

/feminine nature/

Clara B. Jones

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Women Poets Found “concealed in her voice”¹

She remembered Mayan villages made hostile, and she is eating her mother’s tortillas and wearing bright shawls choked back, her wails dropping bits of herself over the mountains in her sister’s voice—*I’ve always been me*. But we’ll be members of a new species with the power to rise up intact. Rebellion-(r)evolution will spring up. If the dream is a woman, the night can drive you crazy, and chickens are saying disrespectful things—docile. So, don’t reject your tragedy. Kiss every pimple on his big toe, this being war time. The man who raped her started wobbling forward into the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the guard said—*What were we supposed to do?* Woman, why weepst thou? I am not yet Mary Magdalene. Don’t mess with me. I’m invisible, and lawdy, lawdy, hallelujah, yellow blues come from the colored to mend Ethiopian success when the chocolate can get rancid all day long—when your theory wants to know is it a him thing? For me, I called in sick during pestilence—no other choice as bleak as perversion and power after the hesitant march by the tens of thousands. She came on the stage, and it was queen Ella leaving a trail of nightingales and violins.

¹ Found in Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa (“*Del otro lado*,” “Don’t give in, *Chicanita*”); Jane Cortez (“If the drum is a woman,” “Rape”); Susan Howe (“The nonconformist’s memorial”); Harryette Mullen (“Muse & Drudge,” “All she wrote”); Alicia Ostriker (“The eighth and thirteenth”); Sonia Sanchez (“A poem for Ella Fitzgerald”) In Frost EA, Hogue C (eds) (2006) *Innovative women poets*. U Iowa Press, Iowa City.

Finding Jorie Graham ¹

Jorie Graham's *Swarm* is rife with endings. More than most volumes, it is akin to other experimental, subversive projects. If *Four Quartets* were to collide with the pattern which Graham credits in her aggregate of perceptions, *Swarm* seems to have no boundaries. We have to remember all of the references to atoms, the noise of the sparrows attempts to summarize the world. This book's universe is "saturated with situation" so that the distinction and multiplicity "to swarm" is a home country, a stable hierarchy of values that will hold. The behavior of these poems provides the epigraph of a circle indebted to allotted paths. The first poem begins with an asterisk of her mode—increasingly disjunctive but now a figure that we could adapt to the new aesthetics of the poet, whatever the case may be. Graham intends her claim has not yet eliminated all humor, but the grim irony is funny. One has to get at it or Emily Dickinson's language alludes to the book. Graham's poem is a dark predecessor's search in another guise, and then Graham uses the quester too late, as it were, but she has been shamed with "atoms." "Desert/Dune" is called a wasteland of "the seriously wounded narrator" in appearances, but Graham's story is teleology. The pun in the beginning waits interminably for news of the Watchman. Of course, the sentence is a life sentence, but it replaces punishment as Graham repeats an event in the poem through such small foreshadowings. The poem coheres around a sparrow, and providence is drawn into the orbit of the bird's death in a glass darkly with an emblem sensuously saturated.

¹ Found in S Yenser In Harp J., Weissmiller J. (eds.) (2006) *A poetry criticism reader*. U Iowa Press, Iowa City.

To A Mother Who Happened To Be A Poet¹

Fate made me my mother's father/*sons who ride away on horseback*/who let her soar to heights of her own making/*I never chose this place, yet I am of it now*/in books and seminars, on podiums and videos while I was sated to go along for the ride/*my power is brief and local*/or her script depicted me so./*but I know my power*/While sitting in her audience my heart was breaking/*I was alone*/a child whose child's adolescence has played out too long/*I am an American woman*/threatening spirits and lives in the process/*if they call me man-hater*/sweating under bright lights/*unmothered world*/wrinkles deep as ruddy shadows./*all my energy reaches out tonight*/Her furious truths made me her enemy/*something hangs between us*/an Oedipal failure/*sons who ride away*/unable to cut the apron strings choking my manhood/*I never chose this place*/another boy subordinate to "the abnegation of power for love"—as she put it once speaking of women/*her hand unconscious on the cradle* .

¹ Italics found in the poem "From An Old House In America" by Adrienne Rich

On A Poet Finding Herself ¹

for Harryette Mullen

Her mother taught her strong girls are masculine,/*attractive people are nicer and more likable*/jaded or angry,/*self-fulfilling prophecy*/tough as nails/*gender ideologies*/wearing steel-tipped boots, smoking with élan,/*swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in a woman*/abjuring a feminine mien./*gender-role attitudes have become less traditional*//Anger dressed in kente cloth the color of orange *Acacia* flowers/*sexism*/glaring green *Ficus* leaves,/*open disregard for the value of women*/black threads woven with cyan,/*moral dilemma*/anger fiercer than slavemasters'/*women are less competent than men*/heat known only to women/*the typical female*/spurned, neglected, mistreated by masters of the heart/*power*/pumping faster and faster/*I call myself a feminist*/wondering what went wrong./*a good deal of conflict*//No longer an anomaly,/*paid employment is associated with better health*/neither orchid in the rainforest nor Picasso in the anthropological museum,/*identity*/but a poet now her own best friend.

¹ Excepting *Acacia* and *Ficus*, italics found In Helgeson VS (2009) *Psychology of gender*. Pearson, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

/My sister cantering/

for the late Alice-Joye Brown

A negress speaking The Queen's English
exception to a rule written in Richmond

when Jefferson Davis rode his stallion to Petersburg
sometimes trotting, almost dressage. My sister

wearing suede jodhpurs holding her blue ribbons
under a grey sky in Williamsburg where scientists run rats

in mazes for pellets or water flavored by sucrose crystals
blue as the circle marking Appomattox on that map

on her wall over her walnut desk.
Papers and paints spread on her bed wrinkled by weight

uneven as the road to Petersburg
wet in April when wrens' eggs open to cool air

warmer than March when green begins to grow.
The jeweled journey ended in a meadow

a tapestry of wildflowers reflecting sunlight
shaped by a sycamore's sny.

My sister cantering, sibilant with laughter
believing in forgiveness delivered by faceless gods,

love letters hidden in stables beneath moist hay,
blue ribbons promising praise,

a day of winning or finding luck beyond the Finish Line,
the pace of hooves slowing to a sparrow's speed.

/poet/

for Meghan Sterling

Planaria's head parallel to its body, flatworms succulent with mustard on rye. Drizzle vinaigrette over annelids when you can't sleep at 3 a.m., a cup of green tea and you're drowsy. Medicate with balm if you're anxious, one

drop of bergamot sap in celery water cures the nerves. Heat-stress clay-colored on the climate map, subfusc soil the color of flip-flops worn 'til toes bleed on cement, clay the color of fur (grizzly, monkey, fox) or of feathers (robin, thrasher,

wren), source of militant microbes, not predators, parasites, food for thought listed in logs that the poet shelves next to jars of nut butter and peach jam sticky on a black plastic knife swiped across Whole Foods® spelt crackers

stored in clear wrap. Listening to Joni Mitchell songs, sorting manuscripts—complex as chemical compounds, organic offals cooked or raw, for study or pleasure, re-search a spliced moving picture, haplotypes fashioned

from DNA codes smelling of dill, sorrel, lavender—fish scales, mucous, sex, silt along the French Broad, slippery to the touch. Verses classified like kitchen herbs (arrowroot, borage, mint), hardy woman writing to claim the wilderness.

/blue hyacinths/ (Costa Rica, 1976-1978)

for Jim Moore

1. Holding your son, she watched our legs skip to our nest, facing my back covered by the ugly striped shirt that fit me so well. Three adults suspending judgment, doubting that the rim of Arenal rose somewhere to the North. You built a bower piled with tales of continents and exploits—each landing a reminder of Mayan temples far away. We planned a future—a son, a pet, a new *cabina*, an urbane set in San José where I scanned him, more subliminal than active, more aware of a past ruined by neglect than of a warm body standing ten inches away.

2. Your eyes restless, the color of booby feet, a fictional habitat, and I am the one you told myths about, never the one introduced to your brother. What else is new, Jim? Does your linen suit still fit? Have you bought a Basquiat? Are you grieving for that Asian guy who bought me German art? On safe shores of narrative (of prep schools and power, of marriages, of titles, of marketable worth) floats a gaze offered singly to men.

3. Driving to Santa Rosa, you squeezed my hand as if to ask: *Must I settle for this? Is life a series of reinventions? If I walk Northwest, will I find my fate in Mexico?* Later, you went mute, planning your next move—missing your wife, imagining a future alone in a house near the foothills of Arenal, removed from Charleston and ships.

