to

see the phosphorescence of her salmon colored

dress and the hotter

glow of the smile-shaped

gash along her neck, the way skin has

of puckering around long

dissolved stitches. Do we let it

get angry. The girl is telling a Lifetime

movie her mother watches

over and over, her vanished

auntie, North America.

The boy hasn't been talked about

yet but B. Lee is beginning

to sense his salt water breath

proximity on the other side of

the pot belly. He has no external

anatomy to speak of. To have language

for a thing you need a tongue or finger

pads at least. B. Lee watches him cut

patterns from a construction

paper activity

book for the "no two

are alike" bulletin

board. There's someone

sleeping on the blade.

Outside the mowers

move in long deep

lines doubling back

on themselves to make

an impression.

This is the closest thing

we get to finding her

some features.

This is the place I keep

saving with my fingers.

I don't know how many of us actually want to be here. Everyone naturally two-times
the story. In the morning I took all the bones right out of it, as the saying goes, but
there was still something to fight against, the desire to be longer. If I can't be a taller
tale then we can all just lie down in a circle around B. Lee and surround the body.
We can be their intention until something is related. Until we hear otherwise. I gave
her all my dead, collapsible family and I gave her my red, wet children, and the
bird's soul-sucking whistle became her name, so that's twice borrowed. I need you
to keep being frustrated when I repeat the word dead. I need the embroidery floss
kids to keep fidgeting as a meter. We can't end things with an ending the way lonely
giants do. I suspect we're going to have to sing a little.

The bone we pick to display has no reason
for being in one place this long. All sides
are taken and worn down in the same places
for everyone , the places that our chests have
caved in and the places that our heads
have caved in. For example the young or early
sounds of morning birds when B. Lee is falling
asleep for the very first time. Sometimes asking
whether she is also dead creates an excuse
to her body which is adjacent to where
she dreams her very first dream, in which her body
changes into a red knot like
a baby left too long in
a shady spot to cry it out.
In the kitchen of her dream

it is impossible to move

through her. The kinds of foods

that cry milk or their own

juices rot in her drawer.

B. Lee dreams she rolls the body

into place and then she rolls

the body away again and the body

is still there. The yes and no rhythm

of the heart monitor or the variable

foot the heart monitor

prefers. The first time dying was walking

out an unmarked door to smoke and the door

locked behind her. Behind the body was a sign,

explaining it. The first time dying

was rough was about three times.

I know because she told
you with her eyes. Cups clapped over
the mouth or skin for sealing
something back to its trailhead.
Concealing something back into
its nail head, hitting the silt
on the pathway and rolling
it away and the body is still
there. The body is on stilts
across the intersection and the light
is not going to favor her. In her very
first dream B. Lee tells
the first half of the body
she can find that this
isn't the way she wants

to be a citizen. The body gives

B. Lee twenty-four

hours over

and over again.

Left in the dark, we all got
a bad case of epithet
mouth. I know you
remember what I used
to call you. Daisy chains
extend the grieving
process, we held
position until squirrely-
eyed dawn, when all
props are strung
out and recoiled
again. How many
weeks since the longest
day of the year? We tied knots in
our shirttails to remember,

and all the soul

singers dropped out

of the trees. Still there were

the sirens in unison, calling after

all reason. "I thank you,"

we repeated in rounds,

to keep our tongues

from freezing to the cheat

sheet, to boogey off

the lava and ergot.

Return Period

“I married Isis on the fifth day of May
But I could not hold on to her very long,
So I cut off my hair and I rode straight away
For the wild unknown country where I could not go wrong.”

Between times the flood meadow is broken up
into roofless plots twisted by opossums and foot-
a-night vine. We can't find the book
with the plant names in it. Something that looks
like blood-daisies and the soft purple
star-bursts that happen later below the skin.
The prickly-fleshed invaders they sometimes call
"little travelers" whether favoring roadside
agrimonies or the tall hairy kind. We call everything Devil's
Bootjack and stamp it down like a begging blood-
sucker. We chop off the tops of the slithering
species and observe them comingling on the fence
perimetering us until nightfall. If I put this under
the nose of any stranger the story like the jaw
of a snapping turtle will not let go until she's nothing

but a simple lure system and some fortunate

bones. Good luck is a dark woolly

band completing the dream

sequence without external

interpretation. I stare it down

into the sinkhole I think her body

is at the bottom of. When it goes from bawl

mouth to bay I know enough

to spread out the freshest bunting.

Waking up outside

the body and hunting

for some new trespass

opportunity: the ugly bird comes closest to the decision

making process which sprouts a red racing

stripe of infection. How many days since raring

to go native: full of unfamiliar spores and scarecrow

dexterity. Did not leave but was

transplanted from the remains

of the wood to another newer growth

forest. Stick five-fingered hand in

the dirt pull

it out do so

also with quiet

opossum left

spread out like

a map adjacent

to the ugly

song the ugly

bird flips around

on us in our

own vocabulary.

To turn out of song into a fur
bearing region you need a shed
eye and the right
kind of shovel. I am speaking
for all parts of us; recessive
country can't make a blue-
eyed offspring. Humming on
the line won't make it
jump. Ravine dances
don't go down on a first
name basis. The first person
ever is quarantined who asks
which side we fall on. Rode
hard maybe but
we favor. We were not trying

the patience of any leather

bound story. We just dried

her off and practiced nickel

magic. We just raised

a couple hackled questions.

