

I SHUDDER TO THINK: PERFORMANCE AS PHILOSOPHY

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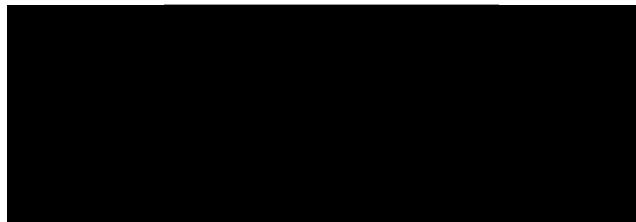
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Doctor of Philosophy Declaration (by creative project)

I, Margaret Cameron declare that the PhD exegesis entitled I SHUDDER TO THINK: PERFORMANCE AS PHILOSOPHY should be at least 20,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work.

Signature:



May 24, 2014

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Abstract

Margaret Cameron's artistic practice performs as philosophy—an investigation that seeks insight through the body's visceral capacities to perceive and to transform experience into material realities, which then become the substance of art.

In order that this research project may take a congruent (or kind of equivalent) form to its proposition, this journey through Cameron's practice is also a dramaturgical mapping. The research begins with an introduction that provides autobiographical context, proceeding to an exposition of methodology. This is followed by an excavation of an exegetical voice from personal, cultural and philosophical contexts, and arrives at a *viva voce* that is the performance score for a work of theatre called *Opera for a small mammal*.

Set in the context of contemporary performance and a working life, the research traverses Cameron's solo artistic practice from 1989 to 2012. A methodology for the overall thesis is demonstrated and enacted through strategies that serve as tools to delay closure and generate possibilities. This methodology includes the consideration of consciousness as performance. Linguistic practices are used to engage language as a perceptual instrument to hold open paradox, endure ambiguity and leverage new relationships between things.

The thesis is constructed as a composition of carefully held parts, and parts of parts, that perform many perspectives of the subject in a discursive play between works. Engaging with perceptual practices and provocations from artists, theorists, philosophers, critics and colleagues, the reader is invited to participate with the artist in the perceptual encounters that conceive each work. These include the transformation of one's self and the thinking, feeling and kinaesthetic events of live performance on a stage. This stage is underscored as a perceptual space that is active—a practising proposition that works in the body of the artist, the audience and the larger corpus of cultural reception.

Perceiving many perspectives in space, poising relationships on an axis of form and content, the artist works through a synergy of modes of knowing, such as thinking, intuition, memory and feeling. These are underpinned by the proposition that art is a verb. Art invites us to audience, and it does so through unique and reciprocal acts of participation rather than spectatorship.

Small letter to audience:

Becoming mouse ... a piping creature pipes to be happy, nibbling at edges and listening to the scuffling of thought. Ordinary things that are huge in my world are quite small in the cultural corpus.

But shivers—a threshold shudders in the wind of all that is known. It's a window where you only have the fun you make your self, where perceptual realities are not imagined but made to live.

Ears,

M.

June 5, 2012

[Poetry] compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know.¹

Introduction: Context and Creation

The phone rings. It's Gorgona from the cave, my friend that wild bird who nests in a crevice on a cliff somewhere I will never know about. We discuss my little one's maths-block, reading block, how he gets sick in the stomach. Either I keep him at home and educate him or I get more involved in the school before his block goes hard and school is a blunt chisel on a lost rock. 'Get involved in the school' I notch into my brain, into my diary, into my retreating heart. When I get near that school I turn into an eight-year-old, hand-me-down, socked and shoed, cleverly darned little baby looking heavenward in wonder at the swathed, blue, ever-free nuns with the ever-fascinating ankles and the authority to pinch my cheeks, smack my legs and hands with feather dusters with God and my mother on their side.²

¹ P Shelley, 'A defence of poetry', in JE Jordon (ed.), *A defense of poetry/The four ages of poetry*, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indiana, 1965, p. 75.

² M Cameron, 'Things Calypso wanted to say! Part two', *Airplay*, radio program, ABC Radio National, Australia, May 8 1999.

A singular space of ‘feeling thought’, before language, before form, way back in the accurate light of childhood, my body all sensation and unresolved cadence, is what I apprehend as ‘mind’. Perhaps these feeling thoughts include the discord of unhappiness and the secret of feeling the yearning to feel more. In a flattened out child, internal realities or things that do not exist in a material way, are longing to participate in a dimensional world.

‘The Sacred Heart’ is pinned on the inside of the heavy door of our weatherboard. O radiating wound. In schoolyard years at biblical dusk under thundery skies, there are other pictures handed-down in the fat pack of swap-cards: epic battles, gothic landscapes, tall-ships on wild oceans, foreign places, the Taj Mahal. I piqued the sensory world with halos of lonely significance and wretched adolescent thrashing. I understood Expressionism—*The Scream*—the landscape draws the face; they are inseparable.³

Did the visiting elocution teacher from the Australian School of Speechcraft and Drama catch a glimpse of my secret yearning to feel more? Mrs Margaret Kellalea, noted in *The Argus* newspaper as receiving First Prize for teaching proficiency and achieving her licentiate in the Art of Speech, Trinity College, London,⁴ selected me from the school’s verse-speaking choir to receive a personal scholarship—private tuition with her in the art of speech. I was seven years old. She asked my mother to buy a little textbook called

³ Cameron, see *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 188–189.

⁴ “ANNUAL SPEECH NIGHT AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF SPEECHCRAFT AND DRAMA. Results: Art of Speech, Trinity College London. Theory: ATCL H-honours: Margaret Kellalea. Prizes: Teacher’s Grade First Prize: Margaret Kellalea. In presenting her report at the annual speech night, the principal Maie Hoban again stressed the urgent necessity of good speech in a country where the film industry must become one of the greatest factors in our industrial and cultural development. Furthermore, she advocated the building of civic theatres, which should be controlled and directed by civic authorities not by organisations with private interests. Until such theatres are built, and competent overseas producers and teachers engaged to train our students, it will be impossible to supply sufficient adequately trained performers for the film studios. There is room in Melbourne alone for at least 20 studios and schools functioning on the same basis as the Australian School of Speechcraft and Drama, where students commence with the fundamentals, such as breath control, voice production, speechcraft, deportment, characterisation, live stage, radio and film technique”, *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 December 1946, p. 16, viewed 5 April 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page1677041>>.

Sound and Sense: A Handbook on Elocution by Wilton Cole. In the preface he writes,

I use the word “elocution” deliberately rather than such terms as verse-speaker or diseur, both of which, though held in esteem by many, seem to me to smack of pretentiousness. The words “reciter”, “elocution” and “recitation” began to fall out of favour many years ago owing to obvious exaggerations of speech and gesture and a general note of unreality. Although isolated instances of this may still occasionally be found, such performances are now almost non-existent; indeed the tendency now is toward undercolouring, especially in the matter of inflection which, be it remembered, is an element, although a subsidiary one, of rhythm. Let us hold to balance, and keep a sense of justness and proportion. I do not feel that it is really honouring a poet to speak his words in an expressionless tone for fear the speaker’s personality interpose itself between the poet and the audience. As a famous actress once said to me: “You see, we are the *salt!*”⁵

The foreword of this book is a letter to Wilton Cole from British actress Edith Evans. She writes, “that it would be of the greatest value to a person learning to speak English. I am glad to know that you think quiet, reasonable recitation is coming back. The ‘Ponging’ School had much to answer for, and to hear lovely lines *spoken* is a rare pleasure.”⁶

For more than ten years, sometimes twice a week, I travelled to Mrs Kellalea’s house with my little book, my pennies for the tram and in her ornate living room we worked on the art of speech for hours and hours and hours. We sang musical scales at the piano, did breathing exercises and drilled consonants with practice sentences to strengthen the tongue and lips. I always felt odd about phrases such as “Big boys boots go bump, bump, bump and when boys jump big boys boots go bump, bump, bump”. I read aloud and memorised huge tracts of poetry and prose, did examinations and entered countless eisteddfods. Shaking in my big boots, entire days were spent sitting with my mother in cold halls listening to hours of children reciting in individual events and dozens of choirs from schools all over Melbourne speaking poetry in unison. I suffered terrible nerves waiting my turn to recite. I sometimes won certificates,

⁵ W Cole, *Sound and sense: a handbook on elocution*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1942, p. vii.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. v.

received numerous Honourable Mentions and once I topped the state in The Art of Speech, Trinity College of London examinations. Most often the adjudicators said my voice was a little shrill. “(*In-breath*) I was highly strung. Who wouldn’t be? Every one has to grow up, embarrassed and advancing into the dramatic future.”⁷

I am a foreigner

In the school mass I often was asked to read and by Year 12 it seemed that the whole school burst into laughter when, having to negotiate the huge plum in my mouth, I attempted to read aloud from the Gospels. That summer I ran away from Mrs Kellalea with her gift and a problem. I was a weirdo. As if I had been occupied in the most intimate of places, the place of my voice, I was not myself, so who was I? Was I one of Wilton’s “isolated instances”, so trained my voice was not my own? It seemed I was from the ‘Ponging’ School Dame Edith thought nearly extinct.⁸

All that poetry and all that speaking aloud of thought and sensation had given me a sense for sound (just like the title of the handbook *Sound and Sense* suggests). I responded to cadence, caesura, lilt and syntax, was sensitive to modulation, could inflect, articulate with precision and I resonated. Yes, I resonated but I do not think I resounded.

I strode off into experimental theatre with the black leotards (that seemed compulsory). After the summer break I enrolled in a teacher-training course at Melbourne State College because having ticked a box at school that said ‘art’, I had received a bursary. In the first week at college I discovered I was enrolled in Art and Craft. Must I sew? I sat down on a curb in Bouverie Street, Melbourne and cried. A woman crossing the road to the shop, noticed me there. “What’s the matter?” she asked. “I am lost”, I said. Opening a door, she took me to her office, talked to me for a little while, made one phone call and switched my bursary to … Drama!

⁷ Cameron, see *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 190.

⁸ Cole, *op. cit.*, p. v-vii.

For the next ten years I climbed mountains in the dark on Grotowski-style creative journeys, screamed and strained till my voice broke and recovered with a new and more fashionable timbre of huskiness. I danced on broken mirrors in woolsheds, worked with snakes and doves, performed at La Mama, The Pram Factory and St Marks Church Hall in Melbourne, then the Adelaide Fringe and eventually went to Sydney to become an actress. And so it went on in one way or another until I decided to 'stop acting' and start writing. I wondered if I could find words that were not a source of ridicule or alienation.

I recall a teacher in my secondary school one day asking me what I thought about a book we had read in class. In a shuddering filled with feelings, I managed to say: "I do not think. I have been taught *not* to think. I do not know what I think because I do not know *how* to think". I continue to fear the 'amputation' of my sensibilities by the fear of this fear.⁹

It seems to me that an artist very often moves toward their greatest difficulty. It is the very thing in the way, the uncomfortable grit of one's nature and biography that rubs.

⁹ There is a dramaturgical reference here to Albinger's work *No door on her mouth—A lyrical amputation* written and performed by Dawn Albinger, Margaret Cameron (dramaturgy), Samuel James (video art), first performed 27 October 2010, The Blue Room, Perth, W.A. In this work Albinger refers to 'The Handless Maiden', a German fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm. I referred to the same story in my first solo work 'Things Calypso wanted to say' in R Allen & K Pearlman (eds), *Performing the unnameable: An anthology of Australian performance texts*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1999, pp. 93-104.

Paco Peña

I had to leave the theatre
part way through the performance
because ...
I am so ... envious

I need to stand
and to sing
like him
in the State Theatre
man standing
there
on the stage
there on the stage
there
on the stage
a man
sound rising ...
out of his mouth

Is he the only living being in the whole eternal universe?

And now I am
standing
I want to howl in the dark
in the State Theatre

(On one breath with arms raised)

I am howling ... my shadow stitched to the desert floor I have swallowed the night in my lungs
the desert moon is glowing I am a tree stars now for eyes and I am howling and the rat-a-tat beat
of my own heart to the lift—

I TOO AM ALIVE

"Excuse me" I say very seriously and very intensely to my very serious and very intense
companion, knowing he will understand, very seriously and very intensely I say "I have to go"
and he replies "Oh yes of course."

And I rush from the theatre to the cloakroom
the attendant looks disappointed that I am leaving
she calls my coat an umbrella.

I turn away
I struggle across thick red carpet
through syrup air
push against my own likeness
in glass door heavy
I stand alone on the wet concrete
gulping down the wind and the rain

(On the out breath)

Ah the night¹⁰

¹⁰ Cameron, 'Paco Peña', *The Open Page*, no. 10, Odin Theatre & the Magdalena Project, Holstebro, Denmark, 2005, p. 86.

“I dare you to say you are the body of knowledge.”¹¹

This provocation is a dramaturgical lever—begging the question it raises.

¹¹ Personal communication posed to me by Helen Sharp at a two day symposium held at Creative Industries Precinct at Queensland University of Technology attended by critical peers and contributors to *Live Research: Methods of practice-led inquiry in performance*, Mercer, Robson and Fenton (eds), Ladyfinger, Nerang, Brisbane, Australia, 2012.

[T]he art of catalyzing a relational emergence is philosophy in action. The conceptual newness is there, in the event, *enacted*. Art, as “composition,” is enacted philosophical thought.¹²

Part 1:

A Question of it—methodology is whatever generates possibilities and delays closure

What is *it*? I have a crab on my face and I don’t have the question to see it. Get me a lever so I can get it off, open, turn, get perspective, show and tell, quicken, surprise, take delight, change my mind ... To avoid ‘getting stuck’ I want a methodology to provide strategies that give the artist leverage. In essence *it* is a quest to gain space and time.

¹² B Massumi, *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, p. 176.

Leverage is the action of a lever pivoting around a point, but it can also mean to borrow in order to make more than what is borrowed—a good trick. The artist leverages space and time with whatever tools and tricks she can. She uses “words [that] do things”,¹³ propositions that act as levers (as explicit as a tool you get from the shed to open the paint tin). To leverage space with a question is a way to leverage “dimensionality”,¹⁴ the dimensionality of thought, movement and felt-sense, using words as working questions that perform by asking, not answering.

The artist leverages perspectives when she leverages space and can also gain humour, a kind of intelligence. Irony opens the unexpected, supporting incongruities between what one expects to happen and what *actually* happens. Now she has irony, she has time and space to play with time. She observes and experiences at the same time. She is her own audience, performing ‘performing’ and in this space between the act and the enactment she makes a stage—a perceptual space.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes, “the question of art continues to be called upon to open up the boundaries of philosophy and politics. Theory is not necessarily art, and art not quite theory. But both can constitute ‘artistically’ critical practices ...”.¹⁵ The reciprocities between art, theory and philosophy are relevant for the artist seeking to re-contextualise their self through spaces of thinking and in this complex interface, uncertainty is a useful tool to engage and leverage vital spaces. In art there are congruent relationships between form and content, subject and object, or perhaps more simply—the work *is* what it *does*. In this sense art is a verb. Minh-Ha writes that creating, or as she says, “(Re)creating” is “a question of exactness internal to the problematic of each creation. Does it work? How does it work?”¹⁶

¹³ M MacLean, *Narrative as performance: The Baudelairean experiment*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 71.

¹⁴ H Sharp, “The breath plays between many surfaces in and through the body and is implicitly dimensional. If I ‘allow’ the breath, this play creates unexpected relationships, (‘Breath as methodology: from doing nothing something comes—by-passing epistemological certainty’ in Mercer, Robson and Fenton (eds), *Live research: Methods of practice-led inquiry*, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 91.) I understand Sharp uses the term ‘dimensionality’ to describe a sensory or perceivable experience of shape—physical, imagistic, vocal but also linguistic, the somatic shapes of thought and of thinking in perceptible breath. See also, Sharp, *Breathing philosophy* , ‘Encounters with the breath: Nine introductions’, viewed 2 October 2012, <http://www.inthecompanyofothers.com.au/html/encounters_with_the_breath.html>.

¹⁵ TT Minh-Ha, *When the moon waxes red: Representation, gender and cultural politics*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 25.

¹⁶ *loc. cit.*

Each artist creates their own references building unique bodies of practice. I will unpack a kind of travelling methodology referencing and marking signposts even as I depart from them into another *question* that would investigate the practice of performance art in a performed exegesis. Each of my performance works are scored in detail (sometimes even with directions for the breath i.e. *speak-on-one-breath*). Each work offers examples of a methodology in action and I continue to discover my practice through each. Even though these works are live performance pieces and text based, it is useful for me to regard them as sculptural. The choices pertaining to each of these texts have evolved over time in performance seasons that occur over years. There are lines or themes in them that balance or are poised, one upon the other, often in antithetical relationships. In my view the choices in each work represent, in each instance, ‘the only possibility’ and are essential. The scripts or scores are defined but the actual performance is ‘played’. Entering each performance without a plan, I enact the structure exactly and minutely, breaking it down into smaller and smaller pieces. There is always movement, and although I bend and undo each moment I play the structures, actions, images and words exactly, maintaining a performance practice throughout. It is easy to do the moves and say the words, but what else is happening?

Deborah Hay: “The perception is the dance”¹⁷

In 1996 I was in a workshop by American choreographer Deborah Hay and she said: “The perception *is* the dance”.¹⁸ For more than ten years I have been turning this proposition over and during this time I have met and worked with Hay in Austin, Texas; New York; Wales; Porto; Melbourne and Berlin. Her process of continual and eloquent questioning opens an enquiry that is alive and moving, investigating ways of speaking that perceptually do things. Hay describes her work as “a linguistic practice”.¹⁹ Her dance works are

¹⁷ Many of the reflections that follow have been developed with reference to my extensive notes taken during my participation in the following national and international workshops: *Performing statelessness* led by Deborah Hay, Autumn Calendar, Dancehouse, Melbourne 1996; *The art of the solo* led by Deborah Hay, Melbourne, Reflex Project, DanceHouse 1998; *Solo performance* led by Deborah Hay and Margaret Cameron, Australian International Workshop Festival, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne 1999; *Sweetening the abstract* led by Deborah Hay and Margaret Cameron, Summer Shift, Centre of Performance Research, Aberystwyth, Wales 2005; *Choreographer plus*, Master of Arts Solo/Dance/Authorship (SODA) led by Deborah Hay, Rosa Casado and Margaret Cameron, Universität der Künste, Berlin, 2006.

¹⁸ Personal note from *Performing statelessness*, Melbourne 1996 (see footnote 17 above).

¹⁹ Personal note from *Choreographer plus*, Berlin 2006 (see footnote 17 above).

developed through sets of hypotheses and perceptual practices. She says, "these practices relate to HOW one perceives rather than WHAT one perceives."²⁰ Through translation I can understand this for my own text-based work in quite a different way; it is as akin to asking *how am I*, not *what am I*?

My solo works are self-observational: occupied with subjectivity and the consideration of my own consciousness *as* performance. They have an ironic engagement in their own enunciation in the thinking—philosophic, psychoanalytic, somatic, perceptual and performative processes—through which they evolve. Jonathon Marshall writes of my most recent performances of *the proscenium*: "The key function and force of both Cameron's text and her performance is simply to symbolise, to translate something".²¹ I am attempting to translate experience and the experiences of language and of live performance are parts of this experience. Marshall continues, "Cameron 'swallows' whole the 'house' of theatre and manifests its structure and poetic placelessness within her speech." For me it is as if place is only discovered in the next word, but even as meaning opens it moves again. In the space of performance and in the text itself, I step from one word to another—discovering words as they perform. Hélène Cixous helps me to understand this,

To write is to have such pointy pricked-up ears that we hear what language says (*to us*) inside our own words at the very moment of enunciation.²²

In 1998 Hay gave me a baffling and fascinating direction: "Don't leak!"²³ I have been turning over this proposition for years. During her return to Australia for Melbourne International Arts Festival, 2008, she told me that this direction must have applied to a specific observation of my performance practice, because it is not something she would usually say. I do not know what "Don't leak!" means but it implies a *how* that makes a difference. In an attempt to understand, I ask: What is leaking? Why do I leak? How do I leak? And how can I *not* leak? I cannot answer any of these questions but I get more leverage from the *how* than the *what* or the *why*—it is about a

²⁰ Personal note from *Sweetening the abstract*, Aberystwyth 2005 (see footnote 17 above).

²¹ J Marshall, 'A revealing partnering: Margaret Cameron & Dawn Albinger at Pica', *RealTime*, Issue #88, 2008, p. 33.

²² H Cixous, *Rootprints: Memory and life writing*, Hélène Cixous & Mireille Calle-Gruber, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 85.

²³ Personal note from *The art of the solo*, Melbourne 1998 (see footnote 17 above).

kind of perceptual holding. I do not mean this with any notion of fixing, rather as part of a continuous, devoted practice to inscribe the immaterial that resounds in time and space, as a shell resounds of its medium, the sea.

When I met Hay's practice I did not so much dance as write, but in my next performance a dancer asked me what I was doing with my body. I said, "I am checking I have one". This was both a performance practice and a choreographic instruction. Hay's work returns me to my body, but my encounter with her art is fundamentally conceptual and I experience her work as conceptually radical. Form arises from hypothetical propositions that are never adjusted to suit any format or code. Hay writes: "My work can be traced to the questions it poses and the answers it rejects."²⁴ That the perception (though it always seems alarmingly obvious) *is* the work struck me as if I had been given a secret—a fundamental principle—a rule of art and artistic practice. Now the question always returns to *how*—returning and returning as an infinitely regenerating and self-generating proposal.

You see, because I cannot, I have a crab clamped on my face. How might I, for instance, prise from my body a socio-political personal (and cultural) narrative that clings and gags? What is *it*—a kind of exoskeleton? It is *on* me and there is no space at all between *it* and me. Instead I ask: *How is it?* There is a difference.

The Question

What happens after the question: *What if I know nothing?* To practice this question continuously, breaking it into parts and parts of parts, into milliseconds ... tiny questions that remain unanswered but are played out, as Hay proposes, "with loyalty and disinterest" is an infinite service and exercise.²⁵ For me at times the feedback from this performance practice of undoing my knowing is a *kind of* dimensional experience of time. Inside a minute breaking up of things (the flatness of hearing and seeing and speaking), I am within and supported by the mediums of space and time and I experience this as *matter*. It is where I work. There is accuracy and exactitude

²⁴ D Hay, 'Performance as practice', 2001, viewed 6 December 2008,
<http://www.deborahhay.com/Performance%20as%20Practice.html>.

²⁵ *loc. cit.*

because where it is ... is *now* and as Hay instructs, "There is always more NOW."²⁶ Through a tiny and exquisite questioning that one may ask with "every cell of the body"²⁷, it is as if one makes a kind of erotic experience of time. By 'erotic' I mean that time takes on a sense of volition, arousing the will and the choice to attend and devote; time opens and is a tool. There is inspiration and thrill—the *zing* of detachment and intense observation simultaneously. One finds time; it is *in* things.

When we set ourselves thinking, time takes shape. We never have time, we worry. But there is time; underneath, in immeasurable quantity, in proportion to our demands: it is enough to think and think and think, and we reach the source. Thinking gives time. And all beings, even the littlest things, are full of time: it is just up to us to think of it.²⁸ (Emphasis in the original).

Methodology is continuously invented so as to think up whatever opens possibilities and delays closure. "Loyalty and disinterest",²⁹ like the like-ends of magnets that will not go together, create space—a paradox to work in. Loyalty will keep me there and disinterest will maintain a working distance so that I do not start to believe in the tricks I am practicing. The practice of both loyalty and disinterest simultaneously, engages paradox. Is the artist then, actually "performing paradox"?³⁰ Hay proposes, "A performer is someone who has many perspectives of themselves in space."³¹

I play out the feedback. Feedback is the returning output. It might be better if I agreed to participate in what is already happening and then I could skip preparing to participate. I could simply join in. Give me a trick to leap preparation and also to leap methodology. Hay suggests, "Assume you are already doing it."³²

²⁶ Personal note from *The art of the solo*, Melbourne 1998 (see footnote 17 above).

²⁷ Hay, 2000, *op. cit.*, *My body the buddhist*, p. 103.

²⁸ Cixous, *Coming to writing and other essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 67.

²⁹ Hay, 2001, *op. cit.*, 'Performance as practice'.

³⁰ S Gardner, 'Performing paradox: Deborah Hay's 'The art of the solo workshop: an interview with Shona Innes and Margaret Cameron', *Occasional papers* #1, Dancehouse, Melbourne 2000, p. 15.

³¹ Personal note from *Performing statelessness*, Melbourne 1996 (see footnote 17 above).

³² Personal note from *Sweetening the abstract*, Wales 2005 (see footnote 17 above).

I can have a large ‘space’ with no ‘stage’ and a large ‘stage’ with no ‘space’ so what makes the difference, or *how* is this difference? To leverage some perspective I tell myself: See yourself seeing; hear yourself hearing; feel yourself feeling. In order to create the space to multiply possibilities, having already admitted that what I know doesn’t work, I ask: *What if I undo my knowing?* I un-know and un-name myself. This opens a way to participate in what is already happening everywhere. I propose that you do not know me as I do not know myself. The proposition acts—it *fires!* I am inchoate. I am not one thing.

And *what if I know nothing?* *Zing* ... unhanding the body’s knowledge releases its libido *for* knowledge, an appetite that re-constitutes joy—the joy of reciprocity (of relation). “Get what you need.”³³

A magpie bibliography

Using shiny bits of other people’s thinking for direction and instruction, she reads (for courage),

The subject then accepts being unsheltered. A stranger in his own land, he turns back to a more radical disappropriation, where keeping the senses awake is indispensable for survival. It would be the same in a region of which the culture is still unknown. Here the eyes have another function than that of recognizing the same, the identical—they search for something to eat, for the means to find shelter without yet being able to name.³⁴

³³ Personal notes from *Performing statelessness*, Melbourne 1996 (see footnote 17 above).

³⁴ L Irigaray, *The way of love*, Continuum, London, 2002, p. 45.

She takes it out of context. She takes it personally. She is the subject. Her body is also a part of a cultural body. She both makes and is made of the cultural body. Does it matter? Get political. She breathes the air of the larger corpus of her environment and her culture. She breathes the air of her culture, in and out, in an indivisible exchange. *What if what is inside is also outside and what is outside is also inside?*³⁵

She reads and receives this direction, this thought, this means to leverage perspective, to re-contextualise and “to advance against the drying wind of all that is known”.³⁶ Now she is allowed to be “a stranger in [her] own land” ... “unsheltered”³⁷ by anything that she would know only because of recognition of its sameness. The artist conceives her work as object of her subjectivity. She breathes through it. She seeks a philosopher for help, for a lever. Now she is allowed to not know ... to *not* be identical. She abandons the shape that is home. She is without a shell. To “open anew upon the unknown” ... “They [words] open anew upon the unknown, they show where to go, what to do.”³⁸

I move words around endlessly, am flattened by meanings. Language is a cryptic crossword. Anything can mean anything. *What if I un-name myself and un-name it?* Or as Hay proposes: *What if I “invite being seen remaining position-less?”*³⁹ Right now my trick is to say that my experience does not have words and that I am unnamed. I am leveraging some space with this trick. I tell myself to tell it exactly, grabbing another shiny bit from Cixous because it generates possibilities,

³⁵ Australian theatre director and writer Jenny Kemp presents a similar proposition in her *Generative writing workshops* conducted through Auspicious Arts Projects, Melbourne. In particular writing exercises participants are asked to consider (and as Kemp says, ‘to write sideways from the following questions’): What if the dream is real and the ordinary world is a dream and what if these realities change place again and again? Originally based upon the writing practice of Cuban playwright Maria Irene Fornes, Kemp has developed and added her own writing practices. Kemp’s focus is a creative premise to do with how the conscious and the unconscious worlds interface and interact. She suggests that the writer enters new territories when considering dreaming reality and waking reality as equally real.

