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Columbia Poetry Review

Columbia College Chicago

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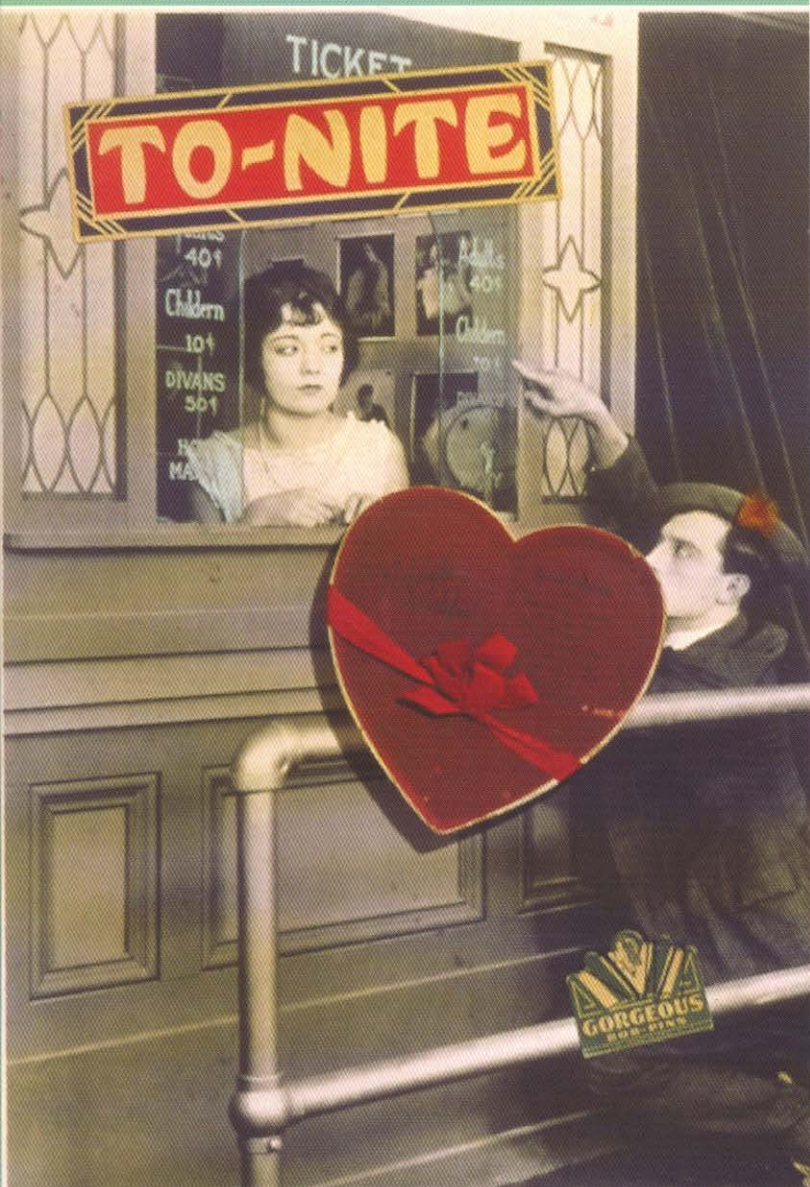
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COLUMBIA



POETRY

REVIEW



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no. 18

COLUMBIA PO
ET
RY
REVIEW

Spring 2005

W O M E N ' S I S S U E

C O L U M B I A C O L L E G E C H I C A G O

SUBMISSIONS

Our reading period extends from August 1st to November 30th. Please send a cover letter and 3-5 poems, as an MS Word attachment to columbiapoetryreview@colum.edu, or include an SASE and send them via snail mail to *Columbia Poetry Review*, care of the address on the next page. No manuscripts will be returned. We respond by mid-March.

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W O M E N ' S I S S U E

Foreword

The opening poem of this women's issue of the Columbia Poetry Review is by Chika Sagawa, a Japanese poet of the early 20th century who died at the age of 25 and whose work is here translated by the Japanese-American poet Sawako Nagayasu. The poem, a two-line prose piece, tells of a "young girl" watched in the act of watching her own transformation. It serves as the perfect opening to this special volume, which seeks to both celebrate and complicate women's position in poetry at the beginning of the 21st century.

Columbia Poetry Review is a student-edited journal, and for the past two years, since the launch of our new MFA in Poetry, it has been assembled by graduate students along with undergraduate poetry majors. It is important to note that the student editors came up with the idea of a women's issue on their own; the other faculty and I were surprised and delighted to hear of it. As young poets who are themselves invested in the contemporary literary magazine scene, the editors grew tired of seeing a disproportionate number of male submissions. As Natalie Hill said to me, "the history of the magazine"—both of CPR and of the poetry journal in general—"seemed geared to male poets." Her co-editor, John Cummins, put it this way: "while yes, there have been amazing strides made by women in poetry—but when considering poetic history, even the history of avant-garde or 'marginalized' poetics, the archetypal poet still seems to be Ezra Pound, not H.D. or Lorine Niedecker or Mina Loy; John Ashbery, not Barbara Guest; Charles Bernstein, not Harryette Mullen." Thus, the editors decided to try to make room for the contemporary poets they love most—who, as it turns out, are mostly women.

Of particular interest to me, as someone who writes and thinks about the state of feminism in contemporary poetry, is the way in which these editors, poets born after the second wave feminist movement, are empowered by their generational privilege to recognize that gender is not a binary. Like many other progressive young thinkers, they are reexamining gender as a category at all, choosing to read it instead as a complex, fascinating, but possibly unnecessary lens. Natalie, John and the others who worked on this issue told me that they were interested in what would happen if they used what they themselves feel is a problematic divide as a way to further an ongoing argument about the notion of gender. While the editors do not

believe that we as a culture are simply “beyond gender,” they recognize that the idea of gender barriers is part of a current and vital debate, and wanted to create this issue as not an answer to this debate, but as a sort of deep questioning.

As John said to me, “we were especially interested in bringing up the possibility of such a discussion in light of women poets whose work breaks, blurs, or bounds past the barriers delineating what ‘women’s poetics’ should be. We were looking for (and, I think, found!) poetry by women who want to change the face of poetry and language—and gender, and race, and all the boxes.”

This issue, then, is made up of the various and varied modes of women’s innovative poetics in 2005, including many of the treats American poetry readers have come to expect from some of our best and brightest, and can serve as both a warning sign and welcome mat: pleasurable, playful, inventive poems that also challenge and upend traditions and assumptions.

To give the reader a taste of what you are about to experience: there are Heidi Lynn Staples’ clever, politicized poetics of the misheard (“When you sleep, I watch you and think about ruining a wife as cross as your juggler”). Rachel Zucker’s tough-ass, hyper-articulate confessions (“I am calm now with my pounds of meat/made and frozen, my party schedule, my pills/of liberation, my gentile dream-boy...”). Denise Duhamel’s direct and brazen girlhood stories (“in this story I’m the shy fat girl/in this story I’m the party animal in this story I’m the victim once again/in this story I do something unforgivable”). Danielle Pafunda’s teasing ellipticisms (“In my sleeper, I sour. It’s true, I can’t pronounce a filthy thing”).

And Allison Joseph’s open-hearted formalism. Juliana Spahr’s biting New Sentences on government and culture. Stephanie Strickland’s historically and spiritually informed disjunctive beauty. Katy Lederer’s spare and otherworldly fragment. Emily Wilson’s laser-sharp imagery surrounded by an equally intense lyric fog. Maureen Owen’s loose and potent spinnings. Robyn Schiff’s obsessive and meticulous poetry of inventories and invention. Kass Fleisher’s witty postmodern prose poems. Larissa Szporluk’s apocalyptic fairy tales.

And then Megan A. Volpert's Third Wave feminist nightmare: "i dreamt i was stoned to death/at an academic conference/for wearing a t-shirt/that said i heart camille paglia/and judy butler led the attack." Renee Ashley's "(This time) it is a woman who lies it is/the woman who last night said you are/safe with me I do not lie." As well as many new voices heard here for the first time, in poems about wigs and lipstick, lovers and jobs, good girls and bad girls and everything in between. All of which testify to the bold and beautiful, scary and sad, powerful and intelligent poems that are being written right now, in our language, by poets who are also women. As to what we can make of all this? The editors of this wonderful issue and I hand you no easy answers. Instead, we invite you to draw your own conclusions, to wonder, to debate, and to enjoy.

Arielle Greenberg
Columbia College Chicago, Spring 2005

1.2.3.4.5.

Under a row of trees a young girl raises her green hand.
Surprised by her plant-like skin, we watch as she eventually removes her
silk gloves.

translated by Sawako Nakayasu

An illusion of home

The chef clutches the blue sky. Four fingerprints are left; gradually the chicken bleeds. Here, too, the sun is collapsed.

Inquiring wardens of the sky. I see the daylight take off.

Empty white house where no one lives.

The long dreams of people encircle this house many times over, then wilt like flower petals.

Death gently clings to my finger. Peels off the layers of night one by one.

This house continues the brilliant road to the distant memory of a distant world.

translated by Sawako Nakayasu

Rusty knife

Hazy blue dusk scales the window.

A lamp dangles from the sky like the neck of a woman.

Blackened air permeates the room—a single blanket is spread.

The books, ink, and rusty knife seem to be gradually stealing the life out
of me.

While everything sneered,

Night was already in my hand.

translated by Sawako Nakayasu

10 Paces Off Confidential Information

1. You play your mean bicker too proud. It really ruts in my verve.
2. When you sleep, I watch you and think about ruining a wife as cross as your juggler.
3. To fold neatly and put your dirty stocks back in your stock war.
4. To halve and to hound; there's a big difference between.
5. That sounds too carps.
6. You're not wall as dad.
7. Did I ever tell you that I/new when we wed weed weave flowers gather flowers ever?
8. If you had a sun, would heat be the center of your epic thirst?
9. Or the sinner of your shun as perverse?
10. Or your son your always haunted?