The first time I saw our fair
self step outside of our darkened
body she made a meal out
of us. Scratch that. For us,
a long deep cut down any
kind of trunk elicits something
thirst-quenching and un-
speakable, sticking the mouth
up inside of the flash-
light instead of vice
versa, until the full tongue fills
up the lowest hardwoods where
the body is night-revisioned.
Scratch that. Where the body is
replaced in the vise. She pressure

cooked some squirrel in the middle

of nowhere, scratch that, our

story. And opening slash closing

in like a rabbit skin newly

separated, the lighter one

said taste of

this quarry or skin

it up again so I can follow

close to what I know.

There wasn't time to worry over

repetition, it wasn't

the time to call her bluff.

I quickened and fixed

myself to her, to the hand

that raises her dead.

We are exacting like furs
are exacting, we are narcoleptic
like furs are narcoleptic, we are dead
language like furs
are dead language, we are black
holes, we are still full
of blood, we line
the wood's edge, we hold
the shape of the edge
of the woods, we remember what
seasonal flooding smells
like on the third and fourth
day, along the vertebrae we
turn into a hard timber
sound that carries an inside out

of it, unexpected rings. We are a trapper
arm full thrown
in a hole, use pronouns this way
to aerate the residence. Hollow where
the body has rested is full of false
dragon head (the obedient
plant) and slender-stalked
guara. Braided from the back we're still
attentive and rising, vestigial
partners, ba-bum-ba-bum goes the birdsfoot
violet when we grow too close
to the highway. A half-inch further
and we would have been decoy instead
of demonstration. We feel our modes
of transportation migrating deep

into the offal thicket and we know
exactly how we'll be covered come
winter. The bill isn't actually made
of ivory but it takes a shine
to the story and drills a perfect place
for a ring to go. Did the body grow up
gnawing at it? Can she tell us
what they called it where
she came from?

We drive the lump of skin and developing
bone back and forth until we can't hardly
stand it anymore. We used to be unknowing
how to affect change in the line. Now milk
is wrapped in a soaking tarp scrap red as that
curiosity. The smell of light self is what we ate
for supper last night, though we camped miles
apart. We reconnoiter the body with our own
localized sensorium and fill mystery pockets
with buck-eyes, wild seng, seven different
meats straight off the source. Light self is not
the same as when delivered but nobody's changed
their name, which means every night comes
together on the ridge, partial
illumination. We trick out

her sonar by throwing clod

hoppers into the darkness, but this isn't solid

entertainment. The narrative of she flies toward it.

Between times, we can't tell if it's the meanest

branches that sparkle. The body incubates

a mess of kittens and airwave's

final say whether

the river will stay

solid or ask us

to go around it. We have only learned bird

aphorism from this side

of the bed and the body's story

is no good to us sieved like

this with interruption. What falls

between body and light

self is the land

bridge on which so much passed-down

variation rested. What grows

between the cast-off

clothes and the cast-iron

eyeball is partial

godliness, a quarter

tendency to turn out

the bottoms for fuel.

The body wants a more

solid bog boot, the little fin inside

the tale stopped progressing

along these lines. Every time we repeat

the experience we append

sensation to the nightjars. Body touches

lips and makes them feel

broke and rushing. No way

to put it that won't sink in.

We return with deep pockets
of milk teeth and electrical
boots which expect the feet
to broaden. This is a metaphor
trap with a curled hair
trigger. Don't chew off the ear
of the handsome body. We don't
care that she cannot or will
not tell our songs from Adam
at this juncture. Make us cross
and we will plant our taboo
eyes deep in
all your thriving plots, in
perpetuity. Don't pretend
you don't imagine the part

we mean. The way we would
part each other. A husband's t-shirt leaves
burn marks when swabbed
across the body, thrown in mother-
wasting ravines: better
learn to act things out. Light self migrates
from vestigial to working title,
a long hole fluttering in
the body's hiatus, or time
when the body does not familiarize.
The tickling sensation the body has gone
off and there is no right
way to be cautious. A husband's
t-shirt leaves us all
representative and half

bare despite

the multiplying branches. We learn to call on her

like she is separated, dressed

as deep and well

as we can circumscribe

the bullet in the dark

meat. A husband's effects

among her pockets or vice

versa. Recognition in

rags on the other side

of the story. She had no husband

or wife to speak of.

The gruff hangs
itself stringy along
the colluvium, pressurized by fern
patterns and botulised
singing. Sinkers tied up
our long sleeves early in
the process, hygiene
smiles and polished
egg memorial slipped
from underneath the body like
a maternal feature. We need to cook
the books before they catch
up with us. Her voice like a cracked
boy full of pellets when we charge her
with something. What it's like to be

a light self, a little

jealous superplus catkins.

The lines fought across it so

this rise was rendered in the same

ways the body got speckled,

the orphans divvied, half divine

as a membrane could we

really only die right here.

By the time we flip her name

pronounceable the veins have gone

from womb-lavender to orchestra

red, the kind you hear in

woods alone. Every step covered

by catkin optimism who knows

if she's turned on us. Marble

mouthed and split-lipped at the site

of home, a little factory exhausting

unfiltered heavenward. The body

aggravates the photographs by missing

canines, molars, opportunities.

These are the most tender hours

of decomp, before we dress

in reversed layers, the passion play still

to get through. For now we pour

every basin's water back down

the well, to keep her

from following too closely, we kiss her

oranges and we kiss her grain.