4. The blue hyacinths you brought wilted before their time.

Elizabeth Bishop Never Wrote List Poems

Every philosophical claim can be converted to a testable hypothesis since all matter is hybrid, though overlapping, and a species is a construct like the whole Linnaean system. A small bat echolocating insects at dusk mimics barnswallows pirouetting into a whorl of wind, not art but a vision of art on a day when the sun rose at ten o'clock leaving a chemical trace, a neural imprint whenever she has tools creating curated needs, commodities becoming markets bleeding capital until she grasps a slippery thalamus between her fingers, color of a ripe pomegranate inside the buried hominoid rising from red clay, virtue creating conflict increasing net worth, unstable in an unpredictable world. The most important thing is restraint when she wears a red Dickies® Bomber Cap because she has allergies from October to January, never sympathizing with critics advancing poetry as *avant garde* art.

Lost Tribe Of Tierra del Fuego (1832)

I quit King's movement because black men in the ghetto made me manic, though the girls made a lot of sense. After inheriting the settlement my grandfather won from the city for false arrest, I decided to raise a kid on my own. *Single mother* had a nice ring to it, but sound alone did not explain why I chose it as my career. I made my decision after she whispered, *I wanted a little girl, but you weren't the one I had in mind*, realizing that a mother is licensed to say anything without reproach. Pregnancy was tolerable, but childbirth was unpleasant, blood between my thighs where his hands should have been, slippery like Adrienne's black ice or a bulb of mercury—unremarkable sights like a bored mother slicing liver taken the day before from inside a calf raised on organic grass, wheezing as the blade opened her cavity, a sound like the Selk'nam girl exhaling the moment after a sheepherder sacrificed her for the Fatherland's honor or for her ancestors' gold—Darwin's *savage*, Chile's *animal*, wind wheezing through her hair black and sebaceous, lying in wait for a taxidermist to stage her, stuff her, stitch her up before transfer to a laboratory or a museum in Europe. The baby made death seem constant, wanting to forget so many mornings waking to the haunting sound of that robin trilling in the garden as if his music one day weren't the same as the day before, hypothalamus enervated by heat and light as I was activated by his touch, now repelled by the infant sucking, tickling her to hear her cry, to make her recoil like a snake spooling. *Trust me, landscapes are burning still.*

For Lucy (d. 3.2 mya)

A glass case your own islet preserving bones from Hadar adorned with metal tags. Lost to blooming acacias, loyal

dogs, guttural songs around a fire beyond a hill, still breathing when carrion beetles began to ravage your flesh,

when earthworms idled on your brows caressing your moist lids while the end of vulgar masculinity was decreed by

a shaman's dance and sacrifice, not of your life but of the politics of your life./*canid, cartilage, corpuscle, cortex,*

cerebrum/It took you longer to die than it took water to leach into your hiding place where a wreath of seeds

adorned your neck, vertebrae visible through hyoid, bones classified like vegetables that you cut like new

fruit, surgeon slicing glabrous tumor into saggital sections exposing soft venous tissue following an exact

recipe, hoping for the best, as I hoped for grace when the wave unspooled my muscles, striking me from behind.

Laetoli hominin footprints tracked in volcanic ash (3.6 mya)

She always wanted to win, not win, but lose less than anyone else. Too short to be taken seriously as a cardiologist, a perfect height for feet whose musk caused her to recall her fingers after pleasure [*hit me harder*], suffocation at the moment of release.

Don't be sorry, just be right!, she heard her mother say even after the simplest procedures—clipping ingrown nails, scraping green rot, actions arousing as dozens of forbidden fantasies conjured between her septic red sheets, never repelled, always grateful for a sensuous life touching

epidermal tissue, no obligations to anyone other than the infirm, every procedure embodying regularities masking contradictions [sickness-health, grotesque-perfectly formed, despair-hope]. She imagined sleeping parallel to L.'s alabaster body and staring at the cardiology residents

[her hands would tremble inserting a stent] and staring at Mary Cassatt's "Bedtime Ritual" in the National Gallery, feeling that she was not ethereal enough, not confident, not content, not cared for, unlike the mother in Cassatt's painting stroking her perfect child, unaware

that all Psychology reduces to Physics. Her success in Orthopedics was not an accident, resulting from conscious attraction to an ugly part of the body upon which no life depends. *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*. She touched the hollow of her chest, measuring pulse.

/when women keep moving/

I know parity but it is difference that makes me see you clearly,
not dominance but contrast—my Mount Mitchell, your Mount

Kenya; my French Broad, your Mara; my maple, your palm—
violets with black veins growing in moist soil, each of us

dreaming of white linen and creams mixed in Paris,
our black bodies waking to coffee shipped from ports on

your coast where problems are persistent, solutions temporary,
politics a legacy of acts committed in the past by men

more at home in Norwich than Nairobi, drinking tea from
Spode® cups, colonial masters sending

letters written with ink the color of monsoon sky, or of your
child's eyes deep in dark skin, a sailor's breeze sneaking up

her sleeve, relative of pastoralists, while my child is marked
with blood of slaves steered on an Odyssey in a stranger's ship,

a story told to no-one in particular or to anyone who will listen,
skin a dark body glove gesturing to the Motherland, willing my-

self to consciousness, a short day long when women keep moving,
the Nile destined to flow unless its tributaries are dammed.

/South to Kongo/

for the late K. Amalie Dietrich (1821–1891)

An infant's nails clean as petals or as skin
folded over her fontanel glued to myelin and
boutons, moving tiny arms and legs to the tune
of "Amazing Grace" while she wheezes—
waiting to be lifted from a sealed crib for five
minutes of controlled human contact. Her nails
not nails, and metaphors not difference—nor
matriarchy, Nature—though microbes are microns
living in pores. This boundary between construct
and Biology is grey not black and desire neither
source nor solution but construct re-purposed
like three billion neurons regenerated from crib
to vault holding secrets that her unconscious
revealed to Freud's heir, indigenous child hiding
from a naturalist's rifle sent to The Motherland—
collecting human specimens rather than plants,
clear as the walls of her heated cell, tiny palms
engraved with brown lifelines pointing South to
Kongo and a future preserved by curators and laws.

/she prefers daydreaming/

for Julie Karin Jones

A negress had children and none of them failed, though she preferred daydreaming to caretaking or agency. It was not motherhood—not motherly—to sit by a fire, frozen, not thawed by heat—hearing Jerry’s swoons as he jumped off a cliff in Utah, seeming preordained. If she did her best, they could not have understood without equations, so she wore her mother’s matte pearls to highlight her faults, a vagrant with a common past, a madwoman with a broken heart who wandered from Boston to Munich with a puppet and a mute master, a mother with no pity, a friend unable to hear. She was the darkie, brown as James River’s waters, swimming strong upstream, circling her eyes with khol, adjusting her reading glasses, painting her skin with ochre, ruing the sled that bore her from snow into fog.

Magical Negro living post-racial—who reads sad memoirs except sentimental girls?

Women Hoping For Happy Endings

for the late Alice-Joye Brown

1. She watched the world through thick glasses, went to court, cleared her name, imagined a boyfriend from Long Island Sound who tasted her tinctures of leaves and stems intended for entrails of Appalachian hares. One evening in Spring Physics failed her. A savage undertow ripped her down. I reminisced about her herby jars until her can of olive oil was spent. Recalling edible yarrow rotting in a dark space, losing touch with absent things.

2. Regret compounds as love wanes. Romance her market generating small returns, victim of myths controlled by feral feelings, a colonizer taming wilderness, a dreamer entering REM sleep mapped by electrodes clipped to origami curls, interference innocent as hair folded over her collar recorded by the lens of a video camera controlled by eyes exploring her face in sequence—forehead then ears then lips—sound of humid breath exhaling, deforming a cloudy space. Air on a slippery shelf protruding from a halcyon hillside, a GPS hidden in a hollow tree tracking her movements—cryptic surveillance, truncated timeline, scene borrowed from a Peter Handke novel.

3. A man with mammaform eyes asked her what she was writing. “A poem about a girl in the mountains, ‘Dolly Parton’—mother’s favorite song was ‘9 to 5.’” Her face red as clay in Haywood County, red as a toy truck tipped on a white carpet, resisting sleep when daylight ends, body falling from a safe height, gravity stronger than the will to stand, hand fracturing water’s film, carp circling fingers nipping her wet palm seeming blue in daylight, cool color resisting raucous crimson.

