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Slow Reading Club - Women and Children First 07/03/20

As for the bed straightened by
visible hands only it is huge.

oblique function (45° tilt)
Spines of book and reader, askew by 45 degrees. Reading together in groups. Body at half elevation.

twicing
Clad text with its double at the distance of a line. That is, while reading, speak twice each line. In groups, one reader each her paragraph.

shared load
Scam the text without meaning: on some signal, a single word is spoken (each likely different). Thus, vertical the text.

earplugs
Hyperbolic form, giddy, expresses itself against the inner skins. That is, while reading aloud, place earplugs into the ears. Reading out loud & together. Perform in joy.

triangles
Suppleclump bodies in threes. Architecting the legs at triangles. Downcast diaphragm, speaklow, eyes to eyes while listening.

skin on skin (wanting nothing and desiring everything)
While partnered, the mutual, comfortable touching of skins is had (e.g.) holding hands, touching wrists, a desireless finger in the navel. Thus, practice alternating between wanting nothing and desiring everything.

white noise
Two roles: reader and listener, in perpendicular relation. L finds a seated position with the R's head laying in lap. L places hands on the vocal chords of the R. Head still in lap. R reads aloud the text. Repeat and Repeat. Oxy cotton noising from the wings. Alternating roles is asked, but not insisted.

Script from 'Blue' (1993)
Derek Jarman

You say to the boy open your eyes
When he opens his eyes and sees the light
You make him cry out. Saying

O Blue come forth
O Blue arise
O Blue ascend
O Blue come in

I am sitting with some friends in this cafe drinking coffee served by young refugees from Bosnia. The war rages across the newspapers and through the ruined streets of Sarajevo.

Tania said "Your clothes are on back to front and inside out". Since there were only two of us there I took them off and put them right then and there. I am always here before the doors open.

What need of so much news from abroad while all that concerns either life or death is all transacting and at work within me.

I step off the kerb and a cyclist nearly knocks me down. Flying in from the dark he nearly parted my hair.

I step into a blue funk.

The doctor in St. Bartholomew's Hospital thought he could detect lesions in my retina—the pupils dilated with belladonna—the torch shone into them with a terrible blinding light.

Look left
Look down
Look up
Look right

Blue flashes in my eyes.

Blue Bottle buzzing
Lazy days
The sky blue butterfly
Sways on the cornflower
Lost in the warmth
Of the blue heat haze
Singing the blues
Quiet and slowly
Blue of my heart
Blue of my dreams
Slow blue love
Of delphinium days

[...]

I have lost the sight on the periphery of my right eye.

I hold out my hands before me and slowly part them. At a certain moment they disappear out of the corner of my eyes. This is how I used to see. Now if I repeat the motion this is all I see.

I shall not win the battle against the virus—in spite of the slogans like "Living with AIDS". The virus was appropriated by the well—so we have to live with AIDS while they spread the quilt for the moths of Ithaca across the wine dark sea.

Awareness is heightened by this, but something else is lost. A sense of reality drowned in theatre.

Thinking blind, becoming blind.

In the hospital it is as quiet as a tomb. The nurse fights to find a vein in my right arm. We give up after five attempts. Would you faint if someone stuck a needle into your arm? I've got used to it—but I still shut my eyes.

The Gautama Buddha instructs me to walk away from illness. But he wasn't attached to a drip.

Fate is the strongest
Fate Fated Fatal
I resign myself to Fate

Blind Fate
The drip stings
A lump swells up in my arm
Out comes the drip
An electric shock sparks up my arm

How can I walk away with a drip attached to me?
How am I going to walk away from this?

I fill this room with the echo of many voices
Who passed time here
Voices unlocked from the blue of the long dried paint
The sun comes and floods this empty room
I call it my room
My room has welcomed many summers
Embraced laughter and tears
Can it fill itself with your laughter
Each word a sunbeam
Glancing in the light
This is the song of My Room
Blue stretches, yawns and is awake.

[...]

I am a mannish
Muff diving
Size queen
With bad attitude
An arse licking
Psychofag
Molesting the flies of privacy
Balling lesbian boys
A perverted heterodemon
Crossing purpose with death

I am a cock sucking
Straight acting
Lesbian man

With ball crushing bad manners
Laddish nymphomaniac politics
Spunky sexist desires
Of incestuous inversion and
Incorrect terminology
I am a Not Gay

H.B. is in the kitchen
Greasing his hair
He guards the space
Against me
He calls it his office
At nine we leave for the hospital

H.B. comes back from the eye dept
Where all my notes are muddled
He says
It's like Romania in there
Two light bulbs
Grimly illuminate
The flaking walls
There is a box of dolls
In the corner
Indescribably grim
The doctor says
Well of course
The kids don't see them
There are no resources
To brighten the place up

My eyes sting from the drops
The infection has halted
The flash leaves
Scarlet after image
Of the blood vessels in my eye

Teeth chattering February
Cold as death
Pushes at the bedsheets
An aching cold
Interminable as marble
My mind
Frosted with drugs ices up

A drift of empty snowflakes
Whiting out memory
A blinkered twister
Circling in spirals
Cross-eyed meddlesome consciousness
Shall I? Will I?
Doodling death watch
Mind how you go

[...]

The darkness comes in with the tide
The year slips on the calendar
Your kiss flares
A match struck in the night
Flares and dies
My slumber broken
Kiss me again
Kiss me
Kiss me again
And again
Never enough
Greedy lips
Speedwell eyes
Blue skies

Sphinx (1986)

Anne Garéta

trans. Emma Ramadan (2015)

That evening, without a glance at the audience, I steered myself toward a table tucked to the side where I always insisted on sitting, and where A*** was waiting for me. The proclamations that I had debated nonstop en route crystallised unexpectedly at the sight of A***, and I abruptly broached the subject close to my heart, as if to get it out of the way. A declaration of love is always tedious; it exceeded my patience to dilute the exasperation of my passion in a detailed statement, to represent discursively the unbearable confusion of my immediate desire—tolerating neither delay nor explanation, so much did its urgency torment me. My intentions were clear; my speech only muddled and veiled them in incoherence. I was alternating aimlessly between snippets of narration, the minutes of my interior monologue, syllogisms and images, passing without transition from slang to high style and from the trivial to the abstract without ever finding the right tone or genre in which to deliver my words. A*** was taken aback by this unprecedented bout of garrulous, confused violence.

A***'s response to the declaration I proved incapable of making was, however, perfectly clear. It could be summarised with a simple verdict: "You must not love me"—an attempt to claim that A*** was unworthy of my passion and that it would damage our friendship. A***'s propensity had always been to refrain from passionate attachments of the flesh, attachments that, once broken by misfortune, betrayal, or accident, resulted in prejudicial excess of sadness. Consequently, A*** thought it wise to disavow the idea of amorous possession, which could do nothing but exacerbate my confusion and forbid us from returning thereafter to that honest friendship, that guarantee of stability, to which we would be better of confining ourselves. That response, the arguments used to justify A***'s refusal, were attempts to disorient me; in fact they did nothing but accentuate the imperative violence of my desire.

They also left room for debate. All of the notions of love A***'s reasoning invoked seemed erroneous to me, and I set about proving it. Those reasons were only a pretext; I wanted the truth. I was ranting, using can-

ning to obtain it, and seeing that the facts were being concealed from me, I brazenly concluded that they must have been in my favour. We spent the night discussing, disputing the erroneous fables used to justify A***'s refusal, and the valid reasons for my desire. Through every tone I modulated the absolute demand and legitimacy of my passion.