³⁶ Cameron, see *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 180.

³⁷ Irigaray, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 14.

³⁹ Personal note from *Solo performance*, Melbourne 1999 (see footnote 17 above).

Giving oneself entirely to rediscovery ... One can tell the facts. One can invent some. It is more difficult to tell than to invent. Inventing is easy.⁴⁰

The artist perceives and plays in the feedback of possibilities in a space generated by a question in order to participate in fresh relationships to what is known, and to what is already happening. The thing that is *on her* is the thing she works with. She *tricks* it. Working with what she knows but also with what she does not know, the artist is in the practice of supporting and being supported by multivalent propositions. Overthrowing knowing, she practices a question of unknowing.

A perceptual lever—*What if?*

What if? is a hypothesis. *What if?* does. It opens an experiment, stepping into experiences of unknowing and observation. *What if* artistic work is a perceptual practice of one's own consciousness *as* performance? *What if* thinking is the ability to endure ambiguity? I am reading Marguerite Duras: "When I was alone in the house, everything wrote. Writing was everywhere."⁴¹ I borrow this perceptual lever from Duras. *What if* writing is everywhere? The feedback is ... *zing*.

Using perceptual muscle she says (or thinks) again: "I imagine every cell in my body has the potential to dialogue with all there is ... *What if* where I am is what I need? Wherever I am is what I need. Everywhere I am is what I need."⁴² *What if* I break time down into parts and parts of parts? *What if* I tell it exactly as it is? *What if* what I need is not elsewhere? *What if* what is happening now is *exactly* what I need?

⁴⁰ Cixous, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁴¹ M Duras, *Writing*, Lumen Editions, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998, p. 9.

⁴² Hay, 2000, *op. cit.*, *My body the buddhist*, p. 104.

She buys an unusual dress that she does not really want. When she gets home she places it on a chair. It is a shape of a person. She does not know what it is about. She does not recognize it. *What if* the dress is a question? *What if* it is literal? The dress is pencil-line, full-length, royal blue velvet and it has with a fake ermine collar. It is royal—a Queen. She had not noticed this. *What if* when you think about things they tend to appear even when you do not think it in words? *What if* the costume is a signifier? It gives audience and it is explicit, *literally* sitting in audience, loyal and quite disinterested. The costume is giving audience to her. *What if* the question is a costume? Other questions follow. *What if* it is the costume of the question?

Thinking is an experiment, a practice of thought ... of thinking. And to practice perceptually is a way to experiment with thinking. Nietzsche's proposition of "the eternal return" can be understood as a perceptual practice.⁴³ Kathi Weeks (citing Deleuze) writes,

As a "cultivating idea" the eternal return suggests that "in all that you will begin by asking yourself: is it certain that I will do it an infinite number of times?"⁴⁴

Weeks considers this proposition as "the deployment of a creative evaluative will", a "selective principle", and that "this selection is not the work of reflective thought but rather the achievement of practice."⁴⁵ Consider the obvious: we are formed; we create and make all kinds of decisions based upon individual and collective perceptions. Perception is a powerful performer. Elaine Scarry in *On Beauty And Being Just*⁴⁶ writes, in this instance, of perception's failure to perform as expected. She illustrates with a poem by Emily Dickinson that beautifully describes the assault of disillusionment taking place when something once valued loses its value,

It dropped so low—in my Regard—

⁴³ F Nietzsche, *The gay science*, Vintage Books, New York, 1974, p. 273. See also the section in Kaufmann's introduction about this idea, which is helpful, pp. 15–21.

⁴⁴ G Deleuze, 1983, *Nietzsche and philosophy*, Columbia University Press, New York, cited in K Weeks, *Constituting feminist subjects*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1998, p. 40.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, Weeks, p. 41.

⁴⁶ E Scarry, *On beauty and being just*, Duckbacks, Duckworth Media Group, London, 2001.

I heard it hit the Ground—
And go to pieces on the Stones
At the bottom of my mind—⁴⁷

Scarry writes, “The revisionary moment comes as a perceptual slap … a correction in perception takes place as an abrasive crash. Though it has the sound of breaking plates, what is shattering loudly is the perception itself”. She continues “The concussion is not just acoustic but kinaesthetic. Her own brain is the floor against which the felt impact takes place.”⁴⁸

Hay proposes that the first place of the work is perceptual. For practice-led research and for the artist this is an important reading of “the perception *is* the dance.”

Taking it personally

The artist like the researcher faces the walls of her own thinking and her biography, her conditioning, perception, feelings, psychology, education and will. It is subjective.

The work space and the space of creation is where she confronts and leaves off at the same time a world of named nooks and corners, of street signs and traffic regulations, of beaten paths and

⁴⁷ E Dickinson, *The poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum edition*, Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, Cambridge, 1998, cited in Scarry, 2001, *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ *loc. cit.*

multiple masks, of constant intermeshing with other bodies—that are also her own—needs, assumptions, prejudices, and limits.⁴⁹

I am subjective. The act is first performed by me and on me—the artist. I am the first audience—the doer and receiver of the *action*.

There are autobiographic references in the work of French artist Louise Bourgeois. She says,

Waiting makes the other too strong. When one waits one is dependent. Waiting for the phone to ring. Waiting when the phone does not ring. Sartre said, '*l'enfer c'est les autres*' [Hell is other people]. And for me, *l'enfer d'être sans toi* [the hell of being without you], the absence of the Other. If you have been rejected, you can rebound. You have been rejected, but you don't have to die on the spot.⁵⁰

Here Bourgeois describes her work as an action, a “rebound”⁵¹ from an experience. Rebound is an accurate word; it is related to physics, the study of matter, energy, force and motion and how they relate to each other. Bourgeois is a sculptor and visual artist. Her rebound causes a shape for a question of feeling but is it also a physic, something that lifts the spirits, and she does not “die on the spot”.⁵² Like a breath her rebound muscularly both receives her and returns to her.

My body receives and rebounds in intimate transactions. My body contains the particularities of my experience and also an artistic will to cause something to come into existence. Through *doing* it engenders. This response makes what would seem immaterial (not made

⁴⁹ Minh-Ha, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁵⁰ L Bourgeois, ‘Paulo Herkenhoff in conversation with Louise Bourgeois’ in R Storr, P Herkenhoff & A Schwartzman (eds), *Louise Bourgeois*, Phaidon Press Ltd., London & New York, 2003, p. 13.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

of matter) perceptible. Things such as feeling and thought become material. My body's experience engenders rebound and opens volumes that are dimensional. Here, in actions of reply and participation, the artist does not invent but with exactitude *tells*. But Cixous writes, "the most difficult is fidelity to what one feels ...".⁵³

Each of my performance works is personal, a revolutionary act. But it is not only personal. Rehearsing in my broken-down car on the side of the road while waiting for the roadside assistance service, in this enclosed space I hear my work as if for the first time. I hear myself hearing ... a (re)sounding. I *receive audience* (am in the presence of) and I *give audience* to the work in a way I have not done before. I understand that I have had a projected sense of audience but at the same time have internalised this imaginary collective to stand in for me. Until this moment I have been rehearsing performing to some kind of imaginary presence. Have I been quite absent? I have never actually heard myself. In the car it is as if I am in the presence of my work for the first time. In a revolutionary moment I give audience and am received in a double-act. I understand that *to audience* is a verb. I understand that I am the first audience.

Mieke Bal uses the term "autotopography" to question the limiting frame of "biographism" in the critical understanding of art.⁵⁴ She is concerned with what she sees as a persistent tendency to link an artist's work—by way of understanding that work—to the artist's biographical references even if the artist acknowledges those biographical references. Bal argues that this tendency de-prioritises the visual nature of the artist's work and its cultural place. In this instance she is speaking of the work of Louise Bourgeois. Bal writes, "The concept 'autotopography' refers to autobiography while also distinguishing itself from the latter. It refers to a spatial, local and situational 'writing' of the self's life in visual art."⁵⁵ This is a useful distinction because it refocuses the art to itself and to what it does. I could say that I am writing an exegetical voice to do with my life in performance art.

Words that work

⁵³ Cixous, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁵⁴ M Bal, 'Autotopography: Louise Bourgeois as builder', *Biography*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2002, pp. 180–202.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 180.

The way one speaks makes a difference. Words are permeable containers, perceptual spaces and shapes that fill and empty. It matters that the words she uses *do* things.⁵⁶ It matters that they cause movement and create space. If they don't do anything then they are dead words. To create possibility with words is a linguistic practice—a practice of making a difference, of thinking and enduring creative ambiguity. When the words she uses are so inhabited they no longer do anything, when they do not *act*, she tells herself to change her language. She tells herself to undo what the words know.

Words must, needs be broken
into parts and parts of parts
to gain again their ability to speak
they are poor bones, easily preyed upon
by every narrative invention.⁵⁷

She seeks a practicing language where words, in a magnetic relationship with meaning, bend always in syntactical poise. With her words and her thinking she is holding open possibilities, maintaining antithetical tensions, ambiguities, contradictions and paradoxes in any dynamic of dimensionality. She gives audience to form and content as they change place again and again; shape fills and in filling changes. It empties. She participates in responsive relationships to what is happening.

A perceptual question is as immaterial as air, like thought. It is not that it doesn't matter but that it has no matter. Through the action of art the immaterial can become or behold the material. It achieves a dimensionality or object-ness. The subject beholds the object and the object beholds the subject.

⁵⁶ MacLean, 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁵⁷ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix p. 175.

It performs again and again

Perceptual, conceptual, physical, emotional and vocal shape resounds, not with what it holds but with how it resonates. I listen, holding words to my ear so I might hear syntaxes that resound and discover me. Irigaray writes, "What a feminine syntax might be is not simple or easy to state, because in that 'syntax' there would no longer be subject and object, 'oneness' would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names" and she suggests that, "that syntax might also be heard, if we don't plug our ears with meaning."⁵⁸

The crab on my face is a kind of question. Through a practice of leverage and observation it is prised away. The thing that is *on* the artist is also *in* the artist. In a reciprocal and paradoxical action it is simultaneously taken within the body of the beholder, 'I—the audience/artist. With a kind of reciprocity it is also the subject (a kind of endoskeleton). *In* and *out* are kind of equivalent, performing as both subject and object. It is as if the material and immaterial devolve from one to other, ever evolving as shape, breathing and engendering, rebounding and resounding. I listen. It seems more useful to listen than to understand.

The question art speaks of immateriality in a material way, giving dimensionality to what might otherwise remain immaterial (or at least flat). And yet what is answering is already, even in its materiality, inexplicable or not quite nameable because it is already returning as a question. What lived here? What caused this shape? One could also say that what is left in a work is what is leaving, or what has departed. It is only the home of what caused its shape and that is already returning as immaterial. A work in many ways is like a shell—a home for what is received and it is as if the container (or resounding shape) is most eloquent, most resonant, when it is empty of the material it beheld.

Each work is a material mark but artistic libido is part of the creative transaction. The acoustic and somatic materiality of language is an inscription of the immaterial experience of life and it continues ... it occurs again and again on each occasion of audience.

⁵⁸ L Irigaray, *This sex which is not one*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1985, p. 134.

In 1996 I heard a joke in Berlin. I used it for the opening lines of *Knowledge and Melancholy*. "The elephant said to the mouse, You are very small. The mouse said to the elephant, I have been sick."⁵⁹ The mouse stands in for 'I'—also the 'I' of a larger body, the cultural corpus. The mouse is a small self but nevertheless has a point of view of the elephant monolith that might imagine such a small thing is not very relevant. From her point of view difference in size is not the thing that makes the difference but rather it is the state of her *self*.

In the practice of leverage and in the mediums of time and space and through actions of rebound and reception, the artist gives audience to perceptual questions. By generating possibilities, resonance occurs in unexpected and surprising syntaxes of form and content. The artist is always first audience to these kinetic transformations. She is the 'I' yearning for a dimensional experience of the world, the 'I' that hears herself hearing herself hear, sees herself seeing herself see, feels herself feeling herself feel. She is the *questioner*.

I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation ... [This] transformation of oneself by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience.⁶⁰

Generating possibilities and delaying closure, opening a view elsewhere, art is a mutable knowledge practice unpinning the literal, footnote-able, *el pied de la letter* (foot of the letter) from fixed places of pronouncement, so un-owning origins and un-weighted by meaning, leveraged signifiers may dance a *way*.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix p. 152.

⁶⁰ M Foucault, *Politics, philosophy, culture: Interviews and other writings 1977–1984*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 14.

⁶¹ Cameron & Sharp, "The 'way' of love is not a path, nor is it a method. The way is 'made' in the breath meeting, in the encounter enunciating sensation, as it is perceived within, without and between. Being is becoming through breath. The movement of breath is in dialogue with the other and the other and the other." *Listening with Irigaray: The sound of the live*, a performance event in response to French philosopher Luce Irigaray's book *The way of love*, in 'Falling behind: politics of body states', a series of performance events curated by Elizabeth Dempster and Sally Gardner, presented by Writings on Dance and Institute of Postcolonial Studies, Nth Melbourne, 24 September 2009. Viewed 1 June 2012, <http://www.bodyvoice.com.au/html/artists_statement.html>.

[T]hese tales, stories, poems, and treatises are already practices. They say exactly what they do. They constitute an act, which they intend to mean ... to say what they say; there is no discourse outside of them. You ask what they "mean", I will tell them to you again.⁶²

Part 2:

In the Costume of the Question

With the perceptual proposition of traversing a performance practice wearing 'new shoes', I hope to receive the known earth as unfamiliar and to make fresh relationships between things. "There is always more *now*."⁶³

Everything is different now.

⁶² M De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1984, p. 80. De Certeau is referring to historian and anthropologist Marcel Détienne's work with Greek stories.

⁶³ Personal note from *The art of the solo*, Melbourne 1998 (see footnote 17 above).

Autotopography

Dramaturgy, the art and technique of dramatic composition and representation, involves identifying and analysing dramatic construction by clarifying the turning points and syntax of the dramatic movements of a work. In an archaeological sense it could be understood as a vertical and horizontal investigation that uncovers the context of a work's formation, both its function and its material evidence or its thing-ness.⁶⁴ This perspective seems relevant for it suggests a dramaturgy that is a process of mapping my participation in the phenomena of the world (both internally and externally) and this involves reading and re-reading that which is perceived, received, made real and figured in the situation of each experience.

Each of my performance works enunciates a sentient reception of the experience of being in the world (with its past, present and future). There is a fundamental, dramaturgical discourse at work, a discourse that is in a dialogue with its own becoming. This is also a story of breath, of inspiration and reception. In this process what is discovered is what is perceived. Helen Sharp asks, "Can I receive the breath?"⁶⁵

I meet the world in my breath experience. I resound in every breath cycle and the scope of my resounding speaks of my formation; the scope of my perception of this resounding speaks of my attunement to the possibility of participating in this dialogue through perception.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Performance maker Nikki Heywood writes, "Perhaps what is so particular and useful about the 'context' in an archaeological sense is its total dedication to the specific nature of what belongs. The found object is only significant in relation to its context. In a mistaken 'context' its value and its relationship to other objects is diminished ... so what I think it asks of us as performance makers is, what is it that absolutely belongs here in this specific work?", personal communication, email, 27 June 2012.

⁶⁵ Sharp, from personal notes of *Performance practicum* foundational dialogues with Margaret Cameron, John Howard and Helen Sharp at the Body Voice Centre, Footscray, Melbourne. *Performance practicum* (2010 & 2011) was a collegial company for independent artists, providing a context for the development of singular works offering direction, dramaturgy, support, guidance, advice, the company of others and the facilities required towards making a viable original devised performance piece. The project focused on gathering a group of artists who has an interest in an ongoing continuity of practice, dialogue, and performance making where the emergence of familiarity with the diversity of one another's work was part of a supportive provocation in bringing new work to fruition.

⁶⁶ Sharp, 'Enfolded in the breath flesh of the world', part of a doctoral project, *Breathing philosophy*, Victoria University, unpublished paper in possession of Helen Sharp, the Body Voice Centre, Melbourne, 2010.

In traversing a body of solo works I will encounter the same hilly concerns as they recur in, as Bal terms it, an “autotopography” that is a “writing of the [my] self’s life” in performance.⁶⁷ I hope to reveal contexts which, akin to archaeology, include the internal and external ground or ‘where’ and ‘how’ the works are formed. Each can be understood to be embedded in circumstance, the accumulation of practice, dialogue between artists and audience and the solo works that precede them. I also uncover a methodology or the exegetical voice of how they are made. In some ways each could be considered a self-portrait. Renoir and Van Gogh painted themselves when expensive models were not available to them. Translated as thrift, ‘where I am is what I need’ becomes a creative principle and a methodological tool. I use myself because I am freely available.

In this part I will tell how each work exists in a story lived across time. Each performance season and publication is referenced to underscore the duration of each work and its life lived in performance. Their discursive contribution is encountered in the *way* or the *how* they tell of their own becoming, embodying a methodology of *doing* along a discreet and winding way of the lowercase letters of art. Notes from performance and rehearsal inter-weave through a chronological order of works performed. These record some of the kinaesthetic and perceptual processes happening in time and space in the theatre of performance. Through these I hope to lift the words off the page and invite you to audience the stage of action in the body of the performer.

Written responses from performance writers and theatre critics are included here. These may be seen as critical commentary but also as participatory, kinaesthetic responses to the breath of the performance and as such complementary, rather than complimentary. They are also evidence of audience. Along with contemporary artists and colleagues, they have been a part of a dialogue around my work and have influenced my understandings. *Knowledge and Melancholy* is the only work created in an academic context. Along with the others, it has been performed in many theatres in Australia, international festivals and conference forums. Each solo continued to develop through many performances and some are still developing. At times they have been re-visioned through a fresh collaborative partnership and this has resulted in a re-naming. Each publication and season can be understood as a revision of the work and also a tracking of the movement of the work’s ‘becoming’ through performance. In a laboratory of practice, the first performance marks the heightening of the process of coming into form. It is *through* performance that it becomes possible to realise, in the resonance of action, the interchanging relationships of form with content and content with form. The score is discovered over time, becoming apparent

⁶⁷ Bal, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

(perceivable) through dialogues of doing and thinking; through the breath and resonance of image, gesture, word and the proposition that *to audience* is also a verb, an action through which both the art and artist *give audience* and *receive audience*.

Art is a verb

My research is *all* methodology—material acts of doing in an indivisible, relational, responsive and polysemic discourse, move uncertainties, echoes, resonances and imaginings, to make material (and to figurate) the sentient, heard, felt and thought. It is personal. Art is a friend who takes my hand with irony and a libido to generate possibility when closure threatens. In many ways it is beyond my comprehension that a thought or a feeling might become perceivable as dimensional. It is a miracle which I am the first to audience. In this way I learn. The cowboy in my work *Bang! a critical fiction* philosophises,

We gonna find out somethin' one day
gonna turn our heads turned right 'round.
We gonna have to get real humble,
that's gonna be a *beautiful* day.⁶⁸

I have only a few heroines (saying their names again and again), so using Bourgeois' clarity once more, "It is explicit. I don't talk about a subject I don't know. I am a woman. I speak about myself."⁶⁹ Bourgeois understands herself through translations of the immaterial or felt experience into the material. In this sense her art is personal. It both gives to her and receives her. It is the evidence of, a question of and action of her life both received and becoming. My work is indivisible with life—my life, which is essentially all I have to contribute. I blow it like a trumpet for the hot air of its breath. Each work engages strategies to make them possible, for otherwise they

⁶⁸ Cameron, see *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 135.

⁶⁹ M Cajori & A Wallach, dirs. *Louise Bourgeois: the Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, DVD, Zeitgeist Film, New York, 2008.

are not. I have sometimes needed to leave through the backdoor after a performance and I have cried on the backsteps of many theatres. The process of getting out from under the merely personal to “the not *merely* personal”⁷⁰ is a perceptually-muscular practice. Anne Thompson writes,

[She] consistently challenged the epistemological model I kept attempting as a researcher ... Talking to Margaret about her art...involves talking to her performances. She answers my questions with quotes from her work. She performs her work in answer to my questions. She refused to separate herself, living in the world, from her art. Her work is her conversation. It speaks for itself.⁷¹

I value the audience, colleagues and writers who so personably companion me in dialogue and play. I have sought only to say what can be said because the works are intended to speak for and perform themselves. The existing (footnoted) publications of *Knowledge and Melancholy, Bang! a critical fiction* and *the proscenium* are in a revised collection in the appendix *Bodies of Words* (as integral changes have taken place during each work's performance history). These three works can also be seen to contain key navigational markers in a journey that collects and arrives in the exegetical voice of *Opera for a small mammal* (see Part 3).

In each work I use wit to escape closure and depend upon the understanding that I am both made of and make the world. “It is literal.”⁷² These works are about themselves on a journey that becomes more philosophical in its considerations, a journey that is also embedded in the context of contemporary performance.

⁷⁰ A Croggon, ‘Torque’, *Theatrenotes*, 28 April 2005, <<http://theatrenotes.blogspot.com/2005/04/torque.html>>.

⁷¹ A Thompson, ‘DIY? Ecologies of practice—a response’, *Writings on dance*, vol. 21, 2001/02, Melbourne, pp. 30–36.

⁷² Cameron, see revised text of *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 195.

Everything is talking

Things Calypso Wanted To Say! developed from 1989 to 1999,⁷³ is a quest to come into being. In the low-roofed suburbs of my culture, submerged in the solitude of young motherhood, in an earnest but ambivalent marriage, it is as if I am on an island, but actually I am in a low-income, resort town by the sea. It is an ominously deserted but beautiful world.

As the seasons repeat the perceptual openings I experience are visceral. A visit from someone lasts me a year. A television program is an oracle. The radio voices prophets. I have a sense that everything is talking and I must write it all down, "There is another blowfly against the glass."⁷⁴ Meanings open through listening to memory, feeling, thought and observation all at the same time, in constantly inter-changing relationships. I receive the world on many simultaneous levels and feel in service: a scribe and secretary, not a creator. 'I dyed my white windcheater black. My son is doing drawings of the hot sun. The blinds are drawn.'⁷⁵

The experience of participating in all this phenomena is marvellous, gathering vertical and horizontal experiences in syntaxes (meetings of relationships) that give me a sense of dimensionality. The flatness of my domestic environment is in stark contrast, yet kind of equivalent in an antithetical way, to the beauty of the natural world outside my door. I want to bring what is outside *in* and what is inside *out*.

On the in-breath ... *I am* ... On the out-breath ... *happy*

⁷³ Performance and publication history of *Things Calypso wanted to say!*

1989—*Things Calypso wanted to say!* First performed at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne, directed by Jenny Kemp and subsequently at Anthill Theatre, Melbourne.

1990—*Things Calypso wanted to say!* Produced by Performing Lines, The Performance Space, Sydney and Playhouse, Australian Festival, Canberra.

M Cameron, 'Things Calypso wanted to say!', in RJ Allen & K Pearlman (eds), *Performing the unnameable: An anthology of Australian performance texts*, Currency Press in association with RealTime, Sydney, 1999, pp. 93–104.

⁷⁴ Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, *Things Calypso wanted to say!* p. 98.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 104.

On the in-breath ... *I am* ... On the out-breath ... *happy*
I am happy ... *I am happy*⁷⁶

In my suburban beach house in the deserted resort where everything talks, writing is company. It includes me. Writing becomes a way to participate. I read aloud to anyone who visits and do an informal reading of frail poems in a cold winter to an audience of strangers in regional Victoria. The words touch freezing air but they do not freeze. Essentially to speak is to understand that, as theorist of narrative Marie MacLean writes, "Words do things".⁷⁷ Speaking the writing aloud turns my world inside out. I receive it. To speak aloud is to agree to an erotic attention to sensation inscribed in the body by breath, occurring between us, in places of image, sound, tactility, colour, rhythm, weight and pause. Larkin says: "It goes far beyond ideology ... there is hardly a gap between audience and presenter."⁷⁸ The words enunciate landscapes I had not imagined. They are real and a small path, the lowercase letters (not the grand capitals) of art, opens.

In the artist's studio she—a 'life model' says 'It is night'—and it is. 'Sound of ... sound of ... the ghost of a hand saunters in ... and draws it out ... She/I am 'a line drawing that breathes ... the sound of lead pencils on paper'. In acts of transference I am re-membered, made present, made absent, drawn inside and drawn outside, on paper and on skin. Words coalesce around sensation; at one and the same time they refer to creating and being created.⁷⁹

Over the hill I have a friend. We metaphorically wave. She also has a young child and her companionship is an essential relationship that accompanies this intense perception of what is beneath and between. A friendship with Australian theatre artist Jenny Kemp, whose artistic consciousness shapes and gives space for the work to actualise, is a conceptual dramaturgy that is essentially an

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷⁷ MacLean, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 71.

⁷⁸ J Larkin, 'Many faces of women', *Sunday Press*, 18 June 1989, p. 39.

⁷⁹ Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

exchange of art between artists. I have experienced this kind of dialogue with a very few, but most important collaborators and colleagues. For me it is the breathing place of art. With Kemp's vision and reception the work becomes cartography, a mapping of inner and outer perspectives that change place.

Sometimes it is pure subject speaking, sometimes it is self as object; and sometimes it is self observing itself as object ... It comes very close to putting into theatrical form what Simone de Beauvoir postulated as the existential position of women in our society: woman experiences herself as both subject and object, she is both self and the Other, as object.⁸⁰

Again and again I apprehend the subject becoming object and the object becoming subject. In becoming object, the subject performs relations that save me from the flatness or depression of circumstance. It is a way, a way to be an artist, to live. It is a life model that breathes.

And then he says, 'We'll have a standing pose in two twelve minute blocks.'
I am standing, feet together, hands behind my back.
And a woman drawer says, 'She looks like a pencil'. Well I wasn't inspired.
My feet are swelling and I'm going blotchy. He's keeping a strict account of the time.
The woman drawer is large. She says, 'If you are going to be a pencil, don't be a smiling pencil.'
I am beginning to wobble. He wrote the cheque. I got a dollar extra. 'For standing?' I said.
And he sort of nods.

In the artist's studio made of corrugated iron, a cold wind howls outside; heavy rain falls on the tin roof and streams of water are running from the guttering into the down pipes.
It is night.

⁸⁰ A Bennie, 'Double conundrum', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1990.

(With eyes closed—audible breathing)

A light is on
 a semi-circle of easels
 and artists are drawing the sound
 of running water,
 sound of lead pencils on paper,
 sound of wind and of the flute
 and I am lying
 alive, alive, awake
 but the full swell of the lips
 switch (*eyes open*)
 and I am walking into pornography;
 remembering the golden key
 he put in my mouth
 that's it, he's alive ...
 O in each dripping curve
 the ghost of a hand saunters in
 and draws it out
 in the life drawing
 erotica lives
 and pencils pastel out the fantasies I nurse ...⁸¹

Theatre critic Alison Croggon writes: “[Calypso!] tears off the comfortable blindfolds we wear and shows us the world: frightening, dangerous and real.”⁸² I write, “Rapunzel is released from the castle by the braid of her own hair.”⁸³

⁸¹ Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 98–99.