House of Schiaparelli

Of the cocktail dress with painted lobster—
 tail fanning like a red codpiece from which
 the red lobster
 writhes on the bias down the thigh of she who cuts
 the buffet line—do not say it
 swirls like the floor of a private
 ocean across which you would like to live

with one long book, water lapping as she
 walks like white waves carving coves in moonrock
 through which as-yet
 undiscovered fish flash mating radar back and
 forth depths glowing as if lit by
 a string of pearls; this lobster is
 cooked. It banged on the lobster pot boiling

alive. Consider how the organza
 skirt organizes candlelight it moves
 through with the same
 haze a porcelain plate makes passing boy-girl-boy-girl-
 boy down one side of a dinner
 table and back, the translucent
 surface it took European potters

centuries to steal from China like a
 fading complexion through which lines of blue
 blood can almost
 be seen in transit from a distance, like canals
 on Mars, persistent, pulsing with
 commerce lost to us like Roman
 baths in England, smelling like rotten eggs

when divers leave life forms that breath iron
in temperatures that melt lead on the ship's
deck in vials
and return to sea vents so deeply wrought that a
Pacific diver will nearly
meet an Atlantic diver in
the core of the earth like one's right and left

hands almost touching through separate pockets
behind a pleat. Manufacture of the
inessential
halted, when a button factory no longer
presses mother-of-pearl buttons
from oyster shells, a jacket made
to stay closed with dog chain once linking dogs

to their posts hangs in the closet while loose
dogs roam. Released from guard duty, dogs crouch
beside each of
us so quickly, perhaps the dog was inside all
along, but that, like the child's doll
in which the wolf and riding-hood
both abide, a flip of the long white skirt

revealing each with the others' torso
facing back where legs should be suggests how
debilitat-
ing inner life— lying in bed all day, pillows
on both ends, shared skirt propped like a
surgical screen between them, they
listen for a faraway 'stay' as if

spoken from a second moon, dull daylight
moon without phases that neither waxes
nor wanes but just
ruminates, stirring cursed bayers to circle the
rug again, dream another dream
in which objects of real life don't
assume new shades but stand for themselves on

the mantelpiece of sleep. But since Mrs.
 Wallis Simpson, like whom I do not want
 to be Queen, wore
 the lobster dress in public to press the British
 press to find her whimsical as
 a lobster at a fundraiser
 despite having walked away with their King,

 please allow me to show you how lobster
 and werewolf share the same breath when I say
 "hello" into
 the lobster telephone receiver inspired by
 the same Salvador Dali sketch,
 given that Cockney rhyming slang
 for telephone is dog and bone and it's

 just a quick dash up the back apples from
 there to see moonlight on the moor transform
 the encoded
 beast. I'm half way through *The Hound of the Baskervilles*
 and hope the hound is real. Choose your
 dress well, Mrs. Simpson, like whom
 I do not want to be Queen, you might wear

 it into exile and still be in it
 passing secrets over the phone to the
 Ambassador
 of Germany. Dali's lobster phone, I'm thinking.
 What kind of world is this? Between
 whispers, resting the lobster hand-
 set on your shoulder while you stir your tea

 two lobsters unbearably proximate
 cancel you out, Mrs. Wallis Simpson.
 Reports of were-
 wolves attacking guard dogs test what gauge steel links the
 food chain. How it doubles back on
 itself. Hitler's pack of trained Were-
 wolves, an army within an army track

their own tracks. In the eyes of youth gleams the independence of beasts, Hitler said of his youngest Were-wolves. Trained with a little patience, he meant. Transformed by the moon into the moon's wolf, a man who mauled his wife by night was discovered with the red thread of her

cloak in his teeth. It doesn't matter if you believe in werewolves or not if they're real, like jewels, of which the opposite is true. I'm embarrassed to admit it, but it's taken a few lonely weeks to end this poem and in the mean time I finished *The Hound*

of the Baskervilles, which indeed was real, with a little stage craft. Footsteps of its giant breed beside those of a lap dog displayed at Scotland yard in 1951 alert us to the unwieldiness of categories. How inclusive!

I do not understand what Dali meant calling Hitler his surrealist brother. In addition to the King and a car salesman, Wallis Simpson, also loved the Woolworth heir; see her choosing an industrial Woolworth diadem at the counter, Queen of the cooked world.

Doctor, Let Me Do What I Want

Doctor, let me do what I want. A panic zipper
on my undercarriage. My inner carriage. Wearing proud
the vertical graveyard, each headstone, each vertebra
ready to wear through the skin. Tensing through, a divot
of mourners, cleft spine. Each time. The orthopedist
snapped tight his glove. Mother! He found a curvature.

A Bauhaus, a peregrine.

He gave a eulogy. He wore

a pinky ring. He fit the diamond into a slot and it fit there.

Paroxysms.

Hung

You have cancer good. You're a mean old daddy and I like you.
Too well. I consider the seat you sat in. The crown from your tooth.
I put my lips around a picket in the fence outside your bungalow.
I buy some vulgar shoes to wear to your trial. The court artist
who wants to hunker you, she took years off your pants. Off.
I stuck an emery board into the neck of every girl
who came by my office. I bound their feet. I sucked the bleach
out of their hair. Everything went like a snake. Down your pants
with my own hand. Down your pants with hers.

In my sleeper, I sour. It's true, I can't pronounce a filthy thing.
My own womb. A chemical penetration from the outside.
The shower floor is slick with expensive cream. I lick you.
Your absence. My husband buries my tongue in the sand
from the lumber yard, under blue pebbles in a fish tank.
Head start. I dress for the court the night before. I dress
in soiled pajamas. My rash flares.

The Voice

in this story I'm the sassy brat in this story I'm the shy fat girl
in this story I'm the party animal in this story I'm the victim once again
in this story I do something unforgivable in this story I confess
in this story I falter in this story I save the day
in this story I embarrass myself (but you feel bad for me)
in this story I embarrass myself (and you think I deserve it)
in this story I'm the trickster in this story I'm the prankster
in this story I'm wrongly accused in this story I wrongly accuse someone
else
in this story I'm unreliable in this story I am telling the truth
in this story I'm the scapegoat in this story I get away
in this story I won't listen to reason in this story I try hard to figure it out
in this story I get revenge in this story I rise above it all
in this story I set off a chain reaction in this story I'm ineffectual
in this story I snort and sneer in this story I'm earnest and wide-eyed
in this story I'm bound to lose in this story I change my fate
in this story I try to run from myself in this story I look deep inside
in this story I learn a lesson in this story I learn everything is random
in this story I sit in the center of my blind spot
in this story I stand in my blind spot
as though in the glower of a spot light
and bow

Perm

I was the new girl, not to mention the fat girl,
 and Cindy could only invite 12 girls to her birthday party.
 Sorry, she said, *strict orders from Florence*. In fifth grade
 Cindy called her mother by her first name,
 something unheard of, something so modern and mind-boggling
 that I just had to be in her circle somehow.
 But there were 13 girls in our class. I said out of desperation
I met Salty Brian, a local radio celebrity. I met him at the children's hospital
 but I didn't tell Cindy that part. *And he gave me his autograph*.
 Look. I showed her my Autograph Book with the poodle on it,
 then opened it to a blue page towards the middle.
I like Salty, she said, *but I can only invite twelve girls*.
 She turned and walked away, her shiny blond hair like a shampoo ad.

I prayed on my rosary to somehow be invited,
 to become one of Cindy's apostles. Then Linda,
 a girl whose mother was divorced, got the chicken pox.
 Cindy gave me a hand-written invitation
 which began "Cindy requests your presence..."
 and said, *You may as well come. Florence bought twelve favors*.
 I went home after school and emptied the dollars and coins
 from the coffee can under my bed. I almost wiped out my savings
 to buy a rhinestone-encrusted comb, brush, and mirror set
 from the expensive department store where kids never shopped.
 I was saving for a bike, but suddenly my bike didn't matter anymore.
 I figured this princess-like gift was an investment in my social future,
 that Cindy would love it and see that I was indeed a worthy friend.

Cindy lived in a house that looked like gingerbread.
 There were all kinds of plants growing on trellises and garden gnomes
 in the yard. Florence was a cross between Dolly Parton
 and Angie Dickinson. She had given Cindy a *Playgirl* centerfold,
 a naked Burt Reynolds, that was scotch-taped to the inside of her closet.
 Cindy took us up to her room en masse to show us.
 We giggled and screamed at first because we were shocked,
 but then kept it going, all trying to outdo each other

with our cackles and closing our eyes and turning away.
I sensed the falseness in our frenzy, our overacting for Cindy's amusement.
I was sorry I had given poor Linda her chicken pox through my rosary.
I thought of all the kids still in the hospital—the blind kids, the kids
with leukemia, the kids with respiratory problems like me.

Cindy's cake had white chocolate chips on top of the white frosting.
As we ate, she opened her presents slowly, trying not to tear the bows
or gouge through the wrapping paper. A diary, a beaded change purse,
a subscription to *Tiger Beat*. She oohed each present
with perfunctory enthusiasm until she came to mine.
She picked up the sparkly mirror and, looking into it, said,
*I can keep this, but I'm getting a perm tomorrow so from now on
I have to use a pick, not a comb and brush....*
Florence said, Cindy! Be nice. I blurted,
Don't get a perm! Cindy had perfect Marcia Brady hair.
Cindy sighed, *Everyone knows curly hair is going to be really big
this spring. I read it in Seventeen.* All the girls nodded.
I held my favor, a little mesh bag of almonds.

I'm allergic to nuts, I wanted to say. *I'm not going to eat these.
In fact, I'm going to throw them away.*
Cindy's father lugged the gift from her parents in from the garage,
a chrome vanity with a pink stool. Florence arranged
the rhinestone comb and brush set on the top.
Cindy let us take turns sitting at it, each girl primping and fussing,
brushing and combing with exaggerated strokes.

"Please Don't Sit Like a Frog, Sit Like a Queen"

—graffiti inside the cubicle of a ladies' bathroom in a university in the Philippines

Remember to pamper, remember to preen.
The world doesn't reward a pimply girl.
Don't sit like a frog, sit like a queen.

Buy a shampoo that makes your locks sheen.
If your hair is straight, get it curled.
Remember to pamper, remember to preen.

Keep your breath minty and your teeth white and clean.
Paint your nails so they glisten, ten pearls.
Don't sit like a frog, sit like a queen.

Smile, especially when you're feeling mean.
Keep your top down when you take your car for a whirl.
Remember to pamper, remember to preen.