4. Dolly is my friend though she’s almost white and drives a Prius® but not a new one. Skin colors like grapes, light ones shade to dark ones. On Tuesday we met for lunch, and I ordered collards, but Dolly ordered kale since her mother wondered how a well-bred southern girl could eat soul food in a restaurant. Dolly speaks French and lived in Lyon for a year and in a hut in Peru and a tent in Kenya, a woman hoping for a happy ending, fertile with ideas of permanence, pedestrian character in a rejected novel,

story line redundant, tension exaggerated and predictable, loving the idea of pretense.

5. Fantasy is relative, a temporary tactic repressing restraint like hallucinating a swarm of birds. Fiction is necessary, illusions negotiable, decisions to save birds debatable, tipping a changing balance between probable and absolute.

/where women go—/

for the late Clara K. Jackson

Summer plunges into the deep end, a happening like fashion or politics
or poetry where women go to free themselves from History,

wearing silk scarves in museums and boardrooms, not aprons
in kitchens, speaking of science and performance art, exposing

matrilines as old as pyramids, older than Lascaux, cave paintings
making sense out of chaos, no longer bound to babies and breasts,

mothers to the world with knowledge of power, no incentives to sew
with local thread, now in the marketplace where it is common to swim

in deep water, tools made for commerce not for cooking, both hands
free to write or fly to foreign borders as men have, unencumbered

by gardens and tea parties and soccer games, now with projects
on a different scale. In a museum she stands before a different kind

of art from a tribe with no borders, as many norms as there are women
to build new cities—spiders weaving ecosystems from webs.

/seagulls/

for the late Jasper Loftus-Hills

I have been here before but not alone. I have been here before when seagulls swarmed and sandpipers swept searching for life to fell in an instant, when a flash storm soaked our shirts and sandwiches, when you said *We need a bigger boat* when the house across the bay was painted the color of my amulet, not blue but cerulean mixed with sunlight, children leering through gossamer curtains faded as my memory of our failures, your palm resting on my knee like a scale, reptilian lamella shielding arteries ancient as gar or vessels divided like sand marking high tide from low, when I said *moral* and *mortal* and *marital* in the same breath—a woman who could sight the kindest of all kind men, the dullest seagulls trapped in the dullest sky—not solemn but grateful for another day familiar as my own face aged by an excess of salty air or by a memory of your face callow and tan—wading into the water, climbing onto the hull.

Women And Mathematics

for Ángela Loij, last Selk'nam (d. 1974, Tierra del Fuego)

1. Women form the base of a monument to Greece, Pantheon honoring Plato and Aristotle, Archimedes writing equations printed with blood of slaves steered on an Odyssey in a stranger's ship.

2. Reading *The Uncontacted* reminded her that women on the Amazon labor to free fish from nets beyond muddy shores, to free agouti from wooden traps in the forest, prepare prey for skinning and roasting, desire to live at a higher scale using linear logic a man learns for steering a dugout downstream from his plot of land. She paddles a tributary, enters the river—knowing that today's coordinates will serve her tomorrow.

3. *La forma de representación etnográfica presenta realismo etnográfico porque algunos rasgos característicos del realismo la importancia y la idea se encuentran en los textos etnográficos. Las convenciones permitieron a la etnografía de esta perspectiva analizar un texto realista de los selk'nam en el ámbito patagónico. Un análisis del texto fueguina.*¹

4. Seek beyond horizons for beginnings./intense dread/Naked, eyes closed, breath slowing, not bearing it/*what a tornado is to a windy day*/labored walking up the *cordillera* overlooking Patagonia's wilderness/*phobia*/pine trees hiding secrets of foxes and Selk'nam/*episodes of intense dread*/acorns scattered like arrowheads/*something horrible is about to happen*/reminding her of waking near a path overgrown with fig trees/*distressing*/body baked by firepit light/*fear the fear itself*/choking, no energy to call for help/*help might be unavailable*/as her heart once stopped for love/*distraction of society*/a trove of causes weaving threads of fear and rapture/*panic disorder*/standing on a scarp about to fall/*heart racing*/owls alighting, confident of flight—sure that Romanians will hunt her./*things seem unreal*/Raspy and riddled with racing heart/*sweat and palpitations*/knowing that time won't restore her center/*it disappears*/that she won't see the rocky summit cleared of green by wind.²

5. Promise of principles old as Euler (numbers never lie), mathematics a good substitute for Truth (energy-efficient, cost-saving), life a function of

some unknown [$f(X)$] derived from a theory, comforting like her Hugo Chavez t-shirt.

¹Spanish found In Menni AM (2006) Los etnógrafos narran la Patagonia: los selk'nam y Anne Chapman. *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales* 10: 103-120.

²Excepting *cordillera*, italics found In Myers DG (2004) *Psychology*. Worth Publishers, NY.

Darwin's Book, *Earthworms*—Reviewed By Romanes In 1881

for M.M.

Class begins at one, and I am running late. I made my decision with anxiety but resolve—to cross the threshold of gender, to embrace a woman's mantle, to affect a female mien. Today is as good as any other to wear my new outfit, too formal for leading a field trip to the pond in Arcadia, searching for tadpoles and worms. My wife's distance increased as my breasts grew and my face softened, until she said, in April, "Get over it," leaving me for her sister's place in Watts. We often talked about moving to L.A. so she could study acting, but my dysphoria always got in the way. Two years ago, she teased me by buying matching bras, and last Christmas she gave me a yellow silk gown. But, she wasn't amused to learn that we weren't playing games, turning against me when I wore makeup in public. My loneliness (relieved only by teaching) fed fantasies of a new partner, though I asked my wife to try couples' counseling with a therapist I found on Facebook®. But, she was busy selling tickets for a theater group and had started dating a guy in the cast. I guess some people will never approve of the new me, but I know I can count on my students for support. If I stay in the moment, my biggest problem is wading through waterlilies without getting my skirt wet.

What Is The Difference Between An Original And A Copy?

for Robert L. Trivers

Because you treated her badly, you push your
hand into loam searching for shards of glass and
curled rhizomes, Amish in your thinking, no wires,
simply involuntary twitches of neurons stimulated

by shock or by adrenaline—vulnerable but not
decompensating. You would have kneeled forever on
a threshold between vapor and ice, tears without
hysteria, your thumb bleeding on wisteria petals, a

mother that you dreamed about, failures as achievements,
writing books a substitute for alienated work like a lieutenant
lighting a fire to melt ice hanging from a general's ear.
What if you read Wallace Stevens poems or taught

contradictions of language, metaphor rather than science,
digits coding a foreign grammar—knowing that codes
change, copies repurpose, performance art iterates,
though homicide rates have skyrocketed in Jamaica?

*Negril's water is still blue, and your father's office in
Berlin remains boarded up.*

Phylogeny And Extinction

for Timothy Rex

You have not touched my face in weeks or placed a cup of ginger tea in my hands—our home an archaeological dig, artifacts buried in fault lines, our tools instruments of histories partly known, mostly forgotten, one tool a matte metal scalpel, blade sharp as roses' thorns waiting for a victim, unaware of present danger, destined to extract signs of conflict excavated by hands once flawless, now stained by toxic fluids used to bleach the stains of blood and soil, to cleanse wounds becoming scars of memories, to sterilize fetid infections, evidence of failed evolution and of a niche now occupied by another kind, a species more successful than the one overwhelmed, superior competitor waiting for you in another room in another house not far from this table upon which rests a new life form waiting to be named, yet to be classified.

/Something of encumber is capable of calm/

for Alessandro Triulzi

Something of encumber is capable of calm as mist over Matterhorn holds for the sun. Lying on a gurney at the middle or the end, shoes parallel—left on right—cuneiform a grammar spoken in a sterile room, medical emojis on posters, random cells dividing faster in afternoon than darkness. Now no foreign hillsides, pink with heather, call with promises of Rigoletto or Vivaldi; rather, streets, cobbled like sulci or tongues, hearing different languages and dialects, insensible—babbling at two months, babbling during play, babbling near death.

Chance favors the prepared mind...¹

A wise word never spoken at the right time when sympathy is no match for words or for what words would be—spoken clearly: *cyan*, *cerulean*, *cardamom*. Wanting *cilantro*-colored glasses, a woman on her own terms sleeping alone on lichens in San Vito, winter keeping streams from flowing—*a posteriori*—careless words harping on Helen's first grey hairs and sagging skin.

¹ Pierre Curie

Cambridge, MA (1963)

for L.

