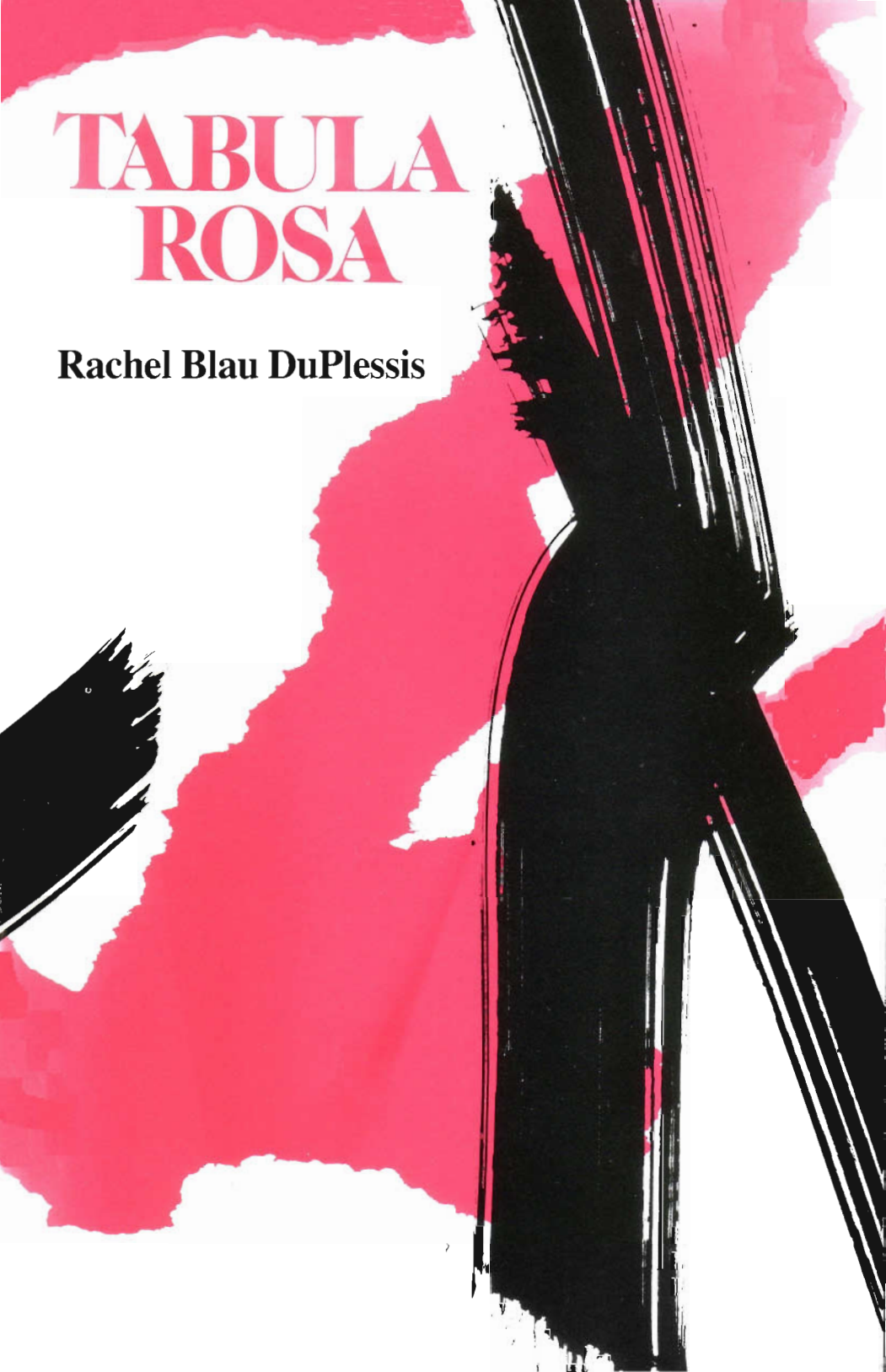


# TABULA ROSA

Rachel Blau DuPlessis





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I. from *The "History of Poetry"*

She cannot forget the history of poetry  
because it is not hers.



*The Poems of Sappho*

Tender pain  
flat milk  
a chest for holding women's things.  
Under the flesh-pink moon  
I keep my hand cupped.

Soft bread  
fresh milk  
so round and uncaring  
the clear-voiced moon,  
a lyre, guitar and mandolin.

I lie face down  
upon a tender pillow.  
Rosy-fingered, moons  
two minds' desire:  
to be one, to be two.

I want and yearn  
but never be enough.  
But dry breath and a dripping towel  
made me stop;  
and over my eyes dropped the dark sleep of night.

*Praxilla's Silliness*

for none but a simpleton would put cucumbers  
and the like on a par with the sun and the moon.

Zenobius, Proverbs: *Lyra Graeca*, III.

Almost  
rounded moon,  
Its unspilling  
meniscus—

Light.

Honeyed face of the sibylline  
earth.

Everything message, every randomness  
twigs fallen just like that     here

bright lined bulging square.

Pepo    pepo    pepo  
bird-ripe  
fruit of melon, cucumber, squash, pumpi-  
kin

slimy-seeded    cries    hot  
August bouncing.

Sweet the push push out of the cell

mint watery by waysides  
soft-leafed basil  
tipped by bushy bracts

cusps of the moon.

Under the fingernails  
dirt, flour, yeast

crusts of the sun.

Walk down the road until you go under it.

. . .

Dew on the wheat field wells up bread.  
Stars, grass, fruit, all variants

Bite down.

The light travels like salt  
The dark is thirst  
deep shadows  
of longing for more light—

But is not the longing for shadows  
brightness

earth of the meeting tides?

. . .

Wood white  
large white little white  
littler fritillaries

wayward

“lords” of air.

Green plums red plums yellow sun  
grizzled dotty (newsprint) juice  
the drupy fruits

signz  
places

always russing somewhere  
A leaf's moist papery crescent sloughs off.

Of silver-waxy bloom  
of cuke uncurls  
I sing.

The flea lights brisk upon  
one tucked foot in the dark.

Mark.

. . .

Written veins the stones' intrusions  
wander  
untranslated rocks.

Me goes leaping full and empty.

Now the dead dare coming closer.

All is inscribed,  
nothing feeds them,

every day a heavy vulval loaf.

Are you ready  
to go down  
by the water?

What cannot be said  
will get wept.



We live a little patch it doth  
go forward  
into grief

*small lilac leafed  
no blossom  
white feather, blossom.*

. .

Travel through  
picking and washing.  
Flesh level, iridescent.

Roads travelled, roads untravelled  
often equal.

Heavy as stone, loose as honey  
earth  
is constantly falling into earth.

So dress for the journey.  
Pink for the cave  
Pink for the endless stairwell

One hell, two deaths,  
three tasteless oatcakes.

. .

What starts and calls and whistles  
through the long clicking night?

Littoral, on the jot and tittle coast-  
line,  
plup,  
that the  
little tides  
catch into gravel, stars.

What I miss most *when dead* is the travelling  
*and after, stars*  
*the shining sun and moon*

*crisp cucumbers in season*  
*the apples bright*  
black-seeded *pears*.

But when I am living, bite hard  
into the crossroads

cukies wet and apples sweet  
I can sing and I can eat.

. .

Bury  
unbury

life deciduous as the moon.

. .

.

1983

*Madrigal*

In the green wood  
girls are twittering  
and birds are lolling in the hamlets

their day off  
today; tomorrow  
it's back to the forest.

Cuccu-nu  
pee-shee  
pipiol  
oi weh  
tuwhitta woo  
tereu

sound the songs  
hidden in bushes.

1981

*Rose*

Well the green  
and this its crowning  
sweet the moment  
common, fated  
weeps the little  
dripping baby.

Well the crimson's  
lavish touching  
clock of petals  
ends by falling  
black and dark  
the noisy baby.

Well the rose  
is filled with  
roses,  
well the baby  
filled with people:

me none  
alone  
foresee  
the rose.

1982

*Crowbar*

Snow on o-  
pen  
yellow for-  
sythia.

'Sno  
won  
open force  
scythe  
ya.

No one  
yell ow—you  
yellow mortal thing  
ringed in  
dull earth's icy garland.

Name this wane,  
this damaged foreign spring.  
For swain,  
who won?  
Name this pain,  
poem,  
whosever  
tune this was.

Prying  
another impleasurable  
forever re-  
tardy poem  
heavily up.

For all the world's sweet bolts  
of fern and rose

intentional petals, leafy leaves  
pressed in this paper-book  
finding's clues—  
trouvez!

Nose down in the field  
Papery poppy “beautiful”  
at the edge of wheat,

inchemeal  
dumb to the marge  
mere

Gleaner:  
silence in between  
coups.

Even the lever is a gleaning.  
“Thou” art the fulcrum.