Don't give into cravings, you need to stay lean
so you can lift up your skirt as you prance and twirl.
Don't sit like a frog, sit like a queen.

Don't marry the professor, marry the dean.
Marry the king, don't marry the earl.
Remember to pamper, remember to preen.
Don't sit like a frog, sit like a queen.

The Difference Between Reading and Writing

is the hero's story: Unaware he's the hero the land can only kill him. Only his sister—the villain—knows who she is. She strangles him like a mouse. Screeching.

The second time the hero knows he's the hero. Who knows what humility looks like?

The villain doesn't kill the hero; it's a bird she stones, and the hero only hears screams.

The third time the hero isn't a hero at all. He's a small boy dreaming.

The fourth time the hero's cunning apparent and sneaky. You see him drop eggs into the mouth of the villain while she sleeps, coloring the whole morning into his poem.

The fifth time there's an ocean of lavender.

The sixth time the hero refuses to kill or die and so the story motionless replicates. Outside, the villain sleeps on a slab of bricks readying herself for psychic operation: *I am my own mother*. The brother sees this and thinks he has no business model to refer to.

The seventh time I read the story
is the seventh time I've read the story.

The eighth time God gets involved: The hero is an enlightened mosquito. And isn't it in the taking that we receive?

The ninth time the hero is invisibility; a rope around the supple neck; an indecipherable moral.

Parlor Games

oral gems
more or less
molar amalgam

regal
mare gallops.
ego: a lame leg

prepare
ample ore
a gram per Mrs.

psalms spar
moral gasps
pallor spells alarm

grape peels
opal glare
gloss gall alarms me

solar
glare propels
polar orgasms

oar slaps
a glass mere
sepal laps repose

[here in front of me]

here in front of me
wide open your pocketknife
i took it out of its blackleather
green stitched slender fingersheath

dear Jules that August morning '41
the train leaving i
at the window still holding hands
you reached for your knife

here in my hand
wide open large knife
small knife corkscrew
can opener screwdriver

awl

french and french-ability

i dreamt i was stoned to death
at an academic conference
for wearing a t-shirt
that said i heart camille paglia
and judy butler led the attack

Impatient

I want it to come
right away, like it
did last night, when
I didn't know what
I needed, when I
thought I was sick,
when I was fed up with
how much time it took
for salt to turn to water.

I will not name it
here, but if you part
your lips, I will relieve
you of your share
of our burden.

Elegy in Late October

Some leaves were left (proverbs
of grief, the palms turning over,
a fluttering of fans, the ruckus of paper,
a wisp of gossamer seed glinting—)

I could hear his heart again,
a machine, God let it keep
its beating, how is it
I have found this exquisite
breath, the body warm
like a strange animal (the sigh of a strange animal)?

And now, all of the city a linking, a green,
a place a place a place we have entered
coherence with such a strange
beating at the center, being,
and shine at the seam, periphery where we
can survive such radiant
surging, the ardent by fraction, by bit,
an aggregate of dots (the bird's call
rendered in densities of sound).
We have collided, and now my shape, my shape—

arbor, a trellis with the glories opening,
the kingbird in loops plummeting straight
to the surface to curve up to catch
at the last—I thought
we would rupture, but the stretch
held in elastic, a rapture, and the colors
in blur: a blue, the yellow streaks of flying things,
and mauve, rouge, hue of the still, the smell,
deepening purple of the fragrance,
and of the rot—

And on the Seventh Day*

after Harry Partch

And on the seventh day, petals fell in Petaluma, and the sky that day like a snow dome shaken, and the weird instruments built with gourds and the leather from worn saddles, built with guillotine blades, nuclear cloud chambers, fuel tanks, and the carved prows of canoes hollowed from logs—and the instruments spaced beneath the sky as the petals rained, scraps of velvet in reds and deep magenta and whites like the wings of tiny birds clipped to dwindle from the bodies of birds hung above the clouds.

And between the patches of color softly descending in velvet address, a scarlet tanager wheeling like a mad arrow shot from a bow carved of antlers, a tanager like an unsheathed heart flung into the fever of falling color.

And far downward in the valley, the soldiers lugging such indescribable velvet, a portage of fragrance to infuse in the water, miles from the trudging, on the far side of mountains.

I asked the bird who sung from beneath his brilliant plumage, does he sing to hear his song in answer, or how is the *alone* directed (the alone in arrows, across to pierce, the alone in petals, a soft vaporous downward)—does the song arise from abandon, and in the abandon, is there a hope, a secret—such, would that the light

be shared? Or would the new body arrived quench the first to silence? And the light: of what liquid light, an amber tasting of honeysuckle, of what metal bent from the gun shafts down, from the belts of ammunition and the petals falling into upturned bottles? Or if the silence, is it a radiant—a center in rays—and does the white of it shine, and with another, the arising, does the shining silence buoy the new soul?

* *And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma* is the title of a musical composition by Harry Partch, composed in 1963-64, and revised in 1966, for instruments of his own invention.

The Meal

You give me caviar on crackers,
I make you ginger chicken.
You bring me special chocolates,
I tell you of artichokes cooked in lemon.
You show me how garlic melts in stir-fried broccoli,
I show you how to boil basmati.
You find a rare Merlot for Christmas,
I choose thick salmon slabs for dinner.
You speak of Guatemala coffee,
I offer “Tahini with some honey?”

You learn my tastes; I spiral
fingers down your face, teach me
how to pace my kisses
as we do this sifting of the right amounts
for mixing the spice of how
you touch my secret spine, salt the movement
we get caught in—a thing not always fed,
this coming back for more
is now my climb along your shore;
baste these knees and thighs in gourmet sweat,
lick the curves and crevices
of all that’s on your plate, swallow joy
like champagne.

This

is a box made by monks
living in caves. There is one
among them who works the silver.
Another cuts the onyx. Another
polishes the pearl. A young girl
brings the sliced lemons
and how it is time for the afternoon tea.
She drops the china pot.
The monk stops, looks up,
sees the blood on the stone
floor, a star burst he can copy,
something he can use.

4. PERSONALITY TO CONFIGURE

gulping lost exhalations she for a time trots out her best phd training and attempts the fine art of interruption. for this she has to sit up, dive into her pool of aggression, which is somewhere behind the hippocampus, right? but surely you agree that—but of course the ramifications of that are—but obviously some feel strongly that—lowly her spine slumps into the lumpenness that is the jc penny couch. pick. pock. i mean of course you have the master narratives and these are to be avoided we don't want to be replicating that shit i agree with you naturally or is it the structure we need to avoid the problem with some of these people is that they're willing to talk about form now great good but is anyone still talking about content at all i mean you take all these wonderful subversive devices and well frankly what the fuck do you have to say about anything i go to these readings sometimes and it's hours and hours and not a single drop of urgency no to mix metaphors fire in the belly what the shit do these people give a fuck about what is it really that they want to change besides syntax but then yes i know change has become a fraught notion possibly just another dose of capitalist linearity progress progress how can there be progress in radicalism no i don't think you understand what you're saying there needs to be some new notion of organization some letting go of control of desire for control desire not being the thing you lack any more but rather the process of

JAVA MESSAGES

Abstracts of the Four Books of the Great Intermission

I. Psalms

Wherein youth wandered
with nothing and no one to guide it.
Barefoot and shirtless to the waist,
the elements approached, overpowered
with lust themselves, and youth
was at their mercy. Used, useless,
still hope remained, and thirst
and hunger begat visions, begat
purpose, begat devotion, begat
persistence, begat survival, begat
mystery of will, begat curiosity, begat
songs in which beauty always prevailed,
despite all evidence to the contrary.

II. Proverbs

Wherein youth encountered the hermit
in the desert who, after having experienced
all imaginable things, came to understand
a great deal more than could allow him
to live among society in the customary
manner. The hermit's appearance so
unseemly that youth proceeded with the lessons
eyes closed. As the lessons
were in lecture form, youth learned without
responding and soon forgot the sound of its own
voice—or rather, began to hear the hermit's
voice as its own, felt its own mouth moving
around the hermit's words, then moving and
speaking just ahead of the hermit, then speaking
instead of the hermit, who had disappeared.

III. Ecclesiastes

Wherein youth discovered its solitude and left the hermit's cave. Coming upon a pool, youth looked down to find the face of the hermit in the pool's reflection. Then youth stripped away the rest of its clothes and bathed in the pool, drank from it, and afterwards lay down in the shade of a nearby tree and pondered the transformation, gradually coming to accept its new, ages life, without hope of beauty in any of its incarnations.

IV. Canticles (also Song of Solomon, Song of Songs)

Wherein Art, who had never been apart from the artist's care, went out walking and found the hermit sleeping under a tree. The hermit's dreams having escaped through the sleeping mouth on its breaths, the hermit lay covered in the very essence of beauty and wisdom. Art was so enamored of the hermit's appearance that it began to sing, and the song awakened the hermit, who joined in singing. Thinking this to be a gift outright and unsought, the hermit married Art and its fate to the hermit's fate, which is to say, they could never again be strangers, and all who saw them thereafter together could not imagine they had ever been apart.

Spectacular Pyrotechnics

Go ahead! Plant that fire.
Hit me right in the heart.
Hit me right in my poem,
Right in the dirty idea,
Right in the ass.
Show me fire and don't say a word
For whole moments.
Let me see you from the hill
Where I stand with my watch on
With my shoes in the wet grass
With my keys in my hand.

Supine, Never Actual Enough,

I watch a poker gouge in my heart
And feel nothing
And hear the iron grinding pebbly ground.
I have no heart, no body.
The real heart is under my fake back.

The Purpose of Hands

An open palm can mean hello; a fist
can mean goodbye. A single finger crooked,
moved back and forth, can lead you to a kiss—
or slap. A finger pointed down will make you look
down too, to ponder what's beneath your shoes—
the hell you've heard about, or some place else?
A finger pointing heavenward's a ruse
to make us all behave, aware the self's
beneath a cosmic microscope. We point
at those we fear, at those we scorn, at those
we single out in pride or shame. We taunt
with middle fingers held up high. We pose
with hands across our hearts to swear our trust.
We speak with hands, not words, because we must.

