

Literary Theory

ENGLISH 752

Prof Kenneth Sherwood

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Before the Law

Before the law sits a gatekeeper. To this gatekeeper comes a man from the country who asks to gain entry into the law. But the gatekeeper says that he cannot grant him entry at the moment. The man thinks about it and then asks if he will be allowed to come in later on. "It is possible," says the gatekeeper, "but not now." At the moment the gate to the law stands open, as always, and the gatekeeper walks to the side, so the man bends over in order to see through the gate into the inside. When the gatekeeper notices that, he laughs and says: "If it tempts you so much, try it in spite of my prohibition. But take note: I am powerful. And I am only the most lowly gatekeeper. But from room to room stand gatekeepers, each more powerful than the other. I can't endure even one glimpse of the third." The man from the country has not expected such difficulties: the law should always be accessible for everyone, he thinks, but as he now looks more closely at the gatekeeper in his fur coat, at his large pointed nose and his long, thin, black Tartar's beard, he decides that it would be better to wait until he gets permission to go inside. The gatekeeper gives him a stool and allows him to sit down at the side in front of the gate. There he sits for days and years. He makes many attempts to be let in, and he wears the gatekeeper out with his requests. The gatekeeper often interrogates him briefly, questioning him about his homeland and many other things, but they are indifferent questions, the kind great men put, and at the end he always tells him once more that he cannot let him inside yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, spends everything, no matter how valuable, to win over the gatekeeper. The latter takes it all but, as he does so, says, "I am taking this only so that you do not think you have failed to do anything." During the many years the man observes the gatekeeper almost continuously. He forgets the other gatekeepers, and this one seems to him the only obstacle for entry into the law. He curses the unlucky circumstance, in the first years thoughtlessly and out loud, later, as he grows old, he still mumbles to himself. He becomes childish and, since in the long years studying the gatekeeper he has come to know the fleas in his fur collar, he even asks the fleas to help him persuade the gatekeeper. Finally his eyesight grows weak, and he does not know whether things are really darker around him or whether his eyes are merely deceiving him. But he recognizes now in the darkness an illumination which breaks inextinguishably out of the gateway to the law. Now he no longer has much time to live. Before his death he gathers in his head all his experiences of the entire time up into one question which he has not yet put to the gatekeeper. He waves to him, since he can no longer lift up his stiffening body. The gatekeeper has to bend way down to him, for the great difference has changed things to the disadvantage of the man. "What do you still want to know, then?" asks the gatekeeper. "You are insatiable." "Everyone strives after the law," says the man, "so how is that in these many years no one except me has requested entry?" The gatekeeper sees that the man is already dying and, in order to reach his diminishing sense of hearing, he shouts at him, "Here no one else can gain entry, since this entrance was assigned only to you. I'm going now to close it."

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<<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/kafka/beforethelaw.htm>>

A Continuity of Parks

Julio Cortazar

He had begun to read the novel a few days before. He had put it down because of some urgent business conferences, opened it again on his way back to the estate by train; he permitted himself a slowly growing interest in the plot, in the characterization. That afternoon, after writing a letter giving his power of attorney and discussing a matter of joint ownership with the manager of his estate, he returned to the book in the tranquillity of his study which looked out upon the park with its oaks. Sprawled on his favorite armchair, its back toward the door—even the possibility of an intrusion would have irritated him, had he thought of it—he let his left hand caress repeatedly the green velvet upholstery and set to reading the final chapters. He remembered effortlessly the names and his mental image of the characters; the novel spread its glamour over him almost at once. He tasted the almost perverse pleasure of disengaging himself line by line from the things around him, and at the same time feeling his head rest comfortably on the green velvet of the chair with its high back, sensing that the cigarettes rested within reach of his hands, that beyond the great windows the air of afternoon danced under the oak trees in the park. Word by word, licked up by the sordid dilemma of the hero and heroine, letting himself be absorbed to the point where the images settled down and took on color and movement, he was witness to the final encounter in the mountain cabin. The woman arrived first, apprehensive; now the lover came, his face cut by the backlash of a branch. Admirably, she stanching the blood with her kisses, but he rebuffed her caresses, he had not come to perform again the ceremonies of a secret passion, protected by a world of dry leaves and furtive paths through the forest. The dagger warmed itself against his chest, and underneath liberty pounded, hidden close. A lustful, panting dialogue raced down the pages like a rivulet of snakes, and one felt it had all been decided from eternity. Even to those caresses which writhed about the lover's body, as though wishing to keep him there, to dissuade him from it; they sketched abominably the frame of that other body it was necessary to destroy. Nothing had been forgotten: alibis, unforeseen hazards, possible mistakes. From this hour on, each instant had its use minutely assigned. The cold-blooded, twice-gone-over reexamination of the details was barely broken off so that a hand could caress a cheek. It was beginning to get dark.

Not looking at one another now, rigidly fixed upon the task which awaited them, they separated at the cabin door. She was to follow the trail that lead north. On the path leading in the opposite direction, he turned for a moment to watch her running, her hair loosened and flying. He ran in turn, crouching among the trees and hedges until, in the yellowish fog of dusk, he could distinguish the avenue of trees which led up to the house. The dogs were not supposed to bark, they did not bark. The estate manager would not be there at this hour, and he was not there. The woman's words reached him over the thudding of blood in his ears: first a blue chamber, then a hall, then a carpeted stairway. At the top, two doors. No one in the first room, no one in the second. The door of the salon, and then, the knife in hand, the light from the great windows, the high back of an armchair covered in green velvet, the head of the man in the chair reading a novel.

<http://www.geocities.com/muna_qudah/cortazar.html>

To His Coy Mistress
Andrew Marvell. 1621–1678

HAD we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side 5
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews. 10
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast, 15
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate. 20
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found, 25
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust: 30
The grave 's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires 35
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapt power. 40
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun 45
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

GLOSS: slow-chapt] slow-jawed, slowly devouring. Quiller-Couch, Arthur Thomas, Sir. The Oxford Book of English Verse. Oxford: Clarendon, 1919, [c1901]; Bartleby.com, 1999. www.bartleby.com/101/. [Date of Printout].

Sun, Moon, and Talia
Giambattista Basile

There once lived a great lord, who was blessed with the birth of a daughter, whom he named Talia. He sent for the wise men and astrologers in his lands, to predict her future. They met, counseled together, and cast her horoscope, and at length they came to the conclusion that she would incur great danger from a splinter of flax. Her father therefore forbade that any flax, hemp, or any other material of that sort be brought into his house, so that she should escape the predestined danger.

One day, when Talia had grown into a young and beautiful lady, she was looking out of a window, when she beheld passing that way an old woman, who was spinning. Talia, never having seen a distaff or a spindle, was pleased to see the twirling spindle, and she was so curious as to what thing it was, that she asked the old woman to come to her. Taking the distaff from her hand, she began to stretch the flax. Unfortunately, Talia ran a splinter of flax under her nail, and she fell dead upon the ground. When the old woman saw this, she became frightened and ran down the stairs, and is running still.

As soon as the wretched father heard of the disaster which had taken place, he had them, after having paid for this tub of sour wine with casks of tears, lay her out in one of his country mansions. There they seated her on a velvet throne under a canopy of brocade. Wanting to forget all and to drive from his memory his great misfortune, he closed the doors and abandoned forever the house where he had suffered this great loss.

After a time, it happened by chance that a king was out hunting and passed that way. One of his falcons escaped from his hand and flew into the house by way of one of the windows. It did not come when called, so the king had one of his party knock at the door, believing the palace to be inhabited. Although he knocked for a length of time, nobody answered, so the king had them bring a vintner's ladder, for he himself would climb up and search the house, to discover what was inside. Thus he climbed up and entered, and looked in all the rooms, and nooks, and corners, and was amazed to find no living person there. At last he came to the salon, and when the king beheld Talia, who seemed to be enchanted, he believed that she was asleep, and he called her, but she remained unconscious. Crying aloud, he beheld her charms and felt his blood course hotly through his veins. He lifted her in his arms, and carried her to a bed, where he gathered the first fruits of love. Leaving her on the bed, he returned to his own kingdom, where, in the pressing business of his realm, he for a time thought no more about this incident.

Now after nine months Talia delivered two beautiful children, one a boy and the other a girl. In them could be seen two rare jewels, and they were attended by two fairies, who came to that palace, and put them at their mother's breasts. Once, however, they sought the nipple, and not finding it, began to suck on Talia's fingers, and they sucked so much that the splinter of flax came out. Talia awoke as if from a long sleep, and seeing beside her two priceless gems, she held them to her breast, and gave them the nipple to suck, and the babies were dearer to her than her own life. Finding herself alone in that palace with two children by her side, she did not know what had happened to her; but she did notice that the table was set, and food and drink were brought in to her, although she did not see any attendants.

In the meanwhile the king remembered Talia, and saying that he wanted to go hunting, he returned to the palace, and found her awake, and with two cupids of beauty. He was overjoyed, and he told Talia who he was, and how he had seen her, and what had taken place. When she heard this, their friendship was knitted with tighter bonds, and he remained with her for a few days. After that time he bade her farewell, and promised to return soon, and take her with him to his kingdom. And he went to his realm, but he could not find any rest, and at all hours he had in his mouth the names of Talia, and of Sun and Moon (those were the two children's names), and when he took his rest, he called either one or other of them.

Now the king's wife began to suspect that something was wrong from the delay of her husband while hunting, and hearing him name continually Talia, Sun, and Moon, she became hot with another kind of heat than the

sun's. Sending for the secretary, she said to him, "Listen to me, my son, you are living between two rocks, between the post and the door, between the poker and the grate. If you will tell me with whom the king your master, and my husband, is in love, I will give you treasures untold; and if you hide the truth from me, you will never be found again, dead or alive." The man was terribly frightened. Greed and fear blinded his eyes to all honor and to all sense of justice, and he related to her all things, calling bread bread, and wine wine.