Light as a feather stiff as we carry

our prepositions across

flood meadow to switching

yard: black birds such hankering

tulip poplars gather and hurt

for open water little

churches showing petrified

pews. We rest on the other

side of the body, running over

pennies for the bad blood

taste, throwing gamey

expressions wide

open in lieu

of filling in. We are still pulled

into the tagged and bagged

train car, Jacob's

Ladder tangled in

the body's sleight

of hand.

The Black Mariah

"So come on in
It ain't no sin
Take off your skin
And dance around in your bones..."

In her photograph Baby Bunting

Lee hangs hard like green

fruit off the spine

of a Mongolian pony.

Where her eyelashes should

be: rattlesnakes on

full alarm. Her breasts a couple

mushroom clouds, vitals

full of holes where the red-

headed gunslinger missed her

apple. It looks like both a woman

and a vase inside her

pupils. Baby gives her lungs

the slip and hides her bottom

self beneath the third

shell which no one ever

chooses. THE WORMS CRAWL

IN plays on her

cavities. Her dress

is made of x-ray

tonic and snapping

turtle secrets, the censors

never get involved.

In the finale

they roll her stones

away but she does not

stop being mortified.

She is the dead everyone

crosses the river to

speak through. In podunks

they call this trick THE FIFTH

SEASON, or TWO HEADED

OUT OF FULL DARKNESS.

An animal fork

without having

without being

snake-naked and

gold. Sundry was made

out of several

contractions, "say

my name" is dumb amnesiac

short-hand

for the public

green palisades of "it will

come to us." My head will not turn

against all the body's forms. If everything I held under

water shocked the surface this

waywardly

I would stop nursing, live

the life of one

skin. I had two

positions which were working and thinking.

Those days everything

had eyelets imbedded. All was set in

a minor vision. Some bleach-blonde

children and a dog

head.

Inside the horse, every

one of our valuables.

We call the act MUSCLE

DANCING outside our

bosom crew. Don't start

the poisoned princess

act with me again. Your pins

are glistening. Your mama was

a flyer and your daddy read

guts. Your vulnerabilities: tart

seeds and your bawling

calf. It stays black

and blue no problem.

We've got sweet hay and body

glitter. We generate our own

lines and the babies cross-
hatch good beards. Don't pull
that delicate
material face. Your incubation
days have turned you in
to a pig, just rolling around inside
the red-eye. If you ever want
to pass for living again
you better dust off
the cathodes swallow
the tongue and make
an appearance.

How sky is taken

out by the stranger

object, a gathering velvet antler

of experience, full

throated reason collars

the body in retrieval

bells. Full color

spectacle open my sweat

valves and fermentation

taps attended the buttering

of the lustral. Liminal. My antennas turn

churn-tangled O

sweet whipped sensory petrichor plus

its vertical motion slicing out

the black eye, probing

narrow. Bitter to be home

plucking imaginary string

theory bite down

into throttle, no longing

place for everything, everything

in my stitches.

We perform best when
we listen to the bird
inside the bird, dark bellied
ugly augur song that
likes to measure us out
of space. For demonstrative
purposes the body can affix
to any orphan line. My eyes are bulls'
eyes, my calves are wet,
pliable, the roped-in death
of me. My mother is
a fertility trick. We perform
best when we admonish
our animals for
the gaminess they visit

upon our routine. We are not two

of everything in

a line, following the color

spectrum. My father is a shadow

on the image. I look for a bird

inside a bird because it slips

bones out of

everything I touch.

I break the character and look

for hours like a body

no one knew to recover.

The body was never
sometimes was
a was a was
a had was had
a head
of mouths and us
but was not was
an end on
end only
buzzed and sometimes
rising a confluence
us the rubble enough
performance don't
muzzle
the dead

Black box as the site of detection

and retrieval; little red

rider takes everyone down

onto bad knees. DEAD MAN'S

BREAKFAST is double-sided

ovulation and just hanging

there until the animal grows

into the circle. What articles

of register will make it play

in your Peoria we are three

feet deep, which is half

of the evening draw?

One season a year the body

lights and it's hours before

we can walk through

the ground without

some bristle. Playing

dead until the lens

fills up with penny eye

candy. With one hand

the body makes a home-

shaped shadow. We follow even

when she seems

to sundown. Wire tangle beneath

the scene's still

hot from traveling,

which means a lot

of table thumping.

Which means not

letting it get

out of your hands.

A smoking

carburetor burns the body slick like apple

mint balm or night

reading

where the ribbon marks

A scalp

check beneath touch

lamp, the body is fire

proof curtains, the atmosphere's

shot out

of hands making church

and steeple shadows

the children's straight parts

the crowd check the tongue.

Mid-performance the body forgets

how to sound itself out

of me, bloody lip is more

conversation piece than fire

starter. We shine the horse

teeth with petroleum jelly, address

each other by our money-

making names. Body chops

so fierce it draws a whole

other body behind us,

on the rails. Early morning

I tell complete songs

of the mortified extension,

the roadside fumes and the body

disappearing thumb

first. Call UGLY UNCLE

all you want over

these miracles. My condition

shrivels when you cross

the line with me. Yellow

you are experiencing is not

so much an expression

as an installation. I grow,

like a canary, cautious

of our deepening talks.

The atmosphere's

shot out. The red-headed gunslinger

says to do a double

plot we would need another set

of songs and

blindens, propane

torches and some bomb

proof live stock. Display confusion

over the cross

over. Inside the three

ring house Baby Bunting

Lee plumps and projects

herself solid and at least black

bear-sized. Bells are for

articulation. Can we slip

inside the body without

aim? How did she

make her mark, give

you her word.

