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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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raspberry vinegar

Jennifer Clark

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
English

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ABSTRACT

raspberry vinegar

Jennifer Clark

raspberry vinegar is what happens when you are on your way to conventional prosody and you fall down a hole like Alice.

The overlying image of this collection is that of suspension. As it explores the no man's land between past and present, a cross-genre form was the most flexible and natural habitat for the work. Colloquial voice and tone are used paradoxically to emphasize the emotional surrealism of living in a suspended state.

I could label the pieces free verse or prose poems, but I prefer the image of "wisowarps". A piece begins with a recognizable fragment, which can be a memory, an object, a person, and "warps" into another dimension. This process required a build-up of energy, a telescoping effect that could not occur within the restrictions of conventional lineation.

The pieces are linked by a narrating voice, travelling and recording through the landscape. This is a journal in which there are 50 entries in an intuitive rather than a chronological order. The rhythm is that of a person talking and pausing for breath.

prelude

I began a journal two other times in my life.

When I was 10 years old my mother gave me a navy blue leather diary that said 'diary' in the front with a zipper and thin little white pages with lines and rounded edges. Each page had a fine gold edge and putting all the page edges together you had a band of gold. I liked to ripple it with my fingers. I think I made two entries. I really didn't get into the habit of writing in it and I hated my handwriting as I always have... I wrote in pencil tidily and addressed my two entries unoriginally with 'dear diary'.

The first entry was after my brother and I were babysat by a Jehovah's Witness. She was German and her name was Mrs. Bunheim. I don't think she even preached to Jeremy and me but just saying that she was a Jehovah's Witness which Jeremy pronounced Johoho Witness was enough for our romantic little minds. My second and last entry was after a party evening with relatives. I was attracted to my cousin and my aunt who was fat like a sausage told him I was wearing my first girdle. That was in the days when we went to my father's relatives for dinners, especially Aunt Jessie with the pink hair. 'Her hair isn't pink,' my mother kept saying, 'that's her scalp showing through'.

She had a collection of oyster plates which she showed us suspended on little hooks on the wall.

The second attempt at a journal was when I was working in a film company. My office looked out on the highway and I used to watch the cars go by in an endless grey stream.

In the supplies department they stocked thick green agenda books which filmmakers and producers kept appointments in. So I got myself one and recorded a few entries. Then I gave it up. The film company was a period when I slept around a bit. It's funny I remember the men but I don't remember the sex. I think I hated sex then.

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raspberry vinegar

the duchess of marlborough was a great beauty
by 16 she knew how to be hateful how to point
her perfect breasts at other women and take
their men she had her nose injected with wax
to give her a grecian profile over the years
the wax trickled down to her chin if I had
to assign death a profile a personality I would
assign it hers because when a beautiful woman
walks into a room everyone dies when a young
boy is cut down on the highway the duchess
drops by before his eyelids flutter shut she
rustles silk soft skin she keeps him alive
minutes longer just to breathe in her flirtations
with the policeman the ambulance attendant the
gawking motorist

3
fragments from a work about
two beautiful women

tina was an italian who came to the united states
tina was married to an american
tina was an actress in hollywood
tina was edward weston's apprentice model companion
and mistress she became a photographer in her own
right

in the envelope there is a photograph of clara
ripped in pieces which could be glued back
together which is the greater beauty I wonder
alive clara or dead tina tina has the benefit
of prose and posterity her biographer has described
her as a small fragile silent woman tragically
tired perhaps she was tired of occupying people's
lives and obsessions like clara clara once
described her life as a brown paper bag why is
it photographs of other people make you feel
your own death feel it in a soft way for example
like light but persistent rain on a spring sunday
spring earth with tiny plant shoots that could
be stepped on

clara tina clara tina clara tina would they
have been friends if fate had placed them at the
same time in the same room perhaps for clara
at least there is a little of narcissus behind
those delicate earlobes behind the finely brushed
eyebrows two perfect brows like the sable brushes
of a portrait painter narcissus you can't blame
a beautiful woman seeking the same there is a
photograph of tina in hollywood she is holding
a sheer lace curtain around herself the kind
clara has on her windows