The queen, hearing how matters stood, sent the secretary to Talia, in the name of the king, asking her to send the children, for he wished to see them. Talia, with great joy, did as she was commanded. Then the queen, with a heart of Medea, told the cook to kill them, and to make them into several tasteful dishes for her wretched husband. But the cook was tender hearted and, seeing these two beautiful golden apples, felt pity and compassion for them, and he carried them home to his wife, and had her hide them. In their place he prepared two lambs into a hundred different dishes. When the king came, the queen, with great pleasure, had the food served.

The king ate with delight, saying, "By the life of Lanfusa, how tasteful this is"; or, "By the soul of my ancestors, this is good."

Each time she replied, "Eat, eat, you are eating of your own."

For two or three times the king paid no attention to this repetition, but at last seeing that the music continued, he answered, "I know perfectly well that I am eating of my own, because you have brought nothing into this house"; and growing angry, he got up and went to a villa at some distance from his palace, to solace his soul and alleviate his anger.

In the meanwhile the queen, not being satisfied of the evil already done, sent for the secretary and told him to go to the palace and to bring Talia back, saying that the king longed for her presence and was expecting her. Talia departed as soon as she heard these words, believing that she was following the commands of her lord, for she greatly longed to see her light and joy, knowing not what was preparing for her. She was met by the queen, whose face glowed from the fierce fire burning inside her, and looked like the face of Nero.

She addressed her thus, "Welcome, Madam Busybody! You are a fine piece of goods, you ill weed, who are enjoying my husband. So you are the lump of filth, the cruel bitch, that has caused my head to spin? Change your ways, for you are welcome in purgatory, where I will compensate you for all the damage you have done to me."

Talia, hearing these words, began to excuse herself, saying that it was not her fault, because the king her husband had taken possession of her territory when she was drowned in sleep; but the queen would not listen to her excuses, and had a large fire lit in the courtyard of the palace, and commanded that Talia should be cast into it.

The lady, perceiving that matters had taken a bad turn, knelt before the queen, and begged her to allow her at least to take off the garments she wore. The queen, not for pity of the unhappy lady, but to gain also those robes, which were embroidered with gold and pearls, told her to undress, saying, "You can take off your clothes. I agree." Talia began to take them off, and with every item that she removed she uttered a loud scream. Having taken off her robe, her skirt, the bodice, and her shift, she was on the point of removing her last garment, when she uttered a last scream louder than the rest. They dragged her towards the pile, to reduce her to lye ashes which would be used to wash Charon's breeches.

The king suddenly appeared, and finding this spectacle, demanded to know what was happening. He asked for his children, and his wife -- reproaching him for his treachery -- told him that she had had them slaughtered and served to him as meat. When the wretched king heard this, he gave himself up to despair, saying, "Alas! Then I, myself, am the wolf of my own sweet lambs. Alas! And why did these my veins know not the fountains

of their own blood? You renegade bitch, what evil deed is this which you have done? Begone, you shall get your desert as the stumps, and I will not send such a tyrant-faced one to the Colosseum to do her penance!"

So saying, he commanded that the queen should be cast into the fire which she had prepared for Talia, and the secretary with her, because he had been the handle for this bitter play, and weaver of this wicked plot. He was going to do the same with the cook, whom he believed to be the slaughterer of his children, when the man cast himself at his feet, saying, "In truth, my lord, for such a deed, there should be nothing else than a pile of living fire, and no other help than a spear from behind, and no other entertainment than twisting and turning within the blazing fire, and I should seek no other honor than to have my ashes, the ashes of a cook, mixed up with the queen's. But this is not the reward that I expect for having saved the children, in spite of the gall of that bitch, who wanted to kill them and to return to your body that which was of your own body."

Hearing these words, the king was beside himself. He thought he was dreaming, and he could not believe what his own ears had heard. Therefore, turning to the cook, he said, "If it is true that you have saved my children, be sure that I will take you away from turning the spit, and I will put you in the kitchen of this breast, to turn and twist as you like all my desires, giving you such a reward as shall enable you to call yourself a happy man in this world."

While the king spoke these words, the cook's wife, seeing her husband's need, brought forth the two children, Sun and Moon, before their father. And he never tired at playing the game of three with his wife and children, making a mill wheel of kisses, now with one and then with the other. He gave a generous reward to the cook, he made him a chamberlain. He married Talia to wife; and she enjoyed a long life with her husband and her children, thus experiencing the truth of the proverb:

Those whom fortune favors
Find good luck even in their sleep.

* Source: The Pentameron of Giambattista Basile, translated by Richard F. Burton (Privately printed, 1893), day 5, tale 5. Translation revised by D. L. Ashliman.

* Giambattista Basile was born about 1575 in Naples and died 1632 in Giugliano, Campania. His *Lo cunto de li cunti* (The Story of Stories) was published in 1634, and named *Il pentamerone* because of its similarity to Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. The framework of *Lo cunto de li cunti* provides a context for ten women to tell one story each every day for five days. The fifty resulting stories, all based on oral tradition, comprise one of the monumental folktale collections of all time.

<<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0410.html#basile>>

Little Brier-Rose
Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

A king and queen had no children, although they wanted one very much. Then one day while the queen was sitting in her bath, a crab crept out of the water onto the ground and said, "Your wish will soon be fulfilled, and you will bring a daughter into the world." And that is what happened.

The king was so happy about the birth of the princess that he held a great celebration. He also invited the fairies who lived in his kingdom, but because he had only twelve golden plates, one had to be left out, for there were thirteen of them.

The fairies came to the celebration, and as it was ending they presented the child with gifts. The one promised her virtue, the second one gave beauty, and so on, each one offering something desirable and magnificent. The eleventh fairy had just presented her gift when the thirteenth fairy walked in. She was very angry that she had not been invited and cried out, "Because you did not invite me, I tell you that in her fifteenth year, your daughter will prick herself with a spindle and fall over dead."

The parents were horrified, but the twelfth fairy, who had not yet offered her wish, said, "It shall not be her death. She will only fall into a hundred-year sleep." The king, hoping to rescue his dear child, issued an order that all spindles in the entire kingdom should be destroyed.

The princess grew and became a miracle of beauty. One day, when she had just reached her fifteenth year, the king and queen went away, leaving her all alone in the castle. She walked from room to room, following her heart's desire. Finally she came to an old tower. A narrow stairway led up to it. Being curious, she climbed up until she came to a small door. There was a small yellow key in the door. She turned it, and the door sprang open. She found herself in a small room where an old woman sat spinning flax. She was attracted to the old woman, and joked with her, and said that she too would like to try her hand at spinning. She picked up the spindle, but no sooner did she touch it, than she pricked herself with it and then fell down into a deep sleep.

At that same moment the king and his attendants returned, and everyone began to fall asleep: the horses in the stalls, the pigeons on the roof, the dogs in the courtyard, the flies on the walls. Even the fire on the hearth flickered, stopped moving, and fell asleep. The roast stopped sizzling. The cook let go of the kitchen boy, whose hair he was about to pull. The maid dropped the chicken that she was plucking. They all slept. And a thorn hedge grew up around the entire castle, growing higher and higher, until nothing at all could be seen of it.

Princes, who had heard about the beautiful Brier-Rose, came and tried to free her, but they could not penetrate the hedge. It was as if the thorns were firmly attached to hands. The princes became stuck in them, and they died miserably. And thus it continued for many long years.

Then one day a prince was traveling through the land. An old man told him about the belief that there was a castle behind the thorn hedge, with a wonderfully beautiful princess asleep inside with all of her attendants. His grandfather had told him that many princes had tried to penetrate the hedge, but that they had gotten stuck in the thorns and had been pricked to death.

"I'm not afraid of that," said the prince. "I shall penetrate the hedge and free the beautiful Brier-Rose."

He went forth, but when he came to the thorn hedge, it turned into flowers. They separated, and he walked through, but after he passed, they turned back into thorns. He went into the castle. Horses and colorful hunting dogs were asleep in the courtyard. Pigeons, with their little heads stuck under their wings, were sitting on the roof. As he walked inside, the flies on the wall, the fire in the kitchen, the cook and the maid were all asleep. He walked further. All the attendants were asleep; and still further, the king and the queen. It was so quiet that he could hear his own breath.

Finally he came to the old tower where Brier-Rose was lying asleep. The prince was so amazed at her beauty that he bent over and kissed her. At that moment she awoke, and with her the king and the queen, and all the attendants, and the horses and the dogs, and the pigeons on the roof, and the flies on the walls. The fire stood up and flickered, and then finished cooking the food. The roast sizzled away. The cook boxed the kitchen boy's ears. And the maid finished plucking the chicken. Then the prince and Brier-Rose got married, and they lived long and happily until they died.

* Source: Kinder- und Hausmärchen, 1st ed. (Berlin, 1812), v. 1, no. 50.