In return, A*** took refuge behind a moderation far from the habitual impulsiveness to which I was accustomed. That night the inversion was complete: I made myself into a demon, and A*** symmetrically put on the mask of the angel that I had abandoned. A***'s final argument, pronounced on the threshold of the Eden, was of this order: "I rely on your friendship, and a physical relationship would annihilate it irremediably; so you must not love me, for such a relationship would be hellish. Don't ask of me what I am unable to give you without the risk of letting you down." I relate neither the exact terms of this plea—they were much more trivial—nor the precise progression of A***'s personal logic, which was much less clearly defined. And I cannot relate them simply because A*** never formulated a link between successive sentences.

From an unorganised mass of statements, of partial notes and arguments, I managed to extract a line of reasoning, a collection of synthetic propositions that I subsequently reiterated to verify their accuracy. For example, the following statements, made more than an hour apart: "If I agree to sleep with you, things won't be the same afterward," and, "I'm ill-tempered, no one tolerates me for long," and, "We can't sleep together, we'll end up fighting because neither one of us will want to let the other take the lead." I concluded implicitly that A***, only able to imagine love as a system of power relations, could only envisage our relationship as a battle, leading irremediably to a violent rupture. I had to translate and arrange every word so that they became intelligible to me. Add to this some misunderstandings stemming from different mother tongues and perhaps one can grasp the difficulty of my enterprise.

This resistance, despite being hard to define, did not disarm me: I persevered and I kept at it for weeks, trying to prove to A*** through every means imaginable that to succumb to my pleas and do the deed, far from destroying our affection, would only deepen and reinforce it. I insisted, tactically, on this shocking fact: A***'s not-so prudish attitude could co-exist with my moral rigidity, and a carefree practice of bodily exhibition

could rub shoulders with an equally strong contempt and suspicion of the flesh. In other words, that A***'s excesses could go hand in hand with my moderation and decorum. Far from being enraged by my obstinacy or taking offence at my incessant urging, A*** found it all quite amusing. This was a good sign. Certainly the variety of my pleas was astonishing; one finds oneself suddenly capable of deploying the treasures of rhetoric, imagination, and persuasion in order to convince someone to have sex—a very common ambition, and not so interesting when one thinks about it in the cold light of day. But voilà, the price that I seemed to attach to my conquest, measured in terms of the energy and ingenuity I was expending, was high enough to be flattering. What must have at first seemed like a blaze of concupiscence was, over time, taking on real form.

Our daily telephone conversation were no longer anything but a game: a hypothetical reconstruction of our relationship if A*** were to succumb to my desires. We were presenting each other with illusions, visions, and tableaux. The object of this display was to figure out how to get along without drama, how to deal with the overcrowding engendered by a relationship that we hoped would not be temporary, but rather truly invested with stable affections, tastes, habits, and lifestyles—all of which differed radically, even more each day. We discussed everything down to the most trivial details. Would we live together? And if so, how would we divide up the household chores? Would we sleep in separate beds, thus shielding ourselves from the boredom of a complacent conjugality? And if not, what type of bedding would we choose? A*** was pushing for the classic pairing of sheets and covers, I for the more rational duvet.

The slow workings of this fiction, which didn't shy away from ridiculous or insignificant detail, were taking on the meticulous traits of familiarity. I was winning A*** over to the possibility of such a relationship. Its incongruity, its danger was dissipating in the soothing quietude of our constructed fable. Repetition and habit tend to diffuse excess. A*** was no longer systematically imagining the worst, no longer predicting disasters at every turn; the scenarios were becoming less catastrophic. Our union, by dint of simulation, was no longer inconceivable. The game of "and if" wore down A***'s reluctance; every day, we already belonged to each other in our imaginations. My desire was gaining power through a trick, was gaining life through a fiction.

from Calligraphy Typewriters: The Selected Poems of Larry Eigner (2017)
Larry Eigner

(c.1952-53)

The midnight birds remind me of day
though they are
out in the night
beyond the curtain I can't see

Somehow bedrooms don't carry
tradition I
and the boxed radio
is off. But what am I reading

inward performance

Has relevance. Allows me to hear
while something speaks. As for the bed
straightened by visible hands
only it is huge
when I feel down in darkness

GO FOR A SAMADHI
feel different

1st CHAKRA

BEGIN
BEGIN WITH ME

Hooray GET OUT is a JOE musical not an order COME SOON NO I PASS NO pass the paper wine YOU HAVE ORDERS *fix the page* WRONG BAR Too late u met Michael at the Tin Palace PARTY free pass OMIT to La Mama good night Bernadette BEGIN Going backwards: QUARTER TO TEN: see GO OUT WHERE YOU TRY SOBOSSEKS FIRST. agent London ACTION. don't hesitate MISS TIN PALACE SEE MICHAEL GO WORDS He knows an agent WOW *get linoleum* TALK TO MARJORIE see Joe, hello to Bob conscious person at NO NOW SINGLE DONUTS eat the glazing NO DOUBLEDAY POPULAR SO ELSE WOWIE DRUNK leave more space don't underline that's an order SO WHAT

serious now don't hesitate tonight followed all wrong go to bed no periods orders go to bed glad get out is New York don't repeat 3 months don't sit down don't perspire don't do it leave get it get it at door noney mother's word be careful drunk also HERE where? bed alright don't perspire hear shout NO don't explain GO TOMORROW Explain the interference noney it stops you from bed doing what the other words tell you omit DON'T GO BE A FOOL It's 7 1ST CHAKRA see clock DON'T EXPLAIN THE CHAKRAS NOW RHYS KNOWS FOUR GO TO BERNADETTE'S it's 7 WOW BEGIN Going to Phil Glass concert POPULAR WIFE GO TOMORROW Tomorrow is Joe's musical and a party DON'T GO BOTH This is silly 2 MOS don't comment yourself SO HUMBLE ENOUGH Rosemary is back in town Read THINK Einstein's definition of thinking Bernadette doing No more periods pre thought thinking SO AM I says the refrigerator in the pink bulb GET OUT Change the bulb Bernadette's MAYER EXPERIMENTS this book is mind controlled the WALK Bernadette language ex communicate her words so through it goes through The way I QUOTE to destroy a word is to change its letters too heavy Systematically derange the SIS I MUST DO IT cut it short SLOW I QUOTE Pick any word at random let mind play around until ideas pass try this with so SO WITH RHYS it's CHARMING'S word He behave through yourself SAW ME YOUR NOVEL CUT IT SHORT PLEASE PASS THE PAGE

SAVE YOUR BREATH

To Phil's concert GLASS
buy another ^{4 enough} special glass do alright saw VERY IMPORTANT OK with a