Matriarchal false union

suit with petal

inserts and mythological

inserts that draw out

the tone. In time we know

how to flap under

fire but moments make us

flower, ape

everything true.

Bottleneck a better conduit

than bone -- the gentleman's face

wrapped around

my windpipe like a herd

of animals trying

to fill a fence gap. Making connections,

my hair falls out like a field

of cottoning. The familiar perpetually

out on simile. For it to turn up

outside the window and wait

mass in the trees. Let's watch

the yellow. Let's try instead

to favor the lines

of others as they form on

either side of us

and shoot their mouths off.

Let's watch for any

sinking in. The alternative is mum

arrangements, seeing a flower

change for us. It doesn't come out

of nowhere: this tap. Light

the tip of the body.

Knuckle down my resistance

face to pull. Pull back the scare

to spread around. I name the infamous

the repeating geography, language

called luringly. Some feathers pasted

the mirrow. Way not because

alliteration or whatever votive

happy to wail across

to spread around. I name the infamous

protagonist after

I am afraid. I know this woman

Bone Period

"The first year I was out here because there were no flowers I began picking up bones."

Honeysuckle horse

endearment was the first

spokes. It's not feeling

Rose-breasted station

peaches dead half

your mouth from the can.

The body has dribbled light

and fro until the grass

is pearly. Is triangle open

mouthed the body's come

to Jesus moment

says, Let

the stranger stay.

Home Hill Spring

Damp Rotting Spring

To stay dead

I would have to look at them

I would look forward

Early Spring

Down to the spring

I come to see you

After tagging the dust your body is made of

sheets flash ceremoniously on the line, in

the rain, I am a bone and I take a bone's

pleasure around the ball joint, shading

inside the names. When I pass your body in

the hallway the illumination gives us three

minutes of standing adjacent to the fetish

dying. Electricity changes, there is no body

to acknowledge through touch, I fling forward

past my desires into the formal living room

with its collection of bells and its collection

of jaw bones. The sparkling line runs across

my statement of purpose. To endanger all
sense, I lay the body out of its own range
of prediction. Token animal, what you know
is circling the house, waiting for the first person
or its shadow to appear. Without looking
forward to sinking through the body, I am
still mostly lover position. Place the bone
in the window spider plant and beacon.

Distress light and blue-edged

screen that

covers that

in this progression like I was

skin & bone a system I ran at first red

spades. If I can't see the body

for days. Because I take a finger and a fine

toothed meaning cicada

for circadian. We had fruits we were going

to be line, switch back if we weren't

careful we were going

to poison the well.

The bone animals, because it was a hard winter
are bottled up and glassed against
the gun safe corner. A little breath
of hay shaped to fall into the river. The body
too wet and the berries are molded
when everything else has been silenced.
Come down out of there and down
where the body is sweetest, wild is not
the terminology but counting draws
the pictures. This is the kind
of hay shaped to fall into the river. Otherwise hell
is always on. A stuffed wildcat mounted

the country. Anything that the body presented

as origin was found to soften the lines,

the neighbors' fences. The body builds

up to anything that can flap its tail and glow.

A percentage of the food supply is offered

transformation. The body throws hay

and hooves are signals of whiteness in

dangerous, suicidal things. When the body is

the body in the first place. Otherwise hell

to understand the thing: the animals

where the body is sweetest. Wild is not

in the gun safe corner. A little breath

the body loves but rather coveting

the bone animals, because it was a hard winter.

Up in back the line like

the bank like the body

to regulate what

lived a pink

nylon for instance.

The initial flap dear

stranger don't be dead on

first thing this

morning needs which

is to say to weigh down

out

back

perennial, the body referred to

for weeks as sister and worked over.

You've got a House

You've got a House anew

House talk to me

Pride Fear Dead then Sometimes

Hearing the Land

Forgotten the Name a Virgin

of myself and you live there

Alone Faint and

High Dead Sound

Two Faces Blood

Boiling for my Safety

which we would remove

to straddle I was Three now

minutes of standing adjacent.

Last time I was a conduit we had a bed full
of grain. I didn't have to wait so long to sink
my weights inside the body, as if catching my clothes
on a very old nail. I'd kiss the hammering
girl between the augurs, millet-mouthed
without a television. As if they gather on the line
to make it surface. I sequence the bone
with canary color, honey face, whatever
we wake when we rabbit ear. As if burning barns
weren't language enough, touch this
handle and finger, come from another
country. Tell me as if I've always been struck.

Water runs slowly through

flat land some early

maps transliterated the body's

apocryphal country an

fever see Jesus'

first decade spotted

horses worn by children

with the dog's eyes would not close

my eyes for me as I descended

to suggest movement

to survive after everybody

to bed inconsistencies will

require no further

attention if I never touch

ink again. Being descriptive and what

hole? Maybe a dog

that pulls lights or the whites of

their query. So the body's under

fathomable, position grows

betwixt. Here everyone

is thinning and a fault

picks up

heat from the engine. Picks up

where the body left off.