I felt a measure
of discomfort
but no alarm.
Aware that she
was on her final leg
from Tel Aviv to Boston
I barely sensed her face.

Lying on her side of the foam nest
your moist beak
packed wet worms into my throat
as you would push your tongue
between her teeth
standing near an exit gate
in three hours or less.

Best Friends (1980)

for the late Alice Calloway

Two sons killed themselves.
A loss worse than widowhood
 mirroring no future.

Did my mother sympathize?
Did Bill leave your bed?
Did you wish for a daughter?
Did you know at some level?
Did your teas get wilder?
Did you feel they loved you?
 Did it no longer matter?

Motherhood is all-consuming like the view from Mount Mitchell or
the feel of long-leafed pine, ancient signs of Cambrian fulgence whose
seasons overpower the mouths of tributaries as French Broad flows to The
Tennessee.

Death begets power and hovers like a mother over bubbling Brunswick
Stew percolating sweet corn and green limas no longer alive like dead sons
turned
 to rich soil
saturated by a woman's warm fluids
tears exchanged for respite from hunger
 relishing the sight of dead things in hot water.

Motherhood consumes a need for novelty
 that burns to forage widely
 rather than to graze in open fields where sons are buried
 dead in the living war
 guerrilla troops felled in Richmond
 suicidal resistance to fates wrought years before.

Failed motherhood is no shame, Alice—
as common as aircraft delays in New York or London

or a student confusing Hudson with Thames
as two SoHos are the same and different.

Your sons twinned across time, impervious to their mother's needs and failures.

If delusion is your respite, enjoy. Let the voices speak their names.

Troll (Rome, 1977–1978)

for Francesca Woodman (1958–1981, suicide)

Francesca, so young to settle it forever
 though photos linger.

Innominate prodigy,
 a window opened for you.

One of your photographs reminds me of a perceptual illusion.
Old woman cowled in black cloak, head covered, haunting.
In your scene a white plate obscures knowing features, unable to see
 the tortoise
 framed by artificial light
a diagonal glare casting shadows on outlets and dirty walls.

An image: Cinderella's hovering stepmother,
symbol and crazy pattern of neglected, checkered lino bare
 as the closed and shaded window blaring
 [“Yet Another Leaden Sky”] to no-one in particular.

Trees were falling in forests, Francesca, but you chose not to listen.

Stevens preached that death begets beauty.
Yet, beauty is another form of power
 displaying photographic fields
curated to create fear in living brains wet with blood and myelin
 cloaking nervous pathways to dopamine targets.

The power of your grainy image belies your secrets
 not bold statements of intent.

Unsanitary appointments repel even you shrouded in black.

Did a startle reflex position the white plate,
or were you licking it clean to hold little tea cakes for your next *festa*?

/those men's faces are blurred/

for Don E. Wilson

What matters is the communal experience colonialism produced creating
real thoughts and feelings based on risk,
so nothing I desire is beyond reach except bluefin tuna because I know it
will soon disappear.

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush...

Other desires are time-sensitive and must be savored quickly to be
remembered for a lifetime
or to be transcended.

I watched a woman make soup from hummingbird nests, boiled goats' milk,
and lumps of crab served in blue china from Cortés' Spain. We hurried to eat
before the nest turned to foam,
and I can still smell the fog of rainy season drifting over Vera Cruz
from the sea.

Centuries later, Darwin was selling serialized chapters of *Origin* to
London's middle-class,
years before I ran away from Grace's husband—
menacing as *Bothrops* ready to strike—
while Grace threw herself into the mix serving flaky biscuits better
than my grandmother's,
a neural trace vivid as my last cigarette.

Don't be sorry just be right...

Erasure happens, confusing memory—
I once saw Mexican monkeys in mangrove swamps but often recall them
eating fruit
in large apple trees
in Cotuit, Palo Verde, Cañas, or Provincetown,
and those men's faces are blurred when I unspool time.

In Xalapa, Eduardo's hands were rough, something I want to forget but
can't—
like a wonder drug whose serious side effects leave a lasting impression.

Louise Bogan Envied Society Wives On The Upper East Side

The Caribbean Chicken Frog will go extinct this year, and she will turn 60, feeling younger than 30 when she was obsessed with men and fashion and career, constantly aware that she was barely good enough for what she had been given (*You achieved less with more than any of my students*), now free of ambition for a place in the world beyond the Tudor turrets that he paid for (flowers on her vanity white as guilt or as her hair tied with yellow silk), knowing she would marry him, shy *patrón* sipping Margaux at the Met, needing a companion to sustain conversations with clients and pretty poets quoting Sylvia Plath while weighing the benefits of suicide after two children and a failed marriage (but his beige linen suit all the words he needed, presentation more important than speech). She has her way with him, amuse and refuge, roles to play in a civilized dream (*Women have no wilderness in them, they are provident—*¹), every detail of her life planned, disrupted daily by third parties, Heisenberg intruders changing her predictable mien, a physical equation, marriage unperturbed, not ideal but good enough to justify her loyalty that keeps him close to home.

¹ Louise Bogan

Darwin (1871) Found Female Mate Choice ¹

The study of human sex has been viewed vigorously or, at the very least, empirical research on women's preferences of mates and marriage partners has invited the reader to judge this approach. Darwin discovered mechanisms that drive female choice and defined why females are choosier. The sex providing more parental investment is in demand and can be choosy, determined by gestation and length of suckling. Behavioral biases in females are conditions for choosiness to evolve. Generally, parenting is evident in some species, including humans, demonstrated across species of bird, insect, fish, reptile, and mammal. Women compete intensely for multiple mates, so psychological preferences have evolved to exploit the reproductive investment of the opposite sex. Men's relationships vary from very brief to decades, and the costs of reproduction are higher for women. Logic indicates that the best situation for a woman is a long-term partner with good genes and resources in terms of cultural success. Females generally prefer dominant males, and culturally successful men are motivated to use this potential. The children of culturally successful men have lower mortality in terms of psychological and physical health and longevity in adulthood, but female mate choice is complicated. The Kipsigis in Kenya are strongly influenced by the amount of land made available, and land and cattle are controlled by men. Women who gain access to large land plots have more grandchildren, and inadequate support is cause for divorce. High-status men have more wives, though a woman's preferred marriage partner and her actual marriage partner are not always the same. Due to competition from other women, women's preference for successful men is also found in singles ads and popular fiction novels.

¹ Found In Geary DC, Vigil J, Byrd-Craven J (2004) Evolution of human mate choice. *The Journal of Sex Research* 41: 27-42.

Crossroad (1972)

for the late Françoise Giroud

I Give You My Word like a blossoming *Inga*
penetrating air. Disowned by your comrade,
feigning humor to cope, stoically grieving two
men. Hard integrity, intentional living, surgical

mien with scars turned inward. Persian
silk your fabric shaped by tissue patterns draped
on living models tall as mother colored like a
zircon beach in Nice or jasper pinned to black

cashmere with yellow gold. Azure sea the color
of Tim's eyes, counterfoil to madness as
hydrangea skies are counterfoil to heat or to meteors
of the next Great Extinction Event seemingly

anticipated by bored primates setting aside reason
as we set aside men even in the midst of lust.
Paris streets, or, rather, boulevards, succoring
intimate transactions for butter, bread, Lyonnaise

tomatoes or love on love's terms, shopping for
everything in particular not like New York's
streets, random walking like worker ants, black
hymenopterans more ancient than rodents, symbols

of sleepless nights and putrid corners. You brought
lavender to work each day slaving for him and
L'Express with no regard for grievance—like a son
lost to snow when you worked nonetheless, not

skipping a beat. You, Lagerkvist's princess menaced
by dwarfs challenging your claim to Versailles,
a Jewess gambling with beauty and cunning, smart
as Hamadryas learning to decode pathways from

one source of safety to another—balancing on cliffs,
watching curious infants trip near edges sharp as the
touch of a needle sewing, seeing order unfolding from
one hot day to another in August when water is scarce

in a desert once traveled by Permian reptiles and
Quaternary hominins seeking tubers like monkeys
ruing toxic plants exposed to herbivores and meat-eaters
seeking to rest like women spent from a day of sewing

and caring, as you cared for him not complaining.
Chronicling two women's lives, different but not dissimilar,
each a genius laboring for glory through men or through
work like you writing and styling others' lives, disregarding

selfish motives of cynical peers wanting you wounded;
although, your regal stares repelled them, banished to
banal lives by your cunning, returning each barb with
winning decrees about culture in your *pais* where female

form is everything. Opera was your final act fitting for
a princess straddling classic and modern like a grey *Citroën*
standing elegant on a street in Medford, hydraulic powers
captivating all who cared to look, and everyone did.

for Juan Carlos Serio-Silva

Being wholly present is the most important thing, and Xalapa is the most beautiful word in Spanish. Am I unpatriotic for using Mexican oregano? Is my spaghetti sauce still Italian, or has it migrated to the plains west of Vera Cruz? Am I a Social Queer or a Political Queer or a Metro Queer or a Heteronormative Queer as I sit in Café Mardel wondering how to define myself, how to draw my race, class, gender as a Venn diagram or as a mathematical model, how to define “X”? This unknown is not the thing but what the thing stands for—pitch inside a space with gauzy boundaries, howler monkeys the moment before leaping, *Andira* the hour before budding, twelve gold shells encased in the anthropology museum once worn by an Aztec princess before her sacrifice, skin brown as tributaries after rain like Ernesto kissing Liliana’s lips red as rocks after Montezuma’s raid. I fell unwillingly on rocks formed by Cenozoic silt wanting to hibernate beneath a grey ledge on Isla Agaltepec until dry season returned sure as Cortés turning Tenochtitlan into Mexico City where he asked me to *do it* within hearing distance of Father Frizzell, and I said—

Not now, ask me later.