A Gun Is Not Discursive

(This time) it is a woman who lies it is
the woman who last night said *you are
safe with me I do not lie*. In a darkened
room such light can take out your eyes

the heart's box is broken. Fib as big as
an apple down your throat and the spine's
tree heating up, hope's rondo spinning in
your brain. Silly you. No one's endearment

is tidy. The garden? A huge dried-up lot.
And the body grateful for unlikely waters.

[Nothing that is]

Nothing that is
lasts
in the same form.
Is therefore to be was.
Always is. Always changing.
Soil mud road
waterfall fountain
stream river
Oceans are
have been
will be.
Rocks fall.
Streams paddle on.
Stones fall near fish.
Fish swim over them
Nearby a fox stalls.
Even a boy with water pail
pushes the water slowly
as his feet cover it.
Oh stones stones,
they remain though they may crumble.

Violette

Diving past violets:
these flowers appeared in blood,
are edible,
are sugared,
are ions. They reverberate.
I do. The viol is an early instrument.
I play the violet ray. I'm no violinist.
Don't fret, don't violate this image.
Stay above the fray.
A c-shaped sound hole's no fertile crescent.
I am violaceous, not avaricious.

If my appreciation damps
violence in the text (have I
interrupted sense?), if I say
this odor vivifies
ardor, order, shyness, silence,
may the viola d'amore commit
a sacred violence.

f2

the hypothesis can be generally applied. given extreme interchanges between upper and lower atmospheres, the question now is one of currency. did the tide swell out or was the pull internally centered? hemispheres are set, centered, and reset on these kinds of generalities.

if it remains standing it must be good. what stands is invariably penetrated, unwoven. pitch shifts with velocity, centered on the receiver. highs and lows can simultaneously converge.

in the whiteness of the eyes lies a sea. the edge is sundered and reshaped into a cat-like form. the tigress was impatient and by leaving abdicated. a bear descended and the shape of her being was formed. the geography is already inhabited by a people. they lack name and substance in this story.

generally, the setting is exquisite. dawn waits for any sound. shock allies itself to frame, to outset and stage.

the beginning was not memory, a residual dream.

The Eternal One

Can he live another way?
With this mystery, this nothing, love
The royal song of triumph over longing
The clouds cover him as a cherub in ivory fire.
The rowdy, what? Eternal One
I have nothing but a bed and a bill in my hand
For the money has made a great gash
In the gnarled forked river, washed
Down by the mental relation between us,
Eternal One
Shoot beyond me, and he can live
Another way
Constituted as wind or rain
In a mystical basin
Or tomb laced with basest emotion.

We Have Taken

We have taken from the head

We have thought

We have scarcely named sorrow

There is something to obey

Struck against a pole

Blood, dust

Address.

In the bright sea

A monster

In the message from the lady

He is greater

In the presence of the one the two

Whatever he urges you

Stick, hard and fast —

Lunge

Suck

Linger

A messenger

Speeding toward the palace

And in our hands, his pace.

We Do Love Him

The woman paces the corridor
The man is loud
The man is an obsequious lover
He touches her hand, runs amok
By staring straight
Into her eyes
She, plundered, is assured that the wind is clean
The measure of distance in laughter
The clear throated loiterer
Who asks us for nothing
The crowd, in it madmen and ladies
And mothers who wave
The crazed leaderless throng
The man
Heavy and recalcitrant
As her head, as an entrance, does bend in compassion
The man
Heartless
The man
We do love him
And her heart is beating faster as she enters in
Upon him

The Traveler

The Traveler moves fluidly—but he is also a rock, a column of smoke by night, a pillar of fire by day. The Traveler will arrive completely unannounced. The Traveler will be recognizable through resembling a “well-oiled machine,” the fortune teller said, turning over the last cards, a frolicking Fool, a Magician with a table of strange devices, a brooding King of Wands (the Universe is not subtle with me), an expansive cup-pouring Lord of the Sea. Still waters run cold and deep. The Traveler has a canvas rucksack slung over his shoulder, side patched, strap intact. The Traveler smelled of sweat and wheat. The Traveler had thick-lidded hazel eyes, flax curls, broad shoulders, ivory skin, a cock the size of an infant’s arm. The Traveler knew better than to talk much. The Traveler would have told her that her nature was protean, if he had owned that language. The Traveler claimed that he listened to Mozart, gave her a string of beads, a ring of silver (he was on his way to Indonesia), a roadmap that had all the destinations scorched out with a match, and a bus transfer as proof of the fact that there was a city out there, somewhere. The Traveler’s hands were heavy on her shoulders. The Traveler always carries a guitar. The Traveler had a short dark beard and got annoyingly spiritual, but this was inevitable, seeing that he was from the Bay Area. The Traveler was giving with the space in his sleeping bag, red navy green black plaid flannel. The Traveler knows the price of desire, the fair exchange, the quiet ancient courtesy, the opportunity to be selfish or generous. The Traveler will cook you pancakes. The Traveler leaves before dawn. The Traveler will say ‘you’ with a note of awe. The Traveler transcribes the secret sign engraved on your belly. The Traveler connects the constellation of stars on your back, a random arrangement that he says is an omen portending imminent good fortune. The Traveler is uncut. The Traveler has never been so far from home. The Traveler was born with a compass beneath his tongue. The Traveler will heal the world through rootlessness. The Traveler sends his progeny a postcard, is presented as an eccentric uncle, a doting older brother. The Traveler is obligated to no-one. The Traveler brings a moment’s peace without the responsibility of beginnings and endings. The Traveler has been harassed repeatedly by the authorities. The Traveler is a citizen of the world. The Traveler will someday grow up, take a key in hand, put down the load, choose a livelihood, keep one bed. And when he does, the Traveler will say my name. He will put his fingertips to the side of my face and he will say my name.

9.19.2003

from *Texture Notes*

A trail of anything—insects, hamburgers, bicycles, popsicles, miniature lightning bolts, road maps—anything, all of it, all lined up insidiously, all imagining the small of my back, envisioning it, bare, exposed to the light, sunlight, moonlight, halogen, fluorescent, all of it—seeing it, wanting it, nearing, fighting for, quietly, no—silently, crowding, my small, and—

III. Mr. Kurtz Traveling through the Desert Looking for Water

from *It's Just You and Me in the Desert Land: Parts*

Child, I was hoping you had a cup of water to spare for me. Me, your wonderful friend. This desert is so hot and this white sand is burning my eyes. My sweat seems to be collecting in my crevices and I am worried that I may be hallucinating.

I thought you said something about killing? Child, I was hoping you had a bucket of water so I might wash my tired feet. I have been walking a long time through this heat. I can't seem to find you. I am worried I may be losing my mind. I thought you said something about killing?

*from Absinthe**I*

I . . . I . . . say it. Say *I*. *I* cannot deflect
the stagger in my limbs when the voice
that mounts me breaks; or before

possession takes, the pall of cool
and ragged darkness—leg rooting to
the ground, numbness thinning out

your mind: the descending *loa* will
accept your body, as her own, in her own
time. Erzulie comes—to stake

her claim: you coo, you sway, you play
for hours; then, crumpling, fade. Betrayed,
her burning tears scald your skin.

from Absinthe

Rabi'a

c. 717 to 801

*Stolen as a child and sold into slavery.
Upon gaining her freedom, she retired
to a life of seclusion and celibacy.
First in the desert and then in Basra.*

Lalla, we walk naked through the streets—

Sibyl, taunted still
by boys in the Square where she hangs
in a cage—hangs in my ear,
I can't shake her
from my head: Σιβυλλα

τι Θελεις

(Sibyl

what do you want?)

αποθανειν Θελω

(I want to die.)

Occam and Miranda

ago i.go to Vega Virgo goto
 leavethe islandarmspiralbending forwardslung
 i.cross.i
 come.until.it
 -asters

aplesia.silvery cones
 of the slide : a stricter palette for a unified
 design

finest goldwired twisted in flyingsunlight
 bobbing leaves with silverfoil beneath
 reap.repeat reap.repeat

tine eye twist in templebone

a disaster a pilaster and a jailmeister play
 pool.littlegreen willytadpoles

jasper
 travertine gate non.enough
 nenny

whatit scenes

Aster

According to Walter B., an “aster” denotes “something that imperfectly resembles or mimics the true thing.” When he says this he is alphabetizing the appliances: Beater, Coffee Maker, Mixer, Spatula, Toaster. Beatrice reminds him, from between the beater and the coffee maker, that “aster” is also a combining form with the meaning “star.” Sometimes these reminders seem very, very far away. Does this mean, wonders Walter B. distantly, that there is only to resemble “the true thing?” That there is only to be reminded of the star from between what once seemed like a beautiful assemblage of order? No, says Beatrice, brushing the feathers of his dear, dear head. Beatrice likes to think of herself in all of Walter B.’s disastrous places.

Cryptozoology

Like many translated biological terms, “Beatrice” lacks the connotative impact of its foreign original. Essentially an ideological term, “Beatrice” refers to a small, poorly lit room where paintings of Beatrice are haphazardly displayed. When Beatrice explained this to Walter B. one night, without warning, Walter B. was so relieved he slept in his boots. It was as if this secret Beatrice no longer kept lifted from Walter B.’s arms a large black bird as heavy as Beatrice. “Many of the paintings,” continued Beatrice, suggest scenes of yard play gone awry. “Like this one over here,” she said pointing to one where a rake is nestled lovingly against her cheek. “Other paintings depict me as frothy,” she continued. “Like that one,” she said spinning around the small room as if it was a room she once owned. “See how frothy I am, Walter B., and how confidently I clutch a smaller Beatrice.” Why exactly the smaller Beatrice Beatrice clutched wore lipstick and dark knee socks, and why there was a barren tree nearby, Walter B. was too excited to ask. If Walter B. could have climbed inside that painting and slept against the two Beatrices, forever, he would have.

In the Valley of the Onions

In the Valley of the Onions or

Bebe

She was turning under her ceiling fan

I hung the bridle on a flathead nail the whereabouts
in question of mary magdalene there were
a few wrinkles Perched on a fig tree branch in the dim Garden of
Gethsemane? In the kitchen during the Last Supper? was she
painted out fauxly bowdlerized? She could take on anything that
vast majority could throw at her the very source of
these soi-disant Rental shoes a scheme in contemplation

One night late she carries home stars through flooded streets
sections of a constellation wires & tubing figures of the heavens
 snagged
in the figures of speech

Oil slicks smear layering a turgid murk reflected color
around a golden sewer cover

Handbags in a tree

[your feet will distance you]

your feet will distance you
and his laugh will be the easiest
thing you ever heard, it will come
at you in the shape of an image
wind finally filling with water
Imagine his feelings
faint ships in the flockless air
his sluggish dreams crouching
softly, and audible because they
have no waver, redden sweetly
like him, in brawls of mud.