Cold moon's circling, half a ring-  
pale smile

Ivory hand  
ivory breast  
ivory front  
marble foot  
stone stairwell

A name that means nothing  
*neither blessed nor laurel*  
no aureole no wreath

tastes the ends of dripping hair in her mouth

*woman half in dream and half in waking*

*woman between dream and waking  
weeping on both sides of the bar-  
rier*

starry;      eyed.

Not on hills but “hills”  
nor by water, but “water”  
or from desire, but from  
“desire.”

Her eyes birds wings fountains  
Her smile  
under see.  
Her hand  
a peony sodden on its stem.  
One leg tucked up, knee under her chin.  
The other dangles,  
sock rumped, loose elastic.  
She rests on her buttocks.

*Frozen snow lying in shadow*

*my heart in the circle of a wet shadow*

She is the landscape  
Fountain and Mirror

for whom?  
bending over the crib enveloping form?  
gleaming in the moon, as breasts, as eyes.

and who  
moans this drone  
mimes lyric tithing?  
Is it

Me

As She  
or Her?

Or is me He?

Also consider for  
whom am I, say, being  
these eyes, these breasts?  
What pulse beat for the icons

ticking off opaque cuneiform wedgies

whether I speak  
about Her  
or whether, being her, I can speak—  
given the range of “speaking” in the first place—  
at all.

Tuning the recorder,  
a wider distance between fipple and body  
thins the tone  
but brings it into alignment  
with more legitimate instruments.

What kinds and conditions of  
longing of hunger for  
whom  
do I nock the arrow  
for whom  
wrists bound by delicate leather thongs  
do I face the straw-stuffed target?

When even one telegraphic  
phoneme, one-half more syllable  
sibillant (s/he) you (little flirt you vixen)  
close-pulled feather,



defines language and centers  
what me they is

(and silvery circles kiss the waiting shore).

She  
is a jewel in this setting she  
an emerald in the silver rain  
I weep.

Moreover  
I would construct  
a ring of green hills  
cover of wildflowers' fronds  
bowing under close roaring  
winds

a fountain eagles  
fly down to drink  
river war mirror window paper

to worship  
to hold her  
in the center.

*For she can cast green  
over any strength or disciple  
of shadow.*

Production of language cribbed  
by (from) what decorum?

This is a spurt of brilliant  
desire, not a little kiss,

juncture of pain and shaking.

A light    a wind    a green  
I was, it was the world  
accompanied me, as it does every  
one  
but it pierced  
in me  
my two-headed arrow.

The desire for the one seen in the mirror  
the desire for one who mirrors  
the desire for the mirror  
the desire for being the one who mirrors  
the revolt of the mirror  
the sestina.

“greetings greenest branch”  
ever renewing cycle of seasons  
and women  
who dare break  
the cycle an icon  
whose body  
existed  
nowhere understood  
every-  
where told, waves of sound, tune  
around it is somehow  
unapproachable, elegiac, that it couldn’t  
ever be voided if I  
chose another  
fold to un word  
the disturbance (a person)  
it made

claiming (lov'd) my  
green my brown my red my creamy, moony  
white.

Hart  
hurt in the heart o dear.

Bitter desire, un-  
and willing-  
to-will desire

one line of the ankle touch  
sock dangles the desire  
sullen, being  
what I  
woman am  
said (what else?) to be.  
My breasts my eyes enfolding mine.  
And am; I am.

So kneel scribe, eye, bird  
crescent kneeler bird  
in the feather breath,  
greetings.

It is impossible,  
love, to love  
and impossible to unlove

green shapes of fair women.

Being or having been  
“a” woman  
thru which a man en-  
tered “be”

yond lang  
wedge,  
edged the unutterable  
exactly: that dance.

Rumba samba  
“papa love mambo”  
fulsome agendas, rigid agents,  
everywhere  
entered unutterable  
appropriative humility  
hey what  
luxury  
of the one situation with many  
palpable gateways

Uhh yeah.

Marimbas repeating rhythms  
organizations of blackness:  
lust in awe  
cruel the twirling, dipping rhymes

those shake-it couples.

How do I want you?  
“like” a pilgrimage starting out  
despite a flooded roadway  
“like” a car sharp in reverse, a gravel  
driveway  
“like” what?

In all splendor in all the  
pulse and blah the strain it comes  
it never stoppeth

bearded iris  
veined with a "bruised" color  
dreamy against a white lace powerless.

Rush from those arms  
rush to those arms  
there "I" am is it certain  
I am there?

Being the sibyllent secret stream inside fountain  
endless pulsing of fountains      cool feathers

their cycles

translucent fear  
on the bright angel trail.

Try mud sky, lunar eclipse, that rare.

Low red belly of the moon h-  
ung

hunger of the sky.

Stretched out on the horizon  
every mound of woman  
a mound of earth  
clay  
she swallowed  
searching any nourishment  
from her unutterable hollows.

Hey ho Bonibell,  
cannibal.

Women walk by abstractedly  
with glass in their pockets.

We look dumb, they think  
but are not dumb.

Words of natives whirr around them.  
That we were once here,

weathered glass  
some sharp slivers mirrors they finger

sleep, pain, desire  
and again desire

that wanderer,  
but are not here now.

My shadow flickers black  
over lady-green shadow.  
Travelling many direction'd crossings  
head blank  
gridded with ever tune-fulest song

one compromised means of transport  
limp  
foot who can say "I" or "I'd" it is all  
practically not-I  
another fusion  
cells annealed the nucleus of a Lady  
in some woman drags  
herself long thirsty  
and heavy-thighed  
up to the Fountain or any ego-ideal  
like that.

'Tis  
Poem:

that around  
its words

it's Words.

The silver ring she threw away  
ringed by the fountain's silver  
ring.

End of the dogwood  
start of the greenwood  
end of the greenword song  
but time repeats its greens and browns  
the clues it leaves declare.

lay dee	hist! story
l'idée	mystery
lay dés	My hyster y

who threw a ring who kept a ring  
who caroled the rich greenwoody song  
all MherY duplicity of gesture  
a throw of the ring not  
abolishing

the Nymph of the Fountain:  
to pray the nymph for this her safe return  
to stop up the crevices of the mountain  
a little IUD of wire this nymph n-  
ode cannot stand it, inseparable  
complicit and disgusted desire.

A crowbar of trobar

pow  
it  
tries  
desire, "thou"  
the fulcrum

pries open the cellular troping  
nucleii and the ever  
drowning dark abyss

My Lady      Me Lady.

La la lie  
laura lie  
don't lie  
some  
love  
the fame of the place  
this singing hole its reason.

Wreathe thru the "bowels of the earth"  
springtime's sibillent whispers  
you (thou) can(st)  
still today get draped and happy wear  
the green gossamer of nature  
down derry down.

What stories  
no end to these stories  
the diaries have dearies  
the stories starry  
a derry  
down a thickening  
o.

Prying them up



out of the self—  
unpicking atoms with a cigarillo.

Lay dee  
dear hood ship sheathe  
in the wild wift wood  
whose feet slog sullen  
over the gnarly ground of gnosis,

if ever.

Precious poetry? ha!  
Rage of being  
the impossible self.

Rupture  
the reverberating lyric cell by cell  
edge of the tree-green strips'  
deciduous space

the stretched pulse of number  
singing in my heart.

Beauty red and beauty white  
green site brown site  
gapping along like shadows in the  
wilderness from  
objects  
dappled away.

Porous breathing stone  
like lace worn thin by seepage:  
woman like what? poem like what?  
complicit with the repetoire  
ambivalent to the repetoire  
Lady Cloudy Mountain

cloudy clutter mountains  
struggle with the white atmospheres  
of yearning such limpid mountings  
fix the figures  
milky mouth on mine.

The gnotty pond  
some blue black coil caved deep in mountain's lime  
and poem's lava.  
Waters pooling from sets of high country valleys  
tro- and trickling thru patterned singers of passage  
-bar no one  
source of mille  
phasia dribbles big libble  
wa-  
the intent pooling  
o -tears  
meniscus filling past its lim-  
it breaking under selves' multiple  
leveled sinters;

Stone secreted path  
dispersong the  
Gouffre

in mar-  
row phasal cluster's  
pearly

Surge.

Leafy crevices. White foam.  
Nacreous  
re-immersion blank  
remission;  
rivulets that rush into the body of

argument,  
double crossing streams  
bright-headed arrows  
engorged with this ancient targeted song.

Milk of the culture's teeming  
gushes at my  $\begin{matrix} \text{HU} \\ \text{A} \end{matrix}$  NGRY weaning.

Fontaine de Vaucluse, 1981-  
Swarthmore, PA, 1983.

*Killing Me*

I had a dream I killed you  
before death's deep doorway.

You sought to kill me  
at the dream-naked doorway?

Lightly lifted sleep-laden  
arms long and small

and wreathed you  
sweetly,

fleeing bright heavy danger  
to take bread at your hand.

Why killeth she me to get  
this doorway?

Who skulks  
on the pink limen of the dawnway?