NO don't be sorry went out don't lie says the wall that's the negative BIG NO FROM JON's shoulder tres no DIDEROT SORRY COUNTING Diversion QUOTE make a pattern of repetitions MARRY SO alright SORRY WRITE in every person & tense Funny, thought HE was Satchidananda's idea and SCREAM he HE FOR A REASON pipe down typing DOUBLEDAY JOHN *What's the matter call Jackson this* PERFECT SCREAM lists, puzzles NO GOOD dictionaries, too much quote NO FUNS NO state the facts REMARKABLE GOOD FOR YOU READ JULY HUMBLE ENOUGH take her out COMMENT of the book or to dinner? RELAX protein 31 too tired not funny, one a week DO OU OUT Jackson please breakd_o open the Code you won't be happy book-to Seemed to, be _w don't erase Jackson that's funny quote Has, Have see Bernadette good for you take Jackson out EAT one moment get yourself upset Every appearance of try again, open code RADIO book to SEEMED TO, EVERY APPEARANCE OF Shall I take you both in tow? unquote WOW RAYMOND I have a pilot on board ONE MORE CODE JanUary Every month be happy ONE MORE BREAKDOWN code poem I QUOTE ME Broken up, has having FOR YOU precious CUT IT SHORT repetition don't omit p3 Experiment with OK plagiarism in any form that occurs to Jackson OPENING 4THE CENTER Nyole YOU DO Attempt to eliminate all connotation eliminate still quoting page DO THAT PRONOUN THIS AFTER eliminate the message GOOD WORK talk about word as message, information story La Monte word as order just command unit of speech Word as instruction YOU MUST REPEAT SAY NOW You know petticoat ding a ling that's enough quote OPEN NIOLE At Phil's concert, concentrating, eyes closed, felt a presence ASTRAL over whose shoulder compliments save a page complete saw dark green astral image too late please count lean over and count whisper "time" don't understand timing that's all OPEN EYES, no one children please count 123 was there PHIL'S GRASS absolutely VERY IMPORTANT GLASS SCHE-DULE Tonight another concert POWERFUL comes in Bernadette go ahead right write at finish the page at 85 degree angle to the typewriter I SEE COLORS SEE ONE MORE I LOVE YOU Messages on forehead in colors of Glass PHIL shirt all reverse too long Why didn't call Nyole learn that almost everything that comes from PEOPLE is a spank reverse CANCEL appears over reverse

Let Me Tell You (2008)
Paul Griffiths

So: now I come to speak. At last. I will tell you all I know. I was deceived to think I could not do this. I have the powers; I take them here. I have the right. I have the means. My words may be poor, but they will have to do.

What words do I have? Where do they come from? How is it that I speak?

There will be a time for me to think of these things, but right now I have to tell you all that I may of me—of me from when I lay on my father's knees and held up my hand, touching his face, which he had bended down over me. That look in his eyes....My father.

Well, I have done what I could. And I believe, by now, I have done all that I could. That's the reason there's this difference in me now, that I may speak my thoughts as I wish. Still, it's hard. I see that face of his. What would he wish me to do?

That face. What does it say? There may be some will tell me I cannot remember from being so little, and they may be right. Some of these may be false remembrances, things my father would say to me, and say again, time upon time, as was his way, so that I think I remember them. I must do all I may to find from them what is truly mine, now that I have made up my mind to speak to you like this.

There are so many of these things. It's as if I held a glass in my hand and could see them all, there in the glass, the things I remember, remembrances all tumbled one upon another, some before they should be, some late, all out of time—the sun over the cold green mountain, a scholar with a hard look in his eyes, my father shaking as he rose to give a speech, my brother with flowers in his hand and he would not say what for, a lost sandal, a music lesson—and it's up to me to be patient and lay them down the right way.

There are things, as well, I do not see, things that come to me as speech, and some as music. A call.

'O, please come now! Now!'

Is this my father? No.

'O, how long must I be down here without you?'

I see the young me, up the cold green mountain, down on the grass, one hand on—what is it?—some little herb. And still that call. She cannot let me be.

'O, come now! Right away! You should be here with me!'

I lay still. It's as if I was held by what was in my hand, by what my hand was touching. It's as if I had been locked there, locked to the mountain, with my eyes quite still, on my hand and the herb in the grass. And all the powers in hell could not have made me go from there.

But I, such a little nothing as I was, I could make me go—did make me go.

'O, now! Do you—?'

She—this young me—I see look up, but not at these words. My arm rises to keep my eyes from the sun. I see it. This is indeed as it was. I remember. An arm rises to the sun, a head from what thoughts it had, two knees from the grass. There was that call, but it seemed to come from a long way away, whilst in my head was another call, no words this time—the call of my thoughts. What should I do? Which path should I take? This way, that way?

'O, please, you cannot go away by yourself!'

I look at me now as I was then. This is like being one of my own observers, but with no powers over what is observed. It all must go as it does. All I may do is see what this little I will do. I look in the glass to do so: I raised my head. My hand let go the herb. I have gone, down the mountain. I have gone. What was I then? Two? Two up the mountain, two as this little I goes down the mountain with a good grace, as she answers the call that had come?

Let time be turned from here. Let these little treads I make down the mountain go up again, restore that right hand to the herb it held, that head to the patient perusal it made. Let little I be there again in the grass, and from here go on and on to before all this, to where she—I—had come from. This is it. Let me go right away, now, whilst it is still not late, to before all this—to before the mountain and the unbraced out-doors and the little me in it all, with my hand touching the herb and my head in the

heavens, to before the time these eyes of mine look up, as I see them look up now, to before that last call to come in.

'O, that's right! Come here. Down to me. See what I have for you.'

Do not fear: that's what I would say to this little me now. The time will come when you do not have to go down there, when you do not have to do what she will ask, when you may please yourself.

This is it, now, that time. It's come. So let's go on to before, all the way to the end of my memory, to what was for me Day One. Let's come to that day she bore me, the day I draw breath.

It's like this. It is morning. The sun is pale; it's a cold morning.

There she is, on the bed. She does not look at the window, to the sun, but away, to the door, as if in expectation that some one would come in. I see all this, for some reason, as if from by the window.

There's another one there. Right. My father. The pale morning sun stole from the window over the bed and over the bed clothes, and now it falls in my memory on them: she on the bed, my father, and no doubt another they would have had there to be a help.

He—my father—could never keep still. He comes and goes from one end of the chamber to the other—one way, then the other, his eyes down. And she, she does not look at him but still at the door, never but at the door. They do not speak. There is no more than this: his treads on the stone, up and down. But let all this go, for how could I remember this day? How could I remember a time when I was not?

I have to think more before I go on like this. False memory may speak, I find, as well as true. I have to know the difference. And I have to see to it that I do not make things up. It's hard. Indeed, it may well seem hard for all of us, to know what it is that we truly know—and what it is that we know to be true. Another difference, it may be. There is more in my mind than I know. I must look hard at what comes to me, cast away the grass and keep the flowers.

I know I have it in me to say things that are not so and have never been so, but that I wish had been so. There are, as well, things in my head that I cannot remember and never will remember. They are not in my memory; they are in me.

But now and again words come to me as if it rained words in my head—words given me by some other, as if I had no hand in what I say, as if all I may do is give speech, let the words come and come, and go on and on, and whilst they go on I cannot say what I would truly wish to say. I may do nothing, held still by my own words—if they are my own. My words go on, but I cannot speak.

I have to make it so that my face cannot speak without my mind, that my words do not take form other than as I wish. I will do so. Mark my words.

So on with it. That mountain: it was a green sandal loosed from the heels of heaven.

I remember it well. My hand touching that herb. A shirt, held out of a window, shaking in the morning sun. The way the maid's head was raised as if to sing, but then she goes on with the sewing. And over all the cold green mountain.