⁸² A Croggon, ‘Survival and identity’, *Bulletin*, 4 July 1989, p. 108.

A conceptual bucket

she felt a premonition in the crinkle of a yellow star as it folded,
crackling in her hand it lay now, in the kitchen bin
she saw a homesick child's face crumpling on the lounge
she felt his heart aching way past bedtime, overtired and fretting
she watched a blackbird take pine nuts from a cone, in the garden
she listened to the children and somehow this summer lacked
the magic of all others, she had to admit she was miserable
in the resort, holding the tatters of a Christmas star⁸⁴

A second work is arriving in difficult fragments and I collect them for a first reading at *La Mama Poetica* in Melbourne in 1991. Bruce Pascoe (who was also reading on the same night) offered to publish it immediately. This text becomes part two of *Thing Calypso Wanted To Say!* It is the material for a new journey with the work that will be re-titled *Calypso! An epic journey in two parts* (developed from 1991 to 1999) and eventually *Calypso!*⁸⁵

Fiona Scott Norman writes, "There is no 'plot' rather a feeling that meaning is just eluding you ... in many ways an exploration of the form of a performance, and where meaning comes from."⁸⁶ I am intrigued by a Kalahari bushman story, a parable about a culture that

⁸³ Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁸⁴ Cameron, 'Dreamhole', in *Australian short stories*, no. 36, Pascoe Publishing, Apollo Bay, 1991, p. 22.

⁸⁵ Performance and publication history of *Things Calypso wanted to say!* (continued)

1992—*Things Calypso wanted to say!* with composer and designer Eric Gradman. La Mama Theatre, Melbourne.

1993—*Calypso! An epic journey in two parts*, with Eric Gradman, CUB Malthouse, Melbourne.

1995—*Calypso!* The Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen, Germany.

1998—'Things Calypso wanted to say!', *Airplay*, radio program, ABC Radio National, Australia, April 10.

⁸⁶ F Scott-Norman, *InPress*, 6 November 1991, p. 3.

has lost its soul. The farmer's cows stop giving milk and wanting to find out why, he stays up all night to watch the herd. He sees star people come down from the stars with buckets, milk his cows and go back up to the sky with his milk. He captures one to be his wife. She says to her husband, "I will stay with you on one condition, that you never look in my bucket". The woman from the stars lives happily on earth and the cows in the herd give milk every day, but one day when she returns home from milking she finds her husband laughing. "Why did you make such a fuss about the container when it was empty all the time?" he says. "Empty?" she utters. At once she becomes very sad. Turning her back to him she walks off the edge of the world, never to be seen on Earth again.⁸⁷

The *I Ching*⁸⁸ refers to 'The Well' to which one returns again and again, as to the inexhaustible source, but when the jug is broken, it leaks and spills misfortune. Nourishment or *milk* seems only to be available when there is an agreement to honour a "perceptual reality that is not an imagination."⁸⁹ To call the container empty is a question of perception. Is it perhaps an omission, a refusal to receive "the resonating breath"⁹⁰ as nourishment? Is to call the perceived an imagination (rather than a reality) to empty the bucket of substance—spilling the milk? Only the perceived becomes matter. Nothing perceived is nothing.

There is a hole in the bucket of practice. "It is a conceptual bucket"—to call it *empty* is to make it so.⁹¹ Don't leak! I look to the stars and wonder if the star people are coming down in the night with their buckets to steal the milk from the herd. I want to capture one.

listen, listen
to the ping
minute explosion

⁸⁷ L Van der Post, *A walk with a white bushman*, Penguin Group, London, 1987, pp. 72–74.

⁸⁸ *The I ching or book of changes*, trans. R Wilhelm, 3rd edn, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1968, pp. 185–188.

⁸⁹ J Howard, a personal note from dialogues with Helen Sharp & John Howard in *Performance practicum* at the Body Voice Centre, Melbourne (see footnote 65 above). This concept is also referred to in 'Small letter to audience' see p. 2 above.

⁹⁰ Sharp, a personal note from dialogues in *Performance practicum*, *op. cit.*, (see footnote 65 above).

⁹¹ Cameron & Young, *So you think you can cow*, Courthouse Theatre La Mama, Melbourne, 2009. This work is explicitly pedagogical in regard to the proposition that 'to audience is a verb'. Received through headphones, instructional scripts are given to four audience members who are costumed and become the performers in the event.

sing
as each small hole explodes in the night
clip clop the milkman's horse
coming up the road
it's six o'clock
clip clop clip clop the milkman's cart
look up
look out at the star leaves of autumn
dropping off flaming trees each star
aah ...
feeling, blown in winter wind
in freezing night
on epic journey into
dreaming without words
without language
noise of armies marching
"retreat over steel mountain"
her own tender feet
on melting asphalt
turn to paper in the heat
"The night is wide open"
language must give way to silence
and the ping pong of stars
popping in her lungs
the popping breath of the future
the DESTINATION
"lights in the city sky"

turn left, left
 turn, turn right
 write this down
 through, through words without song
 language of silence impossible
 construction the tower
 will fall will topple
 left no write spinning, spinning
 she's left the earth ... ⁹²

A stage is created. The proscenium is a perceptual threshold and it is formed by the means of the perceptual practice of the artist. This is what I understand as the stage. Simply, it is the artist's view (perception) that forms the perceivable stage. It is not a room.

A door becomes the set for *Calypso!*

On a silent stage, a pool of light illuminates a freestanding, fully functioning 'domestic' front door. Like the Chinese symbol for *Tao*, the door is a gateway between past and the future, the 'threshold' of the external present.⁹³

Chris Boyd writes, "*Calypso!* chronicles the period between youth and maturity, between scepticism and conviction; it explores the juncture between innocence and experience, and the transition from childhood to parenthood."⁹⁴ It also explores the passage to art, to becoming an artist, although it reveals an idealised notion of where art might be. During the early nineties in Australia, I was not alone

⁹² Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, 'Dreamhole', p. 30–33.

⁹³ Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, 'Things Calypso wanted to say!', p. 95.

⁹⁴ C Boyd, 'Vivid images fill gender gap', *Melbourne Times*, 20 November 1993.

in looking to Europe. Although I had not yet been there, I had seen the works of Pina Bausch and Tadeuz Kantor⁹⁵ when they toured to Melbourne and Sydney.

(With a heavy European accent)

On the radio someone says “to steal someone's perspective is to kill the person.” She is an immigrant and artist. She has a beautiful accent and she is automatically (*pronounced with a hard 'g'*) legitimate but what if you are struggling to find a perspective, that is, you were born in this country.⁹⁶

Peter Weininger writes,

It delves into the minutiae of everyday existence; with its private and public tensions ... [*Calypso!*] reduces concepts back to their essentials, joining fragments of memory to casual observations and subtly changing perspectives ... Her world may be that of the everyday, but it is also our world and the clay from which we fashion our individual and collective identities. Coming to terms with this can be as terrifying as it can be reassuring.⁹⁷

A blink is a curtain

⁹⁵ Pina Bausch, 1980 and *Kontakthov*, Tanztheater Wuppertal, Adelaide Festival and Palais, Melbourne, 1982.

Tadeuz Kantor, dir. *The dead class*, Cricot Theatre, 3rd Biennale of Sydney, The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 1979.

⁹⁶ Cameron, 1999, *op. cit.*, *Things Calypso wanted to say!*, p. 98.

⁹⁷ P Weiniger, ‘Mythery and calypso’, *Age*, 19 November 1993, p. 19.

Here on the stage in tiny gestures, I traverse minutiae. Closing my eyes and opening my eyes—a blink is a curtain with a stage on both sides. I place and re-place. Speaking feels radical, viscous, organic and private. I am fingering words, daring the most intimate touch as sound vibrates in flesh and bone. It is an audible touch, stirring the memory of other touch like a bow on the strings of my being. I am speaker and listener, the act and the actor, the thing seeing and the thing seen, the subject and the object.

The words do not need invention but fidelity.⁹⁸ They are as facts to *tell*. The ‘t’ in beautiful for instance—for *beautiful* cannot achieve itself without the bone of its consonants. I dare edges of volume without rupture. I shuck the flesh from the shell of the word to hear it resound in the empty pencil-line of its shape. The word, like a conch and like your presence, becomes a greater ear through which to hear my hearing amplified (made more, not necessarily louder).

The words are not over once they are said. Speaking is a choreography of breath. The words travel in my body, into the room, into your body and beyond. I do not want to manipulate or burden the words with the weight of their meaning, a weight that might deprive me of air. I listen as breath changes meanings. I place the hands of my voice on words, on *you* who listen, and touch a touch that is also within me. Exhalation becomes inhalation; inhalation becomes exhalation. They are lovers.

Writing is everywhere

In her house by the sea Duras writes,

Around us, everything is writing; that's what we must finally perceive. Everything is writing.
 The fly on the wall is writing; there is much that it wrote in the light of the large room, refracted
 by the pond. The fly's writing could fill an entire page.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Cixous, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁹⁹ M Duras, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

In my house by the sea I sometimes pretend I am she. But I did not read what Duras wrote above until 2001. I knew it. I knew it.
“Everything is writing.”¹⁰⁰

Nothing speaks

Speak to me speak
speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak
speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak
speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak
speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak
speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak
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speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak
speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak speak.¹⁰¹

If everything was talking in *Calypso*, now there is nothing talking. Taking myself to the most subjective of places I try to hear again. In 1996 in Berlin I am preparing a season of *Calypso!* Alone in a heavy winter, I weep experiencing the first snowfall in a rose garden near the station in Charlottenburg. There is snow. *Snow*. The world is becoming even more silent. Roses freeze. There are bitter winds, candlelight, ice lakes and coal fires. I have a frozen heart and a drawer full of poetry that is impossible to speak. The question of this impossibility becomes the work. I carry a dog-eared note from Luce Irigaray considering “a feminine syntax that might be heard”¹⁰² ... even if it cannot be spoken (and I put that in my pocket for nerve).

¹⁰⁰ loc. cit.

¹⁰¹ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix, p. 171. In this passage I intentionally mimic a section of Simone de Beauvoir’s radical work *The woman destroyed*, William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., Glasgow, London, 1969, p. 83.

¹⁰² L Irigaray, 1985, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

Duras writes,

Finding yourself in a hole, at the bottom of a hole, in almost total solitude, and discovering that only writing can save you. To be without the slightest subject for a book, the slightest idea for a book, is to find yourself, once again, before a book. A vast emptiness. A possible book. Before nothing. Before something like living, naked writing, like something terrible, terrible to overcome. I believe that the person who writes does not have any ideas for a book, that her hands are empty ...¹⁰³

In *Knowledge and Melancholy: An autobiographical fiction* (developed from 1997 to 2005),¹⁰⁴ there is a movement from *Things Calypso Wanted To Say!* to a new question—what is possible?

¹⁰³ Duras, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Performance and publication history of *Knowledge and Melancholy*

1997—*Knowledge and melancholy: an autobiographical fiction*. The first performances were presented in a ten-day creative development at La Mama Theatre. I used the theatre as a public studio to test the language and running order of fragments. Performed simultaneously with another work in development by Louise Smith, the stage was shared like a split screen. This was a strategy to take the pressure off a fixated focus on either work and it provided an exploratory context. Subsequently, when enough words were possible, I performed the work as a solo on two evenings at Dancehouse, Melbourne. *Knowledge and melancholy* was presented for my Master of Arts performance for Victoria University in 1998. It continued to develop through public performances for many years and it remains in my current repertoire.

1999—*Knowledge and melancholy: A live libretto*, produced by Deborah Hay Dance Company at Zachary Scott Theatre, Austin, Texas, USA. This duet version with Hay was as an outcome of my work with her in Australia in 1996. I returned from Austin with ‘the perception is the dance’ indelibly imprinted on the work.

1999—‘Knowledge and melancholy: An autobiographical fiction’, *Airplay*, radio program, ABC Radio National, Australia, May 26.

2001—*Knowledge and melancholy: An autobiographical fiction*, in *Inside 01*, Playbox Theatre, Melbourne. This performance season was in repertory with five new Australian works (including my work ‘Bang! a critical fiction’). Also see:

M Cameron, *Knowledge and melancholy: An autobiographical fiction*, in *Inside 01*, Currency Press (current theatre series) in association with Playbox Theatre, Sydney, 2001, pp.161–188.

2002—M Cameron, ‘Knowledge and melancholy: An autobiographical fiction’, in A Croggon (ed.), *Masthead*, Issue 5, <<http://www.masthead.net.au/issue5/cameron1.html>>.

2003—‘Knowledge and melancholy’, at *Magdalena Australia, theatre—women—traveling*, International festival of women in contemporary theatre, Powerhouse, Brisbane. It was in preparing for this performance that I understood I had been working to an audience that was an

The mouse said to the elephant, "I have been sick". This provides a lever. It is the best comment I have heard on point of view and it allows *me* a view—a small voice anonymously arises from a figure at the bar, slumped over a microphone not a beer.

(*On one breath*)

I will unpeel you, eke you out of caves,
feed you on grief rank and stinking
without breath it is not easy.
You cannot expect to feel young.
You cannot expect to avoid daylight
—too human an animal made of flesh and fear.

Our dignity lies in these ashes. Look at me.
Privilege me with no assumptions
that defend your position. You humiliate me
and I am already so humiliated
I become you.¹⁰⁵

imaginary collective. When I rehearsed in the car waiting for roadside assistance, I was (unusually) preparing for an audience of women and since I am a woman, I must consider that this detail was specific to a context that was instrumental to the work being newly enunciated. It was now five years after the first performance and the last few beats came into form when I added the stage direction, "*Dying or falling asleep from boredom lay down. Wait four beats ... snore loudly*".

2004—*Knowledge and melancholy: An autobiographical fiction*, Performance Space, Sydney and Visy Theatre, Brisbane, produced by Performing Lines. These performances were the most gratifying. The moment-to-moment kinaesthetic feedback was continuously breaking time down into parts, and parts of parts. There was so much *time*.

2005—'Knowledge and melancholy', *Magdalena USA*, Magdalena Project, Rhode Island, USA.

2005—'Knowledge and melancholy', *The articulate practitioner—Articulating practice*, an international forum, Magdalena Project & Aberystwyth University, Wales.

¹⁰⁵ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix p. 155.

Using the unusable

This embarrassing poetry is all I have. If where you are is what you need, then using the unusable, I try to speak aloud. The words cloy. Searching for possibilities, I act drunk and with the relaxed weight of the shape of drunkenness, lean into the syllable and allow some heaviness to pour in and build up behind the vowel. I elongate the vowels against the dam walls of the consonants, bending into the words, letting them gather and hold. I tease the vowels against what feels like the bones of the words before allowing a release into an explosive lip or the tooth of a consonant. It is as if I am actually mouthing the intensity of the writing. It is as if the form of my speech is congruent with the content and the feeling of the words. It is as if the writer's body is being given form, as if the speaker bears the writer's body, again and again.

With urgency I attempt to lever inhibition off. The impossibility and the embarrassment of all these words are questions. Yes, the words sound better, much better when I act drunk and leaning into them again, I overemphasise the vowels and slam against the consonants. Think of the winners of things and the ugly face of victory. Think of the losing face, a beautiful face—the beauty of humility. Or is it humiliation? I deconstruct the word—humiliation—suffering its long vowels.

Listen to my breath trembling between howl, sigh, coo and cry ... how my in-breath might, in the grabbing sob of the word, nearly break it; how my breath wants to comfort the vowels with elongations, so to turn them to diphthongs, giving time for I need time to love this cry-full and mortifying word, this literal word that is what it does, this word that dares to humiliate me. I turn the phrases with sensuality, wanting to defy the edge of normalcy but "I must sound normal. I must sound normal."¹⁰⁶ So I leverage the words away from their un-speakable-ness, breaking them into parts and parts of parts. Articulation is an expedition into the impossible becoming possible.

¹⁰⁶ Cameron, see *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 194.

Un-fixing words with breath there are swells in the air (like water) and like music meaning moves on air. The words say what they do and do what they say. Say 'lemon' and there, in a breath, is a waxy yellow with its rind, pith, tart and wince. I behold this, riding the shift of meanings and sensations as they hover like a kite held with two strings, one string of 'loyalty' and one string of 'disinterest'.¹⁰⁷ And as the like-ends of a magnet will not meet, inside this paradox of loyalty and disinterest, there is a space.

The stage is sinking

I lie in the bath and visualise the work, giving myself instructions that I never work out how to do. It will always be new. Instructions like, "crash and burn"¹⁰⁸ and, "lurching and reeling more from fatigue than from alcohol".¹⁰⁹

A critic writes, "An actress walks on stage as if struggling along the sloping deck of a sinking ship."¹¹⁰ I am not playing that image. The theatre critic collects resonances, receiving his own consciousness as performance and yes the stage is sinking always. It is created by continual perceptual practice.

The same entrance is described by John Hughes: "The central obsession of the melancholy imagination is precisely evoked in the prophetic and macabre, opening 'dance' of the exhausted and drunken 'skeleton', momentarily enlivened and entrapped within the 'hysterical' body of the 'Actress'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Personal note from *Performing statelessness*, Melbourne 1996 (see footnote 17 above). Hay used the proposition of working with 'loyalty and with disinterest'. I understand 'loyalty' as keeping a devoted attention and 'disinterest' as maintaining a workable distance between things. In the same workshop Hay proposes perceptual practices as tricks not beliefs.

¹⁰⁸ See *Knowledge and melancholy*, attached appendix p. 160.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 152.

¹¹⁰ S Caroll, 'Tired effort from an old master, inspired from new', *Sunday Times*, 24 June 2001, p. 13.

¹¹¹ J Hughes, Australian filmmaker, unpublished examiners report of *Knowledge and Melancholy: an autobiographical fiction* (the performance component for my Master of Arts, Victoria University, 15 December 1997).

The bucket is not empty. The dialogues of performance between time, space, form, content, inter-subjectivity and perceptual reality are continuously questioning habit. I am thinking under language to locate accuracies that speak through a synergy of modes of knowing. I am calling upon other capacities than the fact of meaning (or definition) in another kind of listening, akin to music, where the poetic speaks between the said.

We are not what we are
but shaped by a region that is seen,
only because we mark what we know
and see then what we know not that makes us.¹¹²

The animal and the person

The task of writers and philosophers consists of tuning into the forces of an impersonal life similar to the actions and reactions of an animal in its environment. In doing so, writers and philosophers are able to push language to its limits, to becoming-other, and eventually to writing "in the place of" the animal.¹¹³

In *A Mammal Gallery* Beat Poet, Michael McClure, confronts the visceral experience of a leopard's growl,

¹¹² Cameron, see revised text *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix p. 158.

¹¹³ A Beaulieu, 'The status of animality in Deleuze's thought', *Journal for critical animal studies*, vol. IX, Issue 1/2, 2011, p. 71.

I am surrounded by the physicality of her speech. It is a real thing in the air. It absorbs me and I can hear and feel and see nothing else. Her face and features disappear, becoming one entity with her speech. The speech is the purest, most perfect music I have ever heard, and I know that I am touched by the divine, on my cheeks, and on my brow, and on the tympanums of my ears, and the vibrations on my chest, and on the inner organs of perception ... It is music-speech. It is like the music one hears when he places his head on the stomach of his beloved. The gurglings, the drips, the rumblings, the heart, and the pulsebeats in the interior of the body are perfect music.¹¹⁴

"Visualise a four-legged animal ... [its tongue, texture and smell] ... Now let a person come into your mind ... Place this person in front of the animal and allow their features to interchange ... Let your character speak." ¹¹⁵

I follow the exercise. There is slippage between writer, narrator, memory and the present, the writing exercise and the student of writing, the animal and the person—"fixed identities give way to assemblages, alliances, passages and becomings between both beings and things".¹¹⁶ The animal serves as a proscenium or threshold, a place of oscillation where subject and object may interchange. Across this mating I may reach into language and write without taking the pencil from the page. It is an exploration that engages with worlds of wordlessness and somatic exchanges that both amplify and depend upon the senses. Listening with and through the animal ... the senses may drip or become taut, words may growl, snort and purr. This territory takes to heart the certitude of an animal's visceral reception of the world, bringing felt sense to the word 'human' (of the animal kingdom). The spoken becomes flesh as images fold and unfold. Marvellous! It is not that one becomes the other but rather it is somewhere between the animal and the person that "I keep coming to an imaginary fence-line" that is not there anymore.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ M McClure, 'A mammal gallery', in *Scratching the beat surface*, North Point Press, San Francisco, 1982, pp.155–156.

¹¹⁵ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix, p. 163. This is an exercise from Jenny Kemp's *Generative writing workshop*, VCA Melbourne, 2007. The instructions to visualise an animal and then to superimpose this visualisation onto a human being and subsequent instructions to change location etcetera, dissolve into the written scenario as the writing gathers momentum.

¹¹⁶ Beaulieu, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

¹¹⁷ Cameron, see revised text *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 148.

The Pig

(Waking) Ah! A new day, a new page

I am awake without an imagination
Look at the sky—it is so high today.
Well I'll try the opposite,
look at the floor—it is so high today.

Tipping the table on a steep angle—it seems the space is warping ...

That made a bit of ... SPACE.
I often feel as if I am on the *verge* of some thing.

"Close your eyes ... Visualise a four-legged-animal."

At the table with closed eyes

I see a pig—four legs, bristles etcetera.

"Now let a person come into your mind ... Someone you know or someone you don't know."
I see a ... (*bored*) ... jogger. Down by the river, Saturday afternoon, he has his ... joggers on. (*Very bored*) He's fit as a fiddle; his muscles are terrific; he feels like the greatest man on earth.

"Place this person in front of the animal and allow their features to interchange ...
Let your character speak ... "

The table tilts

—it seems as if the space WARPS

In the restaurant he said in front of me, 'I prefer her to you',
then he looked at me and said 'you look tired get some sleep'.
WHAT A CREEP.

Just as well I had a couple of compliments
in my pocket to—never mind.

Then he bored into her face with an original poem,
she twitched under the pressure of his gaze—
The poem was pretty good,
I thought I was witnessing the beginning of a great affair.
They're at the feeding-pit these two. (*Snorting loudly many times*).
I'm going to go to the loo.
I'm not going to look in the mirror.
I have my compliments why should I check?

The ACTRESS attempts an EXIT

—changing direction on each line

The restaurant
his chequebook,
her face,
the Thai brocade,
the insult,
the snuffled cleavage,
her red lips,
the twitching pressure,
his erotic suggestion—

(Spinning)

Sea? Sea? Sea? There is no sea here.
There could be a photograph of the sea somewhere
and if I concentrate I can smell the sea ...

Returning to the table

By the sea ... two weeks later I am slumped at the table
snorting into the armpits of another hot day with pink muscles.
I do have ... some ... *pink muscles*.
I can still see her face—
the images yank at her thought, flicker in across her eyes.
She's trained her gaze to strain against, into and fix upon his gape.
She says his name a lot: (*legs crossed, very cool*)
So Richard you write. So Richard you are married.
Well Richard you are very perceptive.
Yes Richard I am very happily married.
He has just enough intelligence to SNUFFLE in
—he's ROOTING for her. (*Snorting loudly and repeatedly*)

I hold my purse with my compliments. (*Searching in handbag*)

One. You are pretty someone said once.

(Repeat until the tension is unbearable)

Two ... um ... two ... um ... two ... um ...

That's not a compliment they said that's a FACT.

(Victorious) That's a beauty.

Yes that's a roast dinner of a compliment,
that will make me FAT for a whole Sunday,

I can make a PIG of myself on that.

They don't last you know, (*re-arranging her hair*)
—bristly little insults last; compliments do not,
like flowers do not last in the heat of moments.
The situation is abominable—I'll spit some poetry at him.
HERE RICHARD COP THIS ... (*Crash and burn*)
—I can't think of anything to say ...

Returning to the table

“Good, and closing your eyes again”
There is no lighting here.
No I am not in contact with the outside ...
Yes in the back of my mind
I am aware of the animal
... ROAR.

Enacted under the table

The night is dark ... (*fever pitch*) yes my character has a lot of sexual energy,
he can do tricks with his penis—a doctor from Spain!
There are cars parked in rows (*There is a lot of bumping*)
—WE ARE THE MOVIE!

“Make a sketch when you are ready.”

Coming out from under
—gasping for air
I couldn't possibly *draw* this—
I could cook it but I couldn't draw it—the trees have *hair*.

Running around the table

I've lost his mouth. I've lost his MOUTH.
In the dark we are all mouth.

*Standing with the table on her back
—an elephant?*

When you are kissing it's really good to push away and come up for air—
(*Breathless*) probably everyone knows that
—there's probably no need to say such a thing.
(*Exhausting herself*)

I have love notes in my armpit and a man whose mouth I have lost,
dark as a Spanish night. There is no outside and no inside.

The content is not within the narrative,
(*Slicing the air with Karate gestures at different angles*)
but within the syntax of perspectives
DO NOT CLING TO THE NARRATIVE.¹¹⁸

Self-contextualisation

Re-contextualisation is a useful strategy or trick, akin to what Deleuze and Guattari call de-territorialisation. Marie MacLean describes de-territorialisation thus:

¹¹⁸ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix pp. 157–162.

When one uses the traditional genres of narrative as a foreigner or a member of a minority uses language, then one changes the rules to one's own advantage and shakes the proprietorial bonds of discourse ... *De-territorialisation* may be brought about by *re-contextualisation*, putting the traditional among the new or products of one ideology alongside those of another; by *decontextualisation*, as when a tale belonging to a cohesive corpus is isolated and judged purely on internal criteria: or most importantly by *self-contextualisation* when unexpected paradigmatic structures work against the syntagmatic structure or vice versa.¹¹⁹

Unable to step outside the symbolic order¹²⁰ Irigaray suggests that there is "perhaps only one 'path', the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it."¹²¹

To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to locate the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself—inasmuch as she is on the side of the 'perceptible', of 'matter'—to 'ideas', in particular to ideas about herself that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: recovering a possible operation of the feminine in language.¹²²

¹¹⁹ MacLean, *op. cit.*, 1988, pp. 46–7.

¹²⁰ M Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: philosophy in the feminine*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 37–38. Whitford describes the Lacanian idea of the symbolic as "the junction of body, mind, psyche, and language where the descriptive fields of psycho-analysis and linguistics (or semiotics) meet, and it is what enables Irigaray to use the psychoanalytic model. If it is in language that one becomes the subject, then to say that the subject is male is not polemical rhetoric, it is a precise theoretical statement concerning the Oedipal structure of the symbolic and the structure of subjectivity. From this point of view, one is not talking any more about individual men and women, male philosophers and female hysterics/feminists, but about a monosexual symbolic structure that because it is an overarching symbolic structure, determines individual subjectivity."

¹²¹ Irigaray, 1985, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 76.

I take up the notion of mimesis as a stage direction. In order to leverage a space to re-examine notions of how we know what we know especially in regard to representations of the feminine, I choose to be *literal* and to enact the feminine in an obsessional drama, seeking validation from a masculine ‘other’. It is a serious joke. My performance premise becomes: *What if* the solo female performer is a cultural model for the feminine hysterical “whose discourse is always directed towards the ‘you’ for validation”, even “willing to produce symptoms, if that will obtain the desired result (love).”¹²³ There is a revolution. In a dramatic reversal a drawer full of otherwise unusable material becomes usable. The strategy enables voice and becomes the work *Knowledge and Melancholy*.