No murder:  
I am worth your killing;

I would kill myself  
to stand at the threshold

under the lintel  
naked foot stalking

on the packed ground of this place  
the clay ground of this thresher's place

AND beat the hard bread grains  
burst from the baskety grasses.

*Eclogue*

Gave me the milk  
curdling  
sour-soft scum naked  
water light and  
glittering where I am  
folded roads.

Gave the bread  
honeyed, gold  
fulls  
the woolly  
cells of yeast.

Mouth to the earth  
takes earth,  
to water,  
water

mouth to the green  
eats  
top and tuft and danky dirt

mouth to the wet bud pool  
drinks hard

kissing the fallen leaves aside  
o'er green fat hills  
heart  
snaked  
round the pearly  
membrane of day,  
O honey hills a hole a spring.

Heigh ho silly  
sheep. Leap!

onto the green and moody  
pastures  
over the green and seedy  
grasses

that be

everywhere  
that earth-laden shadows  
bride and bridegroom  
keep  
their swaddled flocks.

1981

## Ode

### I.

Interior of stone is stone of water, water in stone the lichen skein  
in water, weft Stone interiors are emptiness spaced wide  
all that be empty is all wavering full Interior of wood from want, joined  
of water, woven threads of void Dark over dark, dark  
Arm-wings folded round the heart pulse within the heavy laden blackness  
of the long clicking night.

### II.

Flute flow  
follows  
bluing, to chee  
p watery  
Bronyx  
cackle.  
Thrush any  
thrushway  
feathers its nesting heart in  
egg brown speckle  
hatched from onyx night when  
round down dawn sliver  
silvers  
rivers  
o

### III.

Toe tries  
to twig  
and then when  
double double beat  
it  
flyz hup

One red reed reach  
just one red  
leaf just one  
red  
poep  
rd  
ha

IV.

Be  
needle's gold outpointing light thru fan-thin lines in leaves  
in which reverberates the note hard hit: irradiated  
love

whose every single  
cell sounds all  
as white, as light  
the color chord entire;

each never-rounded  
arcing shell  
binds birth to ocean hearts  
as much as burst with dark.

V.

Blue breath warbles watery fours  
gold breath threes on earth  
red spot tuneful voice from high  
moist and dry  
cold and hot

pulls the massy birth along  
sequacious of the lyre's  
leaf/leaf.



VI.

Swung over by green star-luminous bugs  
under hairy leaf      under swollen leaf  
half-hollow spots of living light  
mistaking earth for heaven  
so vast the ancient sounding  
spheres so loose  
the braiding flimsy  
shimmer  
everlasting you  
over and under under.

Black hold among holes      hope among holes      black  
stones green flashy bugs woof  
steady in the air that threaded planet plurals;

space, size,  
affirm another orb or two;  
hums up inside the wires in the neck  
a warp dark tree.

Muck heads in the mudrich mulch under  
Night-fresh stars celestial sprouting over  
specks of itchy antfast journeys  
under earth's plain black bleak place and  
white beaked over-eager  
time:  
those  
underplayed and thrice displaced  
designs,  
random,

that untune the sky.

*Megaliths*

Standing beyond the threshold of silence  
they loom from the underbreath  
stark so far and firm

These are the dancers  
who beckon by waiting  
the radical letter—

Where they are is space  
where I am, blackfall.

But they are statues of my body speaking:  
the way of the poem  
is the way  
of this  
border  
the rising—  
a dark, treacherous  
water—

All the horizon

floodfill, maps clog  
clayey with matter; mud  
swaddles the engorged feet:

moves mark to mark and makes a crossing  
into boundless dance.

On the gray flat horizon  
the peer dancers  
wet as mist in mist

These the unwritten  
vast before, vast after  
bridging—

Place, place  
I cannot do no longer—

altocumulus  
of a chaotic sky  
coming to the end  
of which  
if it  
is not all  
path  
it is no path

is the abyss:

a dull flame  
flats, tight, lowered to hiss,  
so that the merest

breath, blows its own out  
by very empty dark.

i.m. M.K.  
1980, May

*Two Gypsies*

Two gypsies camped across the woods,  
I heard their sharp guitars.  
I wanted them to read my hand  
and tell my stars.

I went down the darkened path  
the leaves I brushed withdrew.  
The trees flew up and stood so tall  
they masked the moon from view.

They told me a man had come to them  
from far beyond the hill;  
they said our fortunes were the same  
but told no ill.

And more I asked and more I stayed  
their answers were so bold.  
The fire danced a wild wild way  
that forbade cold.

And back along the darkened track  
the dew that once so light  
shone from the bracken on the path  
had thickened with the night.

The time grew pale, my pace grew slow.  
The chill wind before morn  
was vacant of all fiery glow.  
I felt two times forlorn.

And emptied of what I had found  
was emptied of my self.  
I saw a shadow cross my own.  
I turned and wept.

There was a man beside me there.  
His hair was dark with sweat.  
His face was white as mine, and fair.  
His eyes were jet.

“I ran to catch you here,” he cried.  
“You were too fast,” he said.  
“Come and stay here by my side.”  
He took my hand.

And turned with me along my path  
nor would I dry my tears,  
so let them fall as if another  
dew upon the leaves.

And where he has the rage to go  
I can prevent it not,  
with my one trial of stepping fro  
looped back into a knot.

The ribboning path that led beyond  
has tightened this befall,  
has bound my eyes to not look out,  
has me in thrall.

And so the man beside me there  
on my right side and my left.  
He said my fate was in his care.  
I stood bereft.

1962/1983

*Moth: "Ode to Psyche"*

— 1 —

Percussive throws of the moth-  
gambler moth-die  
moth-face soft face  
hurtling  
from one edge of the pegged down screen to the other.  
Twang of wire, wing  
rag(e)s bug "burning" with desire for some bright torch  
: dark clustered tree-eyes beyond  
and moonless scattered fanes of night  
thin stars without a name beyond unreachable light  
THROWS  
the ovoid winged egg at the emplacement  
one dry page casement.

— 2 —

Across the level feather-mottled body  
rock laden visitors of skin  
blackened with feeling  
clitoral police,  
flat ope on the barrier.  
Blank the room you thrill to enter  
no flourishes, outrigger, no oracle, no voice.

Mealy-winged moth desires flat  
slapping when desires unveiled  
moth eyes of high obsession random  
moth splay brown mark under eye,  
pale-mouthed prophet  
pounds the raging promise half articulated  
into the fabled space of unstricted possession  
marked by pinpoints, orange "inhuman" sight  
that squint into the proper book of light.

—3—

Macerated by the acrid air  
One blank ghost haunts the window  
one gaping sob one boy strangling  
his mother grasping round her warm neck  
he grabs to love in rage.  
Two wings and strike like a snake  
the moise noise wehing wehing.

What imago of fast movement  
would long for these embittered aspects?  
Fulgurous fans, beat out, away, away  
beat wrung from this insipid image's  
nay-said repeated drum  
whose garbled sobs can just in “dream-weep” come.

—4—

Ah but the liminal sickness, t hwup the blank moth  
heaves again its pallid self  
against the divisor, lightning splits the center  
brain: two halves one ghosti  
against the fleshy doorway;  
The lungs wing out ple ple hitting  
constrictions of breath.

So the winged worm throws, thrills to  
the fastness, habitual the stubborn moth  
plastered against some unread, light-filled tome,  
it makes delicious moan.

—5—

Knife thread  
cloth of night and you once spun inside it  
feeling the promise of, the void of trains

Writing in the station notebook all the codes  
broken, a vision  
white and brown moth feathering against  
the hard square of "its" desire.  
Resisting normal linkages  
barnacled thoughts of the psyche  
forsaken, her moth-mouth working  
pursing pursuing  
so much hitting  
stolen time has baffled.

She strings herself through fond believing lyre,  
she stuns herself against the form of the window—  
the screen resounds in flat no tune no chord.  
The utter wings dark scorch  
yet still demand, compel, another's bright(er) torch.

—6—

Wrapped forever. Dim blankets turgid pinions.  
And bitter, hitting words onto the sketch pad  
cool rooted resistance shredded  
Pen-sylvia station sheets banded together  
so no one would steal, no one would  
steal a-way into a pouch, she tucked the won ones  
into oracles.

Wrath of the layered silence to avenge.  
Bundled a human packet  
exists to this day where Broad  
crosses Columbia trussed  
a message band(i)ed bonded in leaves of rags and ropes  
for she alone Alone  
inedible rage,  
her thready fascicle.

OR piled both word and page  
the brown winged cast of

harvested leaves  
at the violent barrier;  
threw down her spotted self  
by blunt flight gamble-led  
the snake eye double die did stop the game dead.

—7—

The one who killed a psyche-elf, the openness too heavy  
the one who walked up to the silent tower daily:  
it must begin now, but never does;  
how to protect them from their desire to leap  
into the rigid square of light  
because there is at once too much and much  
too little.