Each morning the sun would come up over the mountain, and we would pray, my father and I, and then with my brother as well, pray for a good day, and pray at the end of the day for a good night.

This was when she had gone. She left when I was little, but that's one of the things I'll come to. If things still come out of my jangled memory here and there before they should, that could be for woe, but then again it could be for joy—if not for the two, hand in hand. But I will do all I may to have things right from here on.

The day I have to find in my memory now is another day, and a day of joy this one was, the day when I was given my brother.

This is something I do indeed remember—and this is where that false memory comes from, of the one on the bed, and the pale morning sun, and the bed clothes, and the head turned away, and my father as he made his way up and down.

I would have been still little when she bore him, but more than I was in that other memory, of being up the mountain. As I remember, hard as this may be to believe, I was there, there on the bed, my little hand touching that face. She and I. (This is not something I like to remember at all. That means it must be true.)

And no, my father was not there. There must have been other treads of his that go on in my mind.

My father was not with us for some reason. It could be that he had to be with His Majesty that morning, for—and no doubt it would have been better to say this before—he was one of the king's right-hand men. He was at the king's call, day and night. He is now, he is still. Do this, do that.

But no, it's not quite like that. My father is the king's shoulder: that's how it is. The two of them know each other so well that my father does not have to think what the king will say. Indeed, he could almost speak for the king, and the day may come when he will have to, if the king's not better before long.

So it was with the king as was, at the time I now speak of, that my father was held in honour and had to go all over for him. Then we, my brother and I, would have to do without him whilst he was away. She, at such a time, was the one we had to go to.

But again I go on before I should. I'll come to all this, of my father, and the counsel he would give the king—the king as was and the king we have now. This will all come out at the right time. As for now, there we are, on the bed in the pale morning: she and me. That's what I remember. That's how it was.

No, that's still not right, cannot be. There was another. I have it. The maid. The maid's here with us as well, by the bed. How could I not remember that the maid was there? And then there he was: my brother. The maid took him up by the heels. I see this. To me he had a puffed-up look—'bonny', the maid would say. He sucked in one breath, and with that my love, little as I was. He did not weep, not at all, but let out something like a little moan, as if—so it seemed to me—he could say 'O'. And he turned his eyes to look at me.

So now there are two of us. That's good. It was good not to be by yourself with such a one as she was. We had each other now. My brother and I had each other.

The maid held him—my brother—close with one hand before she had to lay him down on the bed. There I could look and look at him. Then she took him away again, to redeliver him to us in a long shirt (the one they

would christen him in). Now he was right by me. I remember a little ankle, remember touching a little ankle. I remember touching his face with my tongue.

He was still. All was still. All is still.

And out of that still morning I seem to remember how the maid would sing to us. Was it then? Most of the time she would sing to us at night, as she took us to bed.

There was a lady all in green,

Nony the nony no no,

Was locked away and I was not seen,

Nony the nony no no.

Quoth she: 'I cannot find my tear,

The tear that falls each morning here,

The tear of grace, the tear of fear,

The tear that falls upon the bier';

Nony the nony no no.

A young lord by the window stayed,

Nony the nony no no,

And bended to this speech she made,

Nony the nony no no.

He left that day to find the tear,

The tear of grace, the tear of fear,

The tear that falls each morning here,

The tear that falls upon the bier,

Nony the nony no no.

He did not look down to the grass,

Nony the nony no no,

He did not see the rose of glass,

Nony the nony no no.

The rose of grace, the rose of fear,

The rose that falls each morning here,

The rose of glass that was the tear,

The rose that falls upon the bier,

Nony the nony no no.

The Steady Solid (2019)
Daisuke Kosuge

There was a time when one could only eat up to two eggs per day. It was said that ldl (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol, also known as bad cholesterol, in the yolk increased the level of cholesterol in the blood and that would increase the risk of arteriosclerosis, heart disease, and stroke. I can even visualize it: muddy, fatty sludge sticking to the vascular wall, piling up on both sides and becoming a yellow lump. That was how it was often animated on health programs on tv. Eventually, drifting blood cells get caught up in the narrow pathway and clog the blood vessel. The virtual blood vessel of the animation is an abstraction. It doesn't belong to any specific part of the body, yet it could be anywhere (even somewhere crucial) any moment, even now. It's a lifestyle disease indeed. On the other hand, eggs are the gold standard for protein quality. I read on the internet that egg protein contains essential amino acids which allow for rapid recovery post-exercise. Slowly absorbed proteins like those in eggs make for better protein anabolism, which is optimal for lean muscle growth. As the white contains more than half the egg's total protein, I found a way to get the egg's benefits without the cholesterol, by adding three egg whites at breakfast into my diet routine. There are bodybuilders who mix raw eggs into their shakes for practicality, however, when the egg is ingested raw, albumin, a type of protein, will be absorbed undigested. It is therefore preferable that the egg white is cooked until it loses its liquid state. The best, it seems, is to boil the eggs, but considering the work-load for my wife who would have to peel the shells from three eggs every morning, we compromised on three egg whites fried in a pan: "fried-eyeball" in direct translation from Japanese—but without the eyeball. No bad yellow eyeballs. A good solution, the optimum.

I know in English they call it "sunny-side-up." I used to travel to the United States and Europe at the end of the 1980s, when I was involved in the expansion project of a theme park in Japan. In the theme park business, one of the expansion strategies was to add resort hotels to the main facilities, allowing visitors longer stays with package plans. My research already began when I would land at the airport, analyzing the access to the theme park, the hotels and infrastructure in the surrounding

area. In the hotels that I stayed, I had the continental breakfast. The restaurant staff asked me if I wanted to have boiled eggs, scrambled eggs, or sunny-side-up. I knew already what boiled eggs and scrambled eggs were. I could quickly figure out what sunny-side-up was by a process of elimination. In foreign countries, where I didn't know the language well, I often observed situations, judged things from the context, and acted on these observations. Most of time it went as well as I expected.

For the last couple of years the joke has become useless. First, as a result of scientific research that suggests that most of the cholesterol in the body is produced inside the body, by the liver and other organs. That means that bad cholesterol intake does not necessarily remain in the body, and so the cholesterol intake limit was removed from the Japanese dietary criteria. Secondly, I started feeling a sense of paralysis in my left foot together, little by little, with loss of balance. As it progressed, I was diagnosed with a rare progressive brain disease. Science has still not been able to elucidate the mechanism and cause of this disease. The only clue so far is the accumulation of the protein tau which has been found in affected brain cells after autopsies of deceased patients. The disease bears some similarities to Parkinson's disease, but it affects a different part of the brain, and it has different proteins that accumulate, different symptoms, and a different speed of progression. My wife could not make a joke in this situation by saying, "I thought I would become sick because I was eating yolks everyday but it was a great lie about the two-eggs-per day slogan. And my husband who was eating only egg-whites is the one who got sick." Such a joke doesn't come across as funny even when delivered with a tone of self-deprecation. I have still have my wasted, leftover muscles from bodybuilding. They hang from me while I sit in the wheelchair.