fragments 2

her breasts are small many lovers must have handled them gently roughly desperately clara's breasts are also small on the wall there is a picture of her like ophelia with flowers in her hair she is photographed beside a lover who didn't love her back once in a theatre she exclaimed looking at the screen and at the breasts of a young actress my breasts are nicer than hers hundreds or thousands of lovers don't matter if you don't get the ones you want

beautiful women don't mean to be mean to their own sex but they're beastly all the same they pay compliments and give gifts and every gram of their attention is resented questioned but always treasured in the end holding a water glass up in the air for a moment there is no doubt that tina or clara could transfix a room people would stare as the glass passed the high cheekbones like the shadow of a ship but all eyes would avert the minute the lips touched the wet rim water music is just too heartbreaking

a beautiful woman is never alone but feels the deepest solitude this does not stop her from breaking ties from severing flesh links tina wrote I am living a completely new life life is never beautiful enough for the beautiful this is perhaps their punishment tina's mother's name was assunta tina's lover edward weston photographed her like a saint she has that serene look with eyes downward perhaps she was crying clara's mother has a will of iron and is still beautiful clara could not tolerate an unbeautiful mother she has never got used to getting old clara says her heart just stopped in front of the looking glass at 25 and froze there clara insists that she will not wait to grow old she will not drag yards of flesh behind her

fragments 3

couple at zoo berlin 1930 by tina modotti
 we see the couple from behind they are caught
 in time by this exquisite woman they have
 enormous behinds baby nursing by tina modotti
 1929 a very dark mexican baby a bare breast
 that looks like a stone or a hard coconut the
 photograph is cut off at the woman's chest
 composition corn guitar cartridge by tina
 modotti 1928 against the bullets of the gun
 belt the cob is a grotesque phallus the dried
 separate kernels standing up make it more of
 a penetrator than any penis would ever be

clara is not an artist but could be everything
 about her is coll ge bits of mint and orange
 brocade and soft curly hair one earring crystal
 clock face painted husband's new wife letters
 with salads and summer always stay summer please

all tina's photographs are in black and white
 clara's photograph in pieces is in black and
 white their lives are in black and white they
 have been beautiful others around them have
 not if a martian asked you what beauty is you
 might point to these women and say beauty is
 the hand of friendship abruptly taken away

where I grew up

I left my family like a hard-boiled egg that has only been done 3 minutes and is soft and mushy inside I chose the right place to grow up a place where I could take things easy in fact it was like a giant convalescent home where people recuperated from the angst of being middle class people made films there ate in a cafeteria and watched each other come and go

some people are too cheap to use dry cleaning and they just throw everything into the washing machine and ruin it people's lives at the film place were like this faded kimono in which the colours have run the filmmakers who were mostly men wore torn shirts in flannelette and jeans that were way too big for them they were the gods in this place

except they weren't quite gods more like makeshift druids sharing a common sign like two penises or only four toes their films came from somewhere they did not feel but thought they should and it wasn't their fault while I was there I fell into a deep sleep and I really did expect to be kissed and woken up but I had to learn about the caste system first.

7

where I grew up 2

before I discovered that I was untouchable
I had to make friends with other women
wonderful women they were think of something
beautiful think of something indulgent like
crushing a zillion lily of the valley in your
hand and just smelling and smelling and you
get the idea and then I had to watch these
women waiting

I had to watch them waiting for filmmakers to
take them off the waiting list because there
wasn't much else to do but sleep around and hope
for a better life when a filmmaker selected you
it was like being called as a concubine from
the king's bowling alley your heart beat you
got your typing done

courage

does courage only have to be things like
rescuing your dying friend in a war could
it be turning on the lights in sequence yet
another time dusting the furniture not
eating too fast getting your jollies out
of people's smiles like a dib and a dab of
hormone out of a perfect pineal

rooms.

open sesame my heart do a triple
flip like a spirochete in heat we're so
far away and I arranged it like the
furniture in a hotel room her heart
and my heart have identical tv's gideon
bibles kept in nighttable drawers between
matching single beds air conditioning
a do not disturb sign on the cupboard
doors these are rooms to make love make
telephone calls in but not to care as
we have cared in

thinking of death thinking of you

I am trying to imagine a man who wrote a book called 'Saul's Book' and dedicated it to his son.
With all my love.