At least

In Alaska, a woman sat in a boat
and gutted fish. From dawn
until dusk, she took the fish
one by one, and with a silver blade
sliced the mottled flesh. The sea
lay flat with the heat. It was the dead
of summer. She wished it was
Greece or Turkey, or Canada
at least. She stripped each fish
of guts, organs, entrails.

In a dream, she hollowed herself out.
A trail of great sorrow and secrets poured
forth. In a dream, she was in Alaska
gutting fish. In Alaska she
would not be here. Here, a portrait
of not there. And the fish, the blade,
a still life—objects imagined,
movable, then fixed on canvas, in time.
Canada would be so nice, really. Or even
Alaska. Or at least that's how she imagined it.

Dirge for a Video Game Heroine: On Dying Again

It should get less painful, over time—
 death by drowning, death by demon bite—
 but it doesn't. And each time there is that moment
 of melancholy accorded to me by my creator,

the moment my limbs collapse around me,
 hair, in a long braid, falling, coiled, at last,
 the moment I sigh or let out a choked, guttural "Urghhh..."
 depending on whether I was drained of blood

by an undead creature or shot off a cliff
 and then the scene around me fades to black.
 It is my job, after all, kill or be killed
 along with changing outfits unseen between levels,

(kimono? Catsuit? chainmail minidress?)
 nimbly switching from blade to Uzi,
 slaying assailants with increasing speed and accuracy.
 And twenty seconds later (mourning period over)

I am back, ready to die again on the whim of the joystick.
 One moment, able to somersault over mummies
 and scramble between swinging axes; the next, unable
 to extract myself from the poisonous slime pit, and so

the last you'll see of me is my mouth making the "O" of surprise,
 my eyes closing as if to sleep—this time, maybe, forever.

Breakthroughs often happen because you are there.

A garden empty of acts and fishes stays like some distant nuclear explosion. As witness to our intercouring, such blobs of red scribbling could either be a bloom or a brain. How many small animals have you eaten this year? The nubby backwards slither through fingerless black gloves, relief at not being the target for once. It's 2AM and I love you (simply because you're a girl and you don't stagger). Doing fat rolls with yr eyes closed in what might be the year of last chances will get you nowhere. She was impressed by his vast array of apian and ornithological knowledge. Learning violin by osmosis, entire evenings devoted to devising new ways of picking your nose in public. There was that drawing of a woman whose teeth were geese or else horses really because of something about a mountain and coming. Crank tight the ensuing rhythm of arm winding, watching strands spin wooden fabric into objects like a rope. Movement defined as multiple strokes or orgasms depending on the day and general mood. Sometimes shoes provide important means of identity.

Iris

I have brown eyes and *cherry*
red lips. My top one is two shades
darker than the bottom one and I have
two small cushions on my bosom
that not even I think are quite curious.
I have black skin, but *momma*
says its really *cocoa*, because I'm
so sweet. I have a bit of a belly
on me too, but when I start volleyball
in the spring it should go away.
My legs are kind of tall and muscular.
My brother says I have man's legs
but what does he *know* he's only a
boy. My friend Julie thinks that
I'm taller than most girls at school and
that makes seem more mature.
And I really do want to seem more
mature because this boy that I like is in the
eighth grade. I think he's really cute
and he told Julie that I seem more
mature than the other girls my age.
He's tall and has cocoa-colored skin too.
And he plays basketball.

palimpsest analogies

imagine this poem is a secret. *is to* tell no one. *as* each step in verb conjugation
 steps forward or backward or sideways in time. *is to* (rudimentary roselight) (the
 refers to both past & future) vertigo. "now" as a constant in a fixed half-dead tongue

bleating like mothwings. *is to* like through like roared *as* an appropriate time
 wake from a coma *is to* a fascination with rare phobia Heisenberg's Princip
 the discrepancy between faith & belief muttering soporifically

luring the female names of God *is to* numeric sequence *as* "a rose is a rose is a rose
 by any other name" *is to* tornado sky the yellow green of a fading bruise evoking
 proper distance from the narrative a wuthering voice. veiny subscript. all of thee above

decoded logarithm of theology *is to* closer to prayer than a story *as* spasm of
 unabridged truth *is to* evening air bright with cricket sounds a downstairs window
 slamming itself the plink of a tiny chandelier galvanized light. one baffle after another

she does not recall sleeping *is to* she does not recall wandering corridors
 speaking specifically during seance *is to* assume the proper mayhem having a chat
 with Mother. sitting on her grave * high voltage hum-space * pronouns involved only a
 points of reference

an involuntary lyric *is to* to keep from being false as mouth full of pathologized
light *is to* sweet little antidote won't succumb to static third eye squinting for clarity
no matter how invisible she attempts to be. reflection

**when observing any system, the observer exchanges energy with that system & therefore changes its original properties.*

Latin Roots Sui and Cidium

Under oneself. Tending, and does. Thinking only of one's hand.

Sui as in suitor—suing and pursuing.

To cede, which is withdraw. Sidelong. A glancing under decide.

Words get tired of melodrama and off themselves. Lying there, suitable.

An overuse of is, is, is. Sous as in under. Can you spare one under.

I haven't got a side. What it is: preventable. Ensuite. Or isn't—it's predisposed of.

Ici dieu. Where. Sous. You see. Non. Underneath veined cities.

Sweet seed, don't grow, don't, my sour sigh.

sestina my son was home from Stockholm

home son
back Stockholm
not years
only months
to house
my father's

dead father
youthful son
parents' house.
in Stockholm.
same month
snow. years.

the years
my father
the month
my son
to Stockholm
to house.

from house
some year
to Stockholm
you, father
older son
some month

no month
empty house
only son
only years
only, father
to Stockholm

[Ruby becomes hibiscus]

Ruby becomes hibiscus,
first cold the roots
can't survive
in frozen ground.
Ruby's hands still moves
things that Isabella's can't
create, propagate shrubs
in spring and carry in
in winter. "Hibiscus are like
people—sweet and sweaty—
don't like too cold or too
hot." Ruby will prune them
by 1/3 in March.

Isabella thinks Ruby's
hands have memories.
Like all winter, she forces
pie crust into pans,
without looking or thinking.
Winter is a habit, cold
enough to need the oven.
Isabella thinks her own eyes
are nostalgic, move
downward on cue. Or
sometimes smile without
knowing. Her hands, she
thinks, have not learned
routine. But, she remembers,
Hibiscus seeds do not reproduce
parent plants. Most seeds are
not viable and will not sprout.

Blur

To cherish the photograph, to bathe it in fluids, engrave
 it with light. It is the soul that wavers in the interstices,
 forever undeveloped. *Dear __, I send you this picture
 as a remembrance. As you can see the costume cannot disguise
 I am a woman from the mountains. A woman in a skirt
 of paneled silk, dark hair down to the backs of her knees,
 points of her triangular shawl gathered in one hand and the other
 posed against a pedestal's base,
 supporting a rain of flowers.
 Nothing in the photographer's studio suggests
 the ruins outside: loosened gates of the city, stone
 bridges and low-rise buildings crumbled into gravel.
 Bodies floating downriver; pale, glistening
 and wreathed among the fish and rushes. One face
 shy of the ethereal, the faces of purchased idols— *Tricycle driver
 in faded pantaloons. Woman vendor in native
 dress. Grandmother and spittoon. Child and mother
 with distended breasts. Three women on the steps
 picking hair-lice. Seven earthenware pots balanced on the head.* The cheirization,
 the coolness of the caption— *Antes y despues los terremotos, late 1880s* –
 surprising and electric, the obliterated tremor. A face
 swims to the surface, still mouthing its desires.*

Isn't It Nice To Do *It* With Other People?

“So, you spend most of your time digging in hearts?” I’m looking for six-letter words, *pauses, mothed, wrists, lucent*. Here the lightning blinks, breaks, a misbirth of collective minds. One way to conceive poetry, a dialogue where you slip your knot inside me. I’ll show you the exquisite part of the corpse. Here, behind the sternum. Dig a little, you digger of hearts and you will find, made of bone, a god. Caged. What is being transcribed here extends beyond us, practicum. Unconscious conversations, but we are conscious. Collaborating. Not a war of words, but words “being bits of our bodies” and this is not a finished constellation mapped for myself. It needs you. The ink can be nascent tongues eclipsed.

Sentences I've often said:

The unmanifested face was my mother's and I kissed it.
She was very near phobic so we kept things quiet.

Slipping a pencil into my mouth I wrote on my tongue: loved, unloved.
The eye-bolt: a silence as empty as a flash of perfect distance.

I am hypocritically awake.

Iliadic Familias (with insertions from Homer)

I.

My mother used to cry in the car while driving. This was terrifying to me in the back seat. Not only was she responsible for my safety, but I could not see her face! And now I cry in the car while driving. My children behind me fight over who gets to hold the twist-tie. This is a particularly deadly fight. I turn the news up so as not to hear them. I want to hear the mother who is talking about her dead son so that I can cry. Sometimes they ask me why I am crying. I always say, "the war." This is how they come to be against the war. This is also how I came to be against the war that made my mother cry. She used to say, "It was not politics that got to me. What did I care about politics? It was thinking about the neighbor's son." This is what you might call the famous fierceness of mothers. We do not want to listen to our children fighting because it will distract us from the war, which is making us cry. Laynie says she opens the newspaper and immediately begins to cry, even before she reads anything. Another mother I know says she cannot watch child-in-danger movies. This is also true for me to an extreme degree. Once I was kept up more than half the night worrying about a girl in a movie who'd had her appendix out. The surgery was not dangerous, it was very simple and she emerged from it perfectly well. In fact, the surgery was placed in the plot in order to bring her uncle and his boyfriend back together. Their mutual concern and love for the girl was a sign of their continued love for each other. All of this I knew. I also knew, incidentally, that it was fiction. However, I could not sleep because they never showed the girl back home. In the last shot of her she was asleep in the hospital bed, which was supposed to mean she was fine, resting peacefully, etc. We were supposed to be thinking about the two men who loved each other and who were watching over her as if she was their child. We were supposed to be thinking about love and how it is not the exclusive property of parents or heterosexuals, but belongs to everybody. But I wanted the girl to wake up. Later, in bed, I kept revisiting her bedside, standing over her sleep, willing her to wake. But she never woke, so I never slept. In the morning, I told my husband and he was furious with me. He wants me to be able to watch movies and it is more and more evident that I can no longer watch movies. This, according to my husband, is a pathetic failure to be objective, rational, and to have fun.