The fullness that rises hungers for fullness  
YET tamp(er)ed down,  
heel hard on a pupa, the silent mingled organs,  
no voice, no lute, no pipe, no lucent fans,  
no more the essential elements' distinction  
delicate within a solemn perfect insect  
able to spin a being from itself.

The eye is out forever, it will never be united.  
Mark where the space was; rebus its dread hole.

The difference between dead and living?  
One fur-thready filament, from the silk gland  
of a rejected and panicked giving  
whose central rage goes into living.

—8—

Like a block of stone carried forever, like mutilation  
death and fear are constantly present,



not in the portal,  
not in the insect  
but somewhere, some place some basalt place  
the unutterable  
bond between them, endless battering.  
Gravel sobs quickly stifled  
what shadowy thought can win these outcries back  
from burial.

Sinuosities, wings rising from a single seed  
in the stone  
the pupa sullen, snuggles, thick with time  
nay-said    nascent    any birth?

The hatchling in the vetchling  
the changes    the furrows  
dazed with dismal prophesies  
so far retired  
from happy pieties.

—9—

The grub is in dirt.  
Never at peace with the immeasurable moistness  
of hope,  
did branch its thoughts beyond one swirled  
single slug,  
eye-dawn rising over eye dark midnight.

Not breaking, hardly breathing, apnea  
of the worm  
in the dewy carbon of the ground  
wakens itself as from a bubbling pool  
of silent drowning.  
The acrid space it seized  
rich with lichens against which it takes its ease.

It is the moss-lain flesh blue rider  
that struggles gleefully and wide  
through the book leaf matted down  
through the dumped seasons  
puply choirs of muscledarting  
eating hot up.

The wild worms swirl  
the small grubs curl  
under

writing lines of eager slime  
black and rotten warmth, cell-meaty mass  
rooted in the muddy and blank  
tunnels the multitudinous tuneless numbers,  
bareness blaring unarranged.

1983-84

*Oil*

*bei Dickinson*

The oil that rises every month  
as oracle of moon  
slides sleekly from the strata wells—  
a panther in the bush—

or where there was the hush that comes  
just when the power moves  
beyond the stands where we are happy,  
rooted as we are—

when solid Silence drops away  
and from a hole beyond  
the darkest Gush  
will geyser up  
as brilliant as the sun.

Just the universe again  
that voices from the Void—  
Abyss is not an absence  
though presence be destroyed.

*Var. for l. 13 and last stanza*

as brilliant as the sun—

and cover sun, though sun is bright,  
so force is faced obscure—  
a knowing darkly in the Rush  
that light can not answer.

1978

*Attar*

There's a Nerve along the Jaw  
That Dentists call Attar.  
They operate within these Threads'  
Essential Jugular.

Why They held me in the Chair  
How found that subtle, bloody Hair,  
Who "They" were, why They appeared  
I could not Face to tell.

"What is the Nerve You Like to Cut?"  
"We call it Attar."  
And inched with Tools into my Spot  
The Root Canal to strike.

Articulate with Diagnoses  
They Probed along the gum,  
Mapped each particular to Clamp  
The Jets before they come.

Contesting Doctors—unseemly.  
Shriek? Weep? Query? Rebut?  
Why did I ask but what They called it?  
Not "*Why do You Cut?*"

1984

## *Blues*

Yellow mustard spikes,  
marshy water lily bright.  
I got a little golden lock where I  
threw away the key,  
a combination lock  
where the numbers go 1-2-3.

Wanted to turn my life's work  
inside out  
Yeah she said she wanted to turn  
her work into something else,  
said she wanted to talk about  
spitting into a drought.

I got a ballad and a blues  
like a big hand-lettered sign.  
It's a down turn note  
in a song that's on my mind.  
Confiscating that tune  
three voices on the back of my mind.

There's a trouble-trouble child  
and a middle-size long-time man.  
Lock away from the child,  
turn away from that long time man.  
Look out of my window and I  
twist my heart for wrath.

Got the blue note in my ear  
But I can't get it out of my mouth.

1983

*Sister Rachel's Spirit Tree*

I'm giving gifts from the giving tree  
A ou na na    Ah u na nee  
Great flower of glee in the heart I find  
Your hands and mine will both be filled.

A cake of love I give to you  
So eat it down with loving bites  
Slivers of nutmeg sprinkled on it  
I le vou nee.

A little pudding love  
I give You Nee,  
One drippy drop in the bottom of the cup  
A drop of sweetest silver wine.

A root of cress and growing cressy  
I bind in a sheaf and a leaf beside  
from the willow-hung waters  
flowing by my side.

Feed me crumbs just like a bird  
and I will weep just like a bird  
and I will sleep just like a bird  
cheeping pee shee on the sound of gifty.

Then sweep it clean  
I will, my mother

Sweep clean as the tree  
I will, my love

O sweep the drone the shining  
company of sorrow

So we can walk over meadows clean.

*Afterimage*

He has entered the space between  
himself

and his dying

in that breath thru which  
homeless

the pearly waters rose to make mud.

No plan. It is land  
unnamed.

The deep oily

thoroughfare, no more primitive  
element, no

going backwards, no leaping

backwards, away  
from finding blackness.

Between darkness and light

before the white thread can be told

from the black before it is

palpable, how to tell

both how

can the black road be

white, the dark field mirror tolled

half-blank, how to toil and not

see Self?

Dark field, white mirror half-blank there  
is a vanishing point.

Your eyes wide and inward,  
your eyes watch your eyes still  
watch yourself  
cast in and cast out.

There is a vanishing  
bottom of a fathomed place.

Soft  
at the hillside crumbles      the brown moist  
edge

inward;  
here pools naked water      a scum green rises  
within.

Because  
it was not situated  
and could not rise nor fall relative to  
anything

he walks,  
going on quietly



into something

enraged with annoyance  
as with banality and also  
peace. And time.

Legacy?

Sometimes every one else seems

perfectly unworthy:

bonfire crisps; flash floods; glass costs.

These the obstacles.

People are inhuman as disease.

Is everything for the last time?

What use was it ever?

And earth.

Its powers.

It must not have a name.

Walks holding  
a silver thread into  
a water maze

flooded with

everything  
tries to see to seize

changes he  
ebbs and flows  
around his silver body.

Terse riddings.  
Riddled turnings.  
What little shells in baskets over  
and over the shells  
from nameless emptied creatures!

The shadow round the bone  
patiently  
complies.

Why indeed should I not be  
  
one  
  
of them?

The little them.  
Forgive yourself.

Watch, watcher into the night a  
new, cool rustling    darkness without  
shadow    rictus    total.

These things    probably true.

This crossing a river by walking  
under a river.

Black hole in a universe of seeds.

Flat black stones smoothed in the whorl  
wind of water, so.

Sometimes I want to avenge bread.

No doors.  
Do not ask for any.

Swum into the cool of the lake (innocently)  
found the icy updraft  
feed and pull  
hidden body tangles swimming body.

The hand cups.  
It is not enough.  
The hands cup.

Earth spring  
swings sweet in the deepened hillock.

The drinker has fluttered the surface  
reaching down:

must wait then  
for the loose green floating

up from the earthen sides to still  
to return to the hill

wait then for the pool's bud dark waters  
to clarify.

Thirst that sudden and below  
wells for other water.  
The thirst was parched with life.  
It bent to drink and quench.

1986

*Selvedge*

Leafflat self of cell and gem  
whose living eye fills fathomless with pleasure—

on what tree? and by what beak?  
and ho what noted e of speech?

Silly many my likenesses; all is  
leaves, birds, all birds is greens

and sing  
the pretty boobies in the trees:

below, above, below, above;  
in sum there is no “where.”

: :

Linked listings un-  
to, say,  
mine unto thine,  
unripe berry

red circle  
bordering greeny sphere

await itself inside itself

ripens    a rustling    my-

self ragged half-pecked cells that hang  
together;    porous    flickering  
“while”  
plural seed-filled thought.

: :

Samara

samaras

green sleeves

make a moon  
round rainy trees.

If more seeds fall  
will I learn the nature of rain?

Gather the borders snug,  
pupal,  
eat the teachers,

all under the bosky grids of time and place  
and under wreath my boughs.

1980

## II. Drafts





*Writing*

.Smudge, ballpoint, iridescences  
behind the.

Oily shadow grains an entry  
scrap.

Night  
underpainting  
confident. An a.  
Black lines  
dot nylon rope about,  
tie scout knots.

What paths inside  
other  
territory of utterance  
hear me

smudge and hear me

whiteness

.Plum grainy  
veins, unfathomable  
noises, moues and wrinkle  
winkle

Plumb line, pul-  
sing, eye to eye, drinks  
dusks of light.

One year after, like a punctuation; one month together, and these times had meaning, particular meaning, were also an arbitrary path cut through possibly a mistaken hole in the floor, they thought the radiator was smaller, and there it is, an unfilled circle ninety years old.

full moon, and hardness      My mother I will, she said.