There is a difference in the degree of consideration for wheel-chairs. When I take my wheelchair to the subway near my apartment, I can go to the station counter and ask the station staff for support. The station staff will bring a metal plate that covers the gap between the platform and the

subway vehicle like a bridge. They contact the driver of the next train in advance, and the driver will not close the door until the station staff confirms that I have finished getting on or off the train. This process was far more stressful when the paralysis in my foot was still light enough that I could walk with a stick. I became anxious about every small step elevated from the ground. As soon as I recognized a step or even a simple transition from one material to the other on the road, my left foot stopped listening to my brain as if my body had detected the danger independently of my consciousness. In these places outside of my conscious control, my feet would get tense and freeze in a way that flexed my muscles all at once. Such a sensation is called a "frozen leg," but even so, it doesn't mean that the leg is stable like a wooden stick. The muscles on the front and back of the thigh, calf, shin, and toes, all contract without stabilized continuity or coordination between them. The left foot cannot be lifted to cross a small step, nor is it reliable enough to put my body weight on in order to lift my right leg. If my eyes don't catch the step, my feet can go on without being frozen, but once the step registers in my unconscious, I cannot shake it off.

I used to manipulate my emotions and consciousness through force of will so that my body would be under control in the occasion of temporary body pains or pushing through hard training. Such a technique is no longer effective in this new body. It gets worse in situations where there is a time limit set in advance; pedestrian crossings with traffic lights, getting on and off trains. I cannot trick my body, it's with me, and my body already has the information before I do. The time that trains stop at each station is calculated according to statistics about the expected numbers of passengers getting off and on. In order to get onto a train within the allotted time, I also had to calculate for the possible time needed to lift my frozen left foot. This lack of control too can be made into data through statistics. I have all the passenger traffic patterns in this station in my head, for each train at different times of the day and different days of the week. By comparing these two data sets, the passenger traffic and my own mobility, I can determine the most optimal timing and location to board the train.

I stopped bodybuilding after my diagnosis. It became difficult to walk with a walking stick outside because I couldn't intuitively rely on my sense of balance. I began to walk in my apartment while holding onto various things. When I bent my upper body forward, it felt almost like losing my balance in a state of drunkenness. I needed to place both my hands on stable surfaces around me and to check whether my weight was placed well on both feet. When I got up from my reclining chair, I would pull my heels towards me first so that my knees were aligned in front of my toes. While pushing up the armrest using only the power of the arms, I put my weight on the soles of my feet little by little. Meanwhile, my knees were bent at almost 90 degrees. If I pushed it too much, I would fall to the front, so I would push my weight carefully to the point where my body could ride on my feet. When my heels and knees were not in the right place, I would sit back to the sofa and reset my feet position. And I would try it again. The balance is not sensed by my head, but it is judged by how much pressure I could sense on my palms. I would slowly set my hands free from the armrest, my knees still bent at the same angle. Only after confirming that my body was standing for a while could I finally stretch the knee. Here too, since I could not trust the fine adjustments of my left quadriceps, I would stretch my left leg slowly while adjusting the speed by compensating with my right thigh. It always felt much safer to pull my body towards its balancing point than to push it. I preferred door frames that I could grab onto, rather than flat surfaces like tables. A sense of relaxation was the key, and if I felt nervous, my left foot would freeze up and my hip would move down and backward. Those with Parkinson's disease usually fall forward but it is known that those with my disease tend to fall backwards. That was how it often happened. When my body sensed danger at the edge of carpet or even the thin cable of the phone charger lying on the floor, my left foot would leave my body.

Actually, it would be easier if it did physically leave my body but it remained attached and all the muscles strained in confusion. When I began to fall, I rush to walk towards the walls or anywhere I can grab. Take one step with my right foot, left leg doesn't follow, right foot takes one more step. The distance between my legs widens and my hips go backwards from fear and throw my balance. My eyes see the handrail on the wall but it is too far. The doorframe, the edge of the counter, the overhang of the wall—too far. My hands search for everything in reach at the same time. Touching the surface of the dining table, it slips away from

the fingers of my left hand, and the right hand flails way behind. It grabs the corner of the sofa but I'm already half way down to the floor. Time goes slowly while I see these things and touch those things. Not only in my mind, but also in reality. I never fall suddenly. It always goes slowly, dragging the whole room down and backwards.

The Culmination

An erasure of Laura Redden Searing's "My Story"

Generous instinct, were you
My hand I must
Think. The later brain.
My hands craving every
Learned heart. Nature, art,
World. In my memories
I thought of trust
Then all fear. I
Fell on my pain.
Hope shall in loss
Throb. My, my, my
Stand for the release.
A nation's groan beneath
Dear night. All right.

The Diagnosis

An erasure of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Palingenesis"

I, sobbing in the rolling mist,
Started for peopled days. In dreams
A faded, lonely promontory shed petals.
Belief exists. Cunning with its perfume
Working from youth, defiance. A phantom
Vanished. The swift surrenders, leap into
The old dead heart of lies.
I will give, remembering my turns
Into foliage. Of what light unseen!
What, what, what, what, what, what
Will hold still without its end?

The Manual

An erasure of George Meredith's "Martin's Puzzle"

Book, how well I understand
your gladness.
Suffer'd a fool.
Why heart?
Well, the human fist
can be designed with a savouring.
Why taste the books
of turns?
I never solve
crush'd complaining.
Thanks leave
wonderful body hymns.
Fingers only
ask.
Answer this: Should it select eyes
fixed on eye?
So, Book, what must injustice
again mark?
Engines permit tools.
Respect may perhaps bow
but I instead question.
Made together, the sky.
Stop discord properly.
A universe from heaps,
kneeling.

Transformations of Memory in Everyday Life (1982)

Marigold Linton

In 1972, Marigold Linton undertook a singular memory experiment. Like Hermann von Ebbinghaus, who had founded the classic psychology of memory about a century earlier, she was her own subject. Every day she recorded at least tow events from her life: every month she tested her ability to remember; order, and date a sample of the events she had previously recorded. Linton has presented the basic results of the study elsewhere; here she reflects on some of its implications. How can we understand the effects of "emotionality" and "importance" on memory? What are the long-run consequences of repetition? What kinds of events will be remembered best?

The answers are often surprising. Particularly intriguing is Linton's very un-Ebbinghausian forgetting curve: it is linear with a slope of 5 percent a year. How can we reconcile such a pattern of forgetting with the existence of memories more than twenty years old? Linton's own explanation, based on the diminishing effectiveness of the original cues, that a different forgetting function might be observed with different forms of cueing. Perhaps she is right; perhaps, on the other hand, most of our oldest memories are the product of repeated rehearsal and reconstruction. So far, these are the only systematic data we have.

Some years ago, my curiosity about how memory functions in a naturalistic setting led me to an investigation of my own memory. During the course of this six-year study I developed event items based on my own experiences, and later attempted to reconstruct the probable dates of the events's occurrences. (Dating may seem a rather restricted, perhaps even uninteresting behaviour, but its quantifiability continues to appeal to me). Performing a prolonged study on personal life events has, I believe, provided me with a unique perspective on memory functioning; perhaps some of these insights, as well as a description of the unforeseen difficulties in constructing this research may be informative to others.

[...]

The stimuli for this long-term study were brief descriptions of events from my life written each day throughout the study's six-year duration. At first it seemed there might be a simple set of heuristics for describing events, but rather shortly I abandoned the search for simple regularities.