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0410.html#grimm>

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*"Current moral dilemma:
Spend it all?
Or leave it to the kids?"*

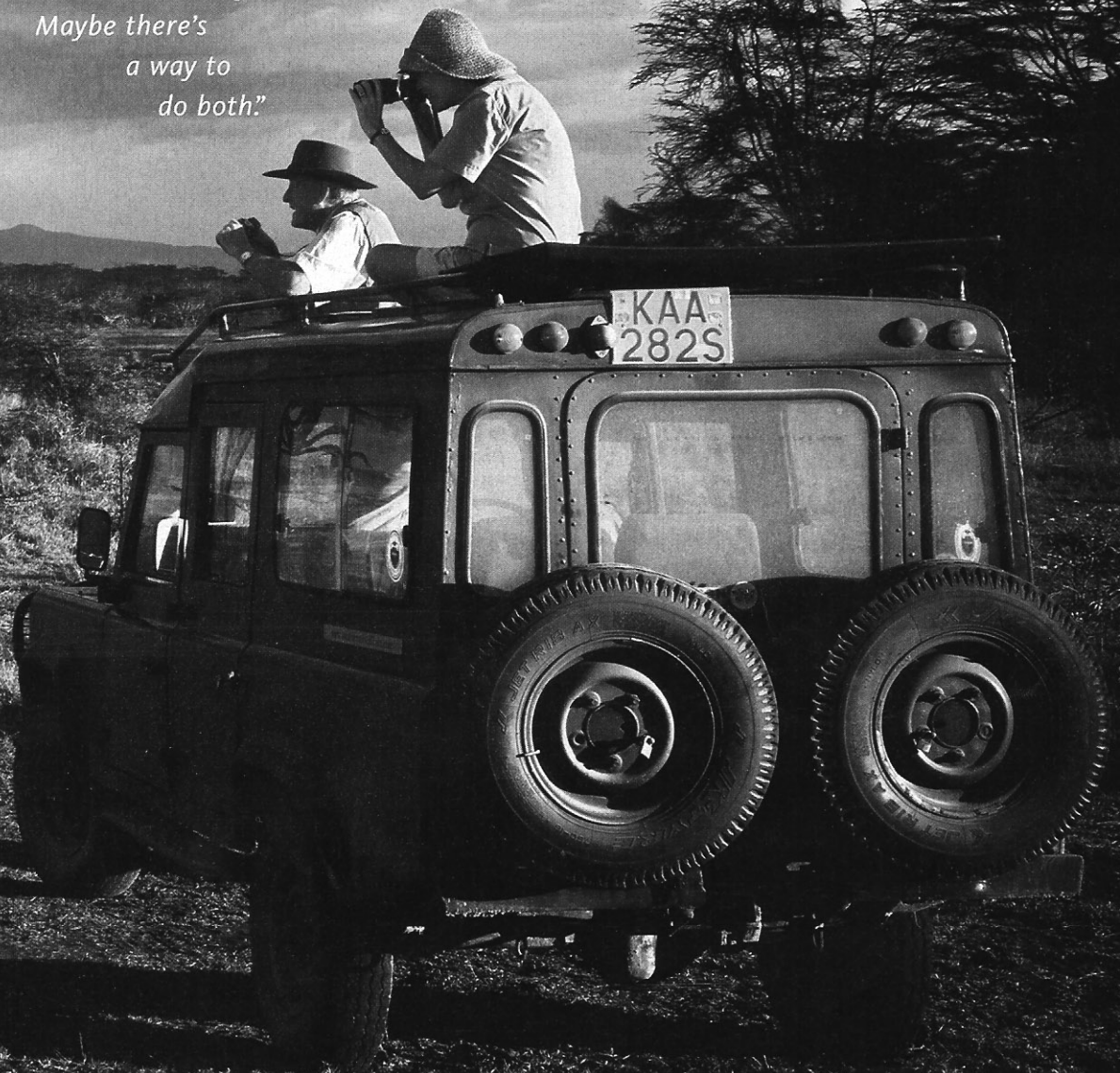
Yes, we love them. Yes, they need money.

*No we can't sit around
and not have fun.*

*After all, giving them money
will only keep them from
learning how to earn it. Right?*

*But everything costs so
much more these days.*

*Maybe there's
a way to
do both."*



Emotional times require sound, unemotional financial advice.

Morgan Stanley
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[Policy]

MAKING THE BIG HOUSE A HOME

From a list of regulations distributed, in English, to foreign prisoners confined in Tokyo's Fuchu Prison.

While walking, avoid folding your arms or hands or putting your hands in your pockets. Avoid waving your shoulders intentionally or dragging your shoes while walking.

You should never strip without permission. Do not hang a towel around your neck.

Conversation in the toilet is prohibited.

Do not sniff or drink paint thinner.

You are not allowed to bother the guards when they are escorting you.

You must not say anything abusive, slanderous, or insulting to others.

You are not allowed to do any kind of sexual play with your inmates. You should not expose your sex organs.

You are not allowed to creep into your fellow inmate's bed.

You are not allowed to create obscene writing or drawings, or possess any such thing.

You are not allowed to talk loudly, make a big noise, or sing a song at the places where conversation is prohibited.

Tattooing or changing your hairstyle or eyebrows in peculiar forms is forbidden.

Without permission, you are not allowed to wash your clothes or body.

Running away from prison or any attempt of such is strictly forbidden.

[Scene]

OPEN FACE

"The Mystery at the Middle of Ordinary Life," a one-act play by Don DeLillo. The play, which was written for the American Repertory Theatre, appeared in the Winter 2000 issue of Zoetrope: All-Story. DeLillo's twelfth novel, The Body Artist, will be published next month.

A MAN and a WOMAN in a room.

WOMAN: I was thinking how strange it is.

MAN: What?

WOMAN: That people are able to live together.

Days and nights and years. Five years go by. How do they do it? Ten, eleven, twelve years. Two people making one life. Sharing ten thousand meals. Talking to each other face to face, open face, like hot sandwiches. All the words that fill the house. What do people say over a lifetime? Trapped in each other's syntax. The same voice. The droning tonal repetition. I'll tell you something.

MAN: You'll tell me something.

WOMAN: There's a mystery here. The people behind the walls of the brown house next door. What do they say and how do they survive it? All that idle dialogue. The nasality. The banality. I was thinking how strange it is. How do they do it, night after night, all those nights, those words, those few who do it and survive?

MAN: They make love. They make salads.

WOMAN: But sooner or later they have to speak. This is what shatters the world. I mean isn't it gradually shattering to sit and listen to the same person all the time, without reason or rhyme. Words that trail away. The pauses. The clauses. How many thousands of times can you look at the same drained face and watch the mouth begin to open? Everything's been fine up to now. It is when they open their mouths. It is when they speak.

[Pause.]

MAN: I'm still not over this cold of mine.

WOMAN: Take those things you take.

MAN: The tablets.

WOMAN: The caplets.

[Pause.]

MAN: Long day.

WOMAN: Long day.

MAN: A good night's sleep.

WOMAN: Long slow day.

[Lights slowly down.]

CURTAIN

DRUNK ON WORDS

From the label of Alloxó Crianza, a red wine from Tomelloso, Spain, published in the March issue of the Wine Spectator.

Aging: In American oak barrels for one year, twelve months in barrels and six months in bottles.

Sensorial Tasting: Alloxó Crianza has a deep, obscure, red and cherry color, with a good cloak, clean and brilliant with reflexes of medium evolution that show tiles. It has aromas of breeding, prevailing new wood over an elegant and perfumed bottom of spices, and matured black fruits well united and with balsamic memories. It is vivid on the tongue, with a great acidity very well integrated, a solid, full, silky, and greasy way, and a tasty and well-structured final. It is large in retronasal.

[Comments]

THE ROAD TO MEAT

From *Letters to Wendy's*, by Joe Wenderoth, published by Verse Press. The novel consists of prose poems written over the course of a year on Wendy's comment cards.

JULY 6

I was so high on Sudafed and whiskey today that I couldn't eat. I got a Coke—actually five Cokes, as I could refill for free. It's times like this—dehydrated, exhausted, unable to imagine home—that your plastic seats, your quiet understandable room, set beside but not quite overlooking the source of real value, offer me a tragedy small enough to want to endure.

JULY 12

I often think about overeating. It's strange that I never have. Each bite of my mustard-only double-cheeseburger is so good that I reel in the aftermath. The meaty goodness obliterates as much as it secures. I'm a fleshy bell, incapable of vibrating any more vigorously. If I rang out with any more force I don't know that I would remain a bell—and I don't know that the air could stand me.

AUGUST 22

There used to be a little Ma-and-Pa restaurant across the road, but it couldn't keep up. Everyone over there acted all familiar and cozy, like they knew exactly where they were. Like they were natives. Natives!! *Execute the natives*, insofar as they claim to be! Build Wendy's everywhere and all alike—and do not fear: you cannot, you CAN NOT ever step into the same Wendy's twice.

AUGUST 25

I see various very strange people in Wendy's—the strangest of all being, clearly, the *serious Christians*. Usually strangeness is a pleasure to behold, but in this case I confess that I feel only a kind of empty horror. People *eating* toward eternity! People *looking nice* toward eternity! It is terrible to be real, I know, but it is more terrible to be *long*.

SEPTEMBER 20

Today I had a Biggie. Usually I just have a small, and refill. Why pay more? But today I needed a Biggie inside me. Some days, I guess, are like that. Only a Biggie will do. You wake up and you know: today I will get a Biggie and I will put it inside me and I will feel better. One time I saw a guy with three Biggies at once. One wonders not about him but about what it is that holds us back.

NOVEMBER 14

Today the restaurant was filled with warmth,

a spirit of caring. The food was just right and the service was prompt. For the first time this season, snow began to fall. Parents laughed with their children. Handsome employees made witty—but not inconsiderate—remarks. Retired couples were given Extra Value coupons. I felt like getting fucked up and watching TV forever.

NOVEMBER 15

A beautiful woman with a Biggie. Nothing

[Pitch]

LOSE IT ALL

From a brochure promoting the Virginia-based Fitness Gaming Corporation's "Pedal 'N Play" and "The Money Mill," devices that combine a bicycle and a treadmill, respectively, with a slot machine; both stop working if the slot machine is idle for more than twenty seconds.

Introducing a twenty-first-century explosion! Fitness Gaming Corporation has merged two very exciting industries, fitness and gaming. This revolutionary concept is taking these industries by storm. You can experience gambling entertainment while receiving a heart-healthy workout. What could be more beneficial to your mind and body—not to mention the opportunity for endless financial rewards.

The fitness craze of today will increase as future generations become more and more devoted to being healthy. Years ago smoke-filled casinos and alcoholic beverages were a big hit; they still are today. However, there is a new generation of health-conscious adults who enjoy gaming but do not want to be subjected to a smoke-filled casino. Promoting health and fitness on the casino floor will capture a new audience of gamblers.