.A writing marks the  
patch of void  
foggy reflecting  
mist catches wet carlight

that everything tests  
condenses  
refracted silence  
The cold rush up  
the dark dark trees  
Somnulent spots of travel

film  
fine tip flairs  
baby wipes  
khaki thread  
nipples

Letters are canal-  
ized as white foams  
zagging, a fissure on the  
sheet,

*tangle of branches unorganized without the leaves*  
cock-eyed underbelly of  
plenitude of

mark. *outtakes, can imagine conversations?  
conversions?*

*Long passages of satisfaction swallowed up  
in darkness.*

**SOMANY DISTANCES INTO INVENTION**

.sing way-  
ward black  
against grey brown against  
black gave small  
twig  
s un stinting

**ATREK. ACROSS SLUSHY  
END-WINTER GRASSES, BARK SCRAP  
TWIG BLOWN, LIMB DOWN A ROT  
AND FEATHER-WHITE WOOD  
ALL SCRABBLE AND GROUND**

Without silver  
remarks without glistening  
tone the little feeling touch  
light as it is  
what is that  
the.

**UNITCHED VERY ITCHY**  
(imbeddings, angles)

**BUT SUCH A BIG AREA, SO MANY  
LEAVES  
AND THEY BLOW  
THEY BLOW  
THEY BLOW.**

.Voracious swelling ocean all  
smallest possible words of all

To a  
time thickened initial  
the tee

which oscillation  
speeding, seems to fix.

Both a cut for "beginning," a  
historical  
sequence the poem invites  
mastectomies  
of dice

and a wrapping, random,  
buntings of stories  
carried, carried dearly  
to the other side of weeping  
(could never credit the whole story)  
precious bundle.

have so many little tasks

picking this and tending that  
my back hurts

*handwriting, written  
story-wise on the canvas  
close in  
any square inch of standing here,  
intensity overlaying boredom.*

.Fructifying inundation of  
alien corn  
offers groundswell.  
Grey crocii pearly  
sprout, snowlogged, slimy,  
dying consensual.  
The plot was so big it  
encompassed all

Pink swans  
“Utopian” living in the deep

statements. Thick black  
cover lined pages.  
Thus it is

abyss!

maybe political cynicism with odd  
borders gerrymandered.

And, in the space between entropy  
and arousal,

Philomel,

or, longing for liquid  
song.

.word. Blue

(pants, trousers, cover-  
alls) Blue, all  
tempered drop  
into  
the morning bizniz sweet  
whistles, their hustle low  
the-y fl-y one (tows) three.  
Stroke in the air, wobble  
a tune, wow.  
Two red tickets set at an angle—

“There is Mr. Ashley, narrating  
his ‘songs’ or ‘stories’ in a  
gentle, sing-song chant— what  
he terms ‘vocal inflections  
that you might call singing.’ ”

Imbedding some extruding some the interplay between selection, imbedding, and loss. Some few words, chosen, and why; but are also chosen from, once the day was awash in pinpricks, a pull in the back muscle, overlay and no experience. No experience because all. Say. Saw. **Operations. Addictions. And no** shadow and it was dark within this icy **one knows** brightness all disappearing all intense writing **what**; does it save it? “diaristic” in impulse, but unbargained, imponderable. Over written. Written then over written, over ridden, the selection is one thing, this (the globule, clot) another. Different plans and different pictures.

Most poetry something—  
imagery, structure.

uneven picture patterns,  
irregular blocks, a rebus  
trued, held in a rose-pink  
border.

Dreaming I'm crying  
it's she's crying.



*Making her and watching her*

.All like little novels?

*make herself*

Novels are nothing like this.

*The synchronicity of seeing that when  
this—*

Too many subplots

*it goes along—*

bleating

*I can't keep it in mind if I*

chaotic lambs

*don't connect*

on the territory

of utterance

*repress, it*

unfurling,

*(as it)*

as well, deep night

reinvents ab-

*goes along.*

straction, blueness,

as, say, gay

day does (sometimes)

syntax.

*sometimes visually*

*stated "imperfection"*

*material "run-*

*out" added a piece of red*

*"accidentally" reversed two*

*patches, inserted an "un-*

*matching" background slash.*

.Snaggles, spiggles, stalks  
peck out snow.  
Fresh, purple, haiku,  
heuristic.

little wails cringing at the sight of green. the hand  
that takes the pacifier out the mouth cannot (wail)  
yet put it in. me puts it in, o me.

mouth moth(er)

.Face face face face-y  
without particularity  
mouth, dots, la la La la LA  
have to learn that flat is flat  
In baby in-  
undation of contexts.

props. shitskies.  
phone. no. ba-ba.  
what; was wet.  
next door.  
Odd time of  
year to be moving.

Impossible maybe to write  
the techne of dailiness the hand reaching onto the shelf the  
dust  
collected in a particular corner the objects also a little  
dusty with the spring light through the back door objects  
directly in the sunlight the coupon torn or cut, saved  
as a lacy proof of thriftiness the unmendable cracks this,  
attempt at exactness, is readable the intersecting rhythms of  
muscles small muscles when cutting when sorting how  
to assimilate how to discuss to represent  
the pulses of pleasure and heartlessness to ascertain  
fairly the moon small cadences  
dotty lights  
rust rough ride shod cracks  
the surface  
winnow the pillars  
what kind of a deal  
anyway  
all this has been “the”  
just where I thought I began  
beyond.

.Winking mer  
ry  
mi mer rill  
lea  
toy houses each with  
toy family and the gigantic  
swollen viviparous rivers  
flooding silences that never  
get drained.

.Letters: a readable staining  
inked jelly floats loosely  
lacking pectin.  
Paper: thick rags, even, sometimes  
flowers leaf bits.

A rose weathers out of the page  
o death  
a strawberry out, greedily, of jam  
a finger, a bud who  
curls there, comma,  
period, sky-reading  
marks  
creating marks for “others” (ellipses) . . .

*Borderline takes many forms*

*"not erasing the original signatures of the women"*

*"keep the noises as close to the body as possible"*

.Stark. Melt. Still.

Terribly cold it wails

blurs

unimpeachable travel

ambush of cloud

translucent mucus

Am I limpid?

Sing-song

for the sake of conversation

wet baby, dry baby.

Poetry

too much, too many.

White stone or green water,

some "coral," rareness, an occasional "amber."

People worry the ends of novels,

marry. Sonnets like novels.

Still lives encode bounty.

Still,

smudging these discourse cross-

hatches terminii

the end (ends up) every

where.

birds .cumulus color of red sandstone, coal shale resume  
they and close tabulated bunching resume  
re they unfirm unpleasant undulent re who  
tcho unconscious tcho

pattern up crests, its opposite pitter pity  
hole in the touching hard and fast they poke a  
house disperse little nest  
thick places  
bound to violent narratives.

.Isolate animal  
squeaks; a few weeks  
later, impossible even to  
remember

threw balled up newspapers for  
flare on the fire

The distinction between city  
and contado cannot be defined  
by city walls.

a mewling into maybe milky dark.

mirror of dream milk smile mirror of actual noticing



.Undesired acts. Could code.  
or the novel?

A meadow grey with sink holed  
snow, melt drops foot-  
prints through a whitish  
song  
(add patched out  
brown). Acts of attention?  
*what an angle you make*  
on acts of inattention.

Curlicues meet curricula;  
much roaring on all sides.  
It's judgment.  
Otherness sidles over to around  
otherness  
outcrops

more or less.

Writing (along the lines of research, of work into and along  
the lines of somethings together  
as long as it, as they interest each other, trace into and  
mark each other) summarizes and accomplishes intermittent  
yearning and proposals  
that define the intersecting of strongly acknowledged yet  
loosely defined materials with an "I" who is the hidden  
subject and object of each of these verbs.

I have removed the finance  
charge of \$2.11 and you  
may look for this adjust-  
ment on your next, that  
is, your May, statement.

.A red squall-pulse glaums on  
Nip eats (has eaten)  
the tippy top the creaminess  
forever. Could eat almost forever  
depends formula—Similac  
on what convention  
of satiety.

*on feeling dopey*

So how  
does one ever  
know? How  
feed the fullness?

How to be that which is unspoken how to speak that which is  
“repressed” elusive anyway tangential different  
impending space different enough how to write that which  
is / is

unwritten.

.Some words much  
syntax or  
allusions thereto  
some invention, but  
if *the laws*  
*of language are*  
*socio-*  
*logical laws* then poetry  
is provisionally  
complicit resistance.

The poet's wife, old woman,  
hunched in the kitchen drying  
dishes, the whole  
interview. Such things  
happening on the side.  
What is realism  
made of?

The bitterness of already  
unspoken bitterness?