So wide a range of content and presentation styles may be employed to specify events that the elements necessary or sufficient to describe "an event" have continued to elude me. To avoid unnecessary narrowness in my event pool I accepted all brief unique descriptions. (No description exceeded 180 letters, and when it was written every item was discernible from all other events then accessible to memory). These criteria were dictated by my major dependent variables: dating accuracy (only unique items can be uniquely dated) and response speed (reading times must be brief/uniform enough not to differentially contribute to memory-search response times). Each newly written item was rated for salience on a number of dimensions. I return to emotionality ratings in a later section.

Memory tests proceeded as follows: Once a month items were drawn semi-randomly from the accumulated event pool. After reading a pair of randomly paired event descriptions, I estimated their chronological order and attempted to reconstruct each item's date. Next I briefly classified my memory search (for example, I might "count backwards" through a series of similar events, as school quarters, Psychonomic Society meetings, and the like) and reevaluated each item's salience. After six years the experiment had reached imposing dimensions. I had written more than 5,500 items (a minimum of two times each day) and tested (or retested) 11,000 items (about 150 items each month). Item generation required only a few minutes each day but the monthly test was extremely laborious, lasting 6-12 hours. The time required for individual memory searches varied widely from month to month as well as from item to item in the course of a single day.

The study of autobiographical memory is complicated by the modifications and changes that any newly encoded information undergoes as the result of interactions with information already in memory and through reinterpretations of existing data forced by the acquisition of subsequent knowledge. I'm speaking therefore, not only of the role that semantic memory plays in interpreting new information, but also of the progressive changes in interpretation and evaluation that occur as the target information reacts with relevant information, either existing or acquired later, in the knowledge base.

In our personal history, as in political or cultural histories, the importance of a singular event may be interpreted in a variety of ways, from differing historical perspectives, and may be reinterpreted repeatedly as its role in different contexts emerges. And in personal, as in many other histories, first or early events in sequences receive royal treatment, with better encoding and associated recall.

[...]

When I designed my study I had intended to include in my event pool each day's most salient experiences. As the preceding discussion suggests, it was relatively simple to characterise the "first event" in some ongoing life sequence. A large number of cues suffice: "I got to New York for the first time," "I meet Clark Kerr for the first time." In fact, "X for the first time" has unparalleled effectiveness as a cue. (My event writing strategy permitted any particular item to sometimes include and sometimes omit this unique specification.) As any series of similar or related events in my life became long, the length of the descriptions required to uniquely characterise particular events also increased.

Indeed, many events could not be adequately characterised in the space permitted. Thus my file—whose contents are shaped by the requirements of brevity and uniqueness—is silent on whole sets of activities that comprise the warp and woof of my existence. One could scarcely know that I teach, or spend many hours each day in academic activities. A perusal of the file hints only faintly at my passion for racquet sports, my enjoyment of good food, or my pleasure in interacting with loved ones. I simply cannot adequately characterise the year's two-hundredth hour in the classroom, my three-hundredth racquet match, or the one-hundredth dinner with friends. But some items do enter: I teach a new class or perform a novel demonstration; I find a new racquet partner, or we find half a boysenberry pie on the court surface; a new restaurant opens or a special friend makes a rare visit to town. These minor variations permit a few such items to gleam amongst their blurred and coalesced brethren.

[...]

Throughout the study I provided emotionality and importance ratings (among others) for each event item, both when the event was written and each time its recall was tested. Although analyses of these data are not complete, the correlations between initial salience ratings and the recall measures will almost certainly remain small and unimpressive. (The relationship between current salience ratings and recall is stronger but this correlation cannot easily be interpreted.) What are some of the reasons that initial emotionality ratings are not useful in predicting event recall? A number of variables complicate efforts to deal with emotionality over time. Second, superficially similar events do not receive similar ratings over time. Third, the emotionality of ongoing pieces of life, or of memories is inherently difficult to judge.

Emotionality of events may also be affected by *changes* in the cognitive surround. The first of these effects may be referred to as contrast.

Level of expectation may be raised by a single highly emotional event or by a number of moderately important or emotional events. After the "enrichment" of the emotional environment, any particular event may look less emotional or important than it did before the change.

But other changes remotely or closely associated with the target item may affect the rated emotionality or importance of the target. Just as historians must interpret and rewrite history as time passes, so we all rewrite our own personal histories. Few of us are wise enough to predict at the time of their occurrence how significant events will prove to be. A person inconspicuously enters our life. He later becomes a friend, a lover, or an antagonist. Others appear with grand flourish and then simply vanish.

Thus, our salience judgements are erroneous for many events. We are offered a job. If we accept a new job that involves permanent changes in our life; for example, if it is accompanied by a move, and increased responsibility and status, the events surrounding the job offer are likely to be perceived as important and emotional. If exactly the same job is turned down, salience ratings are likely to decrease over time. In general, events that initially are perceived as important and highly emotional may be perceived as less emotional or important later as the result of changes in the real world. Events may similarly increase in importance or emotionality as our perspectives on them are modified. If they come to be less important than anticipated we may simply delete them from memory. If they become more important, we link them to the later crucial events—we rewrite this chapter of our lives.

If I Die on the Road (1970)
Virgilio Piñera
trans. Juliana Canal Paternina

I

Si muero en la carretera no me pongan flores.
If I die on the road do not put me flowers.

Si en la carretera muero no me pongan flores.
If on the road I die do not put me flowers.

En la carretera no me pongan flores si muero.
On the road do not put me flowers if I die.

No me pongan si muero flores en la carretera.
Do not put me if I die flowers on the road.

No me pongan en la carretera flores si muero.
Do not put me on the road flowers if I die.

No flores en la carretera si muero me pongan.
Do not Flowers on the road if I die put me.

No flores en la carretera me pongan si muero.
Do not flowers on the road put me if I die.

Si muero no flores en la carretera me pongan.
If I die do not flowers on the road put me.

Si flores me muero en la carretera no me pongan.
If flowers I die on the road do not put me.

Flores si muero no en la carretera me pongan.
Flowers if I die on the road do not put me.

Si flores muero pongan en me la no carretera.
If flowers I die put me on the do not road.

Flores si pongan muero me en no la carretera.
Flowers if put I die me on do not the road.

Muero si pongan flores la en me en carretera.
I die if put flowers the on me on road.

La muero en si flores pongan no me carretera.

The die on if flowers put me do not road.

Si flores muero pongan en me la no carretera.
If flowers I die put on me the do not road.

Flores si pongan muero me en no la carretera.
Flowers if put I die me on do not the road.

Si muero en las flores no me pongan en la carretera.
If I die on the flowers do not put me on the road.

Si flores muero no me pongan en la carretera.
If flowers I die do not put me on the road.

Si en la carretera flores no me pongan si muero.
If on the road flowers do not put me if I die.

Si en el muero no me pongan en la carretera flores.
If in the I die do not put me on the road flowers.

II

Loy en cacharrito, en una cafetera,
Going in a junky car, in a coffee pot

yo voy por la carretera;
I go on the road;

yo voy, voy yendo por la carretera.
I go, go going on the road.

Yo voy a un jardín de flores que está por la carretera,
I go to a garden of flowers that is near the road,

yo voy en un cacharrito, en una cafetera,
I go in a junky car, in a coffee pot,

voy a comprarles flores a mis muertos,
Going to buy flowers to my dead ones,

pero no me pongan flores si muero en la carretera.
But do not put me flowers if I die on the road.