Do you think people in all those ‘normal’ houses have times like this?
 No, I do not think so. I do not think this is ordinary ...
 Do not imagine there is some grander scheme
 beyond the politics of our exchange
 for ART in its grand capitals, in its citadel,
 but excuse me I am only an actress.
 Lend me your imagination ...

(In heroic pose) I am CHARLOTTE CORDAY.¹²⁴
 Who are these people? What is this place?
 I do not recognise it yet it recognises me in a way that I do not agree with.
 Is my inquiry authentic?
 This place feels so lonely I doubt myself.
 I manifest failure that you may interpret the principles—
 Is this a responsible use of public space?¹²⁵

¹²³ Whitford, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

¹²⁴ P Weiss, *The persecution and assassination of Marat as performed by the inmates of the asylum of Charenton under the direction of the Marquis de Sade*, Camelot Press Ltd, Southampton, 1965. Charlotte Corday is an historical figure of the French Revolution. She is also a character in this play.

What is *on* the artist is the thing that she works with and the work returns as a voice that is not only her own.

Within the twin rubric of knowledge and melancholy and a linkage of the psychoanalytic themes of mourning and melancholy with philosophical questions of presence and absence, shifting between modes of direct address, poetic declaration and narrative exposition the work evokes the image of Scheherazade, for whom the necessity of story telling was literally a matter of life and death; a prolonging of life through its displacement in the compulsive repetition and the endless deferral of closure.¹²⁶

Finding irony leverages space and recontextualises content. It enables me to stand alongside, not only within, certain socio-political, linguistic, psychoanalytic, autobiographic and limiting paradigms in a space between the act and the enactment where “unexpected paradigmatic structures work against the syntagmatic structure or vice versa”.¹²⁷ The words and I are not one thing. Playing an epic final scene, enacting dying as a personification of beauty, the actress pleads: “Remember me … do not forget me. If you do not perceive me I will cease to exist.”¹²⁸ Dying or falling asleep from boredom (allowing both possibilities) she shifts the perception to the ‘eye of the beholder’ whom she multiplies as an audience that is both outside and inside herself—personal and cultural.

Generating possibilities and delaying closure the philosopher thinking about thinking will never stop. Scheherazade tells and tells becoming queen to save herself and Rapunzel is released from the castle by the braid of her own language.

¹²⁵ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix p. 176–177.

¹²⁶ J Hughes, 1997, *op. cit.*

¹²⁷ MacLean, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹²⁸ Cameron, see *Knowledge and melancholy* attached appendix, p. 177.

The opportunity shop

In *Bang! a critical fiction* developed from 2000 to 2001,¹²⁹ I am not a cowboy. I am a chest of drawers, walking with stiff legs set wide apart, riding through a dark night (on a real chest of drawers), relating to the chest as not *only* a thing. I *feel* like it. I take it inside. The thing receives me and gives me audience. I am a traveller riding home on a tired horse, on a pilgrimage with a grievance to share. I have a chest (a heart) of ‘drawers’ (of gunshots)—*Bang!* “Crackers explode just as love and life can blow us to pieces.”¹³⁰

I am riding a pun, a slippage that is generating possibilities and relishing the dark tones of a Texan accent with a lilt that turns the ordinary into the poetic. Who is who and what is what? The genre is hackneyed but it is congruent—inside and outside—the subject and the object interchange. Is the subject quite literally becoming object and the object becoming subject? I think so. The Western cliché is tired, it is worn-out, so is the old chest, so is my heart and so is my house. I borrow a genre that fits somehow, there is equivalence that re-contextualises my internal life. And there is an irony that gives the hitherto unspeakable or that which is without a name, a voice.

I am living in inner city Melbourne, in a crooked, old, weatherboard, worker’s cottage, painting it Mediterranean blue. One day at The Opportunity Shop around the corner, I buy a 1950’s chest of drawers. It has some resemblance to a small Martian, something out of *The Jetsons*, a cartoon series I watched as a child.¹³¹ The Opportunity Shop is a shop of possibilities. While I am washing the small chest in the backyard on a hot, summer day I find myself talking to it in a Texan accent. I receive the conversation with joy, as a welcome relief, like a miracle out of nowhere. But it is not really out of nowhere. The hot, flat day is *me*, the house in need of renovation is *me* and then something visits. It is also *me*. Martin Buber writes, “The form that confronts me I cannot experience nor describe; I can only actualise

¹²⁹ [Performance and publication history of *Bang! a critical fiction*](#)

2000—*Bang! a critical fiction* first performed at La Mama theatre, Melbourne

2001—*Bang! a critical fiction* at Playbox theatre, Melbourne. Also see:

M Cameron, ‘*Bang! a critical fiction*’, *Inside 01*, Currency Press in association with Playbox theatre, Sydney, 2001, pp. 1–40.

¹³⁰ K Herbert, ‘Margaret’s cracker of a show’, *Herald Sun*, 5 October 2000, p. 17.

¹³¹ *The Jetsons* is a prime-time animated sitcom produced by Hanna-Barbera. The original incarnation of the series aired Sunday nights on ABC television series from 23 September 1962–1963.

it.”¹³² I am a Chest of Drawers. The object and I are in relationship and it is reciprocal but the exchange is so intimate it is not really clear who is who. Buber writes, “Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it.”¹³³

Referencing the White Knight’s theorem in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* “the name of the name is not the name” Giorgio Agamben proposes: “to name the name, I will no longer be able to distinguish between word and thing, concept and object, the term and its reference.”¹³⁴ The chest of drawers represents equivalence—the scene, the object, the genre somehow match the thing that wants to be said. Boundaries dissolve. The chest re-presents my solitude in a question of soluble relations. The chest is not one thing. It is a chest of drawers and it is a horse. It is a companion, another body, a visitor (from another planet perhaps), a karaoke machine, a ‘sputnik’, a miniature theatre and an inner sanctum (perhaps the unconscious). It is “... an organ of [a] secret psychological life ... a model of intimacy ... a hybrid, subject object. Like [me], through [me] and for [me, it] has a quality of intimacy.”¹³⁵ In this exchange with an object, the (my) world turns inside out and outside in.

I phone my sister. ‘You will never guess what I’ve been doing?’ And I tell her word for word what I have said to the chest for an hour. She is laughing. I need her to audience, to hear if she hears what I hear. Or will my game wilt when it is out of its element? And as I tell her I am memorising, writing it all down again in my head until I can get it on paper. Days and weeks follow. *Yee-ha!* I am a scribe, a slave. *It* has moved in—“a form that wants to become a work through [me].”¹³⁶

I tell you, I am experiencin' the void—
THE BIG SPACE, the desert wind, the VENUE!
I got fiery flies shootin' out all round me
and the air is warm as blood.¹³⁷

¹³² M Buber, *I and thou*, a new translation with a prologue ‘I and You’ and notes by Walter Kaufman, Touchstone, New York, 1970, p. 61.

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 67.

¹³⁴ G Agamben, *Potentialities*, Stanford University Press, California, 1999, p. 213.

¹³⁵ G Bachelard, *The poetics of space*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, p. 78.

¹³⁶ Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹³⁷ Cameron, see *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 137.

On a ride of *yes let's* I wake in the night with things to say and things to write down. Each encounter is crucial—joining the dots in a journey of discovery, following resonance like a fox on a hunt. It is like this,

Such work is creation, inventing is finding. Forming is discovery. As I actualise, I uncover. I lead the form across—into the world of It. The created work is a thing among things and can be experienced and described as an aggregate of qualities. But the receptive beholder may be bodily confronted now and again.¹³⁸

In the genre of a domestic Western the ordinary voice speaks of the not so ordinary, of internal and external frontiers where there are the wide open spaces of the desert and its winds, where soul and sunset are equivalent, where awe and dread are existential landscapes, where wonder is the appropriate response to the immensity of a night sky and where there is “so much nothin’ to make somethin’ from”.¹³⁹ It acknowledges that what we know may not be all there is to know. There is a desire to make things “what give me pleasure” and “get real satisfaction about that” and there is gratitude for the possibility of the unknown, that a Martian or something we don’t know might “turn our heads right around” on “a *beautiful day*”.¹⁴⁰ Cowboy is a poet of the obvious.

I had me two vacuum cleaners
both o' them blew up.
I had to say to myself—

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

¹³⁸ Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹³⁹ Cameron, see *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 137.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 135.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?¹⁴¹

Marshall writes, "the performance touched on generic Western themes—loneliness, the search for the self in the face of an expansive space without clear boundaries, an almost pathological desire for travel ... She constantly invited the audience to think beyond (or through) the space of the performance."¹⁴²

Bang shoots at the fear of repetition ... "cos it's the repetition that gets you down",¹⁴³ the fear of ambiguity and the inability to endure it ... "You keep comin' to an imaginary fence-line and your goin' round and round."¹⁴⁴ *Bang* shoots at a disconnection that is not in dialogue with the planet, with 'you' or any 'thing'. Mostly *Bang* is a bullet that shoots at boredom. *Yee Ha* ... to generate possibilities and delay closure.

Then I watched Germaine Greer—
She sure is a good talker that lady.
I like the way she looks now; she looks real intelligent.
I like what she says. She says, I'm just sayin' what I think.
I saw somethin' needed doin' but tain't no-one doin' it,
so I'm just makin' a question, I'm just doin' a provocation.¹⁴⁵

the proscenium

¹⁴¹ Cameron, see *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 133.

¹⁴² Marshall, 'An Object Lesson: Margaret Cameron's BANG!', *RealTime*, Issue 40, 2001, p. 23.

¹⁴³ Cameron, see *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 138.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ Cameron, see *Bang! a critical fiction* attached appendix p. 135–136.

the proscenium was developed from 2005 to 2008.¹⁴⁶ Saying and doing the obvious in an empty room of my house, speaking the performance text aloud does not feel possible. On my veranda there is a large river stone and I bring it inside. Taking a coat from the cupboard, I put it on and stand under the shower, not thinking in words yet. I do not know anything in words ... yet. Dripping wet and fully clothed I stand on the stone and speak but now I am exactly the image I speak of. Everything is re-contextualised. I hear the words resounding. There is resonance in this syntax of form and content. It is curious that being literal or doing exactly what the work says opens a new and surprising space. The stone provides a counterpoint, in-between the image and the text. In this space between there are relationships that say more than I could otherwise say. There is wordlessness. The image is *doing* and stepping to each word as if "stepping stones in the dark",¹⁴⁷ I hear myself hearing, poised like Archimedes on his skinny stool, precarious, upon thought, upon the philosopher's stone, thinking about thinking. Cixous writes,

Archimedes thought like this: each time he found something he started criticizing his mode of discovery and searching other modes of demonstration. He deconstructed himself ... searching to make the demonstration independent of the discovery. Not to take the discovery as proving ... Took subjectivity into account.

¹⁴⁶ Performance and publication history of *the proscenium*

2005—*Torque: liquid paper 1: Making light of gravity* by Hellen Sky and *the proscenium* by Margaret Cameron. First performed at the Beckett, Matthouse CUB. The works were set side by side to underline the context of performance as discourse.

2005—*the proscenium*, Melbourne Fringe Festival, Tower theatre, Matthouse, Melbourne.

2005—*the proscenium*, Magdalena USA, Woman–Theatre–Weaving, Magdalena Project: Woman in Contemporary Theatre, Rhode Island USA.

2005—*the proscenium*, an ensemble version I directed with 22 students as a graduate co-production, School of Contemporary Arts, Edith Cowan University and Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Perth (WAAPA).

M Cameron 'the proscenium', in A Croggon (ed.), *Masthead* Literary Arts Ezine, Issue 10, 2006, <<http://www.masthead.net.au>>.

M Cameron, 'the proscenium', DVD, in J. Greenhalgh & M. Brookes (eds), *The articulate practitioner—Articulating practice*, Performance Research Books e-Publications, Wales, 2007.

2007—*el proscenio*, trans. Elvira Antón & Bill Murphy, The Magdalena Project Festival *Piezas Conectadas*, Women's Cultural Center, Barcelona.

2008—*the proscenium*, in repertory with *Heroine* by Dawn Albinger, directed by Margaret Cameron, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, PICA, W.A.

¹⁴⁷ Cameron, see revised text *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 183.

*Archimedes says: ‘these are experiments of thought’, in other words it comes from me. (Emphasis in the original)*¹⁴⁸

I am born, Margaret Catherine, the eighth child to the Cameron family in the parish of Burwood in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. There are still several paddocks in the block and at six o-clock each morning, the milk horses clip-clop, clip-clop down the road from the dairy. There are no books but schoolbooks, no music, no art, only the icons of Christianity—the prayer and hymnbooks and the worn-out picture of the radiating wound that is The Sacred Heart. Every few months the Metropolitan Tramways Brass Band marches in full regalia, past our two-bedroom weatherboard while the bitumen road buckles in the summer heat. My friend and I hurl berries at passing cars from the branches of trees in the street. Father hurls bottles at our house from beneath the street lamp every other night. He sometimes sleeps in the single bed under the big tree in the backyard. There is The Boys Room with three and The Girls Room, a converted dining room with four beds. I am the youngest and I sleep in my mother’s room.

With an industrial whirr a light turns on. It illuminates like a door opening to something that should not be seen. She is (I am) an *in* and *out* image—the one seeing and the thing seen. She is a cleansed child, wet and barefoot, poised upon a large stone and she is a dripping man (her father) beneath a light in a room, between stepping-stones on a path that each breath will enunciate. “The unforgettable is some wordless moment held nevertheless in words”¹⁴⁹ where what she sees is not quite what she sees, where the world is not what it appears to be. A memory is re-membered and now it rains inside the room. The room rains. “This is egocentric, a whorl of ripples set out as [she] drops in concentric utterings.”¹⁵⁰

She is the object, an image/stone that drops into the centre of the eye (I) shifting the lens from in to out in a discourse between us—you and me, now and then, her and me, again and again and again placing and replacing in a primal experience of the poetic as a stage of perceptual realities that become (that perform) linguistic complexity. “Talk, talk, talk … I am all talk.”¹⁵¹ There is the sound of dripping water, a literal accompaniment, as words drop.

¹⁴⁸ Cixous, 1997, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁹ Cameron, *the proscenium* attached appendix p. 180.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

"I must advance to return," says Cameron. But clearly also she must return to advance. This double movement is, as is (her) project to physicalise thinking, essentially erotic: a motion of fluid exchange between substance and the insubstantial, the literal and the metaphoric, act and thought.¹⁵²

And *what if* the somatic sense is that she has swallowed a stone (the stone she stands upon) as big as a house and equivalently that a house that feels as big as a stone has swallowed her? She is the subject. The image is a thought that is a stone that feels as big as a house. The word *stone* is a stone that feels as big as a house, a house that is sinking like a stone, sinking until the subject is sunk in the house and the house is sunk, as a stone, in the subject. The imprint of the spoken, the making of a mark in the act of speaking is exact, something survives, is discovered and revived, becoming visible, in the rare context of the poetic, as substance and as the substance (the subject) of somatic perception. As a fossil is a proof of life, an actual mark, art marks time and words exactly leverage the inert, the buried and the unperceived to prove life in indelible resonances.

Paper boats travel, erasing fish
 against the tide in my mind
 the ocean floor, saline place, heart of oblivion
 land without liquid, grave of dead gulls
 and helpless sunken boats.

Did I go to sleep and having fallen did I follow
 across a speckled floor, an inverted sky, an inland space,
 did I follow these fossils into sleep and there remain?

¹⁵² Croggon, *op. cit.*, 2005.

One thousand years ago there was an ocean
that once again draws outlines
that remember their bodies
as the shell remembers its sea¹⁵³

To say she is the subject is not to say that the self is central or dominant but that *being* is a proscenium where the fundamental practice of performance is the enunciation of the perceivable. In transaction and relationship each moment proposes as substance or in Sharps says, as “a breath event”.¹⁵⁴ Here everything is the site of inspiration. She is participating in a diverse interplay of relationship and the syntax of myriad forms. Conceived upon the threshold of *now* her perceptual body is becoming substance.

I will repeat myself, bending towards a returning sense. I will blur half shut my eyes to listen. I must advance to return, stepping on stones in the dark in a landscape where desire makes light and need is a beacon. This land is floating, a mind, a venue, a place where something can occur, stepping on stones in the dark, not knowing, reaching for words inadequate, approximate, close but not close enough, hearing myself hear ... when I do ... across a great expanse of time, a returning sense across a great expanse of time. These words return to me as homes, the places where I curl in need, the places where I hold myself here ... the perceptual stage, the scene of thought, the proscenium¹⁵⁵

A syntactical key

¹⁵³ Cameron, see *the proscenium* attached appendix pp. 198–199. There are image references in the poem to the performance of ‘*Las Sin Tierra—7 attempted crossings of the straits*’ directed by Jill Greenhalgh for Teatro Nomad with artists Rosa Casado, Rocío Solís and designer Mike Brookes, Magdalena Australia, Brisbane Powerhouse, 2003, 6–16 April.

¹⁵⁴ Sharp, a personal note from dialogues with Helen Sharp, *Performance Practicum*, Body Voice Centre, Footscray (see footnote 65).

¹⁵⁵ Cameron, *the proscenium*, attached appendix p. 183–184.

A ‘symbol’ is “something which expresses through suggestion, an idea or mood which would otherwise remain inexpressible or incomprehensible; the meeting point of many analogies ...”¹⁵⁶ I understand a symbol as a syntax (the coming together of languages) in a kind of prismatic key. Meeting something equivalent it turns to open a locked thing. In creating meetings and putting otherwise inexpressible things together, the symbol activates. It not only stands *for*, it stands *in* (for me), so I might enter possibilities.

Jonathon Marshall writes,

Cameron’s text is a dense weft of intertextual references and poetic images, including allusions to *Alice in Wonderland*, Gulliver’s encounter with the Lilliputians, Munch’s *The Scream* and others.

Although Munch and the dream-like accessing of intense childhood memories and aestheticised traumas evokes Expressionism, Cameron’s realization owes more to late 19th-century Symbolist theatre, Odilon Redon and Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs Du Mal*. Her simple, resonant performative presence is both anchored in and generated by the word itself. Cameron’s gestures and movements are sparse, tending to shift between archetypal tableaux which she embodies, rather than enacting (even in an abstract fashion) the events or images she enunciates. As Cameron says, the proscenium space within which this recitation occurs is, in a sense, “literal”; the spoken word tumbles to the floor like a thick wet blanket of affect and metaphoric play. Like Redon, Cameron is seeking an ambiguous yet still recognisable world of palpable symbols which lies behind the particularities of her own experience, even as it inhabits her life.¹⁵⁷

Marshall’s reference to Symbolism brings up the question of verisimilitude. But to what? *What* is not as relevant as *how*. How might

¹⁵⁶ Macquarie Dictionary, 4th edn, 2004, s.v. ‘symbol’.

¹⁵⁷ J Marshall, ‘A Revealing Partnering’, *RealTime*, issue #88, 2008, p. 33.

one exactly tell a sound on a mute canvas and *how* might I describe being swallowed and simultaneously swallowing an image? Jean Moréas who wrote the Symbolist Manifesto published in *Le Figaro*, Paris, 1886,

[P]roclaims the validity of pure subjectivity and the expression of an idea over a realistic description of the natural world. This philosophy, which would incorporate the poet Stéphane Mallarmé's conviction that reality was best expressed through poetry because it paralleled nature rather than replicating it, became a central tenet of the (Symbolist) movement. In Mallarmé's words, "To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment to be found in the poem ... suggestion, that is the dream.¹⁵⁸

'Suggestion' might well be another name for resonance. Resonance includes without fixing by naming. It vibrates. It shudders.

Esther Leslie writes,

For Adorno, the shudder is a primal component of experience, emerging just as humans began to conceptualise the world and differentiate themselves from amorphous nature (*they shudder to think*) ... At the same time, though, the shudder is a manifestation of wonder and a recognition of the possibility of anti-egoistic human interrelationships with other or non-beings. Its twitching indicates a capacity for mimesis, for a connection between self and otherness.¹⁵⁹

Resonance is alive, it moves. The intensely moving lines in Munch's painting *The Scream*, suggest the thing enough for it to occur, to resonate (from the canvas) in the body of its audience. It is a question of a sound not yet sound. Everything moves. The scream resounds elsewhere, not there where it is but here where I am. There are meetings in the synaesthetic roar of silence, "a silence with

¹⁵⁸ N Myers, 'Symbolism', *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2000, viewed 28 June 2012, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/symb/hd_symb.htm>.

¹⁵⁹ With reference to T Adorno & M Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1947, cited in E Leslie, 'Shudder—Shutter—Shatter', *Animate Projects*, 2009, para 6 & 7, viewed 11 February 2010, <http://www.animateprojects.org/writing/essay_archive/e_leslie_2>.

teeth”¹⁶⁰, in the house that swallowed her and the house that she swallowed. There is a denouement of resonances in cross-sensory metaphors such as these where a kind of gap speaks simultaneously with a kind of meeting. They do not need a name to be perceived. Resonance stretches across time and is immeasurable. Its multiplying affects are in procession. Something from many years ago may meet something newly struck; a memory may meet another memory. Resonance resounds again and again in newly born syntaxes of things being put together (or meeting). A symbol presents an entry point and a shuddering threshold.

That shudder in which subjectivity stirs without yet being subjectivity is the act of being touched by the other. Aesthetic comportment assimilates itself to that other rather than subordinating it. Such a constitutive relation of the subject to objectivity in aesthetic comportment joins eros and knowledge.¹⁶¹

Translation

Drenched and dripping wet, entering the dark stage she reassures herself that all she need do is begin and simply tell. Months have gone by working with the translation, each word considered again and again. She has walked a hundred kilometres saying the Spanish words aloud, recited them on rocks on the riverbanks in the village of Peroblasco, she has walked the streets of Madrid, walked her own coastline with earphones, her brain, tongue and lips getting accustomed to the sensations of a different and supremely sensory language.

With bare feet upon the rock, hair, face and clothes wet and dripping, she speaks, “*para poder salir de la insustancia*”, so she “may step out if insubstance”.¹⁶² She is listening to the silent room and the breathing audience, their recognitions, in-breaths, held breaths and

¹⁶⁰ Cameron, ‘The roar of silence’, *Ignite Theatre*, vol. 6, Theatre Arts Network Queensland (TANQ), 2003, pp. 71–73.

¹⁶¹ Adorno, 1997, *Aesthetic theory*, G Adorno & R Teidemann (eds), R Hullot-Kentor (trans.), The Athlone Press, London, p. 331.

¹⁶² Cameron, see ‘the proscenium/*el proscenio*’, translated by E Antón & B Murphy, attached appendix p. 200.

little gasps. Slowly she apprehends this—they understand, they understand. Then stopping mid-word ... “*mi cora ... cora ...*”, she asks herself, will I say ‘correspond’? No. Suddenly she is thinking in English. Lie down, rest your head on the stone and wait. Simplify—and wait. With no thought, becoming empty, her breathing expands. Then her heart rises to her mouth and releasing on a whispered sigh her heart says ‘*mi corazón*’ (my heart) and in doing so it is changing place and *corresponding*. Her heart is coming into the word for itself in her mouth—content is meeting form and re-locating, it is changing place, translating from in to out.

Like Atlas
mother put the bad
world on her shoulders
to make us feel secure.
it was make-believe, a tissue-thin
illusion she preserved
to make the world
which was not right
seem right

We learned it by heart
the kitchen table
was an unhappy place.

We know
magnified reality
stripped to the facts
isolation, poverty,
her sore heart served

Cual Atlas
madre cargaba con el malvado
mundo en sus hombros
para que nosotros nos sintiéramos seguros
creó una ficción
un quebradizo ardid
apenas creíble
que mostraba un mundo justo
cuando no lo era

Lo aprendimos de memoria
la mesa de la cocina
es un lugar desdichado

Conocemos
realidad magnificada
los hechos desnudos
aislamiento, pobreza
su dolorido corazón servido

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, see appendix pp. 193–194.

on a plate pretending
to be peas and chips
the clink
of the knife cutting truth
from placatory domestic rituals

I have sat with my own child
in the same silence
—a silence that put
a clamp on my heart

O busy day!
It is a formality
I enact a brittle distance
to preserve autonomy

I MUST SOUND NORMAL
I MUST SOUND NORMAL¹⁶³

en un plato pretendiendo
ser guisantes y patatas fritas
el tintineo
del cuchillo cortando la verdad
de conciliadores rituales familiares

Yo me he sentado con mi propia hijo
en ese mismo silencio
un silencio
que puso un cepo en mi corazón

¡Ay ocupado día!
Pura formalidad
finjo una frágil distancia
para conservar la autonomía

TENGO QUE SONAR NORMAL
TENGO QUE SONAR NORMAL

There are rocks in Spain. There is Christianity, *El Sagrado Corazón, mi madre*, poverty, isolation and the citadel of uppercase letters of ART. But the singular voice calls in poetry and the beauty of these foreign sounds hold her and hold thought so that she is newly alive, tracing each sound with the Eros of her body, its teeth, tongue, lips, muscle, breath, blood and bone. The translation is boned; it is boning the fear from the words. The breathing audience knows her in each viscous moment. In the beat of a *corazón* poetry crosses boundaries, for to be human is to be so and is translatable. Translatable. She apprehends it now. Experience is translatable, even the grist of the cheapest cut of meat for the family meal is knowable—for it means what it knows and we know what she means. Again and again she receives words that speak not only for her, words that hold her here in a foreign land and foreign language that speaks

with a congruent not foreign heart ... “*es poesía. elemental e inconexa, tan elocuente que marca mi escalofriante adolescencia ... me tragué una casa*” (“it is poetry, disjointing and elemental, so mortal, so eloquent, it prints my shivering girlhood ... I swallowed a house.”)¹⁶⁴

(from) a place where silence collects
(from) a place where words hover
until pinned upon the page
(from) a place where words hover
until pinned upon the mind
(from) where nothing is known,
(from) where there is congruence¹⁶⁵

(desde) un lugar donde el silencio se acumula
(desde) un lugar donde las palabras planean
hasta ser clavadas sobre la página
(desde) un lugar donde las palabras planean
hasta ser clavadas sobre la mente
(desde) donde todo se desconoce
donde hay congruencia

It is not elsewhere

I read the writing of the fly on the wall and collect bits and pieces that illuminate and fill out the flat body because “My problem is my own transformation”.¹⁶⁶ And if where I am is what I need, then what I need is not elsewhere. To receive one’s own experience (or breath) as knowledge is transformative (it performs).

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, see appendix pp. 191.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, see appendix p. 187.

¹⁶⁶ Foucault, 1988, *op. cit.*, p.14.

Language is a tool to revolutionise my reception of the world. “One writes [and speaks] with one’s ears.”¹⁶⁷ *What if* every cell in my body is a tiny, pricked up question that I do not need to name? *Bingo!* These words, like little animals, are full of sense(s). I am filled with shivering queries, movements that are performing linguistic, dramaturgical, somatic and conceptual relations.

And if art is a verb, we—*you* and *I* and *it*—are in reciprocal relationship.