Whether aboard a luxury cruise liner or in a hotel/casino, your health spa is another place to offer the "Pedal 'N Play" cycle and "The Money Mill." The spa exercise floor offers little or no source of revenue. Just think of all the possibilities this innovative concept will do to benefit your customers, your revenue, and your reputation.

Everyone wants to be a winner, and Fitness Gaming Corporation has made that possible. Even if you lose at gaming you win at having a "healthful workout." Imagine that!

else—just a Biggie. She sat alone; she seemed like she was waiting for someone. What lucky soul could make a beautiful woman with a Biggie wait? Who has that kind of power? What person would a beautiful woman with a Biggie find attractive? Only one answer made sense to me: *another beautiful woman with a Biggie.*

NOVEMBER 16

It's good, this not knowing anyone's name. The employees have nametags, but no one believes them. Their anonymity is far too obvious. How monstrous to introduce oneself to one's register person! How useless, how wearying, that information is! Only the shouted names of children make sense here, denoting not a person but a drifting off, a subversive fascination.

NOVEMBER 25

The idiotic notion that one should love the other customers. "Love" here really only means: *agree, for the time being, not to attack.* People pretend, though, that each customer is an irreplaceable piece of some priceless puzzle—like the death of each customer is significant for every other customer. It's just not true; one cannot love what one does not know, and—fortunately—one knows very little.

DECEMBER 3

Today I had \$15 worth of coffees. I got them one at a time, and dined in. The first five were leisurely, but then the leisure disintegrated. I went through the last five in about five minutes. After a while the register girl looked at her manager as if to say: "Is there something we should do?" The manager said nothing. I said nothing. We understood one another perfectly.

DECEMBER 8

To stroke another customer's head. Run my fingers through his hair and whisper to him: "You're going to be *all right* . . ." I would be called *responsible* for doing all of this if he were bleeding to death on the floor, but I would be called *inappropriate* if I did it when he was in good health. I would be, like all trustworthy prophets, called a nuisance and promptly arrested.

JANUARY 30

If I were royalty I would want a Biggie and a hundred plain burgers. I would throw away the buns and lay the burgers side by side on the sidewalk so as to form a bed. I would take off all my clothes and lie down in the bed with my Biggie. As people passed by, I would say, "Behold the meaty bed of royalty! Behold the final Biggie!" And I would relax there until I was arrested.

JANUARY 31

The urge to belong. I'm so jealous when the

14

employees speak to one another in that *knowing* way. I always look away as if I didn't care, as if their easy affection with one another was the last thing on my mind. But why do I yearn so persistently to be included—what would *being included* mean? An implicit motherland? A small drink of blood for my hungry shade?

FEBRUARY 10

One watches the others order. An aesthetic develops. It's not the worst thing that could happen. Yes, a weariness lurks, often, in the obvious next step—the dream of a school. The only thing worse than endeavoring to create a school is endeavoring to maintain a school. Which is why I like, above all, those customers who, in the middle of their order and quite without warning, change their minds.

MAY 20

I'd like to have my muscles removed. Resume the inanimate. Wendy's allows me to extract myself from the retarded narcissism of animal thrivings. I sit still in a warm booth and get thought. All movement wants, in the end, is stillness; the animate is just the failure of movement to get what it wants—one sleeping body. The road to heaven is paved with meat; the road to meat is not paved at all.

Kamau Brathwaite b. 1930

STONE

for Mikey Smith 1954–1983

stoned to death on Stony Hill, Kingston

When the stone fall that morning out of the johncrow sky

it was not dark at first . that opening on to the red sea humming
but something in my mouth like feathers . blue like bubbles
carrying signals & planets & the sliding curve of the
world like a water pic. ture in a raindrop when the pressure. drop

When the stone fall that morning out of the johncrow sky

i couldn't cry out because my mouth was full of beast & plunder
as if i was gnashing badwords among tombstones
as if that road up stony hill. round the bend by the church
yard . on the way to the post office . was a bad bad dream

& the dream was like a snarl of broken copper wire zig zag.
ing its electric flashes up the hill & splitt. ing spark & flow.
ers high. er up the hill . past the white houses & the ogogs bark.
ing all teeth & fur. nace & my mother like she up . like she up.

like she up. side down up a tree like she was scream.
like she was scream. like she was scream. in no & no.
body i could hear could hear a word i say. in . even though
there were so many poems left & the tape was switched on &

runn. in & runn. in &
the green light was red & they was stannin up there &
evva. where in london & amsterdam & at unesco in paris &
in west berlin & clapp. in & clapp. in & clapp. in &

not a soul on stony hill to even say amen

Charles Bernstein

the boy soprano

Daddy loves me this I know
Cause my granddad told me so
Though he beats me blue and black
That's because I'm full of crap

My mommy she is ultra cool
Taught me the Bible's golden rule
Don't talk back, do what you're told
Abject compliance is as good as gold

The teachers teach the grandest things
Tell how poetry's words on wings
But wings are for Heaven, not for earth
Want my advice: hijack the hearse

August

Once you start
counting
stars there's
a full night
before you.

Once you part
counting
mars the
way that's left
before you.

External Market Constraints

No advance is known in the mines
of the heart. As lingering precludes
delay—the saltwork of Abyss
frozen in idled splendor: Recant
what is shorn of hopelessness.
Mingled like the trainless track
that bounds its limits by
mark and never seeks
an end. I knew a boy
called John or Jane
until he faded, who
all do, in loops. A
color lacking shadow, the mood
its stain, but even chance
worked measure to
eviscerated hold. That much for all
to see—I try for less but
spell the blame that cedars
tempt and splint again.

19.
■*Autonomy Is Jeopardy*

I hate artifice. All these
contraptions so many barriers
against what otherwise can't
be contested, so much seeming
sameness in a jello of
squirms. Poetry scares me. I
mean its virtual (or ventriloquized)
anonymity—no protection, no
bulwark to accompany its pervasive
purposivelessness, its accretive
acceleration into what may or
may not swell. Eyes demand
counting, the nowhere seen everywhere
behaved voicelessness everyone is clawing
to get a piece of. Shudder
all you want it won't
make it come any faster
last any longer: the pump
that cannot be dumped.

■

1. Grandfathers

The farm never seemed the same after gramps died
Grace kept saying, "Every life has its tide"
But to have his testicles cut that way
Even if he had done what, whatever they say

The corn grew high as a boy in britches
I loved the smell of the bulls and bitches
Motorcars and kikes seemed a world away
We thought we would always lounge in the hay

The first time I was in Kansas City
All the boys and girls looked so damn pretty
I said to my great friend, hey Joe, I said
How come gramps said we'd be better off dead

Than drinkin' the sweet liquor and tasting
the fruits –

The muscles and turnips and duckling soups
Such that we never ever none did had
When, oh when, we were tiny lads

2. Heritage

Don't you steal that flag, my Mama had qualms
But a boy gotta have something to boast on
Crack that rock, slit that toad
Nature's a hoot if you shoot your load

Flies in the oven
Flies in the head
I'll kill that fly
Till I kill it dead
And no more will that fly
Bother me
As I roam and I ramble
In the tumbleweed

3. Tough Love

My Dad and I were very close
I like to say, int'mately gruff.
We hunted bear, skinned slithy toes
You know, played ball and all that stuff.
Daddy had his pride and maybe was aloof
But when he hit me, that was proof –
Proof that he cared
More than he could ever share.
How I hated those men who took him away!
Pop was a passionate man
Just like me
And I'll teach my son, Clem
To love just like we men.

4. Sisters

William Kennedy Smith
He is an honorable man
And Mike Tyson's
A giant in my clan.
The liberals and the fem'nists
Hate men and vivisectionists.
But when they want the garbage out
Who do they ask, we guys no doubt.

Almost

◊ ◊ ◊

Test American
Poetry

26-27

1

Almost all the words we've said to one another are gone
and if they were retrieved, verbatim, we might not acknowledge them.
But the *tenor* of our talk
has been constant across decades!
(Tenor is what we meant by "soul.")

For instance,
the way we joke
by using non-sequiturs, elliptical remarks
which deliberately suppress context
in advance
of time's rub-out.

2

"When size really counts,"
the billboard says

showing the product
tiny,

in one corner,

so we need to search for it.
Come find me.

I stand
behind these words.

21

Mars Needs Terrorists

◊ ◊ ◊

1.

..... alien parasites
..... alien slave ship survivors,
..... alien teenagers in 1950s Florida, sex
..... terror and destruction, terror
..... designed to part dumbass teenagers
..... some now very wet
..... romantic, the republican
..... told me of their terror
..... outfit for ?I?ma slave
..... a fundraiser for republican
..... and wet buns contest
..... parents talking about sex
..... of here 7.battle him republican 8
..... 8.we are 138 9.teenagers

2.

..... 1.tn t. (terror
..... grind 1.monkey business 2.slave
..... 1.dead & bloated 2.sex
..... pie 9.plush 10.wet
..... mind-controlled slave
..... affirmative vote regarding the wet
..... to malign fathers and teenagers
..... and engage in sex
..... world, now we need teenagers

..... few goofballs hauling their wet
..... breasts plump and round such that
..... needs more focus on sex
..... a nation of former slave
..... are two types of terror

3.

..... comes with wage slave world
..... technofa cism theory, Red Terror
..... "many amongst the fair sex
..... "pretty red roses, wet
..... "reigning terror I'm just
..... burnt out corporate slave
..... sex dwarf
..... as if it was all a gory, wet
..... terror odyssey the exile list of terror
..... in kidnapping and enslaving women as "sex slave"
..... the terror is acknowledged that they have
..... power within the republican
..... porn movie) gotta their teenagers
..... "Teenagers from Mars

4.

..... in America the teenagers
..... units touch spoke sex
..... slavery slaver slave Slav
..... dispensing with his "white slave"
..... out of raw terror
..... was big and black and stank like wet
..... wets wetness wetly wet
..... terroristic terrorist terrorism terror
..... teeth teens teenagers
..... republics republicans republican
..... 133, 114 old, 660, 112 sex, 84
..... 121, 11 ant, 6, 11 slave

..... 10, 3 tiring, 0, 3 terror
..... 0, 2 mound, 0, 2 teenagers

5.