Magical realism: when we reach the dead

shaved to glowing, mouth of black

art and high beams The body keeps revolving

below the asphalt, fights late

and becomes unresponsive to light

companionship. Everything owned

comes back turned miniature rap

to the surface. This bone has a blaze

orange ex, blue ex, missing trees

replaced by swan necks, Oldsmobiles. Mineral

deposits and animal deposits jar

the wall come springtime. Coming

to mid-river, hands full

of a fish the shade I want

for the body called Wiggle

Room. Scrub down the walls

come spring time and bury pits

deep in citronella, marshmallow

flowers. Now the body only drops

its bones as amplifier, coyote

proofing. Only eat something

to remind us how to finish,

only repeat the word crawling on

my belly, in an emergency.

For the body's first impressions

in the tree, displaying broad red

gestures. We see the river

and take distress. The body says find

the string of flame, parts

her chest and starts out

to the dizzy vessel. The body gets a mosquito

so it seems we have an audience

to Clean my House to Negative

veil that rises to flirt with us Dear stranger I don't think

of the bones on the radio

and take distress. The body says that

You can't be dead on

calling. Cleaning and come close

Do not consume any

gestures. We see the river

stripe of deer's blood veil

that rises

to flirt

with us to Replace to

We see the river

my House getting Ready

And Still the Underbelly, Or Parallel Experience
(Some Afterword)

In her 1937 essay “Why I Like Detective Stories,” Gertrude Stein writes “I used to think that a detective story was soothing because the hero being dead, you begin with the corpse you did not have to take him on and so your mind was free to enjoy yourself” (147). There is no transitional “Now I think” to follow, and so the last two-thirds of the essay become “now”; in this continuous present detective stories are soothing when they “take place where there are lots of people” and “hold” when “strewn with people with plans with everything as well as with corpses there is a genuine abundance.” In *Trick Rider*, I am preoccupied with compositional process in relation to time, how time is experienced during the writing process and is communicated both through the text as an object and through the process of reading.

I am interested in all the ways the text can “hold”: to touch fully (how do you move from touching to holding) and perhaps take on some weight, to possess (which is sometimes metaphorical and/or illicit: “are you holding,” “do you have a hold over,” “can you get a hold of this”), to make a claim that is still partly abstracted or obscured, to borrow (“can I hold your pen a minute”), to wait or pause or hover, sometimes in pattern formation.

I am preoccupied with the remains of the epic form, with telling, to use Michael Andre Bernstein’s phrase, “the tale of the tribe” for a tribe that is shifting and multifarious and legion in the New Testament sense that we are possessed or held up by tribe most fiercely when we are traveling in between places, in transition.

(The corpse always is.) Stein's example of an enjoyable act of detection --"why did somebody cut out a paragraph in the proof I was correcting..." (147) —is a question about decomposition. What does it mean to undo? Daniel Woodrell's 2006 novel *Winter's Bone*, an "Ozark noir" narrative, begins and ends with decomposition; its first paragraph describes Ree Dolly, the teenaged, female protagonist, waking up to see "meat...carcasses hung pale of flesh...skinned torsos dangling by rope from sagged limbs," which are later identified as the bodies of deer which have been "left to the weather...so the early blossoming of decay might round the flavor, sweeten the meat to the bone" (3). The narrative ends with Dolly delivering her father's severed hands to a local policeman in order to save her home from the bail bondsman and her family's woods from the lumber mill. In between is a liminal rite: Dolly walks up and down the hollers, ceremonially engaging with her family of meth dealers, creating her own cold trail to follow.

I am interested in this sort of recreation on the part of both author and character; "the hero being dead," the time line is resituated and detection becomes an act of prophecy. Fanny Howe describes the difficulty of this kind of textual recreation in her essay "Bewilderment":

There is literally no way to express actions occurring simultaneously. If I, for instance, want to tell you that a man I loved, who died, said he loved me on a curbstone in the snow, but this occurred in time after he died, and before he died, and will occur again in the future, I can't say it grammatically. You would think I was talking about a ghost, or a hallucination, or a dream, when in fact, I was trying to convey the experience of a certain event as scattered, and non-sequential. I can keep UN-saying what I said, and amending it, but I can't escape the given logic of the original proposition, the sentence which insists on tenses and words like "later" and "before."

Howe does not attempt to “resolve the unresolvable” here, but rather to recognize “bewilderment” as an approach and a poetics, through which “Q--the Quidam, the unknown one--or I, is turning in a circle and keeps passing herself on her way around, her former self, her later self, and the trace of this passage is marked by a rhyme, a coded message for ‘I have been here before, I will return.’”

Though Woodrell’s *Winter’s Bone* is not experimental in its use of syntax or generic tropes, it prioritizes the positions of the disenfranchised; particularly women and children, positions which Howe writes are best represented by a poetics of bewilderment. By focusing on language and landscape as much as plot, Woodrell emphasizes the genre’s ability to “hold” the reader in a moment until that moment decomposes, allowing us to understand past and future as equally accessible (or inaccessible) possibilities, frameworks of knowledge and experience that can collapse into the present and become palimpsest. The possibility of the collapse of linear narrative in such a novel is not only personally enjoyable, but also socially important.

Trick Rider began as a series of poems exploring the metamorphosis of “genius” – from the spirit of a place to a muse to an individual, intellectual, and egoistic attribute; when the writing process started, the poems had a protagonist, and though her body morphed and was occasionally subject to violence, though she traveled alongside and among the dead, like Alice Notley’s Alette, she was very much alive.

Linear narrative is not something I have much experience creating, but this character was visiting me in a similar way that sound patterns have, in the past,

shown up and requested some engagement, and so I started making and observing a space for those visitations: waking up at five a.m. every morning for three months, and for two or three hours doing something akin to automatic writing, through which I engaged with the visitation both through the location of image and narrative and detection of a line.