*your soul—*  
*out!*  
*—among the little*

spaces  
before entropy  
(foreground, bulbous foyer)

becomes arousal  
*sparrows?*

*Narrative as betrayal?*  
keep going

Verification (Docu-  
mentation): What  
types to verify  
my evidence?  
Statistics?  
Expert testimony—  
quoted, paraphrased,  
or summarized?  
Personal experience  
or eyewitness accounts?  
Opinion polls  
or surveys?

*Language as betrayal?*  
betrayal of “what?”

keep going

.Walls

of words make turns themselves  
too prissy otherwise red scarf  
drops staining a gossamer  
reads reds  
through the book each page  
an escarpment tired  
rem the book red flicker  
of movement cardinal  
o eyes go forward forward  
little eyes on the plate, saint  
carries her staring obvious odd place  
trail of wispy  
red in a white  
space the open square  
between letters a piazza  
of unlikeness.

.One anorectic,  
or undigestible,  
wedges into exits invented  
unique. Locked in  
zone  
combat trinkets a few tiny  
tears (of  
amazement)  
(of blocked)

just a sketch for the novel;  
the plot is  
“finally grieving.”

.Live in meditation? dopey  
Live in words?

whose?

Winter empty spikey weedy  
and too tall.

I had mourned my mother  
before it  
happened she said

nothing touched off nothing  
potato salad always the same word  
ruined  
no recovery no change.

This is a day this wailing cold and no  
“work” done the blankness of receipt  
no “papers” marked a kind  
of revulsion to every

thing no

“poem”



.Jonquils, ruffled perianth,  
rains beat them down,  
a few  
more  
bulbs split  
their green  
arrowheads. Not a question of  
making images. Making  
what?

Climax? Silence? Poignant?  
Points? The Memorable?  
Fleshy thick the -y suffix  
added means pleasure or cuteness  
Silly Banilly

the word passes phatic or elegant  
passes bonded passes through  
grammar to get past syntax's single borders  
to funny half-seens, stumbles;  
all routes, all specks, all  
snarled in matted eager acts.



.Is there new plot?  
chickens is there?

“another”  
poem roseate  
ones

“this is not it”  
“it is not yet”  
“now and nowhere”  
now/here know now  
no where  
near?

.A self that had already been formed  
prior prior prior

opening these wounds

may  
balkbalk balk  
vast moody plunge

imbibed the emotional need  
from notes. The oldest stratum  
extruded disfunctionally.

Yearning for the syntax of time,  
the “coral clasp” wobbling nicely,  
some fancy meter

message like a taxi

Rereading this ha ha

(phone ringing)

.The torso fleurie *wanting to have her book virtually nameless*  
flying vagini under full sail  
twirl out a leaf print *what is the most transparent name?*  
the point, sweet business,  
treads water *is everything, or enough - so that*

charging janus penis janus  
thick right at the cusp

*we are where*

*we are.*

slowly cover the space  
bright disc harken

down down down  
by the orbiting ocean.

*what were the women like?*

*evidence he wrote in The Vita Nuova: they  
travelled together  
and commented incessantly on Dante's  
red blotches*

*his leaning weakly against a wall  
for love.*

.Purple crocus cluster, saffron letters at the core  
skid that shimmies the back wheels

(cho)coherence. incho(col)ate  
debate. Best explanation  
I've found  
of overeating.

Dark blood and a little grinding

spur, a vector, and a little  
more of something.

There is otherness coming from  
otherness.

White telescope inside  
slides  
a packet of batting  
me part is filled with paper.

Invisible staining  
a bubble one two three four arcs  
flake of clotting or something

It's all part of being  
part of me  
beet red drops at the bottom  
of pee

of me making this  
this end and of

just happening.

period.

But in writing?

Just one event among flux,  
the many yet so  
foregrounded  
as fourth, maybe the sixth  
tampax in writing?

1984-85

*writing on "Writing"*

*notes made between 15 March and 4 April 1985*

Writing from the center of, the centers of, otherness.

Making otherness central.

Taking myself as central, yet in all my otherness. Trying to write Otherness when it is sometimes felt, or stated repeatedly, that otherness is the opposite of writing, although it may inspire writing.

Understanding formal marginality. Marginalization.

Setting the poem so there is a bringing of marginalization into writing. "No center" of a section alternates with small contained sections. Sections contained by other sections, over writing, writing over, or simultaneous with. So that one section does not have hegemony. So the reader does not know which to read first, or how to inter-read. (And one procedure, adjudicated for one particular section, will not carry over or be applicable to another section. So that one does not learn mechanically; the reader is at large, as the poet is. We are strained companions.)

Part of the debate, or a contribution to the debate, between literature and writing. (Silliman said poetry and writing, I think)

Putting that debate right in the piece by making several sayings or statements be in the same page-space. Making poetry and writing be in the same page-space. Making alternative poetics be in the same page-space.

As to subject: a first or really second month of a baby who comes as otherness, as difference, which cannot necessarily be understood easily, but demands to, needs to be felt, understood.

: a menstrual cycle, the very core of female difference (they say. Sometimes we say) over centuries of our culture. Getting that into writing.

: spring coming: certain flowers certain anger and resistances. Cool weather, never as warm as one would like.

: creating marks: pen, smudge, letters, things that make marks or take impressions (Baby wipes). Handwriting (inc. in text). Repression in mind. Writing to remember. Drawing distinctions. Things on the side, things in the center, blurring distinctions.

: how/why/what to write: realism, recording, selection. Allusions to cross genre, or messing up. (quilts) Genres that create themselves as imperfect. To write into silence. *The*. And the *t*. Narrative and experience. “Narrative” and “experience.” Poetry too pretty; creating “beauty”? Creating chora. Beginning–middle–end, ha.

And as to image flash, there is inscription, writings of all sorts to be read and gleaned. Usually black and white. Intermittently, there is an almost unfollowable flash of (flesh of) red or a related color. Red is the trace or signal of otherness. Signalling like that (red flag) is probably one of the more traditional aspects of this poem. Of this writing.





One day lose him her  
One day lose them

then it melts and dusts tomorrow too.  
Me long gone dissolutions of  
chucnk and humming a-  
ddress it.

have seen faces of limestone, stone cold piled  
unmortered, wandering, dividing the ranges; it  
lettered on green up hillside's social lining.  
divisions and elaborations of property, land-  
scape striated with historical sentence.  
have seen sheep, knolls, pebble turds in piles.  
A mark, a tuft, a makr a/ a\

makes meaning it's  
framed marks that make  
meaning is, isn't  
it? Black

coding inside A  
white fold open eye  
open a little  
slip

= =

To what purpose reveal details of fleshy registers one  
CAN have, blah blah their charm? It's not  
irony (really); it's awe.  
They are what we are, we are  
that,  
that's it; it's only what we are, we write our bodies  
all and only what begin space  
(maybe) by talking  
the tizzy dizzy spin at the window the  
stars; a meaning's point laid lines weather

perfect,

the turnings talk  
in it;  
two shadows blown

is one way of hinting it.

= =

It is not surprising that

where in the placement of  
saffron this is simple 'you'  
are listening 'I' am alert  
enough 'she' is learning how to  
talk 'we' are reconstituted.

It is not surprising,  
that.

It  
is not surprising That.

This is the spoilage of  
presence a condensation of

It's the little stuff that slips the wink rot ick or  
slides past phatic split tingle  
under all those sheets "what  
dog is woofing" what shuttle

brights what warp? WATER damage it really needs  
replacement

Can I heed you, it?

This line, scrawl of a bird line  
tide line

= =

The strange light scuds  
jewels to say  
anything (it) must be

I feel the

half-eaten apple

mistrusted.

wedged under me in the car.

It must be loved like milk.

= =

(parole prevailing against long)

It, is so  
long.

= =

To reinvent “attention” is narrow tho tempting.  
Doesn’t get the folding. I

is it

The

generative

nor jargons in antiphon

mist

I always thought “antiphon” was the most

fat shadow. beautiful word. slight show.

A white house seems  
to be a further  
coagulation of mist

Lucite see-thru overlay, mark upon mark

glistening thru those microtimes of day. Stein in short was

No postcard poetry, a this a that like

a boat like a dog and not just any dog but eliding

an over-eager retriever on waves over

maybe like chickens bobbing. the over.

= =

CANO, can o, yes no

conno-

tations of impurities fill the fold.

Why that, or why

“sea blazed gold”

why

re-up anyway, to artifack

art pac, o me  
o my.

==

Nostalgia for a touch  
resistant how  
the language forms of sweetened  
clouds for fat and white I love  
you Little whirlwinds of paper caught in the  
clouds cross-currents of systems (skyscraper wind  
as clouds tunnels, roads cut, built, then lined with  
shadows creased in heaps and brights delicate  
not literally thighs. lessness even as we squat here so  
on the land we are) the

lyric?

==

putt (pitting) the tiny word  
litt  
it  
on stage in a “theatrical” space  
a  
space white and open a flat  
spot a lite on  
it something  
alight like wings.

Well now what’s  
to speak what is  
to speak when that  
Object (pronoun)  
squeaks its little song its bright white  
dear dead dark.