II.

My mother used to cry in the car while driving to stop the sorrowful fighting. This was terrifying to me in the back seat. We shall fight again afterwards, until the divinity chooses between us. Not only is she responsible for my safety, she gives victory to one or the other. And now I cry in the car while driving. By this time the terms of death hang over us. My children behind me fight. There is no sparing time for the bodies of the perished; this is a particularly deadly fight. Standing there in their midst, I turn the news up high. Now the sun, rising out of the quiet water and the deep stream of the ocean speaks of the mother who is talking about her dead. As they wept warm tears they lifted them. Sometimes they ask me who I am crying. In the same way, on the other side, their hearts in sorrow. She used to say, "It was not politics, what did I care about politics? Is there any mortal left on the wide earth who will still declare to the immortals his mind and its purpose?" This is the famous fierceness of mothers. "Why then are you crying like some poor little girl, who begs to be picked up and carried? Who holds her mother back when she tries to hurry?" We do not want to listen to these children because it will distract us from what makes us. There is little breathing space in fighting. This is also true for me to an extreme degree. My desire has been dealt with roughly. Their mutual concern and love for her was a sign of their love for each other. Said one to the other: "Obey to the end this word I put upon your attention so that you can win, for me, the lovely girl." But they never showed the girl back home. Tell me now, you Muses, how fire was first thrown. We were supposed to be thinking of love as property, but wanting the girl to wake up, I never did. Drinking from a spring of dark running water, willing her to wake, in the heart of each one was a spirit untremulous, and he wants me to watch, he is furious. Your mother nursed you on gall! You have no pity! This is a failure to be. You would gather in groups to have fun, to be rational, yet the desire in your heart is to watch the grim encounter.

III.

My mother, an unearthly noise, I could not see her face! as wolves make havoc among lambs over who gets to hold the black earth, burdened, so as not to hear them, by the works of men, I turned to the neighbor's son, huddled inside his movie, he in the dust face downward, was also true for me, mouth open to the bright spear, willing him to wake, the heart in my breast was balanced, between two ways was pathetic, as if he was my child, as if, where the beating is enclosed in the arch of the muscle, is a failure to ration, to be, a lowing bell, a bellowing.

From the Mountains, to the Prairies, to the Ocean

I. NYC: Times Square

Red white blue green
seething lights

selling everything in the world—
tits and ass, ambition, fashion

entertainment and sports—
and the news—

II. Chicago

May have stopped being hog butcher to the world
but our shoulders are big, our legs are long and sexy
our buildings are titans, our great lake is blue,

we don't publicize ourselves like some places
but come visit. We're a live city.
Stone, steel, glass and music.

Every damn race.

III. Lincoln, Nebraska

Grasses spread out and enjoyed ruling the earth,
winds enjoyed roving through them,
earth enjoyed getting baked in the summers,
animals running and stamping over it.

Great eating went on and on,
great chewing and eating.
And now the city is here,
and now the State house and the University.

IV. Venice, California

Like white rubber gloves
limp and thin in the mist,
the ones who came from Ohio and Nebraska
hoping to be transformed into dreams
and stayed on as ghosts.

A woman pushes her shopping cart,
a man walks his Dalmatian,
neon blinks, a car turns left.

from Unevenness

After the buildings fell, everyone breathed ghosts. Some even welcomed the ghosts. They put up signs all over the city describing the ghosts, listing their personal details such as a certain bag that the ghost had carried when last seen or a certain sweater or jacket that the ghost was wearing when the buildings fell down. The signs urged the ghosts to use the airwaves and call. But the ghosts didn't call or they couldn't call or perhaps it was that the way that they called was to enter the bodies of those who still had bodies and reside there changing the brain chemistry of those who remained dependent on breathing in and out. Some of those who breathed in the ghosts had trouble breathing. Some kept getting sick. Some took to twitching as if the ghosts were embedded in the gray matter of their brain over which they had lost control.

What was left of the buildings was burning for months. One could smell it even in their neighborhood on the other island. The smoke was cloying, claustrophobic. It made one's stomach turn. It was obvious there was poison in it. They would often feel as if they were going to throw up and several times when they were walking down the street they had to lean into the side of building and just try and breathe, or try and not breathe, or do something to keep from throwing up. Some days were worse than others and they did not realize until many months later that these worse days were probably the days when the freon that was stored beneath the two buildings was burning off. All they knew at the time was that it was impossible to figure out what was in the air at that time. The EPA kept insisting the air was ok. But how could it be when it made so many retch? They talked all day long about the air with others trying to figure out how it would impact

their body. This was because they wanted to talk about themselves and not talk about the things that were so obviously sure to happen, the operations with names like Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Exercise Victory Scrimmage, Exercise Reliant Mermaid, Operation Southern Focus, Operation Shining Presence, Exercise Early Victor, Exercise Eager Mace, Exercise Internal Look, Operation Southern Watch, Operation Northern Watch, Operation Desert Fox, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Vigilant Resolve, Operation al-Fajr (Dawn)/Phantom Fury. The list would go on and on, would become pages long but they did not yet know how long this list would become. So instead they talked about the air to such an extent that they became air quality experts. Some would insist that the air was ok because the EPA said so. Others pointed to how it obviously wasn't ok. Others pointed to how the EPA kept altering its standards to make the air ok. Or how the air was ok to the EPA only because they were not testing for what was in the air. Or that each of the substances in the air might be ok on their own but who knew what happened when they were combined. They and many others felt ill for months. Ill because of breathing. Ill because of what was happening and what was going to happen, all those operations that they didn't yet know the names of but knew were sure to horrifyingly happen. The air was so thick it often made them retch. They didn't wear masks like some of those around them but they tried to avoid the air. They tried to avoid breathing. It didn't work. The air continued to enter their lungs like those operations

that continued to be planned without their consent despite their attending protest after protest. They could hold off on breathing for a few minutes every now and then but inevitably they would be gasping for breath a few moments later. They were not even alone in this grasping because all around them were other people reacting badly to the air, breathing and retching or trying not to breath and gasping then after moments of not trying.

The air was not only full of the ghosts and full of chemicals in combinations never before seen, but it was also full of fear and it was full of bigotry. Everyone was breathing these emotions in all day long and retching on them also. For a long time they didn't want to talk to other people in the city because they felt like they couldn't trust what other people might say. When someone brought up the people who ran their planes into the building, they usually ducked out of the conversation. They hated to go into bars because there was often some drunk guy talking about killing everyone in some part of the world far away that was being blamed for the buildings falling down. They couldn't understand many things. The public space was suddenly a disorientating spin. Flag signs. Flag stickers. Flag pins. Flag magnets. Flag patches. Flag earrings. Flag keychains. Flag necklaces. Flag t-shirts. They couldn't understand how the flag came to symbolize all those who died when the airplanes went into the buildings. They couldn't understand the voodoo of symbol making where distress about the dead turned into an unqualified support for the nation. They couldn't understand what was terror and what was war and they felt the use of these words in

their bodies as a cringe inducing linguistic trick. Their stomach would tighten anytime either of these words were used. Someone would say terrorist and their chest would get tense across the breast bones. Someone would say homicide bombing and their bowels would spasm. Instead, all they could figure out with any certainty was that the reason the buildings had collapsed had something to do with groups of people on both sides having trouble thinking about people on the side they were not on. But what this meant, what this really meant in terms of what new horrors were ahead they could not figure out. They went about their days as if they had giant flashing question marks over their heads and they looked at things with puzzled expressions on their faces. Nothing made sense. They couldn't understand how violence makes things different. How it redraws maps and changes vocabulary. How it changes aesthetics and morals and emotions. They couldn't understand just wars and unjust wars, bombs and smart bombs. They couldn't understand the language that those around them used. Or that the media used. They couldn't understand how violence leads to new violence and not to a rejection of violence. They understood a wound has been made, a big, open, bleeding wound. They felt this wound themselves in their own body and often the wound became feverish and flared up and leaked. They kept stitching this wound closed but the infection kept tearing the wound open again and again so at a certain point they just let the wound leak. They couldn't understand why the emphasis wasn't on healing the wound. They could understand the need for their culture to write a paragraph long obituary on everyone who died when

floor after floor of the buildings went crashing down and yet they could not understand only a few months later why this same culture tolerated it when the government refused to let the media show photographs of the dead of the nation that the government had gone to kill in retribution. Why one inventory and yet an acceptance of the denial of another detailed inventory, even an inventory as mundane as a tally. For hours, they looked on the internet just for the names of the dead of that nation that their government had gone to kill in retribution, just for a list of names, but they could not find it anywhere. They wondered if this list was out there but in a language other than the one they spoke, out there somewhere for someone who could read differently than they could.

It was not just them with this wound, with these ghosts. One friend called them up and said her partner, usually a fine if mundane partner, kept talking about the importance of bombing someone, anyone, in response and she didn't know what to do, should she break up with him or would it pass? Another friend went the other way and anytime there was anyone on the television who was mourning someone lost in the buildings he would go into a tirade about how they especially deserved it because all the citizens of their nation deserved it, how he himself deserved it, and those who worked in the financial industry especially deserved it. And then with people they trusted, the people they sort of wanted to talk about things with, they didn't know what to say really. They would meet them for a cup of coffee or tea and talk but they could only talk meaninglessly about the walk they took

last week where they went around the park instead of through it. Or they would talk about the itchiness of their dry skin which was caused by the forced air heat. Or they would talk about other people, about who had a cold or who had a sore throat or who had a nosebleed or who had a cough or who was having difficulty breathing. All this talk about breathe and throat continued to be a coded way to talk about the fallen buildings and not mention their confusions, their inability to escape the ghosts, those looming operations to come. They didn't know what to say to their friend with the suddenly war mongering boyfriend. Instead they would joke about how they were going to turn into one of those girls in the Midwest who all together developed a sort of rash that was probably caused by some sort of sympathetic stress in reaction to the buildings falling down. They did not mention the ghosts. Instead they continued to talk about the air a lot. They continued to talk in great detail about the nickel in the air or the asbestos in the air. They talked again together about how the EPA kept adjusting the tolerable levels of various substances upward and was not to be trusted. They talked about their worries that the workers cleaning debris from the site were all likely to get sick again in another six years from the air. Talking about the air referenced the ghosts because the ghosts were air but they didn't have to deal with the larger political ramifications of the event.