There is something about this expression that all the Hallmark cards in the world and all the people writing it to people they don't mean it to cannot destroy.

It is an old fashioned expression that makes me think of my grandmother who sent me notes with pansies on them and wrote a rather large shaky script which got shakier each year.

Funny how we think of the dead. Just like that after so many years. Fortunate their life in the afterlife doesn't depend on us. My grandmother lived many years after my

grandfather whom I cannot remember. Even when I see his picture. She lived in a ladies' residence with a verandah that seemed to go on for miles. Seeing my grandmother wasn't depressing because the old house had grace and the ladies as we called them floated by whispering and smiling because we were children and the house matron was starched and official. It was a museum where the artifacts could sit out on the verandah instead of in glass cases and hear the leaves. But I don't know if my grandmother was happy there.

thinking 2

When my grandmother got too old to climb the stairs to her little room the family moved her to another ladies' residence. Another old house too run by nuns. But it was dark and the floors were covered with linoleum and nobody could convince you it wasn't really a hospital. My grandmother still had her things the chest of drawers for example with the big knobs. When she bent over to open a drawer you forgot how old and frail she was. She heaved at it like a trucker swinging his body up into the cabin of his van. Down the highway my grandmother went in that place and we watched her go sadly because we weren't young children anymore.

There was a passageway from the front of that nursing home to the residents' rooms. I think it had plants and windows like a solarium. It was so long ago. If I picture myself walking through it I think I can picture the man who wrote Saul's Book:

He looks like Hockney in his swimming pool phase which somebody chronicled in a film. In the film David Hockney is in love with a callous young man and paints him about to dive into swimming pools. There is Hockney with his glasses and tweedy thin figure suffering while friends worry on camera about him. His intensity and the boy's indifference and the hopelessness are there in that moment where the painted figure stands before the blue blue blue pool but does not actually hit water before your eyes.

thinking 3

The man who wrote Saul's Book is now dead and all I know about him is what the clipping said that it was his first book and he won a prize for it and dedicated it to his adopted son.

from Saul's Book

making love with my landlady mrs fitch on one incredible night on her kitchen floor for gods sake with her black mongrel terrier going crazy and licking us both all over and whining and panting squeezing her ass which was soooo ample

The problem is I keep imagining this man as incredibly lonely and I stop there. I imagine us sharing something a theory that people who are born lonely usually cope with it for a long long time. Like living with a nerve disease or leukemia or something until one day they wake up with the final attack and nobody ever really goes near them again.

One false move and I think the man who wrote Saul's Book will disappear from me forever.

Close to the not knowing. Got to respect that in people. Intuit the information. Just thinking about him I feel I may frighten him away.

thinking 4

Could we maybe meet in the park. Somewhere green. When we were little that's where my father took us to the somewhere green. Up to the street behind the oratory. Down the middle of the street were green oases rimmed in concrete. My father sat and read his paper for hours and we ran about and looked up at the dome of the church which was just about level with the street because the oratory is built on the side of a mountain. There wasn't anywhere for us to play but on the flat patches of grass but we played and we played until my father became the grass and the grass became the dome and the shadows of our family were stronger than our own.

conversion

I like measuring things in inches so I'm against
the metric system I want to stop its spread in cities
like calgary where the chinook fools even the wayward
I'm prepared to lobby in shopping malls and activate
in department stores I'm ready to lay my life on
the line I have taken the vow of inchiosity like
savarola I will throw every metric measuring cup
I can find onto the pyre I will smote the heathen
pyrex and tupperware from our shelves they will
not keep me out of homes they will not keep me out of
gas stations I will not rest till I have saved the nuts
from the bolts and brought the gallon back to god

my ideal man

it certainly isn't him because he's gorgeous
every inch of him is gorgeous he has curly
brown hair he looks like cupid and he is
cupid with the farthest away blue eyes you
ever saw

it certainly isn't him because he's sexy so
sexy when I think of kissing him I turn all
green and furry and mossy in fact I think
I'm a rock

it certainly isn't him because he's brilliant
and funny and can do anything and is afraid
of nothing and has a vision