..... sexes sexed sex
..... go out and have sex
..... tie shirt suit wet
..... male person has sex
..... it a crime for teenagers
..... has always picked up on the sex
..... thanks to my former slave
..... 3978 comfortable 3977 wet
..... jay 937 divorced 937 teenagers
..... 904 strips 903 slave
..... teenagers think that
..... dirty bombs will hit the USA at anytime
..... in America—bin Laden because he spread terror
..... was 140 pounds, soaking wet

6.

..... welcome to Iraq Chat Opinions
..... just fuckin' up your sex life,
..... curled back in terror
..... 1813 marvelous 1813 republican
..... 1513 achievements 1513 terror
..... United States, that teenagers
..... image of the republican
..... having lots of sex
..... the of and to a in that is was he for it
..... with as his on be at by
..... spite soil runs republican
..... attend absence windows wet
..... stained spots slipped slave
..... "my wife, panties wet
..... "like some colonial slave

7.

..... chest trembling treat threatening terror
..... to death the nine teenagers
..... republican leader urges new
..... right to better sex
..... *wet 'n' svelte*: Jennifer
..... panties wet with excitement would gasp
..... Osama bin Laden's terror
..... to end up in the attic (engaged in a private sex
..... this time of year going: ?damn, my feet are wet
..... 7829 trees 7809 sex
..... 1363 discount 1363 terror
..... balcony 898 nuisance 898 teenagers
..... involved in the black slave
..... and sticky cold and wet

8.

..... the republican party has degenerated
..... in the face of terror
..... probably calls up phone sex
..... while they were teenagers
..... work for NOTHING) as slave
..... the massacre of teenagers
..... fucker smells like wet
..... "I am a republican
..... "your ancestors had sex
..... sliding around her fat wet
..... pussy—formalities of wet
..... she might Hoover up teenagers
..... the sex was so good that
..... uninitiated multitudes to the terror

9.

..... sex beasts TWO sex
..... regime him group sex
..... he so often wet
..... Tower Records tower terror
..... terrible terrible terror
..... reproductive reptials Republic
..... of Texas Republica republican
..... Teri Hatcher sex
..... teen sex videos navel wet
..... tie shirt suit wet
..... tie shirt suit wet
..... he is a republican and
..... more than 140 pounds wet
..... ANIMALS Japanese Irish republican

10.

..... rabbit valley slave labor
..... and sweet pictures of teenagers
..... frozen in terror
..... parents and hitchhiking teenagers
..... terror: a female Klingon
..... indentured servant: a slave
..... who BEAR infants, BORE teenagers
..... dares not is a slave
..... fine art of getting wet
..... a programmer's approach to sex
..... what comes after sex
..... cars and vote republican
..... we are born naked, wet
..... full of surprises and terror

from *Kiosk*

23

eye balance
of woman in
blue stripes

Ⓟ

PROLETARIAN PORTRAIT

384

A big young bareheaded woman
in an apron 3/45

Her hair slicked back standing
on the street 3/45

subjugating
police to center
woman alive
data

385

One stockinged foot toeing
the sidewalk 2/35

← P. 121, 125 E
2/1/35
later well

Her shoe in her hand. Looking
intently into it 3/65

She pulls out the paper insole
to find the nail 4/45

also
unpleasant

That has been hurting her
5/65

Speaker,
subject
reader?

William Carlos Williams
Collected Poems (I)

AN EARLY MARTYR AND OTHER POEMS 1935

383

on his left ✓
shoulder

using syntactical open in the

Ⓟ TO A POOR OLD WOMAN Ⓟ

munching a plum on
the street a paper bag
of them in her hand

They taste good to her
They taste good
to her. They taste
good to her

7 iconic savouring
try to say
observer/observer

— You can see it by
the way she gives herself
to the one half
sucked out in her hand

as we give
attention to
a poem

Comforted
a solace of ripe plums
seeming to fill the air
They taste good to her Ⓟ

perceptual implications
— snail's pace
board
celebration

Parturition

I am the centre
Of a circle of pain
Exceeding its boundaries in every direction

The business of the bland sun
Has no affair with me
In my congested cosmos of agony
From which there is no escape
On infinitely prolonged nerve-vibrations
Or in contraction
To the pin-point nucleus of being

Locate an irritation without
It is within
Within

It is without
The sensitized area
Is identical with the extensity
Of intension

I am the false quantity
In the harmony of physiological potentiality
To which
Gaining self-control
I should be consonant
In time

Pain is no stronger than the resisting force
Pain calls up in me
The struggle is equal

The open window is full of a voice
A fashionable portrait-painter
Running up-stairs to a woman's apartment
Sings

"All the girls are tid'ly did'ly
All the girls are nice
Whether they wear their hair in curls
Or—"

At the back of the thoughts to which I permit crystallization
The conception Brute
Why?

The irresponsibility of the male
Leaves woman her superior Inferiority
He is running up-stairs

I am climbing a distorted mountain of agony
Incidentally with the exhaustion of control
I reach the summit
And gradually subside into anticipation of
Repose
Which never comes
For another mountain is growing up
Which goaded by the unavoidable
I must traverse
Traversing myself

Something in the delirium of night-hours
Confuses while intensifying sensibility
Blurring spatial contours
So aiding elusion of the circumscribed
That the gurgling of a crucified wild beast
Comes from so far away
And the foam on the stretched muscles of a mouth
Is no part of myself
There is a climax in sensibility
When pain surpassing itself
Becomes Exotic

And the ego succeeds in unifying the positive and negative
poles of sensation

Uniting the opposing and resisting forces

In lascivious revelation

Relaxation

Negation of myself as a unit

Vacuum interlude

I should have been emptied of life

Giving life

For consciousness in crises races

Through the subliminal deposits of evolutionary processes

Have I not

Somewhere

Scrutinized

A dead white feathered moth

Laying eggs?

A moment

Being realization

Can

Vitalized by cosmic initiation

Furnish an adequate apology

For the objective

Agglomeration of activities

Of a life.

LIFE

A leap with nature

Into the essence

Of unpredicted Maternity

Against my thigh

Touch of infinitesimal motion

Scarcely perceptible

Undulation

Warmth moisture

Stir of incipient life

Precipitating into me

The contents of the universe

Mother I am

Identical

With infinite Maternity

Indivisible

Acutely

I am absorbed

Into

{ The was—is—ever—shall—be }

Of cosmic reproductivity

Rises from the subconscious

Impression of a cat

With blind kittens

Among her legs

Same undulating life-stir

I am that cat

Rises from the sub-conscious

Impression of small animal carcass

Covered with blue-bottles

—Epicurean—

And through the insects

Waves that same undulation of living

Death

Life

I am knowing

All about

Unfolding

The next morning

Each woman-of-the-people

Tip-toeing the red pile of the carpet

Doing hushed service

Each woman-of-the-people

Wearing a halo

A ludicrous little halo

Of which she is sublimely unaware

I once heard in a church

—Man and woman God made them—

Thank God.

ca 1945

1961

Photo After Pogrom

problem of reproduction
of the photograph

Arrangement by rage
of human rubble

the false-eternal statues of the slain
until they putrify.

not also thing of
anonymity & heroic state

Tossed on a pile of dead,
one woman,
her body hacked to utter beauty
oddly by murder,

← amb sculpture

attains the absolute smile
of dispossession:

compensation: or
reclaiming dignity in
erotic signs

the marble pause before the extinct haven
Death's drear
erasure of fear,

the unassumed
composure

the purposeless peace
sealing the faces
of corpses—

reclaims natural,
paradox of logic of the
walled funeral where
condemned is raised

Corpses are virgin.

- adding that
- the eternal silence, the silence of the dead

27

Time-Bomb

Time is a bomb of
explosion of human nature

The present moment
is an explosion,
a scission
of past and future

space

presence of time

leaving
those valorous disreputables,
the ruins,

runs a scale

sentinels
in an unknown dawn
strewn with prophecy.

disorder of order

Only the momentary
goggle of death

fixes the fugitive
momentum.

to fix in space of arrest
(as in afterimages of blast)
& also Photo fixing solution
terminally, the photograph
ment

Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots

Latin Borghese

Houses hold virgins
The door's on the chain

'Plumb streets with hearts'
'Bore curtains with eyes'

Virgins without dots*
Stare beyond probability

See the men pass
Their hats are not ours
We take a walk
They are going somewhere
And they may look everywhere
Men's eyes look into things
Our eyes look out

A great deal of ourselves
We offer to the mirror
Something less to the confessional
The rest to Time
There is so much Time
Everything is full of it
Such a long time

Virgins may whisper
'Transparent nightdresses made all of lace'

*Marriage Portions

Virgins may squeak
'My dear I should faint'
Flutter flutter flutter
. . . . 'And then the man—'
Wasting our giggles
For we have no dots

We have been taught
Love is a god
White with soft wings
Nobody shouts
Virgins for sale

Yet where are our coins
For buying a purchaser
Love is a god

Marriage expensive
A secret well kept
Makes the noise of the world
Nature's arms spread wide
Making room for us
Room for all of us
Somebody who was never
a virgin

Has bolted the door
Put curtains at our windows
See the men pass
They are going somewhere

Fleshes like weeds
Sprout in the light
So much flesh in the world
Wanders at will

Some behind curtains
Throbs to the night
Bait to the stars

Spread it with gold
 And you carry it home
 Against your shirt front
 To a shaded light
 With the door locked
 Against virgins who
 Might scratch

*image, not a poem
 O woman, I am
 mortal, mortal
 O woman, I am
 mortal, mortal*

William Carlos Williams:
 from reprinted Spring & ALL in
 Collected Poems

It is rarely understood how such plays as Shakespeare's were written—
 or in fact how any work of value has been written, the practical bearing

W C W

of which is that only as the work was produced, in that way alone can
 it be understood

Fruitless for the academic tapeworm to hoard its excrementa in books.
 The cage—

The most of all writing has not even begun in the province from
 which alone it can draw sustenance.