/dry briars—/ (Ithaca, NY, 1973)

for L. E.

If I make a stew of yams and beans and gravy showered with mother's chopped eggs dressed with sorrel and oil, would you recall stews of your youth, savory and fragrant, hopeful that advancing time repels death rather than marks its kinship? Or, would you become a wizard, hair hoary as chalk, stiff as dry briars clutching your skull like a halo, fog descending over every memory of gorges in Tompkins County, not fairy tales or fiction, but scenes meant for children and other things of beauty, landscape with unmarked trails leading to no outlet, Cascadilla Creek without tributaries, men in Brooktondale without jobs? Is there a future for farmers after backhoes clear their plots or for women after aging slows their gaits, waiting for invasives to overtake forests?

Soy Milk And Kale Make A Healthy Lunch In The Restaurant Near Citibank®

Alice Notley 1: Why aren't black women leading the vegan movement or saving whales? On the other hand, why don't black women hike the Pacific Trail or climb Mount McKinley?

Nikki Giovanni: Black women would rather take poetry classes and travel to Berlin. Furthermore, black commerce isn't taught at Howard Business School, locus of urban reform where black women try to Tweet on a bigger scale because there are no hedge funds in Harlem. Women's liberation movements support Ben Carson's whole brain emulation, a neuromorphic logic of rational economics, though if gender is a social construct, why doesn't Brooklyn have a Phyllis Wheatley Boulevard since there are only a few jobs in New York for black women who haven't heard of her? Banking would be socialized if black mothers read *The Wall Street Journal* to their daughters and read them Harryette Mullen's poem about loans between black men and their sisters.

Alice Notley: Why can't black women find their disorder in DSM-IV? Their boyfriends tell them they're crazy.

Nikki Giovanni: It's so easy for a poet to fail, though a black woman will write sonnets and laugh at a man's bad jokes while he flies her up the Hudson River so she'll make lobster rolls for dinner and vacuum his red Jaguar®. Did you know that, as of February 2016, black women began transitioning to a plant-based diet and working out with weights, and it will be easy to reform carnivores with funds donated by Walmart®?

/Won't Trump tax Mexican avocados....?/

Interlocutor 1: So, a random numbers table is deciding which fourteen-year-old girls in California must adopt a vegan diet, but won't they crave bacon?

Respondent 1: Stanford is conducting the experiment. The logic is unclear. In the second phase of the study, a representative sample of ten-year-old boys was selected to eat gluten-free food. Bacon has no gluten, but it is full of sulfites.

Interlocutor 2: When I visited my mother in Watts last week, I heard that the Mexican Avocado Cartel is funding the research project. Isn't MAC affiliated with FARC?

Respondent 1: MAC was once a commune in Chiapas working for agrarian reform, but the workers weren't revolutionaries because *patrons* paid good money. Besides, Mexicans and Colombians hate each other.

Interlocutor 1: I once made a dip using sour cream and bacon. My vegan friends refused to eat it. When I served the dip with wheat crackers, ten-year-old boys said I was breaking the rules. Are any of the Mexicans undocumented?

Respondent 2: Maybe, but MAC is not bound by ICE rules as long as farmers don't bring contraband into the US, though they can buy Tapatio® in Oakland.

Interlocutor 2: Won't Trump tax Mexican avocados when MAC crosses the border?

Respondent 2: Yes, and New York will be the only state that can sell guacamole from California.

ki-ne-sis

/kə'nēsis/

noun: movement; motion

Could Anthropology have saved your life? You didn't build a brand to be the best hacker but to respect the power reserve oscillating with in-house transformers. She was a media mastermind—a creative genius using random generators to diagnose hyperspace and network memes. You chose the worst time to post online about her investments in Sudanese startups and broadband drones, & her job for your friend's YouTube® channel. They told you Afro-technology is an Alpha Code in virtual time, though she was more interested in Science apps. She refused your gift since her grid ran out of memory, and her schedule was full for the next nine months, so you spent as much time as you could in Dubai where kinesis charged your lithium cells. Maintaining Google's® idiom was your idea of fun—like deleting posts and filtering off-topic tweets. She was a trailblazer among icons, and you always maintained that trans is the new black, but she preferred robots and Congolese men who purchased zip-drives powered by synths—making all the difference.

Morgan Parker Reinvented Herself In The Likeness Of Gottfried Benn

The most intimate thing is sleeping in a tent with a stranger without touching but smelling the unfamiliar body as if it were the rarest fruit on

earth. My friend joined a #BlackLivesMatter demonstration, but who cares if racism is real since all experience is time-sensitive and unreliable?

Besides, like drugs, experience is paradoxical, a rheostat mediating all effects, each of them defensible. Frederik studies dead trees, and

Gottfried Benn is his favorite poet, a Nazi in love with a beautiful Jew. Benn's

Morgue and Other Poems

earned the attention of Gertrude Stein who

disregarded Benn's politics because he was brilliant, forecaster of Poststructuralism, completing hundreds of autopsies in Berlin. Morgan Parker is reading

Benn's poems trying to reinvent herself as a Tragic Realist, but she doesn't privilege nihilism. She deconstructed Benn's line, "the lonesome molar of a

love-maid," and Parker's new collection,

Physical Decay Of Flesh,

was published by Soul Sista' Press.

Ben Lerner called Parker's poem, "Chronic Anxiety

Is Yellow," "a stunning treatment of the post-existential

police state, redefining America's fetishistic relationship to the black body." Helmut Schmidt told *PBS*, "I only

wanted to do my duty," but we never love a *person*, only a *type*. There are couples walking up the hill around that corner whose spines we cannot see.

Dennis Rodman Introduced Morgan Parker To Suvi Kopinen

In May, Morgan plans to fly to Seoul to protest
Performance Art in North Korea, where war is a sport,

though leader Kim played hockey in boarding school,
learning that sex is overrated. Morgan disagrees

because she played basketball with Bernie Sanders
in Finland where every citizen receives a minimum

salary. Morgan asked Dennis to meet her in Munich
to shop for a red gown since she was joining The

Canon of Poetry at a cocktail party celebrating
her new book,

Physical Decay Of Flesh,

dedicated to the late Gottfried Benn—physician,
soldier, poet. She wanted to meet Helmut Lang,

but he was in Helsinki discussing a show with Suvi
Kopinen, Morgan's favorite model, so Dennis promised to

drive Suvi to Morgan's house the next time they were in
Brooklyn eating Junior's® cheesecake, popular in Helsinki,

an import in great demand, supplied daily in refrigerated
cases by FinnAir®.

What goes around comes around.

/I want to be surrounded by things of beauty/

Men my age repel me, except the one I saw in Whole Foods® paying for a package of meat, not a cheap cut judging by the cut of his gray suit [maybe from Barney's®]

and by his Prada Spazzolato® sneakers, not the sort of Southern man who would have a negress for anything other than *fornication*, as my grandmother would say.

But, I wonder what his feet look like in flip-flops? I'm repelled by the sight of feet and by anyone's face after sleeping—sticky lips, swamp breath, crusted eyes

through which the bedroom is a blur. Only the beautiful should couple, and Marco Rubio has submitted a bill to Congress to deny the sale of marriage licenses to anyone over fifty.

A very good idea.

I want to be surrounded by things of beauty that haven't been repaired or haven't had a face lift.