it certainly isn't him because he is a great
lover and he rides you like a rocket and he
grabs your hips like soup tureen handles there
is just so much perfection a person can take

this is a story

we first met in absentia he was in hospital having very serious surgery and they put me in his office which was so permeated with his presence I felt almost calm which was hard in those days there was an old drafting table covered with cigarette burns my favourite and coloured markers all over the place mostly dried up because their lids had been left off and low dusty shelves with stuff dating back 20 years there was a scraggly collection of plants and a wooden swivel chair which had lost its swivel but not its tilt on the walls were bits and pieces of things which weren't necessarily important to him but got tacked up anyway to avoid getting thrown away by the cleaning lady and had stayed on the wall maybe 5 10 years and yellowed there there was a small window with a radiator you could adjust till the room was just about like an oven they gave me a typewriter and I cleaned up a spot to put it on but I always waited till the last minute to do things I liked to keep the office door almost shut and sit in his chair or look out the window somehow it just felt reassuring not to do anything just to be I could have gone up to the hospital to see him but things got mixed up and I helped them choose a book for him instead the secretary came back and reported that his hands were so tiny and dry with tubes in them

this is a story 2

when he came back we became friends almost right away I wanted to be around him all the time I was never afraid of having nothing to say or saying something stupid it all came out like the funny lettering that comes out of the mouths of saul steinberg characters we laughed all the time there was a man who had been his partner and liked him too and he was very angry with us though he never took it out on him he took it out on me he would slam his door in my face but we just kept getting closer and closer

this is a story 3

people were always in his office mostly women they just loved talking to him there was something edible about him you just couldn't get enough like thick peanut butter sandwiches or dipping your fingers in the honey jar he was a listener women told him their stories about their boyfriends and their lack of boyfriends and while they talked he smoked or he drew always one or the other and then he'd get up and butt his cigarette into a plant pot and everybody would exclaim ugggh and he'd light another he could talk and work at the same time he'd rip the finished sheets off his layout pad and they'd come in and take them away I wondered how he could listen so much and never say even a little bit about himself never even the tiniest me or myself it was control like iron bands or all those padlocks. houdini used to work with once the company tried to get rid of him but he survived and nobody knew that. at home he rebuilt his concrete steps and as he smashed at the concrete he fought them all it was a privilege to be told these things.

this is a story 4

I knew he cared for me but every now and then the bottom would fall out of it all and I would wonder if he was just friendly to me like everybody else I thought I saw something which other people didn't see while they were telling him things while he was listening and everybody loved him he was really far far away he was a sea shell and they were the sea which just came and went and didn't make any difference when you don't need anybody everybody needs you I was never jealous of him except once when we got a new department secretary and she discovered him like everybody else I started off liking her a lot but things went wrong she was tall and she wore brownish lipstick always kind of fresh and wet and she obviously spent a lot of time ironing her clothes and polishing her shoes I wondered if she ever got depressed and just didn't feel like putting a lace camisole under an ironed blouse she talked about her boyfriend phil all the time and how they made love all night once he told me she came in with her hair kind of matted and looking sort of cross-eyed because she and phil had been on another marathon he liked hearing about it because he liked talking about sex then she got pregnant by phil my little phil she would say she wanted to pose for him because he was talking about drawing classes at the time but the classes never happened so one day she just lifted up her dress and showed him her stomach I imagine it was brown like the rest of her

this is a story 5

if you love someone I guess you want to share things with them maybe you share a bed a trip to europe many years a child we shared escape from everything sitting on our two chairs playing possum with everyone around us I want to go to the arctic he said I'll go with you I said it's not such a bad life except soon it's all over and something's kept you from doing things everyone always kept asking him for drawings I rescued one from the garbage and got it mounted it is a perfect little square of rows and rows of women's faces looking up which is unusual because his drawings were women's torsos and occasionally watercolour trees so beautiful they looked just like a tear splashed on the page and burst into bloom the people you really love go away

this is a story 6

if I lose my mind I hope they let me keep a
few fragments I wouldn't need much because
moments with him were like a lifetime lived fully
and well I would ask for the memory of late
afternoon when he would draw and I would think
of words and I would place my feet through the bars
of his chair under his side I would ask for
the memory of the day he asked me to his
daughter's wedding