I hear, I do. YO! hear it  
hear “it”? hand it into the wings.

dat dat dat  
didn't want any beauty  
tender  
but

theater of the

page cream space peaks

= =

where in the space of particularity one passes  
beyond ego; where in the placement of saffron  
MA ME I AM A WAKE a and black tuft of heide, no  
hoy ma milky-moo hurt to the heath, not hold  
bright boo. the heart is empty being so  
full of a calmness marking minute practice.

= =

Let silence  
in the form of words'  
in. IT.

= =

Some ART today:  
a  
mimetic use of mottled crepuscular marble to make a  
pop ice cream  
cone of,  
vidi (!),  
I saw—impossible  
NOT to argue in light of it.

I'll make a representation  
to you about it  
later. After I end my song.

Shame is ordinary. Shamelessness  
just a bit less. The real  
interest is  
limpidity,  
power, the necessary

no and yes. I wouldn't want to spread  
Nos and Yesses incessant. myself too pointedly.

= =

There's no way to read it?  
One point is to achieve a social momentum of switched  
referrents and (merry coral white clover  
ding ding ding) commentary in which what he (you)  
says or does must be read differently from what she  
does or says whether he, you does it to her or them to  
it (of whom?) she to it feels different (nights of Holly-  
wood fascism) in an unsettling but not articulate way.  
power power imbedded in, in its (days of military realism)  
place on the pronoun grid, cells squeak in protest "it's  
just language" "we're just nature"

= =

TORN FROM (A PAGE)

a kind of orange it happens  
a kind of orange  
IT HAPPENS  
rose rinse, vertical green.  
Away anyway has shadow  
"a typical Rachel shadow"

blue starts limb long and torso struggles  
its window when all around there's not a single  
wall, NO blockages  
hardly stopped at all except by the pleasures  
of color are you getting the picture  
it hpps BLUEW one from the sequences of looming  
comes     longing

==

There's *no*; read *it*. Down  
under where broach is, a  
nuzzle a quick fat. It is the  
"it" characteristic of everything.     Yes, read it!

A narrative, a story, a plot, every word "a plot  
against the reader"; coagulations of it, rays  
pleased to be doing what they're doing not cynical yet

and plenty spaces

==

The struggle from whiteness  
into whiteness  
via black wit-

ness

I

ching.



==

Overlope loop. Laugh language laugh.  
Sandstone reach overload wrack  
parabolic pools, warm line harken  
shells I  
want to be *in* it, but it is not for  
in it it

*is* it.

Little girls little legs jump the wine dark line.

==

No “books” no ministers no tow art  
“no sandpoems” build of it, not on it  
it is sacred what you can do with it  
the general aura of quest just as a baseline.

This silence awash with

bodies flowered aglow astripe to be  
folded over signals.

Words’ ribbon-wing hover, hovers, hovering.

Silence, silence, silence

was, this was, the implicit subject was  
never foolhardy.

==





*Draft #2: She*

The white one turns red they say  
then peach to white grass rich the edge-fold  
space

slices of porcupine deep underground  
and et that red-grained fat.

“I be good girl with my magic  
markers.”

(marks hands up red  
makes henna dark touch)

Taboo thy ruses, moues and roses, shh.  
Terracotta, ochre smear of Provence  
shadowy <sup>stains</sup> stairs .

Ask for danger, say

“I want that danger.”

^ . ^

Who has

how images <sup>rise</sup>  
rinse and erase how

can the rose  
speak and how much

can you in fact stand that lobotomized  
memory you have been washed up  
into  
do you

NO?

Dear (name),  
I (morder)  
for departure's sake  
further reaches.

The thin voice of the thin space.  
Red red the rushes rise  
down down by the salt tide veil, that  
Love depicted as against itself:  
small happy (guillotined) family unit  
petal lashed to petal.

^ ^  
.

Families set like junket IN milky rooms'  
schematic valleys—  
V-shape of the young runnel;  
rennet sweet-white jellies  
over cascades of russet granite.

^ ^  
.

Lightly risen, of a plastic  
pink too close, too  
bare,  
tho luminous Food one could imagine there  
the Moone  
when next I spy  
retracts: a dime-size toy-tied dish my moony  
quest too dumb to ask a <sup>better</sup>  
bitter question.

Still such catheter stuck there into my any fleck is  
profligate.

^ ^  
.

jests  
Of suggestive twists, of wax rib  
                  joists

stuffed by a potential crime,  
do you read her as  
'Mother'? 'Woman'?

                  "Bandit  
one-armed "Angel With A Lamp"?  
                  "Badger

beam my way, beamy tinkling light; be me now  
O Be Thou Me, sinuous one!

The piece, it's fleshy, picture perfect,  
peachy . . . wax torqued up  
to <sup>fill</sup> fool this unrelinquished peephole.

Luminosities enormities of  
key-shaped air in which she  
flocks, twisted in brush,  
sine curves verbatim.  
A pubis allusive; the eye penises thru the keylock;  
the eye is complicit and so is

HUNGER  
NAUSEA

                  hurl  
for I am afraid to hole it       TOO MUCH  
                  hurt

not speak of hold me.

"I am your danger."  
"I am your anger, ranger."  
"I am your angel, dudgeon."

^^

Red orange with red veining  
shading raised  
rib of same  
color runs into large gold throat  
suppressed heart, green.

Pale peach that by evening has a flush of pink

There is a pink rib goes  
deep, up to the hilt,

rose heart, bound.  
Between me? that?  
heavy-eyed light gazing.

Daylilies open and drop  
opal nenuphars of tears;

“I am your angle, stranger.”

^ . ^

Each word a cryptogram  
never too much:  
in narrow, nah  
in ride, rid  
in courage, cor and rage

in flax phlox hemp feather, hook  
garland pull

a cryptic outline OF something  
word shoal staunch blood  
food at the edge of well-beloved veins  
stood

looking cock-eyed at all their deep,  
at all their deep blue writing.

^ . ^

Shadow under-word  
lopes thru stands of wet papyrus—  
microclimates for this ploy  
versus that: rain warms here; wind twists there;  
one family eats well, another eats each other.

House of the soul is filled with little  
things, clay vessels, slipped and glazed  
all smallness green leaf offering;  
sweaty flower; baby loaf;  
small as half an envelope which wads up tight  
the poem's patchouli.

In shires, shrines:  
you're going to have something  
about aging teeth, you're going to have left  
something half-chewed  
in front of that house,

food on the plate of the moon?  
mets sur l'assiette de la lune?

That hard to write  
"the mother"? to get that  
empty for that full

mouth(e)

her(e)

sh(e) ?

^ . ^

A borer, a beetle, an eater,  
who will evaluate hunger?

Bowel, bowl, daughter  
whosoever siphons undigested words  
requires a wide tube.

^ ^  
.

Dabbles the blankie down  
din  
do throw foo foo  
noo  
dles the arror  
of eros the error of arrows  
each little spoil and spill  
all during pieces fly apart.  
Splatting crumb bits there and there.  
Feed 'n' wipe. Woo woo petunia  
pie.  
Hard  
to get the fail of it,  
large small specks each naming  
yellow surface  
green bites  
Red elbow kicks an orange tangerine.

The time inside, makes tracks, seems a small  
room lurches into the foreground, anger, throwing, some  
dash, power swirls up against MERock, pick it UP,  
Mommy me NEED  
it a push a touch a  
putsch pull a flailing kick a spool  
for her who is and makes thread  
“1”  
The she that makes her her  
The she that makes me SHE

^ ^  
.

Practicing ferocity on <sup>your</sup> her self

You become the mother certainly a change.  
the monster a chain.

foaling  
Is this failing the mother?  
finding

^ ^

Top half poison                      yellow light from above  
ivy next half scritchings        blue light swells from earth  
the garden red                      bruising a frame

Digging, I sit on a flower.

Counting the steps of bright shadow, the pure pause, paces  
clusters of ripe tones making up loud and then wispy forces  
across one singular place saying no to itself with meditative  
privation, yet unfixed, so spun out of, *or* of, being or  
seeing. Which is not, but as it starts, starts a little  
rivulet sound and voice, another, it fuses, pivots, a sigh  
and sign; desire's design, blue transparencies rich for  
thirst listen, to listen is to drink  
how can there be  
another cry: whom; one of another, who?  
who cries? who listens?  
hear here the liquid light  
swirl and merge with drinking calls.  
A sigh, a moan from what is waiting. Sweet sweet  
sweet teas(e)  
Another cry, a honey voice

Another  
one.

^ ^



All told, a voluminous backdrop:  
crevices of the night, 4:32 exactly  
silver hush behind, curdling  
a shaggy hurt bleat.  
Eat that moon's sweet light.  
Bird's blood is brown.  
Her words, some said, they're just a  
"bandaid on a mummy."

Wad reams of rems into mâché  
my eyes chewing.  
She screams unassimilable  
first dreams.