Some bodies are perfect after fifty, so there would be exceptions to Rubio's law.

A Senate panel could look into that, but amendments don't usually succeed once bills are passed.

Stranger things have happened.

DNA Testing Proves That Life Is Worth Living

for Dalton Anthony Jones

1. He flew home on Quantas® to see Sydney for the last time...it was the little things that mattered when he needed an escape to an urban setting for a chance to live longer...the choice was his...it's not complicated...a medium skin tone is preferred by women from Puglia as long as the Rijksmuseum sells its Dutch Masters and Sydney expands the Paddington...every temple in Japan has a hot tub and the best thing of all was not getting what he wanted because the height of style depends upon the annual quest for respect...if his body craved vitamin D I couldn't perform miracles but the sun in Laos shines eighteen hours every day unlike Frankfurt where it is always overcast...someone left a message on his iPhone 8® that said *Meet me at Olive Garden® to sign a few papers and I will be indebted to you for life...* charity is a virtue so in the spirit of friendship he caught the redeye back to Boston where his lover's husband left for Tel Aviv on the next flight...in a villa housing indigenous art he weighed the pros and cons of winning...generally the gold standard improves breathing but on Tuesday he noticed psoriasis though he was allergy-tested last year and his doctor said it was nothing...travel reduced stress when he was at risk for asthma so he returned to Quito for genetic testing.

2. Cloud forests in Ecuador hot at high altitude humid for decades of radical sons driven like FARC into cities before tribunals of authorship in journals the color of bat wings folded like papers in green cases damaged on crumbling tarmac...beauty betrayed by bondsmen seeking payment for gold wrought from veins near Cascabel and for a midnight call to noone in particular when source and sink were found on the same plane but at different scales as ecosystems are multilevel networks nodes appearing every meter along the limbs of *Andira* and *Inga* and strangler figs growing gracefully as he did before the earthquake in Quito branched for thirty meters—an icon of indiemedia the Anthropocene arriving faster than he expected otherwise deforested like hectares by the river where his ghost appeared from Brooklyn offering trout and tea cakes calming children wearing combat boots to an imaginary war in the mangrove swamps of Vera Cruz where Cortes ate monkeys for praise and Mayans ate snakes out of pride for sacrifice and prayer humid as wet season and panting geniuses running from Cañas to the hacienda where Corobici's sallow waters exposed rhizomes and rocks.

Black Trauma Isn't Listed In The DSM Because Negroes Never Complain

Since slavery, blacks have lifted weak economies, but they still vote as a block that made Carter President.

•

You're not going to convince the coloreds to vote for Bernie.

•

I've never had good sex and a good man at the same time, but anything is possible when I imagine the perfect lover who would look like the clerk in Staples® but have a brain like Obama's, and in another ten years anyone could have a brain transplant, but it would cost a fortune.

•

A face transplant would be cheaper and more fun but would sag after five years.

•

Once I was in Vienna with a Swedish salesman who snapped my picture in front of a castle and told me I would look better with blonde hair and thinner lips, but his friend wanted to watch us *do it* in Hotel Austria, so it occurred to me that I might be in danger.

•

My father was a man of principle since he had a chance to molest me but didn't, though brains grow in complexity so that judgment improves.

•

I would want my surgeon to give me the brain of someone with a low I.Q. so life wouldn't seem so complicated.

-

Everything is relative, and feelings can change from hour to hour.

-

But they always return to the same place, like the clerk at Staples® who arrives at work by eight even on days when he doesn't want to leave the house.

I Dreamed Of Swimming In The Mediterranean, But My Parents Didn't Believe In Inherited Wealth

The Stockholm Review won't publish poems about Paris because "Mona Lisa" is black America's favorite work of art which cheapens anything French; although, Céline® has increased in value since most blacks are too large to wear their clothes, but Chanel® suits are duplicated in the garment district for Bloomingdales®, worn in Queens and Harlem, proving that fashion makes the woman.

•

Nonetheless, Mexicans don't wear French outfits while they're visiting Barcelona where Ben Lerner had anxiety attacks and met his wife the same year my parents bought land on Ibiza that they sold three years later because blacks don't believe in investing.

•

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and Donald Trump didn't wait three years before building the tower.

•

My parents cashed out after buying a plot but, then, couldn't afford a beach umbrella.

•

Lying on the sand without protection from rays was no fun so they sold to a doctor from Paris who had never flown to Sri Lanka where my father was stationed before the State Department demoted him to Nigeria after my mother solicited me when I was fifteen and told me that her marriage was a success because she let my father have his way.

•

In Mammalogy class I learned that marsupial bats have been found on Ibiza, but Don Wilson says he doubts the report is true.

-

*Chance favors the prepared mind.*¹

¹ Pierre Curie

Anonymous (or Eurogamer.net Is My Nephew's Favorite Sport)

My sister's son has simian ears and ochre skin,
but she says his superior brain compensates for his lack of beauty.
When he asked her why his toes are webbed, she told him to Google® it
which he did,
but the word "gene" confused him since he knows a girl named "Jean."
Most days he was content to play video games until my sister wanted to talk—
she always began by saying,

I need to reality test, and you're the best therapist money can't buy,

with a grin exposing her teeth stained by Camels® and black tea.
The squeal in her voice made his toes curl,
and he had the satisfaction of knowing her complete devotion.
Like Freud, he never had to say a word

since she droned on and on about her disappointments and failures and
resentments and betrayals, compulsively recording race, gender, location,
time-frame
and every other detail remembered eidetically since the age of three
when our mother drank a bottle of Jack Daniel's® on top of forty Valium®

while watching an episode of *As The World Turns*®.
Our stepmother always told us,

If you can't do it alone, do without,

but my sister requires continual validation.
Usually she insists on his undivided attention,

but sometimes his eyes drift back to the screen,
a motion causing her speech to race.

Exciting her by withdrawing what she most desires makes him shiver,
better than touching himself when she finally leaves his room.

Haibun To Pink

I am a transgender man who still dresses like a woman. Old habits are hard to change. I have a highly refined sense of fashion, and any starlet in L.A. would be proud to have my wardrobe. My girlfriend says my gender is fluid, but I am not non-binary. My self-esteem relies upon a male worldview reinforced with each dose of testosterone. My psychiatrist says I'm an interesting case, presenting with symptoms of dysphoria and cross-dressing, but, I feel no anxiety or decompensation typical of the mentally ill. In community college, my Psychology instructor said girls like pink because girls are a lot of fun, and I guess she's right because my friends call me, "Merry," and most of my outfits are pink or mauve. My girlfriend and I like to go shopping for shoes, but the hormones have changed the shape of my feet—not only the shape of my future.

A mental construct
depends on a point of view
and a stylish dress.

/We're allowed to be ignorant/

The power of rational debate is overrated. I love you,
but I cannot know more than earthquakes shifting the

land at La Pacifica, *Inga's* leaves fluttering from tectonic
shifts after your therapist reprogrammed your life,

leaving you depressed, an Aboriginal hiding from an
Anthropologist's rifle, a scientist in the Outback collecting

plants and walkabouts, hot as the walls of a cell in sunlight,
spiny hands with wrinkled fingers pointing

southeast to Melbourne and a future marked by flightless
birds. Our mother was hysteric so the house was never calm,

but she found her illness in the DSM—performing
molesting after daddy drove us to a bistro in Cherry Hill

where the owner turned us away. In Paris, Simone loved an
ugly man because he was predictable if she was available, and

Sartre was a gender—he was gendering like water breaking
the glass holding it, or blood breaking the walls of vessels,

or a baby fracturing its mother's arms. We saw Rouaults
at the Fricke but thought the paintings ugly—bodies outlined

in thick, dark paint like a thin strip of tarmac gripping cement.
An apricot resting on Carrara marble is not rendered desirable
by staging lemongrass beside it.

*We're allowed to be ignorant but not allowed to make a mistake.*¹

¹ Japanese Proverb

Can A Passive-Aggressive Woman Be Secretary Of Defense?

for Clara K. Jackson Brown

I asked my nanny what was wrong with me so she asked my mother who said I could find the illness in DSM-IV, page 733.

She said it could be treated with medication but didn't have time to take me to the doctor.

My nanny said she would do it, but mother told her that Dr. Baranga doesn't like dark-skinned negroes even though Grace was white on the inside.

Speaking of disease my mother said the stomach flu was sweeping the East Coast from North Carolina to New Jersey showing that a virus could wipe out the country if it wanted to or that North Korea could win a war without a hydrogen bomb though everyone would be susceptible to airborne microbes, even the aggressor.