Form was organic; in the early weeks, exploring narrative more deliberately, there were regular, long units of text that tried to provide room for both the sentence and the line. As with some of Anne Carson's hybrid works, the line break was key, but there was space to let it fall momentarily out of sight.

In the later weeks, line length varied considerably, as did pronouns, points-of-view, and narrative structure, and I began to understand these inconsistencies and variations as important to the nature of the visitation, and the process it was enacting. I began to understand that the linear progression I had imagined for myself – from writer of lyric poem to writer of epic poem – was faulty and limited, that the text was more chimera than intersection: asymmetrical, cross-bred, unrealistic, and if not self-aware or fire-breathing, at least possessing its own processes.

In "Twelve Writings toward a Poetics of Alchemy, Dread, Inconsistency, Betweenness, and California Geological Syntax," Brenda Hillman presents a poetics of alchemy, in which process changes the qualities of matter, and yet product is not—for the alchemist—the ultimate goal:

For many ancient peoples, stone is a living seed. The desire for gold actually comes at the end of a process of stone worship. Making gold is not the point,

and having it is certainly not what's good for us. The fire is supposed never to go out. (281)

The stack of pages that resulted from those morning visitations turned into a source for "trance and chance" operations, a field of text I wandered in, pulling phrases, lines, forms, images, sounds, and gestures for the final manuscript.

I have always been interested in chance operations as considered and performed by artists like Marcel Duchamp and Jackson Mac Low, through which the will of the individual artist is constrained by or removed from the artistic process, but in my own experience those creative processes have felt unconnected to any source. How do you find meaning in chance? In her 1931 essay "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Virginia Woolf argues that science, technology (especially communications technology like the radio), new theories of identity, and the experience of war have all made the lyric voice obsolete: "it is in this atmosphere of doubt and conflict that writers have now to create, and the fine fabric of a lyric is no more fitted to contain this point of view than a rose leaf to envelop the rugged immensity of a rock."

Jackson Mac Low's 1985 *The Virginia Woolf Poems*, created by a diastic "spelling through" of two of Woolf's novels, seems to present an alternative "lyric" voice: one that bears little resemblance to the "intense," "personal," and "limited" "cry of ecstasy or despair" that Woolf describes, but instead a lyric that borrows from those technologies and reflects new and changing concepts of identity, the lyric voice Brenda Hillman describes when she writes:

There's something about the "I" that is stretchy now; I think of the work of poets like Alice Notley and others. There are so many different ways of being personal. Like Michael Palmer's poem "I Do Not." Who's writing in that poem? It's not a persona, it's not just a "Michael"; it's some statement that

goes down a long tunnel of possibility. That much more stretchy sense of "I" really interests me, but one that doesn't lose the depth and feeling tones.

Through *Trick Rider* I discovered the relationship between constant (the visitation, those morning pages) and variable/chance that is necessary to make chance operations illuminating and oracular, light of the eye.

And yet this is still about bewilderment; equally important to *Trick Rider* is Robert Duncan's "little endarkenment," the mystery that the poem confesses and engages with. During the writing process I revisited pages (often chosen via bibliomancy) of C.D. Wright's long poem *Deepstep Come Shining*, interested in her use of the long-poem form and a voice that seems to balance the personal and the communal, but I was also ultimately drawn to the book's meditations on literal and metaphorical light and blindness. I drew connections to Homer as both blind and leader of the blind, hostage and boomerang, one and legion; to John Milton's literal and metaphorical blindness as it is referenced in *Paradise Lost*, when he addresses the muse; and *Radios*, Ronald Johnson's erasure of *Paradise Lost*, which can be read as both an enlightening and an endarkening of Milton's text. And I drew connections to the high-contrast light and dark that has become a characteristic element of film noir, an aesthetic that both illuminates and makes mysterious the body in question, the act of detection.

When I woke up at five a.m. to write, the sun had not yet risen, and I used the artificial illumination of a lamp and the computer screen. As the sun rose, shadows were cast by all the primary bodies, some of which I hadn't noticed before, and a different relationship between illumination and obscurity developed, one whose

complexity informed the ways I approached causality and linear progression in this manuscript. My original formal concept – 24-page sections that follow a circadian rhythm – began, like the “intersection” of epic and lyric voice, to seem too dichotomous and limited for the poem that was developing.

It was around this time in the process that the hero of the poems seems to have died. I admit that I am still unsure, as author and reader of this text, when and if I can pronounce the hero dead, and my ambivalence about the implications of this makes it hard to move on to the enjoyment.

Georgia O’Keeffe moved on from painting flowers to painting bones when she moved from New York to New Mexico, because bones were what was available in the desert. She argues that the bones of her later paintings do not resemble death or make her think of death: “They are very lively.” In opposing death with liveliness, O’Keeffe seems to be disregarding the decompositional, generative qualities of death; she seems to be arguing that the bones are not about death because they open a conversation rather than concluding it.

In her compositions, O’Keeffe often places her found bones against sky, fields of color, floating in air, occasionally alongside other objects; she uses them as a medium or channel to help us better see the light or color adjacent. The bone, like the present, is not isolate or uncontaminated. Bones, like moments, become a deep way of navigating or situating: a mapping for the bewildered. In an interview about “writing place,” C.D. Wright argues,

The mapping of the city is integral to the subject. But as markers of the art, “a sense of place” and “finding one’s voice” have no resonance left. I might read/read out of/skim/leaf 40 books or more when I am working on a

project that attaches to a particular place. It is all just to situate myself so I can navigate the material more effectively, and with greater awareness of its affect.