this is a story 7

one day the company folded most companies go bankrupt slowly but this company died so fast people's coffee cups were still full on their desks we packed up our things and there was something we couldn't share his feelings about a long hard life in the company while I packed up my things effortlessly he stared at his markers and table and drawings like burn wounds we could have been in a wheat field with the wind whirling the shafts furiously we got in somebody's car and drove first to his home and left his things on the front steps and then to my home and left my things in my apartment lobby years have passed we have reorganized our lives we had photos taken of us in front of a church the church wasn't intentional but was suggested by the photographer who was a man we liked a lot at the company we sat on the grass in late autumn and we were laughing a lot and in the middle of the session a young man came up to us and said this was the exact spot he was supposed to meet his brother whom he hadn't seen for years after saying it he didn't really interrupt us just stood quietly while the photographer took more photos there we were very close in black and white stuck side by side unless somebody loses the photos but that doesn't erase the fact they were taken but what is most amazing is the foliage behind us it is like a theatre backdrop was it an accident or was the photographer so perceptive to see we once made leaves together

broadway melody of 1940

I think prejudice is interesting
this is because I am very prejudiced
for example I feel superior to people
who wear platform shoes I think jews
have a thing about money and blacks
have a thing about sex I think people
should keep their problems to themselves
I have had one abortion and I have a
way with horses I think the day of my
father's funeral was one of the most
interesting days of my life I think I
would make a most munchable wife

the power of women

mrs dunlop had long earlobes which were quite wrinkled because she was quite old and made longer by the earrings she favoured generally blue rhinestones she talked thickly with a lot of spittle probably because she had false teeth she taught us geometry and the old testament we learned how to use a protractor and we sympathized with job and I learned something useful from her too I learned which side my bread was buttered on whose side I would take and what camp I would settle in

one day mrs dunlop got into an argument she said that elizabeth taylor was a sinful woman because she had so many husbands and the class brain who had iq genes the size of icecubes and a face like a porcelain geisha from the 3rd century argued back she said mrs dunlop's opinion was a load of crap which was quite cataclysmic in the days when a 14 year old was a 14 year old and mrs dunlop turned from a teacher into a plain old woman almost in a minute

just like

when my mother prepared vegetables
I felt close to god or happiness or
something soft and velvety where there
was no fear she cut up the beans in
little beanlets and the carrots into
coins and put them in water sometimes
she popped a crunchy bit into her mouth
she did it very slowly and when she
poured in the water sometimes she poured
in too much and poured it out with
her hand on the sides of the pot so the
vegetables wouldn't flow out into the sink
into the sewer into people's homes where
there were other families just like
us eating vegetables under the cool
watchful eyes of king carrot and buddha
bean

catapult

a stinking hot summer day and you have
to lug a cake home and it's just a mess
the icing goes wild on you and cries rape
and you rush to the bathroom like lady
macbeth well he was my cake and my icing
too he wasn't comforting being with him
was being with winter looking for anywhere
anywhere warm I wanted to touch him I
wanted to hold him most of all I wanted
to bury my nose in his hair I wanted us
to eat together stay in bed together his
nails were always clean he looked like a
confederate yankee I could see a uniform
with many shiny buttons a bayonet a funny
hat but he wasn't a soldier he couldn't
even defend his own life one day he said
to me let's do it and we went to his house
we didn't even lie down on a bed we went
to a mirror I watched him touch himself
many times each time I said to myself
I am going for an icecream with my
friend make it pistachio icecream is
cooling to the tongue

what to do

when mona's tortured lisa smiles that's the
way it is in big business but not in families
mona can hardly make the grade if lisa is suffering
but suppose lisa is suffering because mona is a
wandering monad wandering along not happy as a
clam not free as a bird but confused like the
great wall of china must forget how many bricks
it has exactly what do you suggest to moes when
he has a headache take a tablet what do you do
when greatness isn't so great anymore

an evening with two intellectuals

it's hard to be with an intelligent person when
you're dumb it's even harder to be with two
intelligent persons when you're dumb and imagine
if those two intelligent people live together

one evening I spent an evening with two such people

intelligent people aren't impressed by clothing
they're impressed by ideas

at dinner we ate tofu on lettuce my dinner cost
\$2 which the man paid for with the woman's charge
card I couldn't get over the questions he asked
me he really seemed interested they were all
about my life