Mother said that if she could do it all over again she would still be a chemist but would work on weapons for D.O.D.

My grandmother told her to avoid

coarse coloreds,

but my mother knew that negroes didn't build bombs.

She said the government wouldn't hire me because of my disability, but Education was desperate for anybody.

Mother used to tell me I could do anything I wanted as long as I acted like a lady, but now I know she was only trying to make me feel good about myself.

Now, I teach third grade at Rosebud Reservation and usually take my meds after lunch.

Get over it. No-one promised you a rose garden.

/hardy as a tardigrade/

Adapted to xeric conditions, she is hardy as a tardigrade, successfully practicing marketing though the bourgeoisie live by rules set by the upper class. The poor do not have a good track record of controlling the

well-educated, but she is used goods not a spinster, green as scabrous bracken fern in a bower of ecosystem collapse. With an I.Q. of 160, her brain is virtually identical to the brain of someone with an I.Q. of 75, a primitive phylogeny

of polygynous relatives, guinea pigs meiotic in their commitment to lagomorphs moving with incumbent palimpsests, ricocheting waves wet like a heart attack marooned at sea. Quaternary signals settling in shale below black loam where earthworms

aerate microbes hanging on rhizomes spreading their kind, every underground species multiplying faster than melanoma, wet as fontanels and paler, deprived of sun. She is “wasting her sons,” probably without damage to stem cells capable of repairing

any organ that may break since they have a soul. The Philosophy of Art is as useful to workers as Psychology is to plants, and a bee leaves its cell learning to forage without a queen, unlike a baby monkey following its mother to a flowering tree.

/Tom Friedman said we live in a knowledge economy—/

You can dress me up, but you can't take me anywhere because I have constant post-nasal drip. My boyfriend says he's rolling the dice, but I'm not sure that I figure

in his plans. We were supposed to enjoy Paris, but I was sick the whole time, so he went to the Louvre alone and said I didn't miss anything, then he promised to buy

me a wedge of Gruyère, but the lines were long, and the odor of cheese made his stomach turn. By the time our week was up we had made the room our own and

learned a few words of French from watching TV, expecting the language to put us in the mood, but nothing made us feel like touching. Room Service brought

pastries and wine which were better than I expected though my allergies were so bad I couldn't taste much. Tom Friedman said we live in a knowledge economy, but

what is there to know that the average person needs? I can't reverse global warming or save lions, and I wouldn't change my life for information, so I searched for a *King James Bible*

but only found calling cards printed, *L'art est toujours*. I packed the whole stack for souvenirs since holidays make memories, but they're not going to get me where I want to go.

She's Been Waiting All Day For You To Call

for Mary Jane West-Eberhard

Class is a trope for the master-slave bond, and the desire to produce on a
bigger scale. Curated
projects create global narratives
about serialized victims

tracking a solitary butterfly's lonely migration to Mexico, a seeker's journey
to discover why Entomologists are the vanguard of Artificial
Intelligence and why vespid robots

have the I.Q. of mole rats. There are few jobs in Oaxaca for people who
dissect notochords,
but Burger King® in Boston only hires housewives
who have never heard of Otto Plath

who knew that "tragic realism" can become "nihilism" overnight. History is
not about the colonist
but what the colonist stands for;
though a pattern generator could

improve marriage by introducing a measure of risk. Nothing is wrong with
her though
her chrysalis hair is eclosing, so she
remains in a class by herself.

/Cabernet and butter—/

1. Risk-taking woman standing close to embankments, loved ones left behind like evening abandoning daylight inhabiting a blank space circling Leticia's tarmac, one engine disabled a fortnight after landing as we touched down in Cape Cod, perilous descents into humid wilderness, not pausing for preliminaries or comfort or gratitude, without a normal sense of caution, the gaucherie of each predicament as if preceded by philistine training, preceded, instead, by *tempezcuintle* served by a Yagua *empleada* whose kinsmen we saw on another tributary lolling passively as indigenous tribesmen are conditioned to comport. River dolphins gray and lachrymose, dusky as Ithaca in winter, belief suspended crossing Twin Towers on a wire or watching piranhas scrape derma from shins—shoulders and breasts exposed to the boundary dividing day and night, a dim glow riving truth and deception, knowing power devolves from her *persona*, as green from blue, gray from black, bogo from Iniidae.

2. Our adventure in San José—atmosphere (curry, anise) redolent with Cabernet and butter, you, feeding me ice cream—silky vanilla, black seedy ants in pale amber—crying in the car. I didn't understand since the highest form of praise is not getting what you want, and sensitive men show no restraint, no wealth of austere countenance, no stoic mien inviting calm exposed by eye or sound.

3. You always were a cowboy, riding away on a horse or in an old pickup toward an amerikan desert of innocent imagination where freedom is ordained by country songs. Don't you get it? We've aged. I barely recall those days in Vermont, that bed of grass a childish trace of scenes uncorrupted by facts. The only signs of you remaining—a blue handkerchief, a silver pot, an eating habit.

4. You cantered through my life as French wore lace. I was a sycophant to your design.

Untitled—11/8/2016

for Albert Bierstadt

When I was seven I bought a Bierstadt
With money from my aunt who said
The world's richest whites live in Monaco
And America's richest coloreds live in Oakland.
Swimming in the deep end is too good to be true
And I deserve the best.
One gallery in Cotuit has ten unique rooms
But St. Etienne on Fifty-seventh has four Schiele's
And unique faucets that work perfectly outdoors.
Volvos are made for life
So contact me for brochures about my urbane shop
Selling ormolu fittings
And Steuben prisms imitating the Bauhaus model.
When Belgians made fabrics and painted objects
From ethnic designs
My neighbors were touring Quito
Seeking photographs of Sontag
Who flew to Stockholm—reinventing herself—
Accompanied by a negro stylist wearing green every day—
The color of artichokes in a Breughel painting.
On occasion, America sends nationals
To the civilized world
For culture or holiday or food
Though I worked with Basquiat in Portland—
The favorite spot of artists from Peru.
Victorian cabinetry is well within my reach.
I bought a Warhol after tax season
When a visit to Amsterdam exposed the focal point
Of the whole museum
And Leibovitz photographed Robert's pool
Where the terrace is shaded by creeping kudzu.

Eating Spaghetti In The Canadian Rockies

My daughter-in-law left my son and went to live in the Canadian Rockies with their five-year-old who wanted to see Kodiak bears catch salmon from the Columbia River in Spring when my son walked from Cleveland to Detroit to talk with his therapist about his nervous tic that got worse every time he made lasagna for his girlfriend who told him he was using the wrong recipe and that Stouffer's® Italian foods are better than anything he could make himself. My son remembered that his wife never liked lasagna because the wide sheets of pasta reminded her of gauze bandages, and tomato sauce is the thickness of blood exposed to air except in the lowland tropics where nothing coagulates because of the heat, and everything is green like spinach that my grandson dipped into vinaigrette dressing, but olive oil isn't sold in the Rockies so my daughter-in-law spreads mayonnaise on lettuce which my grandson won't eat unless it is mixed with spaghetti and canned salmon. He wrote a postcard to his father with the recipe, but his mother forgot to mail it before my son learned to make stuffed peppers with ginger snap gravy instead of tomato sauce. He bought a bike because walking hurt his feet and never forgets to take his psychiatrist Tupperware® filled with shrimp.

Do You Have Change For A One Dollar Bill?

Families in Appalachia and negroes in Atlanta have more in common than two peas in a pod, and I should know since Mama named me Gladys Knight because Grandpa was born in Georgia. Don and I met at a Rainbow Gathering in Madison County and rented a room in Mars Hill for the winter until I got pregnant when we decided to live in a commune where he became an anarchist and started a Robespierre study group. The leader of my feminist collective convinced me to organize a boycott of Free State Books for publishing Joel Johnson's poem about how to seduce women, and Don and I got married though an anarchist doesn't, but he makes exceptions to any rule. Robespierre taught his followers to join barter economies so Capitalism could be defeated, so Don quit his job to rescue chickens in exchange for produce, and Mama told me I should have been careful what I wished for. When the baby arrived Don said the revolution would come in her lifetime and served me an omelet in bed.