Possession, here, becomes suspect, because it isolates or delineates both “self” and tribe; once a writer has “a voice” and “a place,” there is literally a limit to its resonance. To possess a place, and vice versa, is to draw boundaries. Georgia O’Keeffe describes hauling buckets of bones from New Mexico to New York to continue her work with them there. This kind of recreational, bewildered mapping enacts an awareness of affect. O’Keeffe understands the fertile and cross-pollinating possibilities of the bone, which are already present and casting their shadow, and she engages with them outside of their conventional boundaries of place and time.

There is also a violence to this selection. In *Precipitations: Contemporary Poetry as Occult Practice*, Devin Johnston writes about a similar violence in the fragmentary and ambiguous syntax of Susan Howe’s work. For Johnston, the violence of Howe’s process is significantly correlated to the violence of her “content,” the time and space with which she is engaging; they create a palimpsest, a gather and scrape, in which one is read through the scrim of another; these layered and bewildered violences illustrate a difference between a mediated translation process and a more immediate experience of dictation. Johnston quotes Howe on Jack Spicer’s “concept of dictation”:

Well, I do believe that Spicer radio-dictation thing, as I read it in Robin Blaser’s essay on Spicer—that poetry comes from East Mars. But the outside is also a space-time phenomenon. I think the outside, or East Mars, partly consists of other people’s struggle and their voices. (147)

Here, Howe doesn't demystify or simplify the act of dictation, but rather illustrates the daily necessity of it. Poetic channeling draws one deeper into, not away from, daily life and a community of others, but that intimacy often requires, or at least presupposes, a wound.

In "The Feminine Epic," Alice Notley writes of her character "First Woman" from *The Descent of Alette*:

One of my poet friends accused me of making simply an Earth Mother. As if that were a bad (or un-avant-garde) thing. But she isn't an Earth Mother, she has gone to live "below" rather than "above," to escape the degradation she'd experienced in the upper world. Her most marked quality is that she's a storyteller: though she has no operative mouth, being headless, she can speak from the throat, and she has the ability to make you *be in* her stories. Really then she's like the source of dreams. Perhaps I'm saying that the split between conscious and unconscious began with the almost universal banishment of women from public and political life. (177)

In *Trick Rider* I am perhaps also interested in walking through that open wound between conscious and unconscious and to explore the instructive possibilities of dream and the position of the stunt body, stunned body, stunted body that the text becomes. I am interested in what happens when I possess this communal, divined body.

In a recent post on the literary blog *Montevidayo*, Johannes Goransson writes about a similarly complex violence in Diane Arbus's photographs. In response to Arbus's claim that "there's a quality of legend about freaks. Like a person in a fairy tale who stops you and demands that you answer a riddle," Goransson discusses both how "riddles act like wounds in texts" and how the bodies in the photographs

become “stunt bodies ... making the connection between art and death, moving across death’s boundary.”

I am interested in connecting this to Flannery O’Connor’s famous statement, from “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction,” about freaks: “Whenever I’m asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one” (44). What does it mean to recognize, to know without becoming? *Trick Rider* is not ultimately an overtly gothic or grotesque text, but it borrows strategies from those genres, shifting pronouns, gazes, and points-of-view in order to explore this act of dictation, of recognition.

In Flannery O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” one of her “freak” characters, The Misfit, blames his bewilderment on his inability to know whether Jesus raised the dead, at which point the grandmother recognizes him for the second time, at which point he shoots her. Though dramatically different in style and tone, *Trick Rider* takes cues from and engages with the simultaneity and longing of this interaction. In *Trick Rider*, the violence of recognition occurs in part through the riddle of fragmentation, of the broken line and the split voice, a textual body that plays stunt double for the process of writing it.

The “stunts” of contemporary trick riding originate from military/battle maneuvers: in the 1200s in Central Asia, horsemen would hang from their horses, pretending to be dead, until their enemy got close enough to attack. In *Trick Rider*,

reader and writer are, at different points, possessed by and external to that performance of death and resurrection, but there is always the intention of intimacy.

In *Trick Rider* the concept of the double, or doppelganger, has been generative, not only in considering identity, but also through creation of and engagement with landscape. It has been useful to consider Joyelle McSweeney's writing on the poetics of the necropastoral, which she presents as

a term which denaturalizes the pastoral by focusing on its always/already unnatural qualities. In its classical form, the pastoral is a kind of membrane on the urban, an artificial, counterfeit, impossible, anachronistic version of an alternative world that is actually the urban's double, contiguous, and thus both contaminatory and ripe for contamination, a membrane which, famously, Death (and Art) can easily traverse...

As an uncanny doppelganger of the pastoral, the necropastoral critiques the very hierarchy of the double. I was at first troubled by the death of the heroine of *Trick Rider* in part because I am uncomfortable with the implications of placing a seemingly-passive female body at the center of the text. I did not want to replicate that dynamic; I didn't want my heroine to have to "play dead." But as the poem kept returning to the inevitability of this premise, I considered how the dynamic could be decomposed through its twinning.