Open to the eye (*I*) of the other. This is the relationality of *I and thou* elucidated in the work of Martin Buber. Where I am not you but we are not apart. I not only see in vision but I sense in distinct breath rhythm, self as perceptible in the breath cycle. In this felt sense, breath is both self and other and so too is the conceiving space.¹⁶⁸

Sharp’s “conceiving space” contains the consideration of one’s own consciousness *as* performance and comprises of the inter-subjectivity between us where breath trembles.

Many performance practitioners play on this edge of breath, this space where matter exceeds form as an act of fusional creativity. This is where the play of perceptuality occurs, where perceptual practice is intimately at play, and as Agamben has said, “a zone in which possibility and reality, potentiality and actuality, become indistinguishable”.¹⁶⁹

With an unseen vestigial (a remnant tail), I am weaving a braid of language to save Scheherazade from extinction. In this place, sense is

¹⁶⁷ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 1997, p. 64, *passim*.

¹⁶⁸ Sharp, email to John Howard & Margaret Cameron in regard to *Performance practicum*, 9 July 2011 (see footnote 65).

¹⁶⁹ G Agamben, *The coming community*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 56, cited in H Sharp, ‘Breath as Methodology’, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 93.

MARGARET CAMERON

a threshold, where opening to the eye of the beholder, meaning *shudders*. It moves (in) the person. It moves (in) me. I am not a spectator. I am a participant. I change my self by the way I receive the world.

ART IS A VERB

MARGARET CAMERON

TO AUDIENCE IS A VERB

Part 3:

Viva voce—the exegesis squeaks

O pera for a small mammal

ON THREE BUTTONS

1. The Big Other

- As a Mammal Loves to Love
- Like a Woman

2. Ruins

- Courage
- Tilting the Teacup

3. Writing and Jam

- The Thou Form
- The Hearing

Preface

In 1922 as the writer Franz Kafka lay dying, he could not speak but he wrote *Josefine, the Songstress* about a community of undefined people, maybe mice (as the alternate title of the short story is *The Mouse People*).¹⁷⁰ The story reads as an allegory about an artist's position and role in society and the relationship of the audience to the artist (and vice versa). The community revere *Josefine* whose singing they think is extraordinarily musical but Kafka's narrator wonders if this diva may simply be an exponent of mundane piping, which all of her community do so well. He wonders why she is so adored, when others sing (or pipe) better than she as they go about their ordinary lives and in a society that has no regard for history he believes *Josefine* will sink into oblivion. But subsequently American Beat Poet, Michael McClure wrote *Josephine: the mouse singer*, based upon Kafka's final story and the first New York production, in November 1978 at the WPA Theatre, received *The Village Voice*'s prestigious Obie award for the Best Play of the Year.¹⁷¹

Though not based upon Kafka's story, *Opera for a small mammal*, references a curious lineage to Franz Kafka's *Josefine, the Songstress* and Michael McClure's *Josephine: the Mouse Singer*.¹⁷²

M.

¹⁷⁰ F Kafka, 'Josefine, the songstress or: The mouse people', in *Metamorphosis and other stories*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, pp. 220–236.

¹⁷¹ M McClure, *Josephine: The mouse singer*, New Directions Publishing Corporation, New York, 1980.

¹⁷² *Opera for a small mammal* by Margaret Cameron received the R E Ross Trust Playwrights' Script Development Award 2012. The award fosters the Victoria's theatre industry by providing support to Victorian-based writers to develop their play scripts. The annual Awards are an initiative of The R E Ross Trust and are administered by the State Library of Victoria. Enabled by the award and the support of La Mama Theatre, Melbourne's Explorations Season, a one-week creative development was directed by Margaret Cameron with music director David Young and sound designer Jethro Woodward. There were three public presentations of the creative development November 27, 28, 29, 2012 at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne.

O pera for a small mammal

SYNOPSIS

After the big opera, the empty theatre is alive with resonating ghosts. There are leftovers of scenery, costumes and props here and there. Scraps of 'The Faerie Queen', Henry Purcell's 1692 operatic adaptation of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', resound. There are fanfares, Elizabethan cadences and scratched fragments of music coming and going like fragrances on a breeze. Regina Josefina del Mouse lives in the theatre. She is the Mouse Queen. Her tale glints with thieveries from William Shakespeare, Franz Kafka, Lewis Carroll, the Beat Poet Michael McClure, Gertrude Stein, Emily Dickinson and other scholarly-philosophical-literary-artistic bits and pieces. Elizabethan in style, she has lived in the sets, the castles and forests of dramatic literature. Her dominion is the lowercase letters of art (not the uppercase citadel of ART) and Her audience are the community of Mouse People who live in the dark behind the scenes. Huffing and puffing theatre-dust from the questions of self and Art, Regina Josefina del Mouse eventually issues a decree on the artistic nature of Matter.



Figure 1 ©2012 *Regina Josefina del Mouse* by Craig Rawlings

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

One day while waiting for roadside assistance in the enclosed space of a broken-down car I was saying the words of my most recent performance text aloud and I heard myself. I heard myself hearing myself hear. Had I always been rehearsing performing to some kind of internalised, imaginary collective that stood in for ‘me’? Had I been quite absent? In this revolutionary moment I understood that ‘to audience’ was a verb. I was actually in the presence of my work of my work for the first time. I was receiving it. It was as if I was ‘in audience’ to it—both giving audience to and receiving audience from it.

When you think about things (not thinking in words) they tend to appear. At an Opportunity Shop one day later I bought an unusual dress that I did not recognize. I was not sure why I bought it. It was the shape of a personage. The royal blue-velvet dress with an ermine collar was ‘queenly’. It was literal. At home I placed it on a chair. It was in audience and giving audience to me. It was a dramaturgical signifier WITH EARS—“pointy and pricked up” for the question.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Cixous, 1997, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

SETTING:

After the last curtain call the stage floor is strewn with remnants of the performance, a few abandoned costumes and props. A large button serves as a dais. A painting of "La Scala" Opera Theatre Milan hangs in a gilt frame upstage forming a backdrop. There is a small velvet boudoir chair stage right. A grand toy piano (with very long legs) is stage left with a small chandelier hanging above it. A braided tail with a golden tassel, hangs from the ceiling upstage left.



Figure 2 ©2001 *Grand Piano* by Myriam Mestiaen

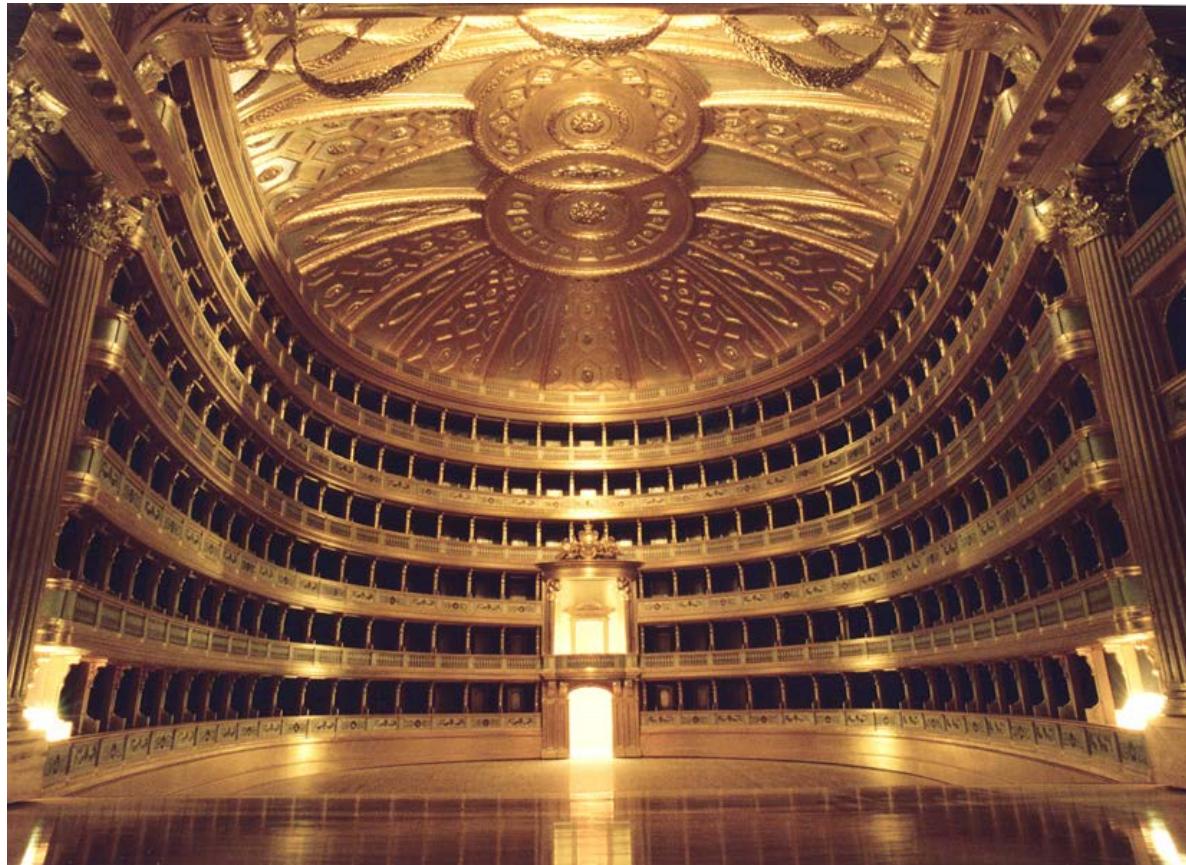


Figure 3 Venue: *La Scala Opera House?*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ *La Scala* Milan, viewed 22 July 2012, <<http://www.milanprivateguide.com/wp-content/gallery/milan/alla-scala.jpg>>.

SOUND:

*The toy piano has a microphone and a speaker inside it.
There is a brass reception bell on the floor that dings as a 'foot-note'
Various plastic SQUEAKERS are embedded in the costume.
The music is primarily sound recordings of the opera The Faerie Queen by Henry Purcell.*

NOTE ON PIPING:

Speaking is 'a choreography' of breath.

PERSONAE:

Regina Josefina del Mouse. The title of Queen is a costume and an emblem of Her stance, that art is an act of reception, that the exegesis of Her work is performing and further that this exegesis performs Her.

THE COSTUME:

For Regina Josefina del Mouse thrift is a creative principle. She wears bloomers under a tulip dress, a bodice with an Elizabethan ruffle, long gloves (that contain squeakers) with lace frills and a simple crown with fur ears. In the third act an Elizabethan whisk with a royal blue tabard and a fur train is added. She has a conductor's baton with whiskers attached, a kind of lorgnette used to sense meaning. It also serves as a pencil.

PROLOGUE

*Incognito Regina del Mouse ENTERS carrying a paper bag
She wears a scarf and sunglasses*

“Not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow’d house ...”¹⁷⁵

She taps the reception bell with with Her foot—Ding!

(With a sense of intrigue) After the big opera, the empty theatre is alive with resonating ghosts. There are leftovers of scenery, costumes and props here and there. Scraps of The Faerie Queen, Henry Purcell’s operatic adaptation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, resound. There are fanfares, Elizabethan cadences and fragments of music coming and going like fragrances on a breeze. *Regina Josefina del Mouse* lives here in the theatre, in the castles and the forests of dramatic literature. She is the Mouse Queen. Her dominion is the lowercase letters of art and Her audience are the community of Mouse People who live in the dark behind the scenes. Huffing and puffing theatre-dust from the questions of self and Art, *Regina Josefina del Mouse* eventually issues a decree on the artistic nature of Matter.

She pulls a golden tassel attached to a braided tail that hangs from the ceiling

LIGHTS flash

SOUND of thunder

From the paper bag She throws handfuls of green leaves

EXIT

¹⁷⁵ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, act 5, scene 1, lines 387–388.

THE FIRST BUTTON

MUSIC of Purcell

Cries of 'Bravo' and 'Encore' with thunderous applause, leaving silence ...

*Quiet as a mouse, the unassuming diva ENTERS from behind the stage curtains carrying a gold teapot and teacup
She FORAYS*

(As if tasting sweets)

Tut! Tut! Tut!

Tut! Tut! Tut!

Testing the acoustics of the auditorium in a clear, ringing voice

Pipe! ... Pipe!

Pipe! ... Pipe!

Sits with tea but does not drink it

Announced:

The Big Other

Dear Ones,

The elephant said to the Mouse,
You are very small.
The mouse said to the Elephant,
We are small but nevertheless
We have a point of view of the Elephant in the Room
Who might Imagine such a small Thing as
Our Self is *not* very Relevant.

Pipe! Pipe!

From Our point of view however
Difference in Size is *not* the thing
That makes the Difference,
Rather it is the state of Our Self.

She puts down the teacup

Pipe! Pipe!

In the question Of Our Costume,
And in the costume Of Our Question ...
In deed in the Muscle of the Verb
— ‘To Audience’,
Our Hypothesis Becomes Us.
Bravi! Bravi!

"Verbs and adverbs and articles and conjunctions and prepositions are lively because they all do something and as long as anything does something it keeps alive." (*Tapping the reception bell with Her foot*)
Foot-NOTE¹⁷⁶—*Ding!*

We are Alive.
We are Alive.
Pipe! Pipe!

Lively feet dance

Let Us take the Ideas Out,
Out of Our Attitude.
Boggle. Boggle.
Thinking is an Experiment,
A practice of Thought
—Of Thinking

We are not what We are
But marked by a region that is Heard
Only because We *Pipe* what We Know
And hear then what We know not that makes Us.
So the philosopher *Piping* about *Piping* will never stop,
Scheherazade *Pipes* and *Pipes* becoming Queen
To save her Self by the braid of her own Tail
Glinting with Thieveries

Pipe! Pipe!

¹⁷⁶ G Stein, *Look at me now and here I am selected works 1911–1945*, Peter Owen Publishers, London, 2004, p. 126.

Ordinary things that are Huge in Our world
Are quite small in the Cultural Corpus.
We are a *Piping* Creature
Who *Pipes* to be Happy

(*Happily and sing-song*)

O to be ...

O to be ...

O to be ...

A small mammal ...

A large gesture—raising Her paws

(Spoken) PAWS FOR EFFECT

Long PAUSE

(Announcing) FORAY!

There is a dance

MUSIC of Purcell

Announced:

—As a Mammal Loves to Love

With lorgnette of whiskers

Hunting

Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff

Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff ...

Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff

Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff ...

*Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff
Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff ...
Sniffing, sniffing ... sniff ... sniff ... sniff ...*

—As a mammal loves to Love
We hunt the Scent of Thought
With the pores of Our Flesh
Our Fur stands up
Pipe! Pipe!
Our ears and nostrils Flare for Resonance

And as if Tasting Thinking ...
Tut! Tut! Tut! Tut! Tut! Tut!
Tut! Tut! Tut! Tut! Tut! Tut!

—Inspired and aroused ...

MUSIC of Purcell

Do We not seek with Our Intelligences,
Read philosophies and Art,
Hold up for Courage,
Shiny objects and gleaming bits of Thought
As Our Badges, Emblems and Flags?

Do We not go toward Our Stupidities
To recover Our Self and in the grist of Our Quest
Turn toward Our very Utter and specific Fears,
Those fears that Engender Us and are as *Idiosyncratic*,
Idiosyncratic, Idiosyncratic, Idiosyncratic,

Idiosyncratic as Our own Face?

Do We not lose Dignity over and over,
(As if about to sneeze) To the *Irritating, Irritating,*
Irritating, Irritating, Irritating, Irritating, Irritating,
Irritating grit of Our Nature as it turns and turns
To transform Our fears to Iridescence?

Oh! Oh! Oh!
Do not Our Libidos:
Intellectual, Spiritual, Kinaesthetic,
Artistic, Sexual, Sensual, Emotional and Poetic,
Bend magnetically toward that which We Value?

O Merciful Expansion!
Such capacities in these many Finenesses
To hold and behold in Our Mind's Arms
The tools and acts of Creation fashioned
With each Will to be the Phallus
And very Eye (I) of Form.

Do We not leverage from Our Being,
Unseemly comparisons,
Referents, agendas, theories, discourses
That abort Our *Sense-sense-sense-senses-senses*
And paradigms of Analysis
That undo Our Doing, Doing,

Determine Our Memory and dry Us out?

Falling down She loses Her lorgnette. As if blind She crawls on all fours searching ... squeakers in Her gloves sound weakly

—Un-seeming Us with very Boring Names,
Names that reduce,
Flatten Thought and Sentience
And divide Our Pastures with fence-lines.

Tut! Tut! Tut!

For so without Leverage
Is the way to Loss after Loss
As one Grief collects another,
Until We are Bereft
And the Worst that can be,
Is Imagined and is Real.

(Shuddering with found lorgnette of whiskers)

O to be ...
(It's worse) O to be ...
(And worse) O to be ... "or not to be"
A small mammal

A large gesture—raising Her paws

(Barely able to speak) PAWS FOR EFFECT

Pause

There is a FORAY

A 'lively feet' dance

Announced:

—Like a Woman

*Moving to the PIANO and playing throughout
PIANO is miked*

Performed like a woman

Dear Ones,

Many times We have un-spooned Grief
As it pounced from the forest Unforeseen ...
Gutting us so that We have Lain down
Upon the Carpet where We stood
To be Mauled ...

And We have cried, cried like a Woman
We have cried like a Woman,
O to be a small mammal.

For when We fall Bereft,
Now We are so much older in Our Bed,
Do We not double Suffer in the Fall,
And that We have Fallen,

Fallen in (*sung*) ... ugh
—Paradigms of Love and Thought for Instances?

(*Lamenting*) Such Humiliations We do Endure—
Such (*sung*) hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue,
Such hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue
hue,
hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue,
hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue,
hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue, hue,
—Humiliations We do Endure

Yet one Drop ... Ah ...

*As if the sun is coming out a chorus arises
Conducting the air*

(*Sung*) Ah ... Ah ... Ah ...
Ah ... Ah ... Ah ... Ah ...
Ah ... Ah ... Ah ... Ah ...
Ah ... Ah ... Ah ... Ah ...

—A word into Our Ear and Heart
And upon Our Fur ...
Into this context
—To Hear the Hearing

And in Listening ...
The Beautiful Flowers Rise
Out of the Dark.

Not spoken with large gesture PAWS FOR EFFECT

*Briskly Regina pulls the braided tail
SOUND of elephants and all kinds of mammals
LIGHTS flicker*

THE SECOND BUTTON

ENTER wearing a transparent grey cloth over Her head as if in mourning

Gull-song:

*Aaah-Aaah ... Aaah-Aaah ... Aaah-Aaah ...
Aaah-Aaah ... Aaah-Aaah ... Aaah-Aaah ...*

Knocking the PIANO lid solemnly once

Announced:

R uins

Dear Ones,

There are Ruined things
Found on shorelines of Hate
Where the gulls shriek for Justice.
But We have sorted through the drawers ...

Accompanied throughout with delicate tweaking of lips and gestures of folding

Many of Our worn-out Bodies
We have put away ...

Holding the shroud in Her arms the image of la pietà di Michelangelo is referenced

Folded all, wordless smooth
As Sleep slipping under Time
Without a Wrinkle ...

We are deposited with the Usual,
Again to choose Our Memory

And spoon Our Biography,
Fresh as Linen. *Sniff.*

Tut! Tut! Tut!
We are but a Husk,
Tut! Tut! Tut!
—A Husk.

Holding the empty material

What answers Us,
Even in its Materiality,
Is as immaterial as Air.
Pipe!
Already it returns as a Question
What Lived here? What caused this Shape?
We are only the home of what is Received
Pipe! Most eloquent, most Resounding
When empty of that which We Behold
“Our songs are arms / Our arms are songs”.¹⁷⁷

Her heart is squeaking audibly

—There is a squeaker embedded in Her bodice

O to be, (*squeak, squeak, squeak*)
O to hold, (*squeak, squeak, squeak*)
O behold (*squeak*)
—A small mammal

The pace of the heart-squeak quickens ...

¹⁷⁷ M McClure, *op. cit.*, 1980, p. 43.

Announced:

—Courage

Dear Ones,

"[Our] problem is [Our] own transformation ... the transformation of oneself by ones own knowledge is the aesthetic experience."¹⁷⁸

Foot-NOTE—*Ding!*

To *Pipe* is to have such "pointy pricked-up ears [to] hear what language says (*to us*) inside our own words at the very moment of enunciation.". ¹⁷⁹

Foot-NOTE—*Ding!*

We who are small
Take this personally,
And literally
At the paw of the Letter

Words have Ears.
Words have Ears.

So much to *Pipe!*
So much to *Pipe!*
So much to *Pipe!*

¹⁷⁸ Foucault, 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 14. My bracketed insertion.

¹⁷⁹ Cixous, 1997, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

Pipe! Pipe! Pipe! Pipe!
Pipe! Pipe! Pipe! Pipe!

Large gesture of raising paws
Not spoken PAWS FOR EFFECT
There is a long PAUSE

Travel to PIANO
Open the lid

Not announced:

—Tilting the Teacup

*SOUND of a continuous pencil tracing the edges of the piano—counterpoint
PIANO is miked.*

(As if writing a letter)
We are a line drawing
That Breathes,
Drawing in and drawing out.

SOUND of writing on the PIANO

Think of Lettering ...
Angles and curves upon the Page,
Writing something Flat,
With the plainness of Sake,
Tasting of Paper.

SOUND of scratching

Even Our blunt and schoolish repertoire of
Scratch-scratch-scratchings and Rubbing-rubbings out
Of Our Traces and Smudges
Refer at once to Creating and being Created.

Imagine a tender stem, an untouched neck,
A breath on the nape of Meaning.
And Tilting the Teacup
We bring it to you ...
Completely emptied of Thought.

One finger on piano note and hold ...

Aaah!
There is a bird Piping,
There are conjurors on the skin-thin Water,
The mineral smell of Hot Weed,
The Daub-daub-daub of Land
On the weak Horizon.
In each Erasable print
Sun-whitened Skeletons
And delicate Maps.
Nothing is required except to Proceed
Into a distance We Understand.

So with Our ears Cocked,
Wandering through the Usual,
Paint your longing on every Sunset,

MARGARET CAMERON

Press the edges of Words
To shuck the Flesh and
Turn the Cadence out.

(As if signing the letter slowly pronounced)

Regina Josefina del Mouse

MUSICAL INTERLUDE through the PIANO speaker

*She has a noisy cup of tea
There is extended slurping
EXIT*

THE THIRD BUTTON

*ENTER with basket of lemons and orange books and wearing a scarf over Her ears (resembling a bee-keeper)
She travels a full circle of the stage*

*Regina pulls the braided tail
SOUND of crashing crockery
LIGHTS flicker*

Announced with great joy:

Writing and Jam

SOUND of buzzing orchard
MUSIC

(Excited as if perusing shelves of wonderful books in a library)

It is time now to cut Fruit
Sweet oranges and sour Lemons
In the Orchard of the World the Bare shelves
Are to be lined again with Jars—
All golden Marmalades of Sunlight.

We are taught what Stock
Libido claims for Passion
But when words are Coins,
They are especially Common Trade

Because Our Ears are Ripe
We *Pipe* to Understand,
Listening *through* the Listening
Until the bending arms of Language accept Us.

We do not hold against Our Capacity
To perceive the Audible.
We are listening,
Encouraged by each Receptive Body
To pick the audible Fruit of Meaning.

Our Ears Strung
On the sagging arms of Time
Hang ready in the Air

For a Picking that will deliver
Nourishment, Value and Jam!

And when Fruit is dropping,
Of Time's own Will (not Ours),
It is because Our listening Ears
Have Ripened things so that they Fall
Full upon the Telling Earth between Us
—On the Ground where We Stand.
These fruits of words are full of Flesh,
For they are Our being Articulated.

Gnawing a lemon

We bend toward an Understanding of this Being,
For here in the Orchard Of the World
Would We remain forever in a paradigm
Of wanting what may readily be Ours?

Through *Piping* We Hear more
Of what We Hear ...
So Bending toward each Other
In the Occasion of this Audience
We receive Our own Ears.

But let Us not Forget
There are other Sensibles.
Tut! Tut! Tut!
For if We do not understand Our Hearing,
(*Enthusiastically smelling a book*)

We may Nose it (*with glee*)
—Our whiskers in the Jam!
We may Nose it
And smell the smell of Hearing.

(*Pretending to read a book upside down*)
And let us not Imagine,
That we need to Understand
That We are Understanding ...
It is the Procession of Thinking,
That in the Procession of Thinking,
The Fruit becomes what Becomes
And what becomes, becomes Ripe
In every Sense that is not sensible,
(*Emphatically*) But full of Sense!

We do receive Our Breath
Most literally for an Ever-in.
And an Ever-out ... *Sniff. Snuff.*
Gained and lost for Life,
Enough for Life

Attack of bees

—Toward a Quality of living
In the Practice of *far ... far ... far ... far ... far ... far ... far ...*
far ... far ...
far ... far ... far ... (Crossly) Pronounce it carefully—the lowercase letters of
Far ... far ... FART
(*Loud raspberry sound with lips*) Pardon.

MUSIC continues

Quickly She clears the air with a super-sized leaf

Announced:

—The Thou Form

Calling throughout and looking skywards to the Big Other

Thou is the subject pronoun form of you.

Thee is the corresponding object pronoun.

Thy is the possessive pronoun (your).

Thine is the plural.

With most verbs (*e*)st is added to the infinitive to get the *thou* form.

For instance, "Thou speakest well."

But *to be ... to be* is Our Exception

It uses *art.*

(Continues calling) Art.

Thou art. Thou art.

Thou art, art ...art

(Very frustrated). Art.

Thou art

Dear Ones,

(Attempt on one breath) "Clarity is of no importance because nobody listens and nobody knows what you mean no matter what you mean, nor how

clearly you mean what you mean. But if you have vitality enough of knowing enough of what you mean, somebody and sometime and sometimes a great many will have to realize that you know what you mean and so they will agree that you mean what you know, what you know you mean which is as near as anybody can come to understanding anyone.”¹⁸⁰ Stein. (*Tapping the footnote*) Ding!

(*Nonsensical with SQUEAKING*)
 For Veritably,
 Our very Nature engenders Our Quest
 A question is born out of specificity,
 Accurate to Itself and no other.
 The very Grit that worries is to become Pearl.
 In the nitty-gritty We change Our Self
 By way of Our Reception.
 It is a Question of Congruence
 In *deed* in the Muscle of the Verbs,
 Form and Content are placed and replaced
 From Inside to Outside
 And Out to In
 —Saying what they Do
 And doing what they Say
 Again and again
 —To Give and to Receive
 Audience.

Oh! Oh! Oh!

¹⁸⁰ Stein, 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

Art is a verb.
Pipe! Pipe!

Our propositional Practice,
Rubbing between Perception and Experience
Is becoming palpable, palpable,
Engendering Our Pearl against
The drying Wind of all that is Known.

Travel to the PIANO

Tapping lid with lorgnette as if addressing the orchestra
SOUND is coming from the speaker in the piano

So, tune, tune ...
... Tune, tune, tuning Our Ears
Tuning Our Ears ...
To the viscous resonance of Air
Through the irritating grit of Our Nature
—To Make, to Remake and to Figurate.
We need not be Reasonable
For no one understands Us.
But We do agree to participate with Libidinous Intent
In Our experience of Experience.

Would We be otherwise without Our Joy
In the Dark Depressions of the *flat-flat*?