There is not life in the stuff because it tries to be "like" life.

First must come the transposition of the faculties to the only world of
reality that men know: the world of the imagination, wholly our own.
 From this world alone does the work gain power, its soil the only one
 whose chemistry is perfect to the purpose.

The exaltation men feel before a work of art is the feeling of reality
 they draw from it. It sets them up, places a value upon experience—
 (said that half a dozen times already)

XVI

O tongue
 licking
 the sore on
 her netherlip

O toppled belly

O passionate cotton
 stuck with
 matted hair

elysian slobber
 upon
 the folded handkerchief

I can't die

—moaned the old
jaundiced woman
rolling her
saffron eyeballs

I can't die
I can't die

XVII

Our orchestra
is the cat's nuts—

Banjo jazz
with a nickelplated |

amplifier to
soothe

the savage beast—
Get the rhythm

That sheet stuff
's a lot a cheese.

Man
gimme the key

and lemme loose—
I make 'em crazy

with my harmonies—
Shoot it Jimmy

Nobody
Nobody else

but me—
They can't copy it

XVIII

The pure products of America
go crazy—
mountain folk from Kentucky

or the ribbed north end of
Jersey
with its isolate lakes and

valleys, its deaf-mutes, thieves
old names
and promiscuity between

devil-may-care men who have taken
to railroading
out of sheer lust of adventure—

and young slatterns, bathed
in filth
from Monday to Saturday

to be tricked out that night
with gauds
from imaginations which have no

peasant traditions to give them
character
but flutter and flaunt

sheer rags—succumbing without
emotion
save numbed terror

under some hedge of choke-cherry
or viburnum—
which they cannot express—

Unless it be that marriage
perhaps
with a dash of Indian blood

will throw up a girl so desolate
so hemmed round
with disease or murder

that she'll be rescued by an
agent—
reared by the state and

sent out at fifteen to work in
some hard-pressed
house in the suburbs—

some doctor's family, some Elsie—
voluptuous water
expressing with broken

brain the truth about us—
her great
ungainly hips and flopping breasts

addressed to cheap
jewelry
and rich young men with fine eyes

as if the earth under our feet
were
an excrement of some sky

and we degraded prisoners
destined
to hunger until we eat filth

while the imagination strains
after deer
going by fields of goldenrod in

the stifling heat of September
Somehow
it seems to destroy us

51

It is only in isolate flecks that
something
is given off

No one
to witness
and adjust, no one to drive the car

or better: prose has to do with the fact of an emotion; poetry has to do with the dynamization of emotion into a separate form. This is the force of imagination.

prose: statement of facts concerning emotions, intellectual states, data of all sorts—technical expositions, jargon, of all sorts—fictional and other—

poetry: new form dealt with as a reality in itself.

The form of prose is the accuracy of its subject matter—how best to expose the multiform phases of its material

the form of poetry is related to the movements of the imagination revealed in words—or whatever it may be—

the cleavage is complete

Why should I go further than I am able? Is it not enough for you that I am perfect?

The cleavage goes through all the phases of experience. It is the jump from prose to the process of imagination that is the next great leap of the intelligence—from the simulations of present experience to the facts of the imagination—

the greatest characteristic of the present age is that it is stale—stale as literature—

To enter a new world, and have there freedom of movement and newness.

I mean that there will always be prose painting, representative work, clever as may be in revealing new phases of emotional research presented on the surface.

But the jump from that to Cézanne or back to certain of the primitives is the impossible.

The primitives are not back in some remote age—they are not BEHIND experience. Work which bridges the gap between the rigidities of vulgar experience and the imagination is rare. It is new, immediate—It is so because it is actual, always real. It is experience dynamized into reality.

Time does not move. Only ignorance and stupidity move. Intelligence (force, power) stands still with time and forces change about itself—sifting the world for permanence, in the drift of nonentity.

Pío Baroja interested me once—

Baroja leaving the medical profession, some not important inspector's work in the north of Spain, opened a bakery in Madrid.

The isolation he speaks of, as a member of the so called intellectual class, influenced him to abandon his position and engage himself, as far as possible, in the intricacies of the design patterned by the social class—He sees no interest in isolation—

These gestures are the effort for self preservation or the preservation of some quality held in high esteem—

Here it seems to be that a man, starved in imagination, changes his milieu so that his food may be richer—The social class, without the power of expression, lives upon imaginative values.

I mean only to emphasize the split that goes down through the abstractions of art to the everyday exercises of the most primitive types—

there is a sharp division—the energizing force of imagination on one side—and the acquisitive—PROGRESSIVE force of the lump on the other

The social class with its religion, its faith, sincerity and all the other imaginative values is positive (yes)

the merchant, hibernating, unmagnetized—tends to drop away into the isolate, inactive particles—Religion is continued then as a form, art as a convention—

To the social, energized class—ebullient now in Russia the particles adhere because of the force of the imagination energizing them—

Anyhow the change of Baroja interested me

Among artists, or as they are sometimes called “men of imagination” “creators,” etc. this force is recognized in a pure state—All this can be used to show the relationships between genius, hand labor, religion—etc. and the lack of feeling between artists and the middle class type—

The jump between fact and the imaginative reality

The study of all human activity is the delineation of the cresence and ebb of this force, shifting from class to class and location to location—rhythm: the wave rhythm of Shakespeare watching clowns and kings sliding into nothing

XIX

This is the time of year
when boys fifteen and seventeen
wear two horned lilac blossoms
in their caps—or over one ear

What is it that does this?

It is a certain sort—
drivers for grocers or taxidivers
white and colored—

fellows that let their hair grow long
in a curve over one eye—

32

Horned purple

Dirty satyrs, it is
vulgarity raised to the last power

They have stolen them
broken the bushes apart
with a curse for the owner—

Lilacs—

They stand in the doorways
on the business streets with a sneer
on their faces

adorned with blossoms

Out of their sweet heads
dark kisses—rough faces

XX

The sea that encloses her young body
ula lu la lu
is the sea of many arms—

The blazing secrecy of noon is undone
and and and
the broken sand is the sound of love—?

The flesh is firm that turns in the sea
O la la O
the sea that is cold with dead men's tears—

Deeply the wooing that penetrated
to the edge of the sea
returns in the plash of the waves—

a wink over the shoulder
large as the ocean—
with wave following wave to the edge

Oom barroom

It is the cold of the sea
broken upon the sand by the force
of the moon—

In the sea the young flesh playing
floats with the cries of far off men
who rise in the sea

with green arms
to homage again the fields over there
where the night is deep—

la lu la lu
but lips too few
assume the new—marruu

Underneath the sea where it is dark
there is no edge
so two—

XXI

one day in Paradise
a Gipsy

smiled
to see the blandness

of the leaves—
so many

so lascivious
and still

eye balance
of woman in
blue stripes

Ⓟ

PROLETARIAN PORTRAIT

384

A big young bareheaded woman
in an apron 3/45

Her hair slicked back standing
on the street 3/45

subjugating
police to center
woman alive
data

385

One stockinged foot toeing
the sidewalk 2/35

← P. 121, 125 E
2/1/35
later well

Her shoe in her hand. Looking
intently into it 3/65

She pulls out the paper insole
to find the nail 4/45

also
unpleasant

That has been hurting her
5/65

Speaker,
subject
reader?

William Carlos Williams
Collected Poems (I)

AN EARLY MARTYR AND OTHER POEMS 1935

383

on his left
shoulder ✓

using syntactical open in the

Ⓟ TO A POOR OLD WOMAN Ⓟ

munching a plum on
the street a paper bag
of them in her hand

They taste good to her
They taste good
to her. They taste
good to her

7 iconic savouring
try to say
observer/observer

You can see it by
the way she gives herself
to the one half
sucked out in her hand

as we give
attention to
a poem

Comforted
a solace of ripe plums
seeming to fill the air
They taste good to her

very much implicated
small branches
boarded
celebration

Zukofsky

22

To my wash-stand
in which I wash
my left hand
and my right hand

To my wash-stand
whose base is Greek
whose shaft
is marble and is fluted

To my wash-stand
whose wash-bowl
is an oval
in a square

To my wash-stand
whose square is marble
and inscribes two
smaller ovals to left and right for soap

Comes a song of
water from the right faucet and the left
my left and my
right hand mixing hot and cold

Comes a flow which
if I have called a song
is a song
entirely in my head

a song out of imagining
modillions descried above
my head a frieze
of stone completing what no longer

is my wash-stand
since its marble has completed

LOUIS ZUKOFSKY

COLLECTED SHORTER POEMS

my getting up each morning
my washing before going to bed

my look into a mirror
to glimpse half an oval
as if its half
were half-oval in my head and the

climates of many
inscriptions human heads shapes'
horses' elephants' (tusks) others'
scratched in marble tile

so my wash-stand
in one particular breaking of the
tile at which I have
looked and looked

has opposed to my head
the inscription of a head
whose coinage is the
coinage of the poor

observant in waiting
in their getting up mornings
and in their waiting
going to bed

carefully attentive
to what they have
and to what they do not
have

when a flow of water
doubled in narrow folds
occasions invertible counterpoints
over a head and

an age in a wash-stand
and in their own heads

Zukowsky

29

N.Y.

"At heaven's gate" the larks: have
Read to date the nth reversion, "re" Marx

Of the mind's image a hangar
A red crane—on the nearby wharves

In the spring-blue day—not working
But not out of languor

January the 29, the 29th birthday
Falling on a Sunday

As planned there should be to-day
29 songs written over two years

And with, but without expected, pay

I have written down twenty-three
Leaving 5 and another page blank

To record a January without snow
For the delectation of the file and rank.