III

Si muero en la carretera me entierran en el jardín
If I die on the road bury me in the garden

que está por la carretera, pero no me pongan flores,
that is near the road, but do not put me flowers,

cuando uno tiene su fin yendo por la carretera
when one has his end going on the road

a uno no le ponen flores de ese ni de otro jardín.
one gets no flowers from that or any other garden.

IV

Si muero, si no muero,
If I die, if I don't die,

si muero porque no muero
if I die because I don't die

si no muero porque muero.
if I don't die because I die.

Si muero en la carretera.
if I die on the road.

Si no muero pero en la carretera si muero.
if I don't die but on the road I do die.

Si muero porque no muero en la carretera.
if I die because I don't die on the road.

Si no muero porque muero en la carretera,
if I don't die because I die on the road,

no me pongan f, no me pongan l, no me pongan o,
do not put me f, do not put me l, do not put me o,

no me pongan r, no me pongan e, no me pongan s,
do not put me w, do not put me e, do not put me r, do not put me s

no me pongan flo, no me pongan res,
do not put me flo, do not wets,

si muero en la c.
if I die in the r.

RJ Romeo and Juliet
From Code Poems (1982)
Hannah Weiner

LZT	Mike:	I have received the following message from agents.
TCD	Romeo:	Party?
VHX	Mike:	Saturday night
OAR	Romeo:	Happy to hear it or that
FS	Mike:	Be very careful in your intercourse with strangers
YCG	Romeo:	I do not trust too much to my _____
EZF	Mike:	Article indicated can be supplied, but it will require fitting.
		I will lend what is required
QNA	Romeo:	All precautions have been taken
TCD	Mike:	Proceed to rendezvous
FY	Romeo:	Hot bearings
TIV	Mike:	By no means plain
SDQ	Romeo:	What is her name?
SDL	Juliet:	My name is
J		Juliet
ENC		dazzling, am, is, are
SDT		What is your name?
SLD	Romeo:	My name is
R		Romeo
EBQ	Juliet:	Your name is not on my list; spell it alphabetically
JG	Romeo:	I wish to have personal communication with you
LI	Juliet:	Unless your communication is very important, I must be excused
JM	Mike:	Stranger is suspicious
MYX	Romeo:	Fine day
EBL	Juliet:	I beg to be excused
PCF	Romeo:	The ice is so solid I cannot break through; send help
YCS	Mike:	Try again
H	Romeo:	Stop, heave to, or come nearer, I have something to communicate
USX	Juliet:	Sorry, I am unable to comply with your request
AGS	Romeo:	The following is in plain language
TQB	Juliet:	I doubt if it is possible
RIC	Romeo:	Cannot make it out
EQO	Mike:	I decline to have anything further to say or do in the matter.
KUM		Nothing to be depended upon beyond your own resources
DJX		Farewell. Adieu (Mike leaves)
NM	Romeo:	I am on fire
MLI		You must not or cannot make any excuse
TMV		Shall I have the pleasure to or of
F		Foxtrot
FBX	Juliet:	As you please
QRA		I am willing to
T		Tango
QAW	Romeo:	It is very kind of you
FIG		At last
B		Bravo
OYP	Juliet:	Horny
BKS		Idiot
IVL		You are too close. Keep farther off.

DN		I have orders for you not to touch
HFL	<i>Romeo:</i>	Will you breakfast with me?
LS	<i>Juliet:</i>	It is not safe to go so fast
LAX	<i>Romeo:</i>	Will you dine with me?
MIL		Tomorrow evening
TQB	<i>Juliet:</i>	I doubt if it is possible
MIK	<i>Romeo:</i>	This evening?
LAW	<i>Juliet:</i>	What time is dinner or when will dinner be ready?
FBM	<i>Romeo:</i>	As soon as it is dark
DCA	<i>Juliet:</i>	With pleasure. I will accept.
MHL		A small establishment
HAJ	<i>Romeo:</i>	Cafe. Restaurant
DOQ	<i>Juliet:</i>	What would you recommend?
TUN	<i>Romeo:</i>	Preserved soup
GDC		Fresh beef and vegetables
STJ		Potato
IOG		Cheese
ISD		Ale, beer
BSU	<i>Juliet:</i>	We shall have
WVR		Sherry
SYR		Are any oysters to be had?
LMT		Half dozen
QXT		Lobster
ZGE		Rhine wine
OEZ		Goose
UWS		Rice
SON		Mushroom
ZGE		Burgundy wine
TUJ		Preserved fruit
KC		Champagne
WIZ	<i>Romeo:</i>	Bicarbonate of soda
DZI		Have been short on allowance for some time
GKI		Can I get a bill cashed here?
IVK		Will you keep close to me during the night?
OXY		Hope you will
OXW	<i>Juliet:</i>	Hope you can
IP	<i>Romeo:</i>	Shall we keep company?
ITY	<i>Juliet:</i>	A visit from a Protestant clergyman would be much valued
GHI	<i>Romeo:</i>	Will you lead into or point out a good berth?
IHL	<i>Juliet:</i>	When do lay days commence?
DQU	<i>Romeo:</i>	After dinner
ZMD	<i>Juliet:</i>	Your zeal has been particularly noted by ____
MIR	<i>Romeo:</i>	Have you ever?
MIG	<i>Juliet:</i>	Every evening
KIQ		Every day. Daily
MJA		Every opportunity
NWC		Have you a proper certificate of competency?
TU	<i>Romeo:</i>	Have you a clean bill of health?
GHI		You are in very fair berth
GIA	<i>Juliet:</i>	This is my best point
SHJ		Some swell
XOR	<i>Romeo:</i>	Thank you
GDS		May I begin to?

GIT
 MFO
 MFD
 KZU
 OOX
 HBK
 HAY
 FHR
 ODI
 HC
 KZY
 BK
 VLA
 EHR
 DF
 AN
 CCQ
 NZ
 CCO
 DIR
 PEO
 BKS
 VKE
 MIV
 SPG
 CWY
 EDH
 JCG
 JDG
 OWT
 X
 MZJ
 JDH
 JCQ
 JDC
 LCO
 ZHC
 DIR
 AI
 WGD
 DXY

Juliet: The sooner the better
Romeo: Entrance is difficult
Juliet: Try to enter
Romeo: I am in difficulties; direct me how to steer
Juliet: You should swing and enter stern first
Romeo: What is the nature of the bottom or what kind of bottom have you?
Juliet: Double bottom
Romeo: Stern way. Going astern
Romeo: I am going full speed
Juliet: It is not safe to go so fast
Romeo: It is difficult to extricate
Juliet: Is anything the matter
Romeo: Cock broken or damaged
Juliet: What do the cost of repairs amount to?
Romeo: With some assistance I shall be able to set things to rights
Juliet: Are you in a condition to proceed?
Romeo: It it comes on to blow
Juliet: Blowing hard
Romeo: Blowing too hard
Juliet: Can you renew the action?
 According to the usual practice?
Romeo: I shall, or will if I can
Juliet: Can you lift your screw?
Romeo: Every exertion has been made
 Operations have commenced
Juliet: You
 Screw well
Romeo: Are you coming?
Juliet: I shall come off by and by or at the time indicated
Romeo: I fear I cannot hold out much longer
Juliet: Stop carrying out your intentions and wait for my signals
Romeo: When will you or it be finished?
Juliet: I will come
Romeo: Come directly, immediately
Juliet: Coming at once
Romeo: Discharging
 Shall or will be withdrawn
Juliet: Can you renew the action?
Romeo: I will not abandon you. I will remain by you
Juliet: Sleep, sleepy, sleeping, slept
Romeo Juliet: All snug

Artificial Life (2018)
from Square of Will in Square of Love
Alina Popa

1.