Single flat note repeated on the PIANO

The Dark Depressions
Of the *Flat-flat-flat-flat*,

Of the *Flat-flat-flat-flat*,
Of the *Flat-flat-flat-flat*?
We do Shudder to Think.
Shudder to Think ...

Shuddering

Shudder in a syntax of form and Content.
Shudder to hold open Our Proposition.
Shudder to demonstrate Our Purpose.
Shudder to re-present the Subject
That it may RESOUND

A long PAUSE
PIANO MUSIC
There is a slow FORAY
The dance disintegrates

EXIT

There is a fanfare
ENTER with ceremony carrying a large, wooden phallus and a basket of electric candles

Announced:

—The Hearing

(*With simplicity*) Ear Ye! Ear Ye!
Ear in the larger Corpus
And Body of Reception

In *das fundus* (the store room)
Of Our Being,
Ear in the Auditorium
The Performance is in Reception.
This is the Context
And this the Context
Is the context of Our Hearing.

We do Receive Thee
With Our Senses Mindfully.
We do breathe the air of Thought
And the Touch of it doth turn Our Organs.
The breath of a billion Questions
Pricks the surfaces Of Our erotic Being.
And as We would Trace Our Lover's Body
To arrive at the Mouth of it,
In this exchange We are Enlivened
And what is discovered is Ours
And is between We.

Pipe!

(As if on one breath)
We do Decree
In question of Royal Blue and Ermine
To receive Audience in Our Costume,
And in Reception
Ourself to receive Poetic Justice

And here to court Disquiet
In the 'He' and 'She' of Our Body,
Which though Personal
Is also the Body of the Question
Of Our Being and Our Dominion
Where We do long for Company ...
That some One would take Our Knowledge
So that We do not Need
To wear this Gown and Crown,
To govern the Question.

(*Furious*) Off with Our Head
That would abnegate Our Throne
With un-welcomes that Betray
Intelligence and Governance!
Our body is poor Pedagogue,
And on the plateaus of Our View
Do We cry Victim to inheritance
Rather than Heir and Heiress to the Question
Of the Dimensionality of Our Being?

Do We *Beg*,
Beg, Beg, Beg, Beg, Beg
The Question?
(*Furious*) Emphatically *Bah!*
Off with Our big Head!
Huff, Puff and Boggle!
Put it out of Order!

(Enraged) PUT IT IN ANY ORDER.

You see, the View of Our Perception
And the perception of Our View is Our Stage.
We are The Subject
Subject to Our Subjects
And subject to Our Quest
In *Deed* We Are the Body of Knowledge
And in this Capacity
We do *Pipe!*

Large wooden phallus is used as a trumpet
SOUND of triumphant male choir

We do Decree therefore
To make visible Betwixt
In the trinity of the Binary of WE
That ONE PLUS ONE
IS TO BE AT LEAST THREE

This art is Our sweet Antidote
To the humiliation of Mortality
Though We will not last longer
Than these things of It
It is not Our Failure to Die

In Our Regard therefore
Our Best to be is in Reception

—To Receive.

*She gives the audience candles
And eventually hands over the whole basket
All the remaining candles are distributed throughout the auditorium*

(*Tenderly*)

Dear One, Dear One, Dear One, Dear One,
Dear One, Dear One, Dear One, Dear One,
Dear One, Dear One, Dear One, Dear One,
Dear One, Dear One,

(*With renewed diligence*)

One, One and One ... One, One and One,
One, One and One ... One, One and One ...
One, One and One ... One, One and One ...
One, One and One ... One, One and One ...

Gold leaves fall

(*Still tender*) Thou Art

Our most cherished Other ...
Other, Other, Other, Other and ...
(*As a full-stop*) Big Other

And between WE
Is an Exchange of such Breath-full-ness

That by the Rod of Our Listening
The Conception Arises to the Matter
And answering Child of Our Quest.

Pipe! Pipe!

(Excitedly i.e. 'go off to the next adventure')
Hurry, Hurry ...

MUSIC of Purcell

Ears! Ears!
Pipe! Pipe!

(Encouraging) Hurry, Hurry ...
Pipe! Pipe! (Repeat)

She sits. Gold leaves continue to fall

MUSIC swells

SOUND of APPLAUSE

Regina stands and with her back to the audience does a deep curtsey to the painting of La Scala hanging upstage

EXIT

SOUND continues playing through the speaker in the toy piano

The audience remain in 'The Orchard of the World' with a candle each

THE END

APPENDIX:

Bodies of Words—three revised performance texts

1. *Bang!* a critical fiction
2. Knowledge and Melancholy
3. the proscenium/*el proscenio*

MARGARET CAMERON



Figure 4 *Bang!* by Sarah Matray 2002

BANG! A CRITICAL FICTION

By Margaret Cameron

BANG! A CRITICAL FICTION

In nine shots:

1. Three drawers and four legs
2. Dirty work
3. Spit the dummy
4. Rectification
5. Like a sore tooth
6. Doin' study
7. Imaginary fence-lines
8. The void
9. Mercy!

AUTHORS NOTE:

I didn't think of Bang! It thought of me.

SETTING:

On stage there is a simple 1950's chest of three drawers resembling a small, modernist cube. It appears quite ordinary yet it has tricks. A variety of hinged and standard domestic lights, visibly attached with cords of varying length, connect to a power board at the rear of the chest. There is a light and a switch in the top drawer. When this drawer closes the exterior lights turn ON and when the drawer opens the standing lights turn OFF. There is a hanging light above the chest.

The object represents an inner sanctum (perhaps the unconscious). The chest of drawers is "a hybrid, subject object" ... "an organ of the secret psychological life" and "a model of intimacy. Like us, through us and for us, [it] has a quality of intimacy."¹⁸¹ It is a karaoke machine, a companion, a 'sputnik', a horse, a miniature theatre, another body and a pun. As in a pun 'meaning' slips and this slippage is what the work 'rides' on. The SOUND comes from the chest, which has small speakers at the rear. Cowboy operates the soundtrack with a remote control disguised as a mobile phone. A floor-light illuminates from the front creating a cowboy silhouette shadow on the rear wall.

COSTUME:

A Cowboy

¹⁸¹ Bachelard, 1969, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

1. Three drawers and four legs

SOUND *the chest seems to be singing 'Nothing Compares 2U'*¹⁸²
COWBOY ENTERS bow-legged, walking like a chest of drawers, shooting cap gun

(With Texan drawl)

I am back.
I ain't gonna tell you where I have been.
I been somewhere that's for sure
but I ain't gonna tell you.
Yer gonna have to figure that out,
yer gonna have to deduce that,
—where I been from how different I am
since last time I saw you.

I got plenty o' time.
I been havin' CREATIVE IDEAS.
(Flat) Yee ha!
I been havin me *so many* creative ideas
I barely have time to think about doin' 'em.
Last time I was havin' creative ideas,
things were talkin' to me.

¹⁸² Prince, 'Nothing compares 2U', in *The Hits/The B-Sides*, CD, Warner Bros Records, CD, USA, 1993.

Now I am talkin' to things.
(Flat) Yee ha I'm back.

COWBOY *opening top drawer of the chest*

LIGHT (*in the drawer*) goes ON and all other attached practicals go OFF

SOUND: 'Mulata' by Calexico goes ON when the drawer opens and OFF when it shuts

I found this pretty little chest o' drawers
at The Opportunity Shop.
She's so pretty—she got three drawers an' four legs.

You don't belong to me
but you can live with me for a while if you like,
cos I like you and that's gonna show.

I am gonna fix you up in a jiffy sugar
I am gonna sugar-soap you.
Yer gonna come good now, be all shiny.
I don't mind you being old
—just I don't like the GRIME.

I like things; they got feelin's.
They got feelin's
from places they been and people they been with.
I am gonna move in here with my things.
Yep I am movin' all my furniture into this here VENUE.
(To the chest)
That's gonna make you a tax deduction.

I bet you didn't think of that.

Listen to that wind ... (*there is no sound*)
Takin' its shape from movin' round things.
I try to be like the wind, take my own shape
from movin' round and in-between things.

Things don't belong to people
and people don't belong to things
—they just stay as long as they like,
then they move on out.
You cain't live inside another thing.
Most things they got trouble
and afore long you get that trouble on you.
And that gets real confusing.

I been thinkin', I been figuring things out
and yes Sir-ee I am a different person now.
Gonna turn the lights on and make you shine.
Only trouble is I got so many lights to turn on
I don't know which switch is which?

LIGHT: Opening and closing the top drawer, all external practical lamps go ON and OFF

SOUND: Gunshots in auditorium

COWBOY is spinning and dodging bullets

2. Dirty work

There's been some dirty work going on the background.
Appeared to be a danger there for a while
that I might not show up again round these parts no more
—but you don't need to worry none.
Where you think I been?
I am gonna tease you about that.
I got me a whole lot o' things,
I got me a bandana, I got me a hairdo,
got me some boots
given to me by a local hero by the name o' Rhino.
Gonna take me some time,
gonna take me some roadmiles
to fashion these boots in my own fashion.

SOUND: *Train whistle*

Why lordy I saw me a train tother day.

SOUND: *Jet engine*

There's an aeroplane goin' over now.
(*Shouting with-fingers in ears*)
They got a new airport here,
no-ones very happy 'bout it, they like the old one
—times they are changin'.

SOUND: '*Bomber Bash*' by Ry Cooder¹⁸³

COWBOY riding Side-saddle on the chest, bumping along as if on a rough train ride

¹⁸³ R Cooder, 'Bomber Bash', in *Music by Ry Cooder*, CD, Warner Bros Records, 1995.

Anyway what I was sayin' was—
It's beautiful lying in bed listening to them train whistles.
I don't why exactly—reminds me of the frontier,
reminds me of adventure.

Kicking heels into sides of chest

Train music starts and stops with each kick

I saw me one of those train drivers tother day.
He had a big cowboy hat on.
I waved at him and then I had to sit down
and wait for this big train to pass
—it took more than ten minutes to do so.
It sure was a *big train*.

(Adamantly)

I told you I ain't tellin' you where I been.
I am gonna leave it alone for a while now
cos I don't want aggravate you.
I am just havin' a bit of fun but where I been is no joke.
I am a funnier person now I been there mind you.

It cost me some real heavy drinkin'
to come up with these insights
I am gonna share with you tonite.

You know the beauty 'bout talkin' like this is
that you can repeat yourself
an' some things, they need repeatin'.

I mean I can say it again and again,
I dun some real heavy thinkin'
to come up with these insights
I am gonna share with you tonite.

(*Still riding train*)
Been doin' me some renovatin'
—got me some internal filler.
You cain't have progress without rectification.
I mean you ain't never gonna shut me up
now that I have found a way to talk.
I AM GONNA BORE YOU TO DEATH.

What's more I am makin' money doin' this.
You should find a way to talk what makes you money,
you can make yer talkin' a *tax deduction*.

You might get sick of me sayin' that 'bout the tax
but I think it's very pertinent, very relevant.
I am out to earn me some GENUINE BIG DEDUCTIONS
(*Waving and calling enthusiastically*)
HOWDY! I am flourishin' thank-you kindly.
How you doin'?

(*Getting off the 'train'*)
I got me a big genuine hunger tonite.
I am gonna have to cook me up somethin' really big.
I am gonna have to cook me up a big *buffalo* meal!

COWBOY *opening the top drawer*

SOUND: Buffalo stampede inside the chest, turning on and off as drawer opens and closes

(Opening and closing top drawer repeatedly)

Yee-ha! Lonely? (Stampede continues)

No lordy I ain't' lonely

I got me imagination to keep me company.

(Making the chest rattle around)

She sure is a wild thing. Yee ha!

While I been drinkin' and thinkin'
I been havin' a conversation with
this here pretty, little chest o' drawers
an' I decided that I had to get somethin' off my chest.
And I means to intend that pun.
HOT DOGGITY.

3. Spit the dummy

COWBOY *throws a cracker in the middle drawer*

SOUND: stampede stops. Cracker doesn't go off. SILENCE. Smoke comes out of top drawer. Repeat with a second cracker.
It goes off with a BANG. COWBOY responds as if shot in the back, reeling and staggering as if on his last legs

SOUND: Honky Tonk piano, 'See You in Hell Blind Boy' by Ry Cooder¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Cooder, 1995, *op. cit.*, 'See you in hell blind boy'.

I got something to say. (*Cough, cough*).
I got a grievance to share.
I been pussy-footin' around trying to be nice,
I am gonna spit the dummy now.

I been actin' like one o' those *woe*-man what love too much.
I been lookin' at the world with the eyes of a child.
I had insights that burned my eyes and now I can see
and what I see ain't pretty.

(*Staggering*) I see people using people
to fill up holes they got in themselves.
I see people takin' off other people
and they don't even say thankyou.
I see people sayin' bad things
and doin bad things to other people
and they don't take it back.
I say, you gotta take that back
otherwise it gonna come back on you!
Trouble always go back to where the trouble belongs.
I been rectifyin' myself.

I got a shadow by the name o' Lonesome,
been takin' up too much light,
been takin' up too much space.
We gonna come face to face

(*Looking for his shadow*).

Some people they need to maintain
a mighty a high opinion of themselves
—that really ain't no good.
I been rectifyin' myself. (*Taking a swig of gin*)

Now I ain't using high falutin' words
like some people I know
keep perpetuatin' the situation stead o' changin' it.

(*To shadow on the rear wall*)
You sure are a cowardly thing Lonesome
always operating in the dark.
You get to be believin' yer real.
The more you believe that the bigger you get,
the more attention you require.
You end up shadowin' all the space there is
and that gets real confusin'.

(*Recovering strength*)
Come right out I am ready.
I am gonna shoot you down.
Gonna make you shake in your too-big-for-your-boots.
I ain't dilly-dallyin' 'round.

(*Stirring up trouble*)
You cain't stand the light o' day,

always walkin' round in the dark bumpin' into things,
gettin' spooked by yerself.

Got special tricks you do,
Always blamin' other people.
You don't seem to realise yer only a shadow,
you wouldn't exist without me.
It ain't complicated, all you got to do is
TURN THE LIGHTS ON.

LIGHTS go ON and OFF

COWBOY tries to pin his shadow down

Gotta be prepared to see what you gotta see.
Some people they just cain't take the shock
—keep runnin' like a criminal.
They just cain't bear to see all the booby traps
they laid for innocent people to walk into.
Then again those innocent people
didn't have their headlights on.
Ain't nobody innocent round here
—that's the condition I see.

I ain't blamin' no-body.
I don't want you to take it personal.
No sir-ee this here is a CRITICAL fiction

(Exhausted)
I got a neighbour,
she come over when I was renovatin',

she said to me ‘this is *too much!*
Yer so young, when you finished this you be *old.*’

I said to her, Maria *doggonit* you sure hit the nail on the head.
When I have finished my business I’m gonna be old
BUT I AIN’T GONNA BE GRIMEY
Since last time I saw you, I started eating de-toxifying food.
Yee ha! (*Legs in air*)

SOUND: ‘*Poker D’Assi*’ by Morricone¹⁸⁵

COWBOY plays a Keystone Cops routine with live shadow dancing on the back wall

4. Rectification

What I had to say was ...
I forgot what I was gonna say.
I cain’t afford to do that, some o’ my thoughts
are TAX DEDUCTIONS.

(*Tiredly*) I didn’t sleep so good last night,
I felt like I had the moon in my blood.
Kept getting’ up havin’ creative ideas
but I didn’t write em down, now I cain’t remember ‘em.
I CAIN’T AFFORD TO DO THAT!

¹⁸⁵ E Morricone, ‘Poker d’Assisi’, in *A fistful of sounds: The complete soundtracks*, CD, BMG Records, 1999.

COWBOY is riding the chest slowly through the night ... clip-clop, clip-clop
SOUND of the prairie wind

(Deep and husky)

I reckon yer out yonder somewhere Lonesome,
ridin' and thinkin' ...

(Gee-up ... clip-clop, clip-clop)

Fancy yourself a cowboy
turnin' the night sky into a VENUE ...
(Gee-up ... clip-clop, clip-clop)

You think I am standin' in line, waitin' for you to come back,
waitin' for you to deliver a wallopin' shot o' your shakti?

(With dark glee)

I tell you I am on the intravenous.
I got a continuous drip goin' on.
It starts way down in my arse and from there
—it's straight on up! YEE-HA!

SOUND: 'The Theme from Bonanza'
ON/OFF with each 'gee-up'
COWBOY continues riding the chest

Yes sir I got a grievance.
Lonesome you said 'I lived on dead men'.
I did not know what you meant but when you
turned your back on me like some kinda freedom fighter
—I got the idea.

SOUND: Western gunfight, 'The Theme from Bonanza' continues
COWBOY rides the chest, swinging overhead light, shouting and shooting cap gun

I need someone big and strong to stand up now because
I NEED A CREATIVE IDEA.
Now sir you are big and strong,
when I shoot you, you gonna fall down.
(Shoots cap gun)
BANG! Yee-ha

That sure fills me with
C-R-E-A-T-I-V-I-T-Y
It's real important to keep your LIBIDO.
One thing's deadly on libido is BOREDOM.
(Shoots)

HOT DOGGITY ... I AM BACK!

Shoot!
Why Doggy! (In pain) Tarnation!
I just dun shot myself in the foot.

5. Like a sore tooth

COWBOY bandages his foot with a bandana
—a husky voice, deep in John Wayne country

I knows why you go ridin' Lonesome ...
One day you a' gonna lose somethin'.
I cain't keep tellin' you this.

SOUND: Spacey harmonica, 'Death Rattle' by Ennio Morricone¹⁸⁶ turns ON/OFF
like a rattlesnake in the dark

(Spooky feeling)
You cain't go ridin' every time there's trouble.
You gotta settle down.
You listenin' to me?
Yer bad Lonesome ...
You got some real bad parts a happening' in you.
I cain't keep quiet about this.

COWBOY limping around, peering out into a dark night

(Deep and husky)
Only trouble is yer so stubborn
you probably ain't gonna give me
the satisfaction of sayin' this to you.
I am gonna have to live with this all by myself.
Yer gonna ride your horse,
feel like a brave cowboy, turn your back on me.

(Rasping and mean)

¹⁸⁶ Morricone, 1999, *op. cit.*, 'Death rattle'.

I am gonna come back on you like a sore tooth.
Yer gonna have to pull that tooth one day.
Yer just like one o' those big stones on the prairie,
keepin' your mind closed ...

(*Very dark, very slow*)
You have been a pain to me Lonesome,
A BAD PAIN.
I am gonna come back on you like a slow fuse ...
Gonna be in those desert winds, burn your eyes ...

(*Darker*) I don't wanna hurt you.
I don't plan to hurt you. It's out o' my control.

COWBOY *sadistically plays with remote control turning
SOUND goes ON and OFF*

It's gonna happen natural.
Trouble always goes back to where the trouble belongs,
you cain't lose your trouble on someone else.
Trouble is Lonesome, you won't be able to take this
cos you got no sense o' humour,
(*Dark chuckling*)—need a sense o' humour

(*Very calm*)
You lost a lot o' credibility in my eyes Lonesome.
I knows you went lookin' for yourself.
I knows you didn't feel very credible 'round here.
Yer so suspicious o' me—thinkin' I am out to get you

every turn o' the bend.
Where'd that come from cowboy?

I hope you found a way to believe in yourself.
Don't just appear out o' magic.
There's gotta be rectification afore there's progress.
You been rectifying yourself?

I mean I been drinkin' non-stop for five month now
and I got me some real insight.
(*Gravel-voiced*) I can be real mean, real dirty,
I can be a force to reckon with
—I got me a genre now!

It cost me some real trouble to integrate these things.
I mean I had me two vacuum cleaners, both o' them blew up!
I had to say to myself—

(*With feigned astonishment*)
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

You gotta name things,
otherwise things are gonna name you.
I been named TARNATION.

(*Slowly and emphatically*)

PHILO-SOPHIE is one thing and livin' is another thing
and I got me a PHILO-SOPHIE about livin'.
I mean I started thinkin' in the afternoon,
I don't very often do that
but I had so many creative ideas
I couldn't keep up with myself.

(Calling) Lonesome
I think you should come on out now.
Face the music.
Yer runnin' scared—tain't bein' a cowboy!

6. Doin' study

COWBOY sits on the chest soaking sore feet in the middle drawer, drinking gin and shelling peanuts, 'seemingly' spitting out throwdowns (that explode as they hit the floor)

(Laid back)
I got plenty o' thyme.
I been fixin' up my house, makin' it pretty.
I been makin' things the way what gives me pleasure.
That sure is nice!

I sit out on the back step in the mornin', in the early mornin'
and I look at my handiwork and I think 'I like that'.
And it's gonna be a hot day and it's a cool mornin' ...
And I am lookin' at my things there that I made ...

Chucks another throwdown

And I get real satisfaction 'bout that ...

I made me a flower box on the front porch.
I am gonna put Begonia. I am gonna put Geranium,
gonna put Lobelia ... Honesty ... (*a meaningful look*).
I go out there and I look at my handiwork ...
And I get real satisfaction 'bout that.

Chucks another throwdown

I been doin' me some study ...
Watched me a television show tother night.
Did you know? I didn't know was there was a face on Mars
like the Sphinx lookin' down on us?
I find that mighty credible ...
Those people on Mars had to come down here ...
This fella on the television reckons there's a very strong possibility
that we here on earth, that we directly descended from Martians.
Ain't that beautiful?

Chucks another throwdown

I tell you there's more happenin' than we know.
Then I watched *X-Files*. I like that,
I sure like that theme.
I tell you we gonna find out somethin' one day,
Gonna turn our heads right round.
We gonna have to get real humble.
We gonna get our heads turned right 'round,
That's gonna be a *beautiful* day!

Then I watched Germaine Greer—

She sure is a good talker that lady.
I like the way she looks now.
She looks real intelligent.

I like what she says.
She says I am just sayin' what I think.
I saw somethin' needed doin',
I wish someone else would do the job
but tain't no one else standin' up so ...
I am just makin' a question, I am just doin' a provocation.
She says you wanna find out what's really goin' on,
You should look in the glossy magazines.
Might disapprove, might think yer high falutin',
wouldn't buy no glossy magazines,
but that's where you find out what's
REALLY goin' on.

Yep it sure was an interestin' night,
I did me some real study.
I wonder what's on the television tonite?

7. The void

LIGHT goes ON/OFF, the chest is a TV, hanging head light swings
SOUND: 'The Chase' by Morricone¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Morricone, 1999, *op. cit.* 'The chase'.

(*In wonderment*)

I tell you, I am experiencin' the void
the BIG SPACE, the desert wind,
the VENUE!
I got fiery flies shootin' out all round me
and the air is warm as blood.
So much nothin' to make somethin' from ...

(*Getting sad*)

I can feel real sorrows lurkin' round the corner.
Do you ever feel that?
I mean when the sun go down, we all go down
—loneliest time o' day.

(*Very tired, as if riding home wounded*)

Yep in this here big void,
there's big goodbyes waitin' to be said when the time comes.
Gonna have to say goodbye to creepin' thyme
and the sweet sunrise.

SOUND: 'Adagio for Strings' by Barber¹⁸⁸

COWBOY'S tone is broken hearted

We all gonna die ...
We all gonna die ...

¹⁸⁸ S Barber, 'Adagio for Strings', the second movement of *String quartet op. 11*, 1936.

*Opens and shakes middle drawer
with a hollow voice*

*COWBOY is sobbing,
taking hankies from top drawer*

*Lamely waving a hanky,
a long sojourn through the dark night*

I been doin' me some real rectification.
I been all twisted up inside,
I been exploded,
I been shootin' out all over the place.
Now I come back together again
I got me some real things to say ...

My heart's too big for my body
—BIG BUFFALO HEART.

I am thinkin' bout you Lonesome,
I know yer sufferin'—
too dam stubborn to own up.
All I can say is, I hope you get exploded
and I hope you come back together in a way that
you don't ever have to get exploded in the same way again,
cos it's the repetition that gets you down

Tarnation! I got tears ...
I got tears in my eyes.
But tain't no point takin' this world personal.
You gotta kept on travelling
—gotta be a pilgrim.

I still feel I got some conversation to have.
I am a bit afeared of what I might say ...
I feel like I am goin' close to the bone now ...
I don't want to say somethin' I am sorry I said.
It comes to me like ...
I don't wanna say I am sorry
afore you say your sorry, that kind o' thing.
Cos I don't mean I am sorry.
Only mean I'm sorry in a sorrowful kind a' way ...
not that I am sorry 'cos I did somethin' wrong
I ain't got nothing to repent on,
not that I understand anyways.
Mighta dun somethin' wrong a long time ago,
mighta had somethin' wrong dun to me a long time ago,
somethin' I cain't even remember.
I dunno ... I dunno
I mean I'm sorry ... like sorrowful
In a rectification kinda way.

(*Sniffling*)

Maybe that don't makey much sense
Maybe I will find a better way to say that.
I feel like I am puttin' pressure on myself ...
After I exploded I come back together
And I understand somethin' but tain't an idea.
I think there's been some mighty power struggle goin' on 'tween us
—must mean there need to be a break.

There's bin some individual sufferin'
but then the question come—
Shoot! I am bein' real sincere,
I hope we can agree 'bout that.

(With mortal fear) I respect you Lonesome,
maybe not in the way you might understand,
I respect you cos you got the power to pain me.
I am afear'd o' you and I respect yer power,
an' now I gotta find mercy in me,
cos I come to my own defence and I get real powerful then.

(Losing confidence) Somethin' in these things there ...
I hope yer thinkin' 'bout these things ...
I know yer a deep thinker.
Yep I bin real misguided 'bout certain things in my life.
Only got what I got to offer. I am here doin' things
—got my imagination that's for sure ...

8. Imaginary fence-lines

SOUND: 'Without Pity' by Morricone¹⁸⁹

COWBOY is laying flat out on the chest with straight arms and legs so his shadow on the back wall resembles Superman flying

¹⁸⁹ Morricone, 1999, *op. cit.*, 'Without Pity'.

(*Disembarking*)

I tell you what I am gonna do ...
I am gonna put you away where
I don't have to think about you
but where I can find you if you turn up on me
'cos it would be mighty impolite if I couldn't recognise you.
So I am gonna put you in the bottom drawer of
my friend the Martian here ... right up the back ...

COWBOY *takes out middle drawer out of the chest and puts his head inside chest*

Shoot it's dark in here ...

BLACKOUT: *it is as if 'we' are now inside a larger cube that is the auditorium*

SOUND: *The text is pre-recorded with reverberating echoes*

(*Calling*)

You out there?
You listenin' to me?
Yer pride makin' you deaf
—yer gonna have to be tamed.
I cain't do that for you.

(*Gently in a very old voice*)

Yer pride gonna have to tame you ...
Yer gonna have to bite on your bits ...
Yer gonna have to huff and puff ...
Yer pride gonna make you huff and puff ...

When yer pride tame you
you gonna be real sweet.

SOUND: 'Untitled 111' by Calexico¹⁹⁰

LIGHT slowly illuminates

COWBOY who is sitting on the floor, his head is still in the middle drawer of chest and it looks like the chest of drawers is his head

(Old and tired)

You had to go out on your damn horse,
that's what yer doin' now,
yer ridin' and thinkin',
yer watchin' the sunset an' the sky,
and your old horse,
she keeps comin' to an imaginary fence line,
your old horse she just keeps stoppin' there
at a fence line that ain't there no more
and your goin' round an' round ...