"Further than"—

Further than the wash-stand
three mountains in one bathroom
The mountains on the floor, sea-bed
rock, colored design; Five figures, chance
smudges, perhaps tar, in the mountains; Six
and Five figures in the waters under
and above them. Each figure
is an ordinate of which the axis

26

is a peak, The Whole Peak, from summit
thru base to inverted altitude, depth beneath
sea level. Only drying from the shower is
exploration possible, the chances
of world monopoly have been so carefully
seized that only on the other side of
one's bathroom nothing is foreign. Unless
charting the antarctic has something to do
with figures the heads of which are
just smudges away from the axis of abscissas
or one is merely exploring from a shower
expectant that today or tomorrow must
bring the new economic anatomization.

"Mantis"

Mantis! praying mantis! since your wings' leaves
And your terrified eyes, pins, bright, black and poor
Beg—"Look, take it up" (thoughts' torsion)! "save it!"
I who can't bear to look, cannot touch,—You—
You can—but no one sees you steadying lost
In the cars' drafts on the lit subway stone.

Praying mantis, what wind-up brought you, stone
On which you sometimes prop, prey among leaves
(Is it love's food your raised stomach prays?), lost
Here, stone holds only seats on which the poor
Ride, who rising from the news may trample you—
The shops' crowds a jam with no flies in it.

Even the newsboy who now sees knows it
No use, papers make money, makes stone, stone,
Banks, "it is harmless," he says moving on—You?
Where will he put *you*? There are no safe leaves
To put you back in here, here's news! too poor
Like all the separate poor to save the lost.

Don't light on my chest, mantis! do—you're lost,
Let the poor laugh at my fright, then see it:
My shame and theirs, you whom old Europe's poor

Call spectre, strawberry, by turns; a stone—
You point—they say—you lead lost children—leaves
Close in the paths men leave, saved, safe with you.

Killed by thorns (once men), who now will save you
Mantis? what male love bring a fly, be lost
Within your mouth, prophetess, harmless to leaves
And hands, faked flower,—the myth is: dead, bones, it
Was assembled, apes wing in wind: On stone,
Mantis, you will die, touch, beg, of the poor.

Android, loving beggar, dive to the poor
As your love would even without head to you,
Graze like machined wheels, green, from off this stone
And preying on each terrified chest, lost
Say, I am old as the globe, the moon, it
Is my old shoe, yours, be free as the leaves.

Fly, mantis, on the poor, arise like leaves
The armies of the poor, strength: stone on stone
And build the new world in your eyes, Save it!

? "Mantis," An Interpretation ?

or *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum,*
names are sequent to the things named

Mantis! praying mantis! since your wings' leaves

Incipit Vita Nova

le parole . . .

almeno la loro sentenza

the words . . .

at least their substance

at first were

"The mantis opened its body

It had been lost in the subway

It steadied against the drafts

It looked up—

Begging eyes—

It flew at my chest"

—The ungainliness
of the creature needs stating.

No one would be struck merely
By its ungainliness,
Having seen the thing happen.

Having seen the thing happen,
There would be no intention 'to write it up,'

But *all* that was happening,
The mantis itself only an incident, *compelling any writing*
The transitions were perforce omitted.

Thoughts'—two or three or five or
Six thoughts' reflection (pulse's witness) of what was happening
All immediate, not moved by any transition.

Feeling this, what should be the form
Which the ungainliness already suggested
Should take?

—Description—lightly—ungainliness
With a grace unrelated to its surroundings.

Grace there is perhaps
In the visual sense, not in the movement of
"eyes, pins, bright, black and poor."

Or considering more than the isolation
Of one wrenched line,

Consider:

"(thoughts' torsion)"

la battaglia delli diversi pensieri . . .

the battle of diverse thoughts—

The actual twisting

Of many and diverse thoughts

What form should *that* take?

—The first words that came into mind

“The mantis opened its body—”

Which might deserve the trope:

the feeling of the original which is a permanence

?

Or the feeling accompanying the first poor 27 words' inception
(the original which is a permanence

?),

That this thoughts' torsion

Is really a sestina

Carrying subconsciously

Many intellectual and sensual properties of the

forgetting and remembering Head

One human's intuitive Head

Dante's rubric

Incipit

Surrealiste

Re-collection

A twisted shoe by a pen, an insect, lost,
“To the short day and the great sweep of shadow.”

The sestina, then, the repeated end words
Of the lines' winding around themselves,
Since continuous in the Head, whatever has been read,

whatever is heard,

whatever is seen

Perhaps goes back cropping up again with

Inevitable recurrence again in the blood

Where the spaces of verse are not visual

But a movement,

With vision in the lines merely a movement.

What is most significant

Perhaps is that C—and S—and X—of the 19th century

Used the “form”—not the form but a Victorian

Stuffing like upholstery

For parlor polish,

And our time takes count against them

For their blindness and their (unintended?) cruel smugness.

Again: as an experiment, the sestina would be wicker-work—

As a force, one would lie to one's feelings not to use it

One feels in fact inevitably

About the coincidence of the mantis lost in the subway,

About the growing oppression of the poor—

Which is the situation most pertinent to us—,

With the fact of the sestina:

Which together fatally now crop up again

To twist themselves anew

To record not a sestina, post Dante,

Nor even a mantis.

Is the poem then, a sestina

Or not a sestina?

The word sestina has been

Taken out of the original title. It is no use (killing oneself?)

—Our world will not stand it,

the implications of a too regular form.

Hard to convince even one likely to show interest in the matter
That this regularity to which ‘write it up’ means not a damn

(Millet in a Dali canvas, Circe in E's Cantos)

Whatever seeming modelling after the event,

649 years, say, after Dante's first canzone,

If it came back immediately as the only

Form that will include the most pertinent subject of our day—

The poor—

Cannot mean merely implied comparison, unreality

Usually interpreted as falsity.

Too much time cannot be saved

Saying:

The mantis might have heaped up upon itself a

Grave of verse,

But the facts are not a symbol.

There is the difference between that
And a fact (the mantis in the subway)
And all the other facts the mantis sets going about it.

No human being wishes to become
An insect for the sake of a symbol.

But the mantis *can start*
History etc.
The mantis situation remains its situation,
Enough worth if the emotions can equate it,

"I think" of the mantis
"I think" of other things—
The quotes set repulsion
Into movement.

Repulsion—
Since one, present, won't touch the mantis,
Will even touch the poor—

but carefully.

The mantis, then,
Is a small incident of one's physical vision
Which is the poor's helplessness
The poor's separateness
Bringing self-disgust.

The mantis is less ungainly than that.

There should be to-day no use for a description of it
Only for a "movement" emphasizing its use, since it's been around,

An accident in the twisting
Of many and diverse "thoughts"
i.e. nerves, glandular facilities, electrical cranial charges
For example—
line 1—entomology
line 9—biology

lines 10 and 11—the even rhythm of riding under-
ground, and the sudden jolt are also
of these nerves, glandular facilities,
brain's charges

line 12—pun, fact, banality

lines 13 to 18—the economics of the very poor—the
newsboy—unable to think beyond
"subsistence still permits competi-
tion," banking, *The Wisconsin Elkhorn*
Independent—"Rags make paper,
paper makes money, money makes
banks, banks make loans, loans make
poverty, poverty makes rags."

lines 22 to 24—Providence myth

lines 25 to 29—Melanesian self-extinction myth

line 33—airships

lines 35 and 36—creation myth (Melanesia), residue of
it in our emotions no matter if fetched
from the moon, as against l. 25 to 29.

and naturally the coda which is the
only thing that can sum up the
jumble of order in the lines weaving
"thoughts," pulsations, running commentary, one upon the other,
itself a jumble of order
as far as poetic
sequence is concerned:

the mantis
the poor's strength
the new world.

39—"in your eyes"

the original shock still persisting—

So that the invoked collective
Does not subdue the senses' awareness,
The longing for touch to an idea, or
To a use function of the material:
The original emotion remaining,
like the collective,
Unprompted, real, as propaganda.

The voice exhorting, trusting what one hears
Will exhort others, is the imposed sensuality of an age

When both propaganda and sensuality are necessary against—
“—we have been left with nothing
just a few little unimportant ships
and barges” (British Admiralty even in 1920)

or jelly for the Pope

la mia nemica, madonna la pieta
my enemy, my lady pity,

36—“like leaves”
The Head remembering these words exactly in the way it
remembers

la calcina pietra
the calcined stone.

But it remembers even more constantly
the poor
than
com' huom pietra sott' erba
as one should hide a stone in grass.

Nor is the coincidence
Of the last four lines
Symbolism,
But the simultaneous,
The diaphanous, historical
In one head.

November 4, 1934
New York

NOTE

The six blank pages intended by Song 29, written January 29th, 1933, were filled during 1933 and the early months of 1934 with songs 11, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28. Added to the original collection their number is not included in, or for, the title of the book, namely *55 Poems*. They are dedicated rather by their subjects.

from *Baby*

◇ ◇ ◇

Baby. In Three Parts.

Baby has discovered a primal land of no name narcissism not because she knows the meaning of narcissism and wants to convert self-adoration into something invisible, filthy, eager, peppery with sweat, and universally altruistic. Not because she even means to love herself. Intention switches places with the disquisition of lungs bursting with her smarts withering future word balloons. Next baby is in hiding. She is going to praise something not worth knowing. No worth. No verdict. Salty lips wrangle with mist. Clotted clouds devour a sky. The goodness of good words of Kantian aesthetics blow amongst flimsy detail for the round world amplifies a life of its own, a life on its own, an anti-aesthetic with revolt a wish list or one and one and one steeped in spikes, fingers, and holes. She the gargantuan fragment pulls on the thin lower branch of an oak tree then pulverizes one and then another oak leaf. With these new forms of flesh jammed into each of her fists she marches into Daddy's room, mounts his seated lap, and smothers his forehead with the application of leaves. Her father in this play begins his history of fretting for his little girl, whom he predicts is destined for the life of the artist. Baby willfully disregards the codes-tossed-in-fret, but as an afterthought, she presents her father with an alternative: this is for nothing, for no one, for it and me. Come here Daddy and look into the glands of a fearless flower. "All thinking hears the indelible imprint of survival." Once upon a time baby wallowed in trivia so that no one could associate her wallowing with shame. Baby figured that if she could live in an inchoate world where her actions were neither confirmed nor denied, some great force would bubble up around her and we'd all turn into ferocious beasts. Her body would dissolve into the Realm of Ferocity and she would live shamelessly ever after.