She dreamt of a woman planting small logs in the naked ground. She was puzzled as to how someone could think that mutilated lifeless wood becomes tree or anything of the sort. But the woman in a reassuring tone as if it were the most natural thing in the world, said that all logs are able to grow their own roots. She understood but couldn't express. Understanding was a knowledge that made its event the most placid banality.

"My healing is not personal", a grave incorporeal voice murmured through the airless space of dream. Her thought opened itself to reason. She wanted to repair the ailing roots that made her be. To grow the teenager, the child, the newborn, to grow the event of her own coming into being. And become human again.

She woke up when the operation was over. The session was done, the hospital people dressed in white walked on the dusty village streets devoid of sun and asphalt. Others were left sitting in the garden, outside the therapy cupola, under mango trees, on wooden benches donated by the healed species. All the doctors were taking a break, some on chairs, some in the air. And she was part of this masterpiece.

She walked feeling proud and hidden in the swarm of people. She was thankful to be there, given a chance at world-trimming. After the five hours spent in the meditation room of the clinic, she reached her posada, emptied out of thoughts. She poured a glass of water. For a moment her mind unfocused all the plots methodically woven, all her life, into her sense of self. She sat down on the big brown couch indifferent to desire, even to the one that brought her here.

She opened her tablet and scrolled through the notes she had written before coming here. She read but thoughts didn't want to bend in the angle of past mental forms. She was stubborn, ignorant, blank. She drank the water. Her gestures were empty, saturated with the mental monochrome of the now. She closed her eyes and browsed randomly through her mind. To think, she now thought, the first impulse must be null.

She decided not to fight back. She abandoned herself to not-knowing, reason humbled by the rule of something that cannot be word. In the vast expanses of in articulation shivers of joy made her insides tremble. She opened her eyes and the tablet and a new note and typed: I am in the

desert, waiting for the first sign of a new language of living. Her thoughts dissipated and she was now contemplating the middle of the dark room, her gaze glued to where nothing could be discerned.

[...]

2.

I am wondering if you can make yourself signify something other than yourself. I am a sign of what is sleeping unconsciously and dreaming of me, I thought, as I waved my hand upon seeing an old friend biking on the other side of the road. I was going deeper into the image, into the depths of a surface that says no to seeing. I refocused, went to the left, passed by a big parrot painted on the wall of a small posada, trying to ignore that a pink Christ in a strange fairy dress, or was it an optical glitch, waved me hollow from the painted house on the opposite side of the street.

I went home, sat on the brown couch. I closed my eyes and I saw... in fact I began to stop thinking through seeing. I felt myself seeing myself as something invisible. My head was a two-dimensional ovoid shape with blurry borders and all the characteristics of an illusion. The deformed invisibility that I sensed myself to be scared me tremendously, I wanted to restore this monster to my common physical form. But all I could become was human-shaped fog missing some anatomical components. My inner form took flight from the rational structure of the body.

I remained knots and nodes and highways of energy flowing, shivering, stumbling, stagnating, and flowing through again. In my hologrammic version there was no hardness to life. I weighed less than the ray that pierced through your hair yesterday when you explained to me that hermits have practiced a modernism of the soul. Like them, I want to methodically cut structure into my invisible self, into the chaos of life, make my existence readable, translatable into something else. I wanted my share at world-trim, be part of the twice-born, induce leaks in my consciousness, work from the ultra-margin of my egoistic field. Transcend.

I fell asleep on the couch as this purely mental will necessitated too much metabolic life force.

I fell asleep dreaming the sleep.

There was such transparency between reality and dream that no quality could give away where I really was. I dreamed not of something but precisely the perspective from which I could potentially dream anything. The doubling of reality through the dream was a result of a random awareness enhancement. It is only from the copy of reality that I could

put an intention as to what this chunk of sleeping life must serve. I directed my intention toward the restoration of damaged DNA and soul glitches. I operated on myself through a meta-procedure that I will never forget. When I woke up I wondered about the transparency of real life and the inaccessibility of the body or thing that is lying out there and dreaming me.

[...]

7.

There is a simple motion that you have to do to be present. Withdraw your gaze. We have two gazes: one looks into the world and the other searches, like a lantern turned on in full daylight, scrutinises, beyond the seen. Withdraw second gaze. And bring it as a light, calming memory, when you look through the first.

I stared at the white hemisphere for longer than I can remember. Contemplation was a tool against the vivid impression that everything around took flight. Viewed from above, a huge bird - the city. And I - flea frozen in the landscape, ready to let it take me on wing. I let sight slide on smooth margins. Like me, on the edge.

Formless light descended from between unclear clouds to halo the urge to walk. Too aesthetic, I thought. But I couldn't help the immersion. I knew how to hang myself in suspense. Thought had taken a nuance close to the backdrop of mind. That second gaze is the eye of thinking, I thought, blinking long enough to feel a little too theatrical. I walked.

I was behind the building that, with the dissipation of shadows, became like the sky. A sky enclosed, a dome, draw the child contouring her way through the trauma of symbols. You have to know your limits. I was never good at it. But I am willing to build them, from scratch.

I took a guided tour of the parliament. What a scam. It is the geometry of seats that, once inhabited, guide the mind of the elected in to the childish belief that society is representable. I knew that natural numbers are inappropriate to describe us. At least the God forgotten Marxism - because this was its will - should have brought the irrationals in, if not the imaginaries.

I once pictured a football game with players wearing fractions, irrational numbers, arithmetics like "stuff". I was annoyed at order. I used to draw $1/2$ on the back of my sports T-shirts. I always felt half absent anyway. But I also wanted to look smarter than I thought I was, though I always confused intelligence with something else.

I was annoyed at order but when I saw it, the regularities, this lines, the square, the spheres, anything parallel, I had to submit. I loved this ri-

diculous city. It gave you the impression of things having a future. Looking at the rows of geometrical buildings induced inner horizons. Like in the Clinic - I knew that the wooden benches were oriented toward the open to give us lines of flight.

Future is fictional forward movement, I mind-wrote.

The tour was over. What seemed alien on the outside, looked primitive inside. Modernist ships built by invertebrates. I waited until everyone disappeared in the vastness of the drawn city and lay myself on the warm flat cement. How inappropriate to feel one's biology against the perfect flatness, like samples of bacteria caught between microscope slides.

If I had a paper to draw how I felt, I would just stare at it for hours in a row.

mono-
chroming
(yellow)

Silent choosing of a letter whose now
bolding presence at the head of a word
spells that word as "yellow". Alternate
the cipher by reader. Thus, vertigoing at
monochrome.

flowers

By conjoining skulls, bloom a sleep-
space for garden voices. Reading out
loud and untogethery.

strobe

Text withdraws (coyly). Reading out
loud and together. With contesting dila-
tion and quiverpupils.

back to back

Sitting back against back (not nece-
sarily solitude) and reading in one's
head; in the strange thick of reading by
one's self. Please, please, leave as you
please.

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nd.