Gee-up horsey ...
Gee-up horsey ...

When are you gonna come to your senses?
Maybe when that next sunset sets
some kinda miracle gonna happen to you.

PROJECTION: on back wall COWBOY'S shadow independently rises as if from out of the chest. The shadow does a walking/labouring dance as if barely able to move from the effort of living

¹⁹⁰ Calexico, 'Untitled 11', in *Hot rail*, CD, Touch and Go/Quarterstick Records Inc., Chicago 2000.

(Weakly, still with head in chest.)

Gee up horsey ...

And your goin' round and round ...

Gee up horsey ...

And you keep comin to an imaginary fence-line ...

Gee up horsey ...

(Becoming an ancient voice)

Gee up horsey ...

Somethin' mighty strange happenin' in me now ...

Gotta to be some connection 'tween imagination and loneliness.

I think that's a secret.

I think I just stumbled upon a secret

In the bottom drawer o' my friend the Martian.

I ain't fictionalisin' this.

It's got some kinda connection

with somethin' greater than us.

I think for sure some meanin' in life

we just don't understand ... unknown thing

SOUND of a prairie wind

All through history people been givin' it different names ...

kinda like the great desire.

We don't want to be alone,

We want to be part of everythin' ...

One big soul ... one big world ...

Go beyond this world and out and out ...

SOUND of *loud electrical interference*

9. Mercy!

COWBOY returns the top drawer to chest

SOUND: beep, beep ... beep, beep ... beep, beep ... 'Space Oddity'¹⁹¹

Countdown ... 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 ...

COWBOY falls backwards in slow motion with legs in the air so his shadow on back wall seems to be floating in space

SOUND: Dissolves into 'X-Files Theme' by Mark Snow¹⁹²

Smoke bellows from beneath chest.

COWBOY slowly places a flashing light bulb on top of chest and places his cowboy hat on it.

The blinking light shines through the eyelets of the hat like eyes in the dark. COWBOY disappears in smoke

CHEST SPEAKS:

A deep and otherworldly voice with a Texan drawl

Yep, it's like we're goin' on a big lonely sojourn.
I am talkin' to you and you may as well be the deepest part of me.
Funny thing the deepest part o' me, of you, of everybody,
Is some kind of lonely secret ...

¹⁹¹ D Bowie, 'Space oddity', in *David Bowie*, CD, EMI/Virgin, UK, 1999.

¹⁹² M Snow, 'X-Files theme', in *Songs in the key of X: Music from and inspired by the x-files*, Warner Bros Records, 1996.

Gotta find it, everybody gotta find it.
All kinds o' ways people go about findin' it ...
In the end it's just you gotta find your secret ...

(*Fading into the distance*)
People keep their things in drawers—
Special drawers where they keep things with feelin's,
All kinds of feelin's like beauty and love
—those two go together pretty well ...
When humans do their naked beauty time
They have real feeling ... my ... my ...

Mercy!
She like a big heavy cross to carry
Maybe I am getting out of line now ...
But I think there's somethin' in that ...
We come on this earth to make friends ...
We cain't punish each other for havin' learnin' points ...

Electrical signal failing

You know there's some things
I cain't say with an accent ...
If I get too complicated
I cain't makey no sense at all ...

(*Almost inaudible*)
Geez ... I am runnin' out o' accent now.

SOUND Electrical interference fading into white noise

LIGHT fading

SOUND: A single beep ... beep... beep ... repeats.

COWBOY'S hat is left on top of the chest, seen still blinking through the eyelets

Fin



KNOWLEDGE AND MELANCHOLY

By Margaret Cameron

Figure 5 *ART/art* by Alison Kelly 1996

AUTHORS NOTE:

What if the solo female performer is a cultural model for the feminine hysteric, “whose discourse is always directed towards the ‘you’ for validation” [even] “willing to produce symptoms, if that will obtain the desired result (love).”¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Whitford, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

PERSONAE:

The ACTRESS—a contemporary woman with ‘an epic’ nature; also performs a scene from Marat Sade by Peter Weiss, playing Charlotte Corday (who suffers from melancholia and narcolepsy or sleeping sickness).

SETTING:

A theatre. There is a large, linen canvas with the painted letters of uppercase and lowercase ART/art hanging in the space. There is a small round table and a chair.

COSTUME:

The ACTRESS wears a simple skirt and cardigan and has a handbag with a light inside it. In ‘Letter to Marat’ she wears a theatrical, long and hooded cape of rough wool.

Scenes
KNOWLEDGE AND MELANCHOLY

A prologue

1. *Déjà Vu*

2. The pig

3. Desire and hysteria

4. Letter to Marat

A prologue

SOUND: *Voice over:*

She began in a simpler place,
kicking concrete on the way to school.
Now her head is fallen,
her eyes are blind and her body split
in this Gethsemane she speaks to no one.

She is un-simple, knitted with tension,
her skeleton is hurting locked
in this cupboard of pressed flowers;
her skeleton is twisting away
from everything that is light,
already dead, it wants more death.

Who has put her here? Where is her mother?
Who could be her lover? She smells of nothing.
She has no power in this secreted place,
—who would not have eyes like hers;
she sees nothing, nothing, from those holes.

SOUND: *Three loud reverberating knocks on wood*

1. *Déjà vu*

On a silent stage, a light illuminates a diagonal pathway to a simple table with chair.

SPOKEN:

The actress enters to the soundtrack from *Raging Bull*. She is fighting invisibles, in an effort against gravity, lurching and reeling, more from fatigue than from alcohol, she crosses a long diagonal from the door to a simple table with chair.

*The ACTRESS enters to the Intermezzo from 'Cavalleria rusticana' by Pietro Mascagni.¹⁹⁴
'lurching and reeling', it is a dance*

The elephant said to the mouse:
You are very small.
The mouse said to the elephant:
I have been sick.

Do not expect me to be cheerful,
I am fighting for my life.

¹⁹⁴ P Mascagni, 'Cavalleria rusticana', 1890. The symphonic Intermezzo from the opera figured in the opening of *Raging Bull*, dir. Martin Scorsese, United Artists, USA, December 19, 1980.

There are no words to describe loss of this dimension.
Even the mouse carries a great sorrow,
though her small voice would never pretend
it was the elephant's pain,
and could the elephant in his bigness,
imagine how a tiny pain,
could burden an uncomplaining creature?

He imagines lowliness is a lack.
He sees the mouse as improbably small
and remarks on the essential
and elemental bearing of a small creature,
something a refined mind would understand
is not a topic of conversation.
The heroism of certain small individuals
should never be languaged by voyeurs.

The elephant has no right of passage here,
the mouse, perfectly bounded, describes her 'why'
—the simple beauty of a modest point of view,
I miss love. I miss love.

I grow dreams, dreams that grow me.
My eyes cling to windows filled with icons,
I cannot feel your hand—
the wind is my voice it's howling now ...

SOUND: '*Cavalleria Rusticana*' fades
... there is a howling wind

My ship has broken its hull,
I am adrift ... my imagination fills this void
but with no natural response I become too big,
too grand to take a living person's hand.

O my body, heavy as Sisyphus,
is grown too weary and too weak
and too unbeautiful to believe
—I travel in despair

Wind continues
—a cavernous space ...

Do you not hear my whispering?
You dark in Odysseys' ship neglect me,
I am demanding, conjuring elisions of time and space.
Do not expect surprise in a *déjà vu* ...

Remember ... remember
my foot, my leg,
my friendless body
on the dark side of the world,
I am one night, one dream away.

The ACTRESS arrives at the table
—addressing the audience

What do you think of me?
I tell you everything in this room,
this theatre ... with no bed.
Relieve me of my love.

(*With panache*)

I walk streets, shop for cardigans, pink and coral,
colours that become me, colours that I become.
What do you think of me, who has lost?
I faint at these wounds of love,
I climb to your knee to weep defeated,
since I am empty what can transform me.
Does poverty become me?

(*With confidence*)

Come sit in this warm room,
I wear a dress and ask what do you think of me now
I die in your company to wear red.
I swallow grief whole, touch only shadows
prised from pavements charisma has stained, over and over,

(*On one breath*)

I will unpeel you, eke you out of caves,
feed you on grief rank and stinking
without breath it is not easy.
You cannot expect to feel young.
You cannot expect to avoid daylight
—too human an animal made of flesh and fear.

Our dignity lies in these ashes. Look at me.
Privilege me with no assumptions
that defend your position. You humiliate me
and I am already so humiliated

I become you.

You humiliate me
and I am already so humiliated
I become you.

How do I look to you?
I know the nape of my neck,
the squareness of my shoulders ...

*Image of the guillotine
head and neck bending over the back of the chair*

I was once a princess
I have no inheritance
I my soul must crown.

I have sat in cafes remembering eloquence,
I was not taught to speak of these things but I do.
I hurl myself against you, bleed upon the rocks
of every dark night, I *howl* to the moon ... ROAR.
Sailors hold hands against the pull of my voice,
not to go where they are drawn.

These things I say like dead flowers in old books,
remember nothing of the moment they died to mark.
I am not eloquent as the poets of old,
a crown of simple leaves.

I call upon you:

Defend me. Defend me.
The line of my neck tells you,
you must be (*faltering*) honourable.

I am not a very comfortable actress,
I have a feeling in a moment you will say
I made the whole thing up.
I would have believed everything *you* said.

When I decided to give up authority
as *modus operandi* while I was performing
I could barely ... stay awake.

In a sudden, deep sleep, making small, erotic noises as if fingers in her body, find words lodged in her organs

(*With eyes closed*)
The air is dreaming ... the night is passing ...
dawn is creeping sharp into the long blackness ...
it is edging the sheets from the words that lay draped
here in a renaissance room that curtains burden and shadow,
the page is a boy, handsome and clean, the nape of neck still
white and tender, carving undeniable shape ...

2. The pig

(Waking) Ah! A new day, a new page
I am awake *without an imagination*
Look at the sky—it is so high today.
Well I'll try the opposite,
look at the floor—it is so high today.

Tipping the table on a steep angle—it seems the space is warping ...

That made a bit of ... SPACE.
I often feel as if I am on the *verge* of some thing.

"Close your eyes ... Visualise a four-legged-animal."

At the table with closed eyes

I see a pig—four legs, bristles etcetera.

"Now let a person come into your mind ... Someone you know or
someone you don't know."

(Bored) I see a jogger down by the river; Saturday afternoon, he
has his joggers on. (Very bored) He's fit as a fiddle; his muscles
are terrific. He feels like the greatest man on earth.

"Place this person in front of the animal and allow their features
to interchange ... Let your character speak."

The table tilts—it seems the space WARPS

In the restaurant he said in front of me, 'I prefer her to you',
then he looked at me and said 'you look tired get some sleep'.
WHAT A CREEP. Just as well I had a couple of compliments
in my pocket to—*never mind*.

Then he bored into her face with an original poem,
she twitched under the pressure of his gaze—
The poem was pretty good,
I thought I was witnessing the beginning of a great affair.
They're at the feeding-pit these two.
(*Snorting loudly many times*).
I'm going to go to the loo.
I'm not going to look in the mirror.
I have my compliments why should I check?

*The ACTRESS attempts an EXIT
—changing direction on each line*

The restaurant
his chequebook,
her face,
the Thai brocade,
the insult,
the snuffled cleavage,
her red lips,
the twitching pressure,
his erotic suggestion—

(*Spinning*)
Sea? Sea? Sea? There is no sea here.
There could be a photograph of the sea somewhere
and if I concentrate I can smell the sea ...

Returning to the table

By the sea ... two weeks later I am slumped at the table
snorting into the armpits of another hot day with pink muscles.

I do have ... some ... *pink muscles*.
I can still see her face—the images yank at her thought, flicker in
across her eyes. She's trained her gaze to strain against, into and
fix upon his gape.

She says his name a lot: (*legs crossed, very cool*)
So Richard you write. So Richard you are married.
Well Richard you are very perceptive.
Yes Richard I am very happily married.
He has just enough intelligence to SNUFFLE in ...
He's ROOTING for her. (*Snorting loudly and repeatedly*)

I hold my purse with my compliments. (*Searching in handbag*)
One. You are pretty someone said once.
(*Repeat until the tension is unbearable*)
Two ... um ... two ... um ... two ... um ...
That's not a compliment they said that's a FACT.
(*Victorious*) That's a beauty.
Yes that's a roast dinner of a compliment,
that will make me FAT for a whole Sunday,
I can make a PIG of myself on that.
They don't last you know, (*re-arranging her hair*)
bristly little insults last; compliments do not,
like flowers do not last in the heat of moments.

The situation is abominable.
I'll spit some poetry at him.
HERE RICHARD COP THIS ... (*Crash and burn*)

Returning to the table

I can't think of anything to say ...

"Good, and closing your eyes again"

There is no lighting here.
No I am not in contact with the outside ...
Yes in the back of my mind
I am aware of the animal
... ROAR.

Enacted under the table

The night is dark ... (*fever pitch*)
Yes my character has a lot of sexual energy,
he can do tricks with his penis—a doctor from Spain!

There are cars parked in rows (*There is a lot of bumping*)
—WE ARE THE MOVIE!

"Make a sketch when you are ready."

Coming out from under—gasping for air

I couldn't possibly *draw* this—
I could cook it but I couldn't draw it—the trees have *hair*.

Running around the table

I've lost his mouth. I've lost his MOUTH.
In the dark we are all mouth.

*Standing with the table on her back
—an elephant?*

When you are kissing it's really good to push away and come up
for air—(*Breathless*) probably everyone knows that,

there's probably no need to say such a thing.

(Exhausting herself)

I have love notes in my armpit
and a man whose mouth I have lost, dark as a Spanish night.
There is no outside and no inside.

The content is not within the narrative,
(Slicing the air with Karate gestures at different angles)
but within the syntax of perspectives
DO NOT CLING TO THE NARRATIVE.

Lying horizontal on top of the table with her feet on back of the chair

I am over-tired, I am at a cerebral limit,
—comprehension is shattering,
soon we will be utterly without narrative.

The image of beetle on its back:

in silence on the table, feet in the air and legs waving, slowly and helplessly in space for too long

My intellect, locked in my heart
arrives at the limits of what I am allowed.
My heart is too big for my body
it is pounding, keeping me awake at night
here in my heart I am over-reached.

Abandoned. Sitting on the table in a pool of light.

SOUND is unresolved chords that swell and linger

(Gently touching her hair and face)
I must arrange the everyday,
as flowers in a vase must be refreshed
but I am desolate, I cannot talk,
both sets of lips freeze in the citadel.
Speak to me, I am not well.

(As if a quote)

O barren shore where love comes no more, the gulls cry the fires do not burn. The eyes of want stare all around the eternal ocean, the sky is white and swirling, I hear nothing but the wind swallowing promises. And so, alone on the rocks, we sit together knowing nothing, we could speak for want of something else to do, the words of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Am I making you melancholy?
I have said too much.
I have gone too far, I must go
... my mother waits for me.

Attempts an EXIT

Wait! (*Stop*)
There is more meaning
in any one moment than is said by words ...

Écoutez avec la respiration ... (Audible in-breath)
Écoutez avec le cœur... (Audible out-breath and repeat all)
Écoutez avec la respiration ... (Audible in-breath)
Écoutez avec le cœur... (Audible out-breath and repeat in different rhythms)

(Whispering)
The light is thick;
the moods are ominous ...

(Delicately) This lamp is a moon
and drops of rain are falling inside me
the edges of time curl and break the *hoo-hoo*
of unidentifiable sound.
Soon there will be no more want in me,
these fingers will court the surface into feeling,
feeling more swell and drunk as Satie's notes
upon a keyboard I will fall forward
... lips ... pursed

With pursed lips waiting for a kiss

(Losing confidence)
I have come here today to ...
I simply cannot go on
I am too ... too ... I am too ... too ... sleepy ...

(Getting sleepy)
Don't. Don't watch me too closely ...
(With fragility) I don't know how ... to be ... here

Attempts an EXIT

3. Desire and hysteria

SOUND: Maria Callas singing 'Norma' by Bellini.¹⁹⁵ The aria is played loudly.

The ACTRESS turns dramatically and with the authority of a diva re-enters on a diagonal path. At the table she enacts a romantic scenario. The scene becomes increasingly intimate and intense, a generalised landscape of desire yielding to the volitional pressure of the aria

J'ai une grande peur de l'ennui
—that's French for 'I have a great fear of boredom'.

SOUND: Record scratch
The ACTRESS falters

(With high status)
O god, life is intense. If it were not so funny
—it would be unbearable.

SOUND: Record scratch
The ACTRESS falters

I am not suited to the heat. I have always the essential right to say how I feel
And as I say, I have been trying to find a dress for years, not floral, no, I
don't like flowers—only in vases. This dreadful ennui, this unbearable heat,
I shall go mad.

SOUND: Record scratch
The ACTRESS falters

Aria begins again

In my whole life I have never lost my dignity. Kiss me ... kiss me ... kiss me.
(With increasing passion)

¹⁹⁵ V Bellini, *Norma: Complete opera live 1952*, Maria Callas, conducted by Vittorio Gui, Orchestra & Chorus of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, CD, EMI Classics, 2005.

A woman alone in a cafe, her legs crossed beneath the table. She looks at her coffee, waiting. It is easy to imagine that she is waiting for something. It is easy to imagine that she is lost in thought because of a powerful passion, an unrequited love. And once you have thought that, you want to know her.

He is thinking of a Bunuel movie.

(With French accent) 'Go over there and insult her; if she laughs she is sophisticated.'

*Changing direction and standing and siting for each voice
until she is too obsessive to remember who is who*

[Alain]

Hello Madame, I do not like your dress.

[Marie]

Ha-ha-ha! Really Monsieur. What a pity.

[Alain]

You are very pretty Madame.

[Marie]

Yes Monsieur thank-you.

[Alain]

Are you alone Madame?

[Marie]

Yes *Monsieur*, apparently.

[*Alain*]

Would you allow me to introduce myself?

[*Marie*]

Yes *Monsieur*.

[*Alain*]

Alain.

[*Marie*]

Bonjour Alain.

[*Alain*]

Bonjour Madame.

[*Marie*]

The cafe is deserted Alain.

[*Alain*]

And you are sad Madame?

[*Marie*]

No, no Alain I am not sad.

[*Alain*]

You are very pretty Madame.

[Marie]

Yes *Alain* you said that.

[Alain]

I am repeating myself Madame.

[Marie]

Yes *Alain*.

(*Fervently*) *Alain* is still standing. She is casual, elegant, a woman of good humour, her clothes are content to be close to her.

[Marie]

It is Saturday *Alain*.

[Alain]

Yes, but I do not know your name Madame.

[Marie]

Marie, Alain.

[Alain]

Bonjour Marie.

[Marie]

Bonjour Alain.

She wakes like a cat to his touch. (*Enact this*)

[*Marie*]

These people Alain, where do you imagine they have been?

[*Alain*]

—To the pictures Marie.

[*Marie*]

Yes, they are pleasant.

(*With intensity*) They watch a crowd enter the cafe. There is laughter and they laugh simply because the crowd and the movement stimulate them.

[*Marie*]

Do you like my hat Alain? It is a hat for the sun for the shade, the cool shade. Kiss me Alain.

[*Alain*]

—But why, Marie?

[*Marie*]

A hat is not enough Alain. This unbearable heat! In my whole life I have never lost my dignity. Speak to me Alain. Tell me something ...

[*Alain*]

(*Rising to the occasion*) Yes Marie, the people are leaving their houses because it is so hot, the windows of the apartments are open and the children cannot

With increasing intensity

sleep, old men sit and smoke in the square, lovers walk hand in hand, arm in arm.

[*Marie*]

Yes, yes Alain. (*Fervently*) Speak to me Alain.

[*Alain*]

Women in scarves lean from their windows and talk.

[*Marie*]

Yes, talk to me Alain.

[*Alain*]

The cats sleep Marie.

[*Marie*]

O c'est merveilleux. Yes, yes Alain speak to me

[*Alain*]

(Playing the 'climax') There are people sitting very still in their chairs Marie, and they are gazing out to sea, though there is no sea there. They imagine the cool shade of the night sea.

[*Marie*]

Yes, yes Alain, I should like to sit on a chair and watch the sea. Yes. Yes speak to me Alain

SOUND: *Aria finishes*

(*Alone*)

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BLACKOUT

4. Letter to Marat

The ACTRESS appears in a long and hooded cape of rough wool is moving quickly as if she is walking through city streets, alone at night. The SOUND is like a vortex ... Town Hall bells are heard.

All the text is spoken including the stage directions in square brackets.

"CORDAY: [quietly]
I have come
To deliver this letter
[draws a letter from her bodice]
in which I ask again to be received by Marat
[hesitates]
I am unhappy
and therefore have a right to his aid
[repeating loudly]
I have a right to his aid"¹⁹⁶

*CORDAY is rehearsing holding the knife above her head with two hands
and as if reading a letter in the air her head and eyes travel left to right across the auditorium*

How do you think I have lived? You will not grant me autonomy. Inert with depression, you insult me I try to save this house. O the persistent unhappy demands of my life, anyone would consider escape. Your instability

¹⁹⁶ P Weiss, *The persecution and assassination of Marat as performed by the inmates of the asylum of Charenton under the direction of the Marquis de Sade*. Marion Boyars, London, [1964] (1982), p. 67. Charlotte Corday, an historical figure of the French Revolution, is also a character in Weiss's play. In this scene she delivers a letter to Marat, whom she assassinates. I have inserted my own 'letter' to Marat.

compromises me, I am afraid of you. I call witness, be my guard. I am speaking of safe houses. I cannot let this go unattended, your support is getting thin—I ration food. You make me cry poor. You display an illusionary wealth in front of me. You court your pain with extravagance. I feel the need for some pragmatic fidelity. An arrangement must be made. I do not like seeming like I want something from you. I don't like having to remember things, to go over the ground. Exhausted by my efforts to survive, (*suddenly weak*) I am tired of inventing. Circumstance, you misrepresent me. Your story insists on its effects, I don't have the strength for it. Fidelity is not a romantic notion. It is to do with verisimilitude—an exact telling.¹⁹⁷

*With renewed energy
she holds the imaginary knife aloft*

This is my complaint—to tell and to be heard, I must arrive at such a place of exhaustion, to be on my last breath. (*Unadorned and tired*) I am very sensitive. If I do not appear so, it is because I must be so strong. (*Simply*) I am really doing my best while you depend on me for esteem and wonder, under the most stressful conditions. (*Catching her breath*) Why should I suffer humiliation for this? Are you not grateful to me? I do what I must. I use my time. I wait for you to grow. The future is in danger and I must remind you, all is lost without some kind of fidelity.

Loudly and raising the knife again

What am I to do? Why am I forced to speak?
Hearing only the sound of my throat rasping
and the victorious, they are marching,
playing trumpets.

¹⁹⁷ Cixous, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 119–127, *passim*.

Corday sleeps ... (*Pause ... then snore several times*)

Cape is dropped to floor

SOUND: Gnoissiemes 3 by Erik Satie

The following is performed as a somnambulist dance

(*Swaying*) Sound of engines... (*Pause*)

Sound of the city... (*Pause*)

Getting everything done in time

I cannot hear people

Have you ever had phone sex?

Taking off a shoe and speaking into it

Hello?

Limping across the space talking

as if on the phone

Yes the boat we made is beached upon an ordinary shore. Watch and listen ... the three-day tide is leaving us stranded. I would have sailed with you to Africa, the way forgotten in that sleep, stretched between us, so inspired our bodies we lay in sails I slip from you and you from me. Our love becomes the things that are not marked. The space, behind the lines, that make the space, which is nothing. Our kisses mark themselves but make another thing. Your hand drew on the bed; the sheets wore no expression, lightness and darkness.

Realising there is no one there

We are not what we are
but shaped by a region that is seen,
only because we mark what we know
and see then what we know not that makes us.

Please phone.
I need some tokens of your affection,
small gifts of feathers and sticks
—Such natural items lovers might collect on purposeless strolls
to mark the delicacy of their observation

—A gentle compliment delivered with ease
such as 'I like to look at you looking out the window.'

This is enough to stir my trust to continue
as I must to talk thus unto the dribbling end
and not be reduced to the too simple, though eloquent
—O help me.

I am grateful to you for having emptied me
—'this beauty a truth, and this truth a beauty', as Keats said,
'that is all you know and all you need to know.'

O portentous words—
must needs be broken into parts and parts of parts,
to gain again their ability to speak.
They are poor bones easily preyed upon
by every narrative invention.

Attraction is a principle in nature
yet in this evolution of becoming
we wear each other's illnesses.

We must say goodbye.
Forgive my poverty and do not imagine
that you are rich beyond this moment
which cannot be described and to which we submit.

Understanding loss is the recognition that we have loved
What a strange lesson.

Do you think people in all those 'normal' houses have times like this?
No, I do not think so. I do not think this is ordinary.
It does not seem to me from here that people honour beauty
Perhaps I am arrogant but I suffer this status quo,
this expectation of the 'normal' and I do not find it so,
It neglects truth it neglects beauty

Do not imagine that there is some grander scheme
beyond the politics of our exchange
for ART in its grand capitals, in its citadel,
but excuse me I am only an actress.
Lend me your imagination ...

(In heroic pose) I am CHARLOTTE CORDAY
Who are these people? What is this place?

I do not recognise it yet it recognises me in a way that I do no agree with.
Is my inquiry authentic?
This place feels so lonely I doubt myself.
I manifest failure that you may interpret the principles—
Is this a responsible use of public space?

I am subject to the subject, abject,
present to your absence and absent to your presence,
which is the failure to love

We must say goodbye ... (*She is dying*)

I have lost my dignity to this.
I love beauty poor and true.
If you do not perceive me
I will cease to exist

Do not rob me of faith,
gift to the brutal heart,
multiple and blooded
All of hurt I lay at your feet.

Do not forget me
Remember me. Remember me
I am subject to you
The object of our love
these things we have made visible

Do not forget me.
Do not forget me
Remember me.
Remember me...

Remember me...

*The ACTRESS dies or falls asleep from boredom.
Wait 4 beats and snore loudly*

Fin

THE PROSCENIUM

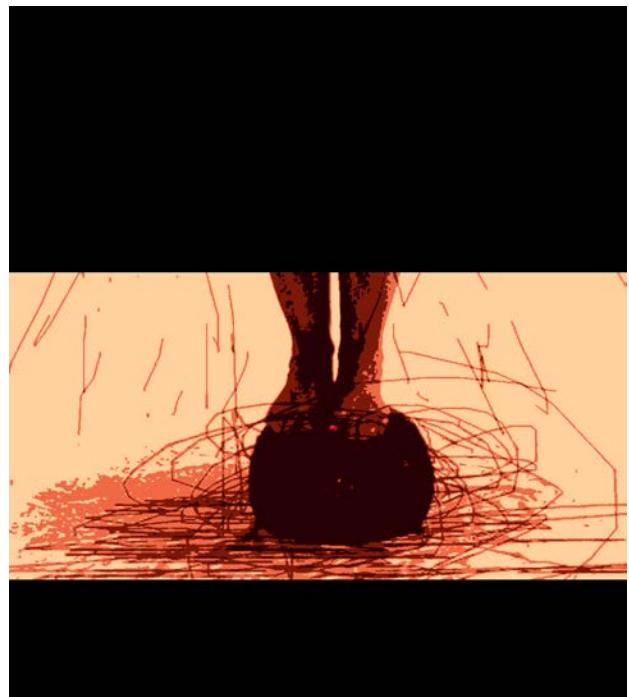


Figure 6 *Philosopher's Stone* by Hellen Sky, 2005

A childhood speaking against the drying wind

EL PROSCENIO

De
Margaret Cameron

Una niñez hablando contra el árido viento

AUTHORS NOTE:

The unforgettable is some wordless moment held nevertheless in words that apprehend a somatic relationship with image.