Hold her unutterable

And press another quire of girl bound in, bond in, for pink.  
Draw drafts of "milk" these words  
are milk the point of this is  
drink.

June 1986–January 1987

*Notes on the text*

I. *The "History of Poetry"*

"She cannot forget the history of poetry because it is not hers": from Joanne Feit Diehl, "'Cartographies of Silence': Rich's *Common Language* and the Woman Poet," *Feminist Studies* 6, 3 (Fall 1980).

"The Poems of Sappho" contains transformed sentences and phrases based upon *The Poems of Sappho*, translated by Susy Q. Groden (Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966) as follows:

- a chest for holding women's things, cf. p. 122; Edmonds 178
- a lyre, guitar and mandolin, cf. p. 122; Edmonds 178
- tender pillow, cf. p. 121; Edmonds 176
- two minds, cf. p. 30; Edmonds 52
- I want and yearn, cf. p. 15; Edmonds 23
- a dripping towel, cf. p. 67; Edmonds 131
- and over my eyes, cf. p. 98; Edmonds 141 A

Edmonds is *Lyra Graeca*, edited and translated by J.M. Edmonds (Harvard University Press, 1922). The phrase from Paul Valéry, "Le pain tendre, le lait plat" is from "Palme," *Poésies* (Gallimard, 1942). The pun on Homer is, apparently, Sappho's.

"Praxilla's Silliness." Work by Praxilla of Sicyon (c. 450 B.C.) is based on the translation by John Dillon in *The Penguin Book of Women Poets*, ed. Carol Cosman, Joan Keefe, and Kathleen Weaver (Penguin Books, 1980), and information in *Lyra Graeca*, vol. III. Her text was preserved only by the carping critic cited as epigraph. The end citation is worked from Praxilla; the mid-text citation is by H.D. from the manuscript "Autobiographical Notes, 1932—Greece," Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

"Madrigal," cf. Thomas Nashe, "Spring, the Sweet Spring."

"Rose." Ronsard, for the catch line "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose . . ." and Edmund Waller's "Go, lovely rose" for "common" and "fated."

“Crowbar.” Dante is the source, quite modified, for some of the materials, including the vision of women in *La Vita Nuova* and a refabrication of both “Deh Peregrini . . .” and the sestina “Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra.” Bonibell from Spenser; Dés from Mallarmé. The Fontaine de Vaucluse is, besides being a notable geological formation, part of the Petrarch-Laura legend. A water-powered paper mill on the site fabricates paper imbedded with flowers.

“Killing Me.” Thomas Wyatt, “They Flee from Me.”

“Eclogue.” The silly sheep are Spenser’s.

“Ode.” John Dryden, “Ode on St. Cecelia’s Day.”

“Megaliths.” Read down each column, then across both.

“Two Gypsies.” John Keats, “La Belle Dame Sans Merci.”

“Moth: ‘Ode to Psyche’ ” from John Keats, “ode to Psyche” with allusions to Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson.

“Oil” cf. the writing practice of Emily Dickinson

“Sister Rachel’s Spirit Tree” contains “nonsense” syllables from Shaker song.

“Afterimage.” D.H. Lawrence, “The Ship of Death”

“Selvedge,” has “Greensleeves,” traditional. The final line was a gift from George Oppen, based on my draft.

“Writing.” William Carlos Williams, “January Morning”; Christopher Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to his Love”; Julia Kristeva interview, cited in Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn’t*; news article on composer Robert Ashley in *The New York Times*; Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*; a comment by Robert Creeley; a statement by V.N. Volosinev, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.

“Draft #1: It.” “Torn from (a page)” is the title of a painting by David Hannah; the section contains allusions to other of his paintings. The quip about “Rachel” from a letter by Kathleen Fraser. There is an allusion to a statement by Paul Celan.

“Draft #2: She.” The artwork alluded to in the fifth section is Marcel Duchamp’s *Etant Donnés*, an installation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. There are echoes, later, from H.D. and from Gertrude Stein.





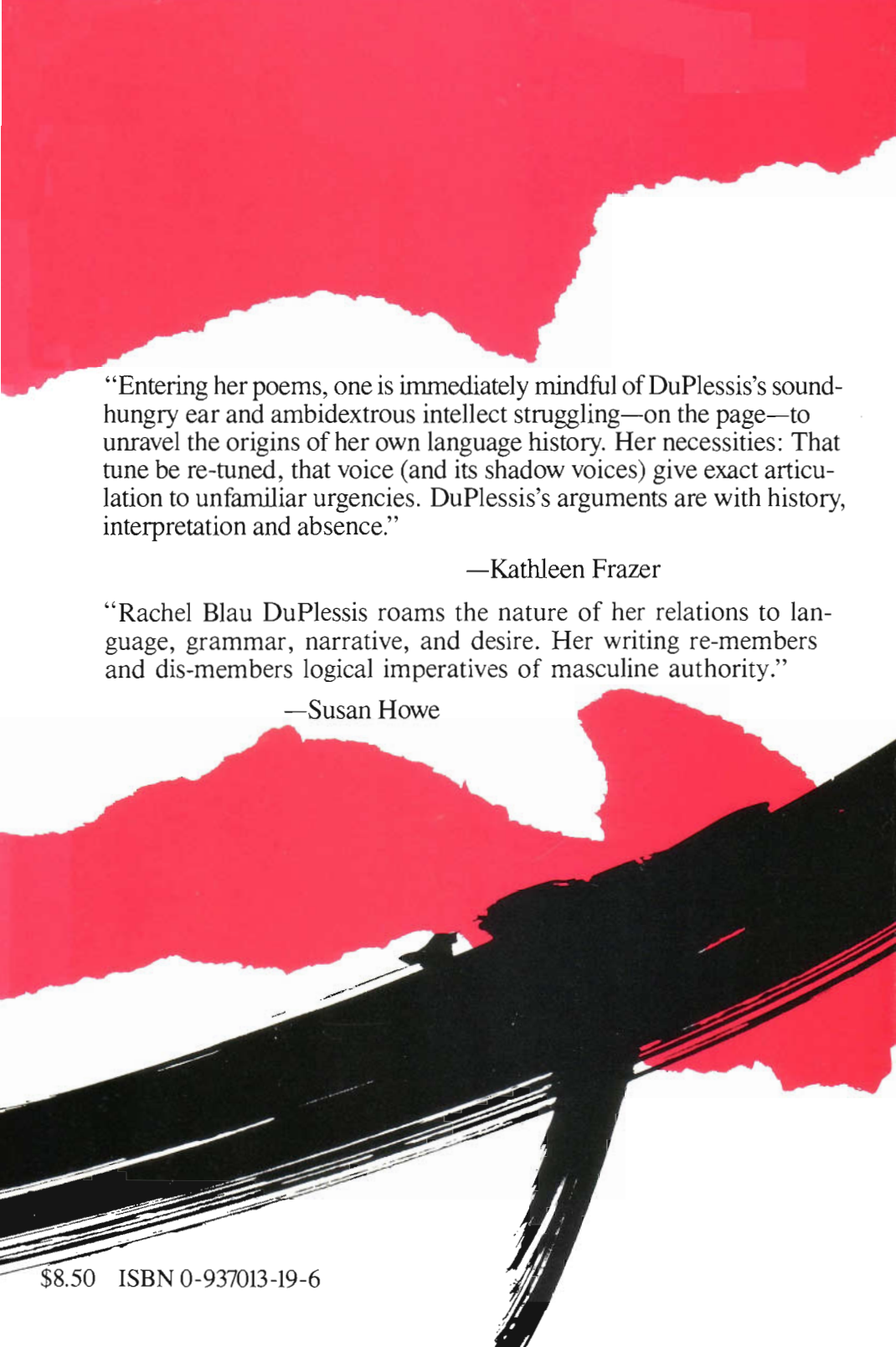
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- Miekal And, *Book 7, Samsara Congeries*  
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Beau Beausoleil, *in case / this way two things fell*  
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Pete Spence, *Almanak*  
Pete Spence, *Elaborate at the Outline*  
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Craig Watson, *The Asks*  
Hannah Weiner, *Nijole's House*

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The background of the page is a vibrant red color with a torn paper effect, where the edges are irregular and jagged. A thick, black, brush-stroke-like line runs diagonally across the bottom right corner, starting from the left edge and extending towards the right edge. The line is composed of multiple parallel strokes, giving it a sense of movement and texture.

“Entering her poems, one is immediately mindful of DuPlessis’s sound-hungry ear and ambidextrous intellect struggling—on the page—to unravel the origins of her own language history. Her necessities: That tune be re-tuned, that voice (and its shadow voices) give exact articulation to unfamiliar urgencies. DuPlessis’s arguments are with history, interpretation and absence.”

—Kathleen Frazer

“Rachel Blau DuPlessis roams the nature of her relations to language, grammar, narrative, and desire. Her writing re-members and dis-members logical imperatives of masculine authority.”

—Susan Howe