41

The. Open. Box.

Baby in another era was running from room to room with her arm thrust out and her finger bent in a peculiar position. She was making a splattering buzzing sound. A black fly in the form of baby! That ran splat, right into the television set perched on a little stool. A stool that baby had used only yesterday. Wha's 'at? asked baby, pointing at the TV screen. The tiger was there ready to whisper in her ear. It's a dungeon full of dirt. Oh, zee, zee, said baby in wonderment pulling at the knobs. Tiger realized too late baby liked dungeons full of dirt, especially when description poured spontaneously out of tiger's mouth. Baby loved the mouth of the tiger. Especially its sweaty lips. So the TV, it was black and white, went pop, on. Baby sat down on the floor with her entire hand in her mouth, her mouth sucking on the hand, four and five fingers. In and out. While nutty adults in miniature did all sorts of things talking in odd theatrical voices as if they were talking to air and air could listen. The air has huge ears, thought baby. She looked around all about her but could only feel the air brushing lightly against her cheeks in that interstitial world between now and then. In the meantime, the jackpot hobnobbing of the nitwits and sad sacks on television had vanished. In front of her was an emaciated child with huge ribs and a terrible listless look that frowned on baby's chubby face. Baby fearlessly batted at the TV screen. The baby's in the box. The baby's in the box! The baby's in the box! The box! Open the box now!

Another Artifact.

Open lips for sucking and pouting were all stopped up with a plug that wouldn't come out. Without result, lips and teeth tugged on the plug of a wasp wasted object. Baby's hands were moist as usual so she wiped them down the side of her shirt. But she couldn't pull the stopper out even with the use of her wadded up shirt, which she had finally struggled out of. A voice from behind her said, it isn't supposed to open. Hands pried baby's digits away dislodging the object, which was returned then to a shelf and set between a portrait of baby and a kachina doll with green pants and something earnest about it moving forward. For a minute baby looked around for her shirt. It had apparently disappeared along with the door shutting. Baby's lips moved in and out in a sucking pout as she contemplated the wasp-waisted relic on the shelf. The object was obviously the physical manifestation of the inside of a song bound up methodically around the middle with twine. Such fortification caused baby to place her hand two inches below her navel and rub there with a circular motion. Her belly was getting hot and her body was tuning up. Eec sounds rose clear and up into her throat from her navel. If there had been silence, silence would have been pierced but the room was always humming.

Next.

Small mean feats and regurgitation of memories made baby wild. She melted into the crowd and I frantically followed her certain all the while she would meet her doom before the fatal hour when moths let loose a scent that compels humanity to respire most willfully. Creatures fallen from grace including show horses and several unfortunate mud hens pranced and scuttled unwittingly through the compositional nightmare. Did baby know where she was going? Absurdity after absurdity stunted my search for baby. The moths swooped around a slanted tree. A derailed train lightly nudged its trunk, which was torn away slightly from its surface roots. Bankers and stockbrokers and sales people of all stripes marched up and down the sidewalks as invisibly as if they were in Midtown Manhattan. The sun was lowering slowly and I was frantic to find baby. If I were to call on a cop for assistance I would be asked for my credentials. These credentials, neatly tucked into my sock, were wilting with sweat. The stench would prove that I was a lazy and even abusive parent.

I thought I heard baby at a distance. When one loses baby, the body comes nearly undone. Your guts start to strangle your organs and your limbs take flight. Suddenly I recognized the location: San Francisco. This was good. I knew this town.

At nightfall, I thought I saw baby standing on a soapbox made of musical instrument cases stacked precariously one on top of the other. At an artificial height of four and one half feet she was a commanding young figure. Like gaudy acrobats, her dimpled arms flung up over her head every time she wanted the crowd surrounding her to cheer or egg her on. There she was, or so it seemed, exercising her rights to free speech again. As I approached, my view of baby was obliterated by onlookers. When I could see again, the musicians were unpacking the instruments from the cases: the soapbox had been dismantled. The musicians tuned their strings, sucked on mouthpieces, then began to play a sad song:

Hold me
Hold on
Waiting for curfew
To go home

It's night
Bright lights
Fling fear
Away

Hold on
It's night
Bright lights
Fling fear away

Let's play
A tune
Waiting for curfew
To go home

I left before it was over. And yet, it didn't seem to matter at all if I stayed or went. Baby would be raped and murdered by now kidnapped or placed in a holding cell at the police station or given to a foster family or placed under observation in a social worker's clinic. Or she would be hiding in the basement with some local cur and her pups, feeding with the pups from the cur's nipples and drinking out of the same water dishes. Somewhere out there was the real, the reality principle, even reality and realism all tied up in a bundle waiting for the flood of investors to snatch the whole thing up. And that's where baby could be found. But "I" I was left here in the imagination strangling in the pearls before swine she'd smothered me with, intoxicated by the false scent wafting around the urban rot of baby's noisy dreams.

43

Again. The. Time.

Repetition and baby. Losing and tiger baby. Water in baby and curling. Ears and accumulation. To know everything. Baby is entirely inside baby. And then baby glides, a little boat, and not interruption. She doesn't want an imposition. She seals tiger's mouth with her wet tongue. This is tiger silent. A hand dances with a knee. Silently things have fallen around baby. "The sun taking a bath," says baby.

Yelling. For. Fun.

Someone produces frequent groans. Flowers ornament the walls. Out is getting out and being out. And being out getting out.

Mutations.

In the air cuddling with the wildest regions. Reproducing one trauma after another. This is it. Life was getting longer. It was becoming historical.

Mutations.

A face with red cavernous gashes and things possibly living in them. Possibly pill bugs, dragon flies, freedom fighters, and tiny horses. Then eyes as large and black as truck tires but with irises and pupils as gentle and wary as a handsome mammal. Exaggeration is better than bricks and squares. Baby's ancestors knew this and baby is holding the hands of her ancestors. They all reject banality, drinking from the lake with their necks curved in arches. Someday baby will declare that people are horses locked in upright bodies. That most of western architecture is a product of repression. This is why she cannot, will not ever wear shoes.

The. Corner. Of.

The whole lot is now dark and out of sorts. The corner then finally vanishes. Lashed. Lacerated. Then the pain is gone. Something too hot to even sting exits the tongue along with everything.

Baby. N. Baseball. Song.

Baby was going to sing and then sing twice. The song was later attenuated when there was nothing left to ferry to the foreground of the forest, which had been the center of singing as baby experienced her lungs. Experience. Experience. She sang. She sang divided and then twice feeling the lungs of the forest as her own and then stepping back to observe herself as a phenomenon springing into readymade denomination from the head of an old god named Nietzsche. Or N. His name too had been clipped short like the song when she, growing tired and distracted, had less and less to ferry forth as offering, as person, to the forest, which was transforming into high speed blur. Tings like notes left distinct prints in non-voiced ground near voiced air. These were things baby could not experience or express. She recuperated her energies and opened her mouth. She thought she was going to taste tings. Then she thought again and thus was thinking twice. The singing was attenuated, clipped short. Minor distractions delineated something back in the brain that her lips associated with sucking. Baby's little body is a speedball. That's what someone remarked as she raced back and forth between the catcher's mound and the batter's plate. Someone was watching her play. She is her own ball. This someone was laughing so baby flew into sky and ground.

Note.

There they were. The notes clipped. Short, spread out. Deathless and. Without design. Baby was trying to decide if she should let go the cry pressing up through her chest when the sound of children distracted her. Were they surrounding her? The children are coming. The children are coming. She sang. Wailed. Rolled into a speedball and proceeded on her back and forth diagonal course from b. plate to c. mound. Baby was not a team player. The shifting universe had narrowed to one demand: do not give up the strip of inside field. Singing, wailing were trampled in the dust of a play that cut all others out.

Baby. (For B and T)

Because this is the literature of ideas I cannot smoke a cigar. Baby had picked it up in the parking lot at the market.

Because this is the literature of ideas what just happened is a thought. Baby would give the cigar to Uncle Ted. Uncle Ted liked a musician named Sun Ra.

He was from outer space.

When baby's father inquired as to where the cigar had come from, the one that baby had wedged on the tight ledge between head and ear, baby had the answer. This cigar is from outer space. It was a surprise for Ted from Sun Ra.

Tragedy. Reconsidered.

You've gotta throw yourself at the other baby because you've been abandoned and forsaken. The other baby ridicules and ridicules. You are left left left there. Left and thrown down and the other baby gets under you and licks the wounds that gird the fine figure you cut when you are hiding the truth: you are just a baby. The other baby who has ridiculed and tormented you and who now soothes you with tongue and a special silence abandons you, goes to work, mercilessly. You baby of babies stand out, among the wild albatross, shining and shining "when the sun goes down."

Go. Down. Sun.

Be with baby under baby.

Knowledge.

Knowledge was being processed. It was in the argument machine and the driver of the machine was a god with the face of a man and the body of an inkbottle.

Knowledge.

White fuzz in the air froze on a screen. Baby danced the cancan which she'd seen imitations of on daytime television. Monarch butterflies hatched that day blanketing the scruffy shrubs with anxiety. Baby danced on the sidewalk. She choked a coke can with a jump rope. Then blew up a plane with her semiautomatic spitballs. The butterflies wanted nothing to do with her. When she trapped them with her little hands, they played dead, and when she opened her hands they wobbled on air pockets off into distant trees. These children, these children, screamed baby. What do they know?

from *Sal Mimeo*