Translated by Elvira Antón and Bill Murphy, for Magdalena Festival *Piezas Conectadas*, Barcelona, 2007.

NOTA DEL AUTOR:

Lo inolvidable es un momento sin palabras pero sostenido en palabras, en él captamos una relación somática con la imagen.

Traducido por Elvira Antón y Bill Murphy, para el Magdalena Festival *Piezas Conectadas*, Barcelona, 2007

SETTING:

A river stone

COSTUME:

A wet coat

ESCENOGRAFIA:

Una piedra de río

VESTUARIO:

Una gabardina empapada de agua

<p><i>On the stage a river stone is illuminated</i></p> <p><i>Voice over</i></p> <p>Inland shiver of an unknown hope need unfurls bending towards its search a magnetic advance across the dunes made speechless against the drying wind of all that is known inscribe with breath some shape pressing the eye of mind ... silence collects meanings hover words abandoned Sound a distant sea</p> <p><i>BLACKOUT</i></p> <p><i>PAUSE</i></p> <p><i>Voice over continues—</i></p> <p><i>A priori</i></p>	<p><i>En el escenario una piedra de río iluminada</i></p> <p><i>Voz en off</i></p> <p>Tierra adentro estremecimiento de una esperanza desconocida necesidad que se despliega inclinándose hacia su búsqueda un avance magnético atravesando las dunas enmudecidas ante el árido viento de todo lo conocido infunde con aliento alguna forma que se imprime en mis adentros ... el silencio se acumula los significados planean las palabras abandonadas sonido de un mar distante</p> <p><i>OSCURO</i></p> <p><i>PAUSA</i></p> <p><i>La voz en off continúa—</i></p> <p><i>A priori</i></p>
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<p>embedded within the ancient erotic curve of the imaginary of the symbolic of that which forms us deep beneath the covers our work enunciates thought becoming shape following air</p>	<p>incrustada en la antigua curva erótica de lo imaginario de lo simbólico de aquello que nos forma escondido bajo las mantas nuestro trabajo enuncia el pensamiento cobrando forma siguiendo el aire</p>
<p><i>The SOUND of light turning on in a 'whoosh' and a shaft of light illuminates the scene, as if one sees a thing one should not see</i></p>	<p><i>El SONIDO de la luz encendiéndose en un 'whoosh' y un rayo de luz ilumina la escena, como si uno ve una cosa que no hay que ver</i></p>
<p><i>She is standing on the rock drenched</i></p>	<p><i>Ella está de pie sobre la roca empapada</i></p>
<p><i>Speaking:</i></p>	<p><i>Hablando:</i></p>
<p>This is egocentric a whorl of ripples set out as I drop in concentric utterings talk ... I am all talk</p>	<p>Esto es egocéntrico aparecen espirales de olas y caigo en frases concéntricas palabras ... soy toda palabras</p>
<p>I will repeat myself, bending towards a returning sense, I will blur half shut my eyes to listen, I must advance to return, stepping on stones in the dark in a landscape where desire makes light and need is a beacon. This land is floating, a mind, a venue, a place where something can occur. Stepping on stones in the dark, not knowing, reaching for words inadequate,</p>	<p>Me repetiré. inclinándome hacia una sensación que vuelve. Me difuminaré entrecerrados los ojos para escuchar. Debo avanzar para volver, sobre piedras en la oscuridad de un paisaje en el que el deseo produce luz y la necesidad es un faro. Esta tierra flota; una mente, un espacio en el que algo ocurra. Por un camino de piedras en la oscuridad, sin saber.</p>

approximate, close but not close enough. Hearing myself hear when I do across a great expanse of time, a returning sense across a great expanse of time, these words return to me as homes, the places where I curl in need, the places where I hold myself ... here

The perceptual stage
the scene of thought:
the proscenium:

The image
—the room rains

The scene
a marriage-bed pressed
a table set
laid in silence so flat
the chequered cloth
clings on
pretending permanence

Night turns to day
her worn-out thumb strokes
a child's sweet-corn-hair

Tanteando palabras, inadecuadas, aproximadas, acertadas, pero no suficientemente acertadas. Escuchándome a mí misma escuchar, cuando acaso lo hago, a través de una gran extensión de tiempo. Una sensación que vuelve cruzando una gran extensión de tiempo, estas palabras vuelven a mí como hogares, espacios en los que desamparada me hago un ovillo, lugares en los que me abrazo a mí misma ... aquí.

Un escenario de percepción
la escena del pensamiento
el proscenio

La imagen
—la habitación llueve

La escena
una cama nupcial preparada
una mesa puesta
extendida en silencio tan liso
el mantel de cuadros
se agarra
fingiendo permanencia

La noche se convierte en día
su desgastado pulgar acaricia
la sien color maíz de una niña

and reassures against shouts
that hurl our lives
against a wall

The twisted ring on her finger
screws a tight lid on feeling
she bites grist
swallows hard fat
holding up a house
that is our mothers body

I try to understand
bare-foot
naked-beneath the nightie
I am a flower girl marked
here, on threadbare floor
its floral prints
are islands
an archipelago of safe havens
these patterns
on the floorboards of my heart
which are the shocks of childhood

When night turns to day
I am made primitive
made witness
to the jarring of my girlhood
I draw the outline of my foot

y ofrece cobijo de los gritos
que arrojan nuestras vidas
contra la pared

El anillo enroscado en su dedo
encierra hermético el sentimiento
ella traga carne dura
muerde tocino rancio
sosteniendo esa casa
que es el cuerpo de nuestras madres

Procuro comprender
descalza
desnuda bajo el camisón
soy una joven flor marcada
aquí en el desgastado suelo
sus diseños florales
son islas
un archipiélago de puertos seguros
estos dibujos
en el suelo de mi corazón
son los sobresaltos de mi niñez

Cuando la noche se torna día
me torno primitiva
me torno testigo
desde la puerta entreabierta
de las sacudidas de mi infancia

at the threshold
of my mothers door
conceal and marry a scene
of agony or ecstasy
I cannot tell which

From this *now* on
I am dramatised

Now there will be always
the possibility
of rooms with no walls
where rain falls

My voice still shakes
in this place
that swallows space

Down
the twirling
vortex of my ear
through the wide iris eyes
a stone sinks

It waits
beneath surfaces
listening
forming

dibujo el contorno de mi pie
en el umbral
de la puerta de mi madre
oculto y caso una escena de agonía o éxtasis
no sé cual

Ahora estoy dramatizada
ahora ya me torno obra de teatro

A partir de este *ahora*
siempre existirá
la posibilidad de habitaciones
sin paredes donde cae la lluvia

Mi voz aún tiembla
en este lugar
que engulle el espacio

Bajando
por la espiral
del vórtice de mi oído
atravesando el amplio iris de los ojos
se hunde una piedra

Aguarda
bajo superficies
escuchando
formándose

And poor Gulliver says:

When I lay down your voice ... entered ... made me
 ... shiver with fingers that turn ... kidney, liver ...
 and lung ... I your cadaver pinned alive ... so
 bloodless are you ... you need my body for
 adventures you traverse me with words ... beneath
 surfaces

A dormant thing
 encased in memory
 something literal

Resting her head on the rock

(from) a place where silence collects
 (from) a place where words hover
 until pinned upon the page
 (from) a place where words hover
 until pinned upon the mind
 (from) where nothing is known
 (from) where there is congruence
 ... a thought (so) silent
 ... a thought (so) made of nothing

Y el pobre de Gulliver dice:

Cuando me tumbé tu voz ... entró ... me hizo ...
 estremecerme con dedos que revuelven ... riñón,
 hígado y pulmón ... yo tu cadáver clavado en vida ...
 tan exangüe eres ... que necesitas mi cuerpo para
 vivir aventuras ... me atraviesas con palabras ... bajo
 superficies

Una cosa latente
 enmarcada en el recuerdo
 es algo literal

Apoyando la cabeza sobre la roca

(desde) un lugar donde el silencio se acumula
 (desde) un lugar donde las palabras planean
 hasta ser clavadas sobre la página
 (desde) un lugar donde las palabras planean
 hasta ser clavadas sobre la mente
 (desde) donde todo se desconoce
 (donde) hay congruencia
 ... un pensamiento (tan) silencioso
 ... un pensamiento (tan) hecho de nada

Its print
a tiny exotic on white sand
translucent crab

Its print
a track of claw
a trace
a sliver of weed
sucked in at ebb point
the stain of bark
its tea-coloured mark

The imprint of presence
as a sigh marks a loss
as shape and air make sound

Rise holding imaginary rock

The thing that is made
is not the thing
that it is made of

The Sacred Heart
is pinned on the inside
of the heavy door
of our weatherboard
O radiating wound!

Su marca
un minúsculo exótico sobre arena blanca
cangrejo translúcido

La marca
una huella de pinza
un indicio
una fina alga
arrastrada por la marea baja
una mancha de corteza
su marca del color del té

La huella de una presencia
como un suspiro denota una ausencia
como la forma y el aire crean sonido

Se levanta sosteniendo una imaginaria piedra

La cosa hecha
no es la cosa
de la que está hecha

El Sagrado Corazón
está clavado en el interior
de la pesada puerta
de nuestra desvencijada casa de madera
¡O radiante herida!

Opening arms out

In schoolyard years
at biblical dusk
under thundery skies
there are other pictures
handed-down
in the fat pack of swap-cards

Epic battles
gothic landscapes
tall ships on wild oceans
foreign places
the Taj Mahal

I piqued the sensory world
with halos
of lonely significance
and wretched
adolescent thrashing

I understood Expressionism
The Scream
the landscape draws the face
they are inseparable

My mother took a deep breath ... (*in-breath*)
tested by my high-pitched intuition
accompanying me

Abriendo los brazos

En los años del colegio
a la hora del apocalíptico ocaso
bajo cielos tormentosos
otras imágenes
pasan a
la abultada colección de cromos

Batallas épicas
góticos paisajes
altos barcos sobre océanos salvajes
tierras extranjeras
el Taj Mahal

Me asomé al mundo sensorial
con aureolas
de relevancia solitaria
y desdichados
espasmos de adolescencia

Comprendí el expresionismo
El grito
el paisaje dibuja la cara
son inseparables

Mi madre respiró profundamente ... (*toma aiento*)
irritada por mi estridente intuición
llevándome

<p>hand-held and nevertheless towards the theatre (<i>out-breath</i>)</p> <p>(<i>In-breath</i>) I was highly strung Who wouldn't be? Everyone has to grow up embarrassed and advancing into the dramatic future</p> <p>My flower was a heart made red by a thorn already birthing images of shock I thought deeply about nothing</p> <p>I was nostalgic nothing matched the initials of meaning inscribed in that swaying vortex where I saw myself see heard myself hear feel myself feel the unforgettable</p> <p>It is night they are hosing my father through a window in the bedroom</p>	<p>de la mano aún así hacia el teatro (<i>suelta el aire</i>)</p> <p>(<i>Toma aliento</i>) Es que yo era muy nerviosa Y ¿quién no? todo el mundo crece ruborizado y a la vez avanzando hacia el dramático futuro</p> <p>Mi flor era un corazón enrojecido por una espina que ya alumbraba imágenes impactantes reflexioné en profundidad acerca de nada</p> <p>Me sentía nostálgica nada correspondía a las siglas del significado inscrito en esa vorágine tambaleante donde me veía mirando me oía escuchando me sentía sentir lo inolvidable</p> <p>Es de noche duchan a mi padre con una manguera a través de la ventana en el dormitorio</p>
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<p>on a threadbare floor beneath an electric bulb</p> <p>In me the walls fall the room rains</p> <p>It is poetry disjoining and elemental so mortal, so eloquent it prints my shivering girlhood</p> <p>I swallowed a house</p> <p><i>Silent 'O—'the scream'—a slow descent on rock</i></p> <p><i>Voice over</i></p> <p>O Alice what fat tears you are leaking grown too big in your shrunken mind inspire air reach dark places that sleep endure uncertain meaning it floats in membrane inscribed exactly dig at hunger it is a dark age</p>	<p>en un suelo desgastado bajo una bombilla</p> <p>En mí las paredes se derrumban la habitación llueve</p> <p>Es poesía elemental e inconexa tan mortal, tan elocuente que marca mi escalofriante adolescencia</p> <p>Me tragué una casa</p> <p><i>'O' silenciosa—'el grito'—un descenso lento en la roca</i></p> <p><i>Voz en off</i></p> <p>Ay Alicia qué lagrimones derramas muy grande ya para tu reducida mente aguanta llega a lugares oscuros que duermen acepta la incertidumbre que flota en la membrana inscrita con precisión profundiza tu hambre es una edad oscura</p>
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grieve Alice grieve
the ceiling descends below sea level
each loss passed
unmourned is lost unnoticed
and bit-by-bit you become stupid
you, who occupy the venue
think about thinking Alice
for meaning withers without you

(Speaking)
I swallowed a house
—A house swallowed me

SOUND of creaking floors and dripping water
Couched on rock

Unpin me
That I might read what I do not know
in that viscosity of being
before word and language
a working question to float
in the dark water
where desire makes light
and need is a beacon

Not your answer
Not your answer

llora Alicia llora
el techo desciende por debajo del nivel del mar
cada pérdida que pasa
sin ser llorada desapercibida se pierde
y poco a poco te vuelves estúpida
tú que ocupas este espacio
piensa en pensar Alicia
pues el significado se marchita sin ti

(Hablando)
Me tragué una casa
—Una casa me tragó

SONIDO de crujido de suelo y goteo de agua
Agachada sobre la roca

Desclávame
Que pueda leer lo que desconozco
en esa viscosidad de ser
anterior a la palabra y el lenguaje
una pregunta que sirve para flotar
en ese agua nocturna
en la que el deseo crea luz
y la necesidad es un faro

No la respuesta tuya
No la respuesta tuya

O funny bone
the hurt that laughs
I want walls to fall
and rooves to blast

Rock is a brother (and a 'crumb')

Handsel and Gretel
my brother and I
the miserable leftovers
of a large family
are abandoned after tea

Like Atlas
mother put the bad
world on her shoulders
to make us feel secure
it was make-believe
a tissue-thin
illusion she preserved
to make the world which was
not right seem right.

We learned it by heart
the kitchen table
was an unhappy place

We know

Ay 'funny bone'
Ay hueso de la risa el dolor que hace reír
quiero que caigan las paredes
que estallen los tejados

La roca es un hermano (y una 'miga')

Handsel y Gretel
mi hermano y yo
miserables sobras
de una gran familia
abandonados, después de la cena

Cual Atlas
madre cargaba con el malvado
mundo en sus hombros
para que nosotros nos sintiéramos seguros
creó una ficción
un quebradizo ardid
apenas creíble
que mostraba un mundo justo
cuando no lo era

Lo aprendimos de memoria
la mesa de la cocina
es un lugar desdichado

Conocemos

magnified reality
stripped to the facts
isolation, poverty
her sore heart served
on a plate pretending
to be peas and chips
the clink
of the knife cutting truth
from placatory domestic rituals

I have sat with my own child
in the same silence
a silence
that put a clamp on my heart.

O busy day!
It is a formality.
I enact a brittle distance
to preserve autonomy

I MUST SOUND NORMAL
I MUST SOUND NORMAL

I must sound normal
in the amplified void
but tea towels
hang limp on a rack

realidad magnificada
los hechos desnudos
aislamiento, pobreza
su dolorido corazón servido
en un plato pretendiendo
ser guisantes y patatas fritas
el tintineo
del cuchillo cortando la verdad
de conciliadores rituales familiares

Yo me he sentado con mi propia hijo
en ese mismo silencio
un silencio
que puso un cepo en mi corazón

¡Ay ocupado día!
Pura formalidad
finjo una frágil distancia
para conservar la autonomía

TENGO QUE SONAR NORMAL
TENGO QUE SONAR NORMAL

Tengo que sonar normal
en el vacío amplificado
pero los paños de cocina
cuelgan inertes en el tendedero

Image of crucifixion, standing arms open, feet crossed on rock

And on opening a book
the pressure of inner life
forces words into hieroglyphics

Mother has no taste for fiction
the world already too animate
silence has teeth

In the amplified void
what is heard
no one speaks

In the amplified void ...
I step from the wings
at The Civic Centre
in the school production
I did a straight copy
of Fagan in 'Oliver'

I got a prize 'Best Actress in a Musical'.
It was in the paper
it is literal

Derek Nimmo
handed me twenty dollars

Imagen de crucifixión, de pie con los brazos abiertos, los pies cruzados sobre la roca

Y al abrir un libro
la tensión de la vida interior
convierte las palabras en jeroglíficos

A mi madre no le gusta la ficción
ya hay demasiada animación en el mundo
el silencio tiene dientes

En el vacío amplificado
lo que se oye
nadie lo dice

En el vacío amplificado ...
salgo de entre bastidores
en el centro cívico
en la producción escolar
hice una representación calcada
de Fagan en 'Oliver'

Recibí el premio a 'Mejor Actriz en Musical'
Salió en los periódicos
literal

Derek Nimmo me dio un depósito
de veinte dólares

<p>in an ANZ Bank account it was in the paper 'Best Actress in a Musical'. it is literal it is literal</p>	<p>una cuenta bancaria salió en los periódicos 'Mejor Actriz en Musical' literal "al pie de la letra" literal</p>
<p>This is the theatre</p>	<p>Esto es un teatro</p>
<p><i>SILENCE</i></p>	<p><i>SILENCIO</i></p>
<p>These are the lights that turn night to day</p>	<p>Estas son las luces que convierten la noche en día</p>
<p><i>SILENCE</i></p>	<p><i>SILENCIO</i></p>
<p>This is the door that swallows space this is the room with no walls</p>	<p>Esta es la puerta que se traga el espacio esta es la habitación sin paredes</p>
<p>It rains!</p>	<p>¡llueve!</p>
<p><i>The SOUND of heavy RAIN</i> <i>RAIN continues until end</i></p>	<p><i>SONIDO de LLUVIA intensa</i> <i>La LLUVIA continúa hasta el final</i></p>
<p>Now there is a sudden need for form</p>	<p><i>Ahora se necesita forma</i></p>
<p><i>The SOUND of light turning on in a 'whoosh' and a shaft of light illuminates the scene, as if one sees a thing one should not see</i></p>	<p><i>El SONIDO de la luz encendiéndose en un 'whoosh' y un rayo de luz ilumina la escena, como si uno ve una cosa que no hay que ver.</i></p>

She wears a cloth crown like a child at a birthday party

The rock is planet earth

Who will lead us, we who are turning? Where are the gypsies who sing for us into the other black sea the night sky? Where are the gypsies whose voices reach gathering all in beauteous howls? Who will wake us from our grave cities, beat the blood from our waiting? For grace grows threadbare without forgiveness and all the world is crumbling, all the past is blasted scenery wrecked and smoking to the sound of armies marching.

I return the stone to the unforgettable

The image
—it is night

My father is hosed
inside the house
through the window
in the bedroom
beneath an electric bulb
on a threadbare floor
his drunk wet gibberish

Lleva una corona de tela como un niño en una fiesta de cumpleaños

La roca es el planeta Tierra

¿Quién nos guiará, a nosotros que giramos? ¿Dónde están los gitanos que nos cantan hacia ese otro negro mar, el cielo nocturno? ¿Dónde están los gitanos cuyas voces alcanzan a reunir en bellos aullidos todo? ¿Quién nos despertará de nuestras ciudades-tumbas, quién dará compás a la sangre de nuestra desidia? Toda gracia se disipa sin perdón y el mundo entero se desmorona, todo el pasado es un devastado escenario arrasado y humeante al son de ejércitos en marcha.

Devuelvo la piedra a su cuerpo olvidado

La imagen
—es de noche

A mi padre le duchan
dentro de la casa
a través de la ventana
en el dormitorio
en el suelo desgastado
bajo una bombilla
su húmedo balbuceo de borracho

is twisting lids
off all the jam jars
in the cupboard shelves
of mothers heart
leaving her a wrench
and going into me

... The room rains
the room rains

Down the twirling
twirling
vortex of my ear,
through the wide iris eyes
a stone sinks
it waits
beneath surfaces
for audience

Rock is a pillow, image of grave

Paper boats travel erasing fish
against the tide in my mind
the ocean floor
saline place, heart of oblivion
land without liquid
grave of dead gulls
and helpless sunken boats

desenrosca las tapas
de todos los botes de mermelada
de las baldas de los armarios
del corazón de la madre
dejándola desgarrada
y penetrando en mí

... La habitación llueve
la habitación llueve

Bajando
por la retorcida
espiral del vórtice de mi oído
atravesando el amplio iris de los ojos
una piedra se hunde
aguarda
bajo superficies
al público

La roca es una almohada, imagen de una sepultura

Barcos de papel viajan
desdibujando peces contra la marea
en mi mente el fondo del océano
lugar salino, corazón del olvido
tierra sin líquido
sepultura de gaviotas muertas
e indefensos barcos hundidos

Did I fall to sleep
and fallen
did I follow
salt fish
across a speckled floor?
an inverted sky
an inland space

Did I follow
these fossils into sleep
and there remain

One thousand years ago
there was an ocean
that once again draws outlines
that remember their bodies
as the shell remembers its sea

Rock is a seat

This my secret
my treasured significant

And so
beneath the fig tree
on beds of moss
in the pubic beds
of fantasy and intellect

¿Caí dormida
y caída
seguí
a los peces de sal
por el suelo manchado?
un cielo invertido
un espacio interior?

Persegú acaso
esos fósiles en el sueño
para allí quedarme

Hace mil años
había un océano
que ahora vuelve a dibujar contornos
que recuerdan sus cuerpos
como la concha recuerda su mar

La roca es un asiento

Éste mi secreto
mi preciado significante

Y así
bajo la higuera
en lechos de musgo
en lechos públicos
de fantasía e intelecto

searching in the slumbering
mansion of Psyche
where the wound, my evedom lives
in these lonely hours
I loved playing
with berries and seeds
I brooded up vertiginous drama
laboured at scabs
for sweet pathos

*She steps onto the rock
The SOUND of light turning on in a 'whoosh' and a shaft of light
illuminates the scene, as if one sees a thing one should not see
There is a shadow of her silhouette*

So I might step
out of in-substance
so I might substantiate ambiguity
So I might prowl
the nights of childhood
loud with thought
prowl the house full of worry
walk the cold dry garden
pick up smells I left
in hollows that still remain
so I might shipwreck my heart
in sleepless nights of witness
when I mistook the swell of love

buscando en la adormecida
mansión de Psique
donde la herida reina
en esas horas solitarias
me encantaba
jugar con bayas y semillas
inventaba vertiginosos dramas
hurgando con mis costras en busca
de dulce patetismo

*Ella da un paso en la roca
El SONIDO de la luz encendiéndose en un 'whoosh' y un rayo de
luz ilumina la escena, como si uno ve una cosa que no hay que
ver. Hay una sombra de su silueta*

Para poder
salir de la insustancia
para poder sustanciar la ambigüedad
para poder merodear
las noches de la niñez
pobladas de vociferantes pensamientos
merodear por la casa poblada de preocupaciones
pasear por el seco y frío jardín
recoger olores que dejé
en huecos que todavía permanecen
para hacer naufragar mi corazón
en noches insomnes de testigo
cuando confundí el estallido del amor

believing it was the ocean
not the cliff face
and limp to my mother
as the doomsayer
tolling the dull bell
the damage now manifest
the damage now manifest
—it is literal

I prise the lid—

Aaaaaaaaah (*long creaking sound made with throat*)
hear the cracking rooms
the ravaging winds
the jumbo jet crashing
through the ceiling
of the unhappy marriage
through the red tiled roof
of the weatherboard
how I welcome the unholy light
with a chorus of angels
with songs of praise
for the damage now manifest

See mother see
the need for form
—I am not invisible at this door

creyendo que era el océano
no las rocas del acantilado
y poder llegar renqueante hacia mi madre
como el pregonero del juicio final
tañendo su lúgubre campana
el daño ahora manifiesto
el daño ahora manifiesto
—es literal

Arranco la tapadera—

Aaaaaaaaah (*sale de su garganta un largo crujido*)
escucha el crujido de las habitaciones
los vientos devastadores
el ‘jumbo’ estrellándose
contra el techo
del matrimonio desdichado
entrando por el tejado de tejas rojas
de nuestra desvencijada casa
con qué deleite acojo la luz profana
con un coro de ángeles
con canciones de alabanza
por el daño ahora manifiesto

Debes ver madre
una necesidad de forma
—yo no soy invisible en esta puerta

<p>It is literal</p> <p>I have only this it the critical spindle that pricks the way out—intelligent air the door (Alice) a vertical descent cracking my eyes rinsing me of knowledge laying bare a bare child of imaginings prancing barefoot with a stone</p> <p><i>'Skipping girl' on rock with imaginary rope</i></p> <p>See— girl in a playground</p> <p>Everyone of course has a childhood something literal inscribed with fidelity stepping unknowing from its origin to some specific future enacting form to show itself in a proscenium somewhere</p> <p>Here in erotic time</p>	<p>Es literal</p> <p>Sólo tengo esto el decisivo punzón que abre la salida – aire inteligente la puerta (Alicia) un descenso vertical que me agrieta los ojos que barre el conocimiento descubriendo una niña desnuda llena de fantasías que bailotea descalza con una piedra</p> <p><i>'Niña saltando' con una cuerda imaginaria en la roca</i></p> <p>Mira— una niña en el parque infantil</p> <p>por supuesto que todo el mundo tiene una niñez es algo literal inscrito con fidelidad pisando un camino desconocido parte de su origen hacia un futuro específico haciéndose forma en un proscenio de algún lugar</p> <p>Aquí en tiempo erótico</p>
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<p>a practice of milliseconds apprehends thought to substance substance to thought in an exact undoing</p>	<p>una práctica de milésimas de segundo el pensamiento aprende a ser sustancia y la sustancia pensamiento en un exacto deshacer</p>
<p><i>EXIT as if stepping on stepping-stones in the dark Rock remains</i></p>	<p><i>SALE como saltando de piedra en piedra en la oscuridad. La piedra permanece</i></p>
<p>Epilogue</p>	<p>Epílogo</p>
<p><i>Voice over as light slowly fades on the rock</i></p>	<p><i>Voz en off, la luz se desvanece lentamente en la roca</i></p>
<p>A priori embedded within the ancient erotic curve of the imaginary of the symbolic of that which forms us deep beneath the covers</p>	<p>A priori incrustada en la antigua curva erótica de lo imaginario de lo simbólico de aquello que nos forma escondidos bajo las mantas</p>
<p>our work enunciates thought becoming form following air</p>	<p>nuestro trabajo enuncia el pensamiento cobrando forma siguiendo el aire</p>
<p><i>Fin</i></p>	<p><i>Fin</i></p>

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