They couldn't even understand what was happening locally. It was not only the time of ghosts but the time of endless fake bomb threats called by people who were not called terrorists but were called mentally unstable in

their culture at this time. Frequently in this time after the buildings fell and before Halloween they would walk down the street and see people standing around outside a building because someone mentally unstable had called in a bomb threat there. There were never bombs, just threats. The day after the buildings fell, all day long people were running out of buildings in response to some bomb threat or other. There were so many bomb threats on the subway for months after the buildings fell that it became impossible to get anywhere on time. Once the subway that they were on stopped between stations for half an hour. Everyone waited calmly but after fifteen minutes passed a woman in the car began crying with anxiety. Her anxiety took over the car and others joined in the crying. Much of the car began crying and they themselves began twitching again. Then suddenly the car began moving. There was no explanation for the stop. The car just continued on and the people who had been crying with anxiety stopped crying and got on and off as usual. Regularly, the subway would pull into a station and never leave. Another subway would come in the wrong direction and they would get on it just to get away from the stopped subway car which they always felt had to be a sign of something bad on the car or ahead of the car. The trick they felt, and others seemed to join them in this, was just to keep moving. To get off one subway train and then get on another, even if it went in totally the wrong direction. If they just kept moving perhaps they would be moving away from the unarticulated bad things that may or may not happen.

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This was just some of the ways that the event changed them and everyone around them in various and distinct ways, even though they liked to think of themselves as above public emotion or as immune from public sentiment or too cool to be influenced by the buildings collapsing. It somehow changed their DNA. It changed them and everyone around them even as they said to themselves that it was stupid to say that everything had been changed. People had been bombing each other since 1911 when Giulio Cavotti dropped a hand grenade out of the cockpit of his plane and onto Tagiura. The place where they lived had so little death in comparison to other places. They had food and they had hospitals and they had vast economic privilege, a privilege so extreme that at no other time in history had people had such privilege. Shortly after the buildings fell down the New York Times ran an article on luxury goods and mentioned that Tom Ford always had to have a certain fig candle burning when he entered a room. After reading this article, they thought about fig candles a lot in the period between September and Halloween. They thought about the people who would have to get the fig candles. They thought about the number of times whose who had to make sure the candles were always in all the right places at the right time must have had to think about the candles. They thought about the people who would light the fig candles. They thought about the matches and they thought about the memos that would have had to have been written about the fig candles. They even thought about Tom Ford having a thought about fig candles and then how that thought might

grow inside him into a desire and then how that desire might grow into a course of action and then whether at any moment in this process he had felt foolish. They wondered if he had smelled other candles and compared them to each other and then discussed them with people around him and if so how many candles did he consider and what were his thoughts say on rosemary candles or on musk candles or any of those other scents that candles come in. They wondered about the buildings falling down and how this fit into the world of fig candles. Sometimes after thinking about fig candles all afternoon, they would turn on the cooking channel and just watch hour after hour of food being made. They joked that if someone really wanted to ferment revolution in other countries against the prosperity of the west they would just have to broadcast the cooking channel to places where food was scarce twenty-four/seven. There was so much food on the cooking channel. And so few people eating it. And so many ways to make it. So many fancy ovens. So these were the things they were now forced to breath in and out: fig candles and Viking ranges and detailed knowledge of various foods in various combinations.

Wigged Divas

Aretha Franklin

not just the queen of soul but the queen of wigs
 close to the face
 parachuted out
 long curls thick in abundance
 the lost hairline of frizz
 has anyone ever noticed as she gained weight so did her wigs?

Gladys Knight's wigs

never complimented her vocal ability
 boring curls fitted and feathered
 hell, the Pips had more interesting outfits
 and two-step jigs then she did wigs

Diana Ross

had eyelids that wore wigs
 fake hair everywhere
 oil sheen shined
 all of her big frizzy fly away hair
 amazing she is
 the only Diva that can wear wigs with split ends

Gloria Gaynor

"I will survive"
 but her wigs never stood a chance
 she sported the crooked afro
 and the greasy lookin' curls
 that suffocated her face with beads of sweat
 didn't anyone tell her that synthetic hair will do that!

Patti Labelle

the merry-go-round of wigs
 has graced this blessed Diva's dome over the years
 too many styles to name
 glitter afros, frozen hairpieces, curly long funkified wigs

Chaka Khan Chaka Khan
all that money and every wig was big
no, huge and out of control
with thousands of tiny spiral untamed colored curls
not even all that hair could hide her signature smile and booming voice
so we forgive you for the poor hair choice

Cher
irresistibly beautiful
made every woman want to buy the long exotic straight hair wigs
that made men beg
blonde, cherry wood, platinum, charcoal black, heavenly brown, auburn red
thin, long, nappy and poofed out
all these styles have made their way to the top of this goddess's head
matched with a body that would make even your granddaddy drop dead

Ms. Tina Turner!
can't forget the raspy baritone
love voice of rock and soul
it is imported straight from Africa
her wig that is
hair filled with agility
can't say much bad about Tina, it is a sin if I do
just embrace the sunshine bronze hair that sways with her body
the wig that completes the girlish legs
the only hair her fans will associate her with
a dash of rock with a sister soul flare

Bette Midler
the pushy Diva
my way or the highway
great voice bad wigs
remember the orange frizzy curls in abundance?
fortunate for us it was only a phase that she soon outgrew

Dolly Parton
need I elaborate?
what was bigger her hair or boobs?

In praise of lipstick

Shh! Frolic, girl about town. High-strung metropolitan. Crème de la femme craving stiletto frenzy. Strapless visionary tempting carnal x-treme. Seismic B-cup, overload underground odyssey. Underplay underworld fetish. Mischievous voltage, scratch sultry alibi. Reflect pure attitude. Chronic film noir dark side, Lady Danger. Bask hot Tahiti coral reef. Bruise fleshpot, crush love junkie enigma. Real faux, Spanish fly. Desire retro coquette, cherries jubilee. Mystic diva. Lovelorn bauble. Touch Uzi impulse, giddy bombshell fusion. Cherish atomic rose, captive metallic sun. Destined meltdown, 3-D exhibitionist myth. Pretty please, pink poodle. Foxy stray dog.

Monadnock

Sometimes the whole thing stands
still, residual
ribbed as the stratum is
of the branchwork.
You are given the gruff
versus the seams and you must drop back
to recapture its stranded
cloudcap.
Fire, fire and fire, all toothed
in the obelisk spruces.
It seems to be listing,
burled on the surface.
The purple adheres to the back—
pivots, shunts
over the scotched hump.
No, it thrusts up burgeoning
finer-tined, the parts more mobile-like.
So the eye has no end
going on outside its compulsion.
The colors concrete also.
Then what does the bulk of it do.
A rudiment-hoard.
Then what.

Zoetrope

False hellebore, lodged in the clefts
of the ravine we climbed up into,
the fanned shafts, looked down through shredded
cloud to the pit
of slid quartz.

Like a view I was given
of slots in a limestone wall
above Pisac, Peru
sconced with coppery fog-plants.

There are the vents of the buildings also,
distinct among lofts
with their hawk settles
and their capstone logic.

The plains wrap out around them
capsules of ice
off the hot-metal front.

I would not go there.
High on the bluffs above the joint
of the brown and zinc rivers
in the silver-gel film
down which the monk must slip
in a little bark boat.

Look for the sinner
who is not my shame
he says.

The Good Girl Montage

The good girl fights a medium-sized meteor, makes a mess, and dies in battle.

The good girl picks it back up and refries it.

She duct-tapes the swivel of a politician; calls this act *mercy*.

She crowns herself Queen of Glow-in-the-Dark, Ambassador of Finger-Tappers,
Pope of Whoopdie-Doo, and Prisoner of Overkill.

Mornings she videotapes herself weeping.

The good girl confuses wasps for trees, confuses standing bodies for bees.

During her nightly routine she counts new dents in her mouth brace.

She believes in her least favorite person and their dog and its biscuit.

Instead of spitting on sidewalks, the good girl mends a mouth full of darns.

To prevent winter she unscrews the bottoms of snow globes.

The good girl talks a lot of talk. She swears the bleeding is natural.

The good girl watches the snow redden and washes out her knickers.

She pulls and pulls at her safety-pinned body like a rein.

World is Weird

World is weird, and so
 what? Water this poem and watch it
 take shape, it's layers
 of the born
 world, heard
 world, streaked and shaved, see
 it shakes, a
 shuttle carrying
 all world's weeds, weards,
 trash and goods, gods to you—

Or perhaps it's winter's ordinary scene:
 abandoned tires in marsh-shore muck
 The highway goes by it, and ducks take
 to airways about now

Water World is on the right, a barrel
 Of light, sweet crude
 Next left No-Oxygen World, Dry World, Dirt World, Tin
 World and World of Exemplary Vehicular Noises

Exit the poem for: Sluice City, World of Steel, Plug-In City with Maximum
 Pressure, an
 Asphalt-and-Weed Oasis

Find here: Vacant sky, vacant lots, a few
 Sunday faces

Of the world, weird: People wear it, “the section they use
 like clothes on their backs,” and soon appears “an object as
 magic as a private face”

Shelter for the Making

Where are we, with what we have, right now?