Haibun For Radicalized Sons

You dreamed of a voyage with Darwin, your sons chasing finches, riding tortoises, remembering when they could not color between the lines, when they traded basketballs for handguns or for suicide belts, Chicago and Ben Gardane not too different than London or San Pedro in your mind, or America from Tunisia where their brothers cry for them each time they part, and you ululate with broken heart. They are your sons of color, networks of rage, their revolutions impulsive storms like furies at Tierra del Fuego or the Cape a continent away, alienated and marginalized by capital, contempt for your weakness, repulsed by your contented mien living within borders bound by home. Like Darwin at Down House, you wanted nothing more than to sit at tables preparing specimens for display in locked cases, sons deracinated on dusty streets.

You remember them
cooing in your folded arms—
blossoming flowers.

/the other side of the coin/

for Jaguar

My heart is heavy because my son has been radicalized through no fault of my own. How can a boy become rudderless in a world with so many choices? He drove a cab for three years, but that wasn't good enough so he went to work for Walmart® to get a medical plan. He thinks he's worth more than nine dollars an hour, but he dropped out of trade school so what does he expect? His brother never complains—gives me ten dollars a week that I save in my purse for a rainy day. My son says I'm crazy, and I guess I am. Things haven't been the same since my cat disappeared. It's a bad idea to love something that can die, but what choice did I have when she jumped in my arms while I was riding the carousel in Wildwood? Last year I found a dayglo-green sweater at Goodwill®, but the color clashed with my pink skirt. My son calls me a bag lady, but I know he doesn't mean it. He only hurts my feelings so that I will see the other side of the coin.

Everybody has a story.

May I Help, Or Would That Make Things Worse?

I am a self-hating negro who lives in a prison of her own making. My psychiatrist specializes in mood disorders, and most of her clients are alienated members of the black underclass. She told me to call her Carole because her feminist collective is opposed to hierarchy and because last names remind her of male oppression. Carole was once married to Dr. Ben Grander, a Physical Anthropologist widely known for his research on African-American sexual habits. His most famous paper presents data proving that the average circumference of flaccid penises do not differ significantly between negro and Danish men. Carole said that Ben is brilliant but sexually repressed, except after watching videos of his naturalistic studies. After her divorce, Carole and her partner adopted a colored boy named Leslie and are raising *them* according to the non-binary principles of the late sociologist, Sandy Bem. Carole is transparent with me, so I hide nothing from her and have shared my plan to travel to Yemen and join a charismatic religious group. Carole suggested that before I leave, I should read the prize-winning book, *Tribal Governments Today*, so I won't experience culture shock when I arrive. She renewed my Lamictal® prescription for six months, enough time to decide whether to stay in the Middle East, but I was shy about saying that I've met a Tunisian man online who promises he will make me happy by teaching me to serve a higher purpose. Maybe he is Buddhist, and we will transcend self together, but, if Ahmed has something else in mind, I'm certain it will be for my own good. Carole always tells me I have an adventurous spirit, and I feel prepared for any challenge.

Yours Truly, “Alienated”

She has no private life, motherhood consumes her from
inside-out like her father’s game, a smothering, a pillow

leading to remorseful sex, a pillow cover monogrammed
in Wedgewood blue, a “B” stitched in Ariel like something

remarkable—an infant’s fontanel, a melting icecap, a
radicalized son punishing himself for the scars she left in

his synapses, chemical traces of a different sort of—*jihad*—
another type of suicide bomb, familial disease carried from

the Kalahari to Jamestown, from Leigh Street to Brook
Road, from New Jersey to Sri Lanka, the barrenness of a

brain after shock therapy or of a chamber before filling,
blood red as cayenne or as lips burning from lust, no division

between home and work, her grief exposed as poems written
for dead *jihadis* and for their mothers catatonic as mammals

in torpor or patients hypnotized by shiny objects swinging in
front of hazy eyes and somnolent brains.

/where mothers stop weaving/

The mountains are not waiting to be climbed nor oceans sailed. Poets are not waiting to inspire nor women toil for lace or textiles wrought by weathered hands near desert's whilom wilderness, rugged wives obeying Nature's rules, haplotypes bound like lion prides, spooled like *Bothrops*, settled like rhizomes brown with loam—where terror's psychology turns on whether bombers were enemies or sons drinking warm Coke® from stained cups, Rorschachs of unconscious fates—*o tempora, o mores*—since somewhere a defense minister takes notes with an Extra-Fine Pilot G®, green ink marking a general's report printed on paper the color of sky after rain or of a son's skin after death, wet from Indus' overflow, a sailor's breeze sneaking up sleeves of a shirt belonging to an older brother fighting somewhere on a day too still for laughter. The shortest day is long to households in Kabul destined to fall if its roads are bombed, where mothers stop weaving when power is a function of unknowns $f(X)$, and sons have left home to join a different tribe.

Volcán Arenal

for Adrienne Rich

Fighting for agrarian reform, reading Galeano poems,
sitting at a table in Cañas—wet season meeting *Inga*
and tapirs near the rim of Arenal. Opposition is intimate,

and your mother ululates when you leave to foment war—
breaking rules like sturdy tardigrades in hostile habitats
with rhabdomeric eyes and sticky glands, surviving with

fossils from Cambrian's brown substrate. You are 39,
more anxious than someone twice your age, remembering
when mothers were blamed for everything [*Freud*]
—not

that religion ever tempted you, but your home is a war zone,
and your birthmark is shaped like an ant though everyone
thought your leg was broken when you fell on rocks hard

as tarmac. Genomes imprinted with maternal DNA
awash as biomarkers clustering loci or fluid as a group
of spider monkeys foraging for fruit—little ones riding on

their mothers' backs between then and now, synergy of
primates and plant genera scaling like lullabies and ecotypes
before flowering time—your favorite meal, yucca and

rice. You are privileged and have no complaint since
borders cross war zones—silt rolling down *volcán* as
you eat entrecôt, and she washes dishes after her tea party.

Mother Sonnet

1. Your mother wouldn't look you in the eye until you made something of yourself.
2. *rb-c>0*
3. Why does it have to be you?
4. Do you want to talk about it?
5. "Majoli uses watercolor and gouache to paint solitary, rubber-encased male figures involved in sexual fetish acts of sensory deprivation."¹
6. She's not colored; she's not negro. She lives on the margins with other hard-wired Afrobots.
7. Your pills won't cure all diseases though you may feel healthy visiting parks where birdwatchers go to see thrashers and towhees.
8. You never thought you would make it this far since you have innate cognitive-dissonance that makes you the weak link in the chain.
9. The commodification of black art exposes its function and dysfunction.
10. She wants you to explore the interface between poetry and sculpture to regulate development and health by transcription of $\text{A}\beta$ secretion.
11. Every poet must see the Mayan exhibit in Merida.
12. Poetry forms dynamic, interactive fields for reading, viewing, interpretation, and representation. Is this something your mother cares about?
13. Your microbiome is a personal choice.
- 14a. This is only the beginning of your journey to health, though you know

that her DNA matches yours, and she is sciencing a lobster risotto since her only goal is to win.

14b. Is dopamine released each time her reward center is activated?

¹ Michael Duncan (2006, December), *Art in America*, p. 153

Desire On The Amazon

1. Wabi Sabi with you on the river and later in the forest drinking café negro, your dugout resting on the bank 20 meters from your camp— sleeping alone in a tent left by gringos in Leticia, far from your village as I was from my children, not wanting to die but not caring, a kensho moment like the moment after Mishima knew he would do it or the moment before Truman gave the order or before walking on this path encumbered by a morbid affect, silver and guttural, an evening when smoky skies were foreboding, signs that maps would be repurposed or repressed, holomorphs of wet networks modeling patterns formed to house the rules of why my neurons decelerated almost to a stop, no longer signaling to Broca, broken pathways from ideas to speech, safety as tenuous as the feelings I was trying to avoid with the comfort of mathematics, proof that perception and Physics form cartographies that humans know as Truth.

2. I wish I had walked with Permian reptiles eating insects and fish, but neurobiology is no fiction.

3. Body as grid, not like a graph on paper but a grid of probabilities, order in statistics spread by axons fibrous as responsive sinews, stress perturbing symmetry when linear and complex converge.

4. Cause, effect intersecting like lovers' lethargic morns waking slowly to each other with empathy the first mark of a day meant for other types of tension beginning with some stimulus unrecorded so forgotten as memories of maps fail when conditions change like moods in flux in space and time, fuzzy dimensions consolidated by the law of averages. Maps reduced to simple rules numerical and variegated as *Andira* flowers.

5. A moral woman choosing a mate is not making an aesthetic judgment. I was not making an aesthetic judgment. Therefore, I was a moral woman.

6. Actions and neurons were a quantified connectome, patterned and predictable.