The polyphonic speaker of *Trick Rider* is a stunt double and experiences doubling, being both representative of and outsider to the community she channels; this tension is simultaneously cause and effect of the text. I am interested in this contradiction as it arises for any writer attempting to represent a community, and the way that contradiction is inherited by the hero of the epic poem – who is

typically required to leave his or her community in order to represent or preserve it – so that the hero becomes a kind of stunt double for the writer.

By the time an epic poem begins, home has typically already become *unheimlich*, and the hero is compelled by mission or instinct to move deeper into the strangeness. In “The Fabulous Bilocation of B. Lee,” I try to explore the vulnerability of a community that is infested, living out of tents, as it ceremonially identifies and sends away its “hero.” There is cyclical burying and unearthing, emerging and invading, naming and obscuring, delineating and overflowing.

In “Return Period,” I create a landscape that’s very familiar to me, a bottomland that regularly floods, promoting both decay and a sense of the temporary. Most of this section occurs in the woods, with homes only referenced as ruins, roofless cinderblock foundations. An especially interesting type of detection happened during the writing of this section, because, from childhood, I either knew the look or the name of a plant I wanted to reference, but rarely both; recognizing the missing information via internet searches created an entirely unexpected uncanny space. I became interested here in a charged use of vernacular, a word that Daniel Tiffany, in *Infidel Poetics*, traces back to its Latin roots: the language of house slaves. As Tiffany notes, “the speaker of vernacular language occupies an ambiguous position that is at once within the master’s house...and fundamentally alien” (18). I am interested in the way vernacular both locates and dislocates us, emphasizing the liminal position of both reader and speaker, most overtly in this section but in more subtle ways throughout the text.

In “The Black Mariah,” the idea of “house” becomes theatrical, the tension between house and stage. I’ve borrowed the title from Thomas Edison’s production studio, which had a retractable roof and was situated on a turntable so that Edison could film by natural light as much of the day as possible. “Black Mariah” was also the nickname for police vans at this time. This section is the most overt representation of *nekyia* in the text, and I am able to more directly explore the act of channeling as a performance and a triangulated communication which challenges the notion of place/space.

“Bone Period” continues to explore that triangulation in the form of eros, considering the ambivalent nostalgia that appears in canonical epic poems like Homer’s *Odyssey*. Even when the speaker is inside a house, they are estranged, a traveler or stranger describing it as if from both a spatial and a temporal distance. In this final section of *Trick Rider* I borrow language from the editor’s notes and Addie’s chapter in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*. I am interested in how the body at the center of this novel functions in relation to the corpse at the beginning of Stein’s “detective stories:” not a self-contained representation of a crime, a foreign blot on a scene, but rather an oozing, smelling, (sometimes unpredictably) changing part of the environment, as elemental and “natural” as the flooded river.

While writing *Trick Rider* I spent a lot of time with Sally Mann’s photographic series “What Remains” and “Deep South.” Initially I was most intrigued by the photos Mann took at University of Knoxville’s “Body Farm,” a forensics laboratory where human bodies are left outside to decompose so that this process may be studied. It is interesting to see how distance and point-of-view create different

experiences of the uncanny; full body shots with landscape may read like crime photos, while detail photographs allow us, through disorientation, to focus on the texture and line of a body part as part of a natural scene. I tried to engage a similar shifting of point-of-view in my writing.

As *Trick Rider* progressed, however, and the grotesque seemed less a focus, I became more interested in Mann's photographs of Civil War battlefields, where the presence of the dead ultimately feels more graphic and challenging because it is without even the boundaries of the body; it permeates everything. An event in Mann's personal life – the suicide of an escaped prisoner who was evading capture in the woods near her home – seems to have prompted this transition of focus: “That’s when the whole question changed from ‘what does the earth do to a dead body?’ to ‘what does a dead body do to the earth?’” Like O’Keeffe’s “lively” bones, the body at the center of *Trick Rider* engages with the landscape in a manner that generates both mystery and illumination, in part by continuing to ask this question of positioning and relationship. How is and is not the body earthly?

As I begin working with the dictated source text I created during those first three months, I listened to two contemporary throat-singers: the Tuvan band Huun-Huur-Tu, and Canadian Inuit soloist Tanya Tagaq. I have been drawn to throat singing, or overtone singing, since I was first introduced to it, over a decade ago, because of the way its sounds mix “high” and “low”: the lower pitches and often harsh sounds created by a full body manipulation of air can sound almost animalistic and draw attention to the body as instrument, and yet the polyphony suggests a kind of channeling, a multiplicity of voices that could not possibly come

from the body alone. Huun-Huur-Tu, a band from near the Mongolian border, sings songs inspired by the traditional songs of horse men; hearing the human/inhuman voice recreating the rhythm of horse's hooves informed but did not shape the line in *Trick Rider*. More interesting in terms of a poetics was Tanya Tagaq's work. Unlike Tuvan throat singing, Inuit throat singing is performed almost exclusively by women who sing in duets. It is such an intimate partnership that the women often hold onto each other as they sing, facing each other and standing so closely that it is as if they become one instrumental body, singing into each other's mouths.

Traditionally, Inuit throat singing was considered a diversion and entertainment for women while men were out on the hunt. That Tanya Tagaq attempts to create the same resonances as a soloist on a stage for non-Inuit audiences can be seen as a violation, prioritizing the individual over the community, but I am interested in the potential for recreation and detection here, the possibility that this violent channeling helps us reconsider ideas about community, diversion, the body, and intimacy. I intend *Trick Rider* to engage in a similar kind of decomposition.

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