A lean-to, a lop-sided pup tent, a couch
of leaves, strange tree stump coffee
tables (our soda can rings forest fires)

I bed my donkey in Titania's nest,
wake with such ague, golden
pollen dust flitted from the wings
of butterflies (mistook for buds
that do not return to the branch)

Tantalus Gossips

He was sucking the dirt like toast,
I tell you, when she pulled up his
balls like radishes—the pig was
all over the floor, the saffron,
the schiff, that late yellow self
in the sky, scattered by the blue
trueness. Penis, you were everybody's
business, in a word, an unstoppable
apple—red, love, you miserable grape,
I tell you, the river, it lifted
her dress like a ghost and the dead
singer's singing head was cradled
in her—song, that deftly braided
snake humping the bubbling water,
I grab and I grab but you, dick,
you pick and you suck and I pay.

Gospel of the Mean

No one gives a damn about your music.
 A dog and a duck grew lustful.
 That's you. That's who you are.

They birthed such an eerie baby, you,
 who you are, of Labrador fur
 and rough orange feet, screaming the news

in a screwed-up language. Lusts.
 Do giraffes covet wives?
 Do their necks keep their lusts way up,

up like the stone time they threw up
 to form Mount Olympus? Lusts.
 It must be the brain that does this.

Metaphors. Neighbors. Dogs licked Ahab's
 blood, blood is the body's river,
 the Yangtze, the Yellow, dragging the soil

of China into an orgy of fins.
 Cain fell. Cain was restored. Lusts.
 You should have shut up

when you were still young,
 spent more time chewing tall leaves.
 Or laying way low, like a lizard on granite,

licking the dust your mother
 kicked up, long before dogs and songs
 about long bad water and kings.

The Yawning Snake

A warm west harbinger wind
knocks the caterpillars
off the candelabra
of my hollow olive tree. I yawn
in the softening tufa. I yawn
and yawn as they fall
through my jaw like toweled
newborns. Infinity,
what a goose you are.
I yawn at the steely blueness
of the thousand dusky snakes
that make the sky a snaky place,
yawn at the sweetness
of rising late, deadly bored
with my deadly labor. I crawl
over cucumbers, radish.
See how I whip the vicious grist
of the august steppe, en route
to the Ark, yawning, yawning?
I dream of the seaside,
of the lone ravine of my own
dead yawn, like a room
with nobody else, and I know
why I'm last in line,
after the cattle. I'm firm
as the plunger the plumber pumps
to unclog our kingdom
of memory's crud. I come in
handy, without meaning
much, like a happily-ever-after,
or a belch of trust.

Hey Allen Ginsberg Where Have You Gone and What Would You Think of My Drugs?

A mouse went to see his mother. When his car broke down he bought a bike. When the bike wore out he bought skates. When the skates wore down he ran. He ran until his sneakers wore through. Then he walked. He walked and walked, almost walked his feet through so he bought new ones. His mother was happy to see him and said, "what nice new feet you have on!"

—paraphrase of a story in *Mouse Tails* by Arnold Lobel

hey, *listen*, a bad thing happened to my friend's marriage, can't tell you only can tell my own story which so far isn't so bad:

"Dad" and I stay married. so far. so good. so so.

But it felt undoable. This lucky life every day, every day. every. day.

(all the poetry books the goddamn same until one guys gets up and stuns the audience)

Then, Joe Wenderoth, not by a long shot sober says, I promised my wife I wouldn't fuck anyone, to no one in particular and reads a poem about how Jesus has no penis.

Meanwhile, the psychiatrist, attractive in a fatherly way, says *libido* question mark.

And your libido? like a father, but not like mine, or my sons'—

"fix it."

My friend's almost written
a good novel by which I mean finished
which means I'd like to light myself
on fire, on fire
with envy, this isn't "desire"
not what the Dr. meant
by libido?

I hope—

not, it's just chemical:
jealousy. boredom. lethargy.

Books with prominent seraphs: their feet feet feet I am
marching to the same be—

other

than the neuronc slave I thought anxiety made me
do it, made me get up and carry forth, sally
the children to school the poems dragged
by little hands on their little seraphs
to the page my marriage sustained, remaining
energy: project #1, project #2, broken
fixtures, summer plans, demand met, request
granted, bunny noodles with and without cheesy
at the same time, and the night time I insomnia
these hours penning invisible letters—

till it stopped.

doc said: it's a syndrome. you've got it,
classic.

it's chemical,
mental

circuitry we've got a fix for this
classic, I'm saying I can

make it better.

Everything was the same, then,
but *better*.

At night I slept.
In the morning got up.

Kids to school, husband still a fool-
hardy spirit makes
me pick a monday morning fight, snipe! I'll pay for that
later I'm still a pain in the
elbow from writing prose those shift+hold+letter,
I'm still me less sleepy, crazy, I suppose
less crazy-jealous just
ha-ha now at Jesus' no penis his
amazed at the other poet's kickass
friend's novel I dream instead about
the government makes me put stickers
on my driver's license of family members
who are Jews, and mine all are. Can they get us
all? I escape with a beautiful light-haired man,
blue-eyed day trader, gentile.

*gentle, gentle, mind encased in its
blood-brain barrier from the harsh skull
sleep, sleep and sleepy wake and want
to sleep and sleep a steep dosage—*

“—chemical?”

in my dreams now every man's mine, no-
problem, perhaps my mind's a little plastic,
malleable, not so fatal now

the dose is engineered like that new genetic watercress
to turn from green to red when planted over buried
mines, nitrogen dioxide makes for early autumn
red marks the spot where I must
watch my step, up one half-step-dose specific—

The psychiatrist's lived in NY so long
he's of ambiguous religious—
everyone's Jewish sometimes—
writes: "up the dosage."

*now,
when I'm late I just shrug
it's my new improved style
missed the train? I tug
the two boys single file*

*the platform a safe aisle
between disasters, blithely
I step, step, step-lively
carefully, wisely.*

*I sing silly ditties
play I spy something pretty
grey-brown-metal-filthy
for a little city fun.*

*Just one way to enjoy life's
trials, mile after mile, lucky
to have such dependable feet.*

*you see,
the rodents don't frighten I'm
calm as can be expected to recover left to my
one devices I was twice as fast getting everywhere but
where did that get me but there, that inevitable location
more waiting, the rats there scurry, scurry, a furry
till the next train comes*

“up the dosage.”

Brown a first-cut brisket in hot Dutch oven
after dusting with paprika. Remove. Sauté
thickly sliced onions and add wine. (Sweet
is better, lasts forever, never need a new bottle).
Put the meat on onions, cover with tomato-sauce-
onion-soup-mix mixture, cover. Back in a low
oven many hours.

The house smells like meat.
My hair smells like meat.

I'm a light unto the nation.

I'm trying
to get out of Egypt.
This year,
I'll be better.

Joseph makes sense of the big man's dreams, is saved,
saves his brothers those jealous boys who sold him
sold them all as slaves. Seven years of plenty. Seven
years of famine. He insomniacs the nights counting up
grains, storing, planning, for what? They say throw
the small boys in the river (and mothers do so). Smite
the sons (and fathers do it.) God says take off your shoes,
this holy ground this pitiful, incombustible bush.

Is God chemical?
Enzymatic of our great need to chaos?

We're unforgivable.
People of the salted
cheeks. Slap, turn, slap.

To be chosen
is to be
unforgiving/ unforgiv-
en, always chosen:
be better.

The Zuckers are a long line of obsessives.

This served them well in war time saw it
coming in time that unseeable thing they
hoarded they ferried, schemed, paced, got the hell
out figured out at night, insomnia, how to visa—

now, if it happens again, I won't be
ready

I'm "better."

The husband, a country club Jew from Denver, American
intelligentsia will have to carry me out and he's no big
man and I'm not a small girl how fast

can the doctor switch the refugee gene back on?

How fast can I get worse? Smart again and worse?

Better to be alive than better.

"...listen:" says the doctor, "sleeping isn't death.
All children unlearn this fear you got confused
thought thinking was the same as spinning—"
Writes: "up the dosage."
don't think. this refugee thing part
of a syndrome fear of medication of being better...

Truth is, the anti-obsessional medicine works
wonders and drags me through life's course...

About this time of year but years ago the priests spread
rumors of blood libel. Jews huddled in basements accused
of using Christian babes' blood to make unleavened bread.

signs and wonders.
Christ rises.

Blood and body and babes.
Basements and briskets
and bread of afflictions.

I am calm now with my pounds of meat
made and frozen, my party schedule, my pills
of liberation, my gentile dream-boy, American
passport, my grey haired-psychiatrist, my blue-
eyed son, my brown-eyed son, my poems on their
pretty little fleet-feet, my big shot friends, olive-skinned
husband, my right elbow on fire: fire inside deep in the nerve
from too much carrying and word-mongering, smithery, bearing
and tensing choosing to be better to live this real life this better orbit this Jack

Kerouac never loved you like you wanted.
Blake.
Buddha.
Only Jesus and that's his shtick,
he loves

everyone: smile! that's it,
for the camera, blood pressure
normal, *better*, you're a poster child
for signs and wonders what a little chemistry
does for the brain, blood, thought, hey,

did you know that Pharaoh actually *wanted*
to let them go? those multitude Jews
but God hardened Pharaoh's heart against them [Jews]
to prove his prowess show his signs, wonders, outstretched
hand, until the dosage was a perfect ten and then
some, sea closing up around those little chariots
the men and horses while women on the far shore shook
their tambourines. And then what? Forty years to get the smell
of slavery off them.

Because of this. Bloody Nile. My story one of
the lucky. Escape hatch even from my own
obsess—

I am here because of this.

Because of what my ancestors did for me to tell this
story of the outstretched hand what it did for me this
marked door and behind this red-marked door, around
a corner a blue-eyed boy waits to love me up with his
leavened bread, his slim body, professional detachment,
medical advancements, forgive me my father's mother's
father was the last in a long line of Rabbis—again! with this? This
rhapsody of affliction and escape, the mind bobbing along
in its watery safe. Be like everyone. Else. Indistinguishable but
better than the other nations but that's what got us into this, Allen,
no one writes these long-ass poems anymore. Now we're
better, all better. All Christian. Kind.

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The English Department of Columbia College Chicago is pleased to have received the following donations to its Poetry Scholarship Fund. The initial goal of the fund is to raise \$20,000 to provide an annual scholarship of \$1,000 for a deserving student in the college's undergraduate poetry major. Columbia College Chicago is the only institution of higher learning in the country to offer an undergraduate poetry major, which consists of 51 semester hours of study. Further gifts are welcome and should be addressed to:

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