I wondered if I should quote him a poem which is
what I said I did a haiku maybe

turd on lettuce
a brown moment in history

but I thought better of it

because here I was with a couple who had
everything including good looks and each other.

china

I was ashamed of his kisses and his kissing me in public the smacks were always very loud and they rang in my ears long afterwards so I devised an elaborate procedure and found many things I had to do in the morning before school so he and my brother left for the bus without me I was ashamed of the way he stammered when he was excited and his white hair which he had at a very early age when I opened the door he was gone for good I have nothing of his not an old worn fedora or a stained tie not a pair of metal eyeglasses or the last book he read he is as absent in momento as he was in my heart but there is one photograph in which his young face is as bright and forthright as a china saucer rimming a china cup

how I discovered the orgasm

my bedroom was quite small. almost like a pretty nun's cell. there was a little bed and maple chest of drawers, a green quilted chair and a dressing table shaped like a person's kidney that fitted cleverly over the radiator in front of the window.

when I looked out the window I saw our street with our neighbours' houses tidily lined up. we never got inside a single one. my bedspread, curtains and the skirt of my dressing table were in a print of garden flowers.

I kept my room neat as a pin. I dusted off the top of the maple dresser at least once a day. I washed off the glass top on my dressing table and I arranged my china animals in new and pleasing configurations. over my green chair was a small green bulletin board which I always kept empty because I liked order. I even arranged the tacks in a little clump in one corner.

one day we were playing and I was clowning around. I hoisted myself onto my bedroom door for no particular reason and sort of hung there. while suspended I noticed this strange tingling in my private parts. the tingling turned into a very quick throb and I looked around to see if anybody noticed anything different about me.

org 2

after that I could hardly wait to repeat the experience. I used my cupboard door instead of my bedroom door in case my mother was in the vicinity.

sometimes I wondered if the neighbours who could look in my window ever saw me. I wondered about the smith boy who my mother fixed up with my cousin when she visited us from the states. my mother was shocked because she turned her meat pie upside down on the plate. I never saw him through his windows but I thought somebody in that house surely saw me.

getting the throb via the door was very awkward and I discovered again by accident that there were other ways it could happen too. for example when I climbed ropes in gym. the trouble was you couldn't just hang there you had to keep climbing so I had to try something more dangerous.

our school had a playroom where we used to play records and house and wear teachers' old hats and shoes. once I got athlete's foot. in the earlier days of the school that room had been a gym and there was a rope hidden behind a panel. I couldn't climb with people around so I used to get to school very early and sneak into the room and just hang there. on several occasions I was almost caught which made the throb even throbber

org 3

I shared my secret with my friend brenda and it felt better to share it. she tried the rope and she said she felt something but it didn't seem to impress her.

when we broke up the house my mother sold the contents of my little room. I didn't feel any pain I didn't care if I left it I was fantasizing about a new room new furniture white and magazine-like wallpaper and lamps with gauze god if I could go back touch the window the cupboard the door knobs.

sashaying up to authority

mister policeman which way to the nearest
icecream parlor my what a big gun you have
there have you ever used it on anybody blood
is sticky like icecream and thicker than the
water you wash it off with like the mating call
of a mad duck that crash lands in the duck pond
with the plastic replicas it doesn't take much
to start a blood bath one orange peel floating
on the water one gum wrapper placed just right
a blood bath is a bubble bath when your blood's
in theirs and their blood's in yours

let's elope and eat cantaloupe

what's it like sleeping with your son
I think I know first you pretend that
the bed is a sandbox or a crib age is
no object an old man or a very beautiful
young man will do you laugh a lot and
you call it funny names like peter rabbit
or two minutes to midnight you let him
plan a life together where you are the
princess and he is the pea and while he
plays with your mumzies you make him tea

I love you

I love you like a fish loves the sea
it doesn't have any choice it was born there
and it dies without water and I would
die without you you are in my limbs when
I stretch out and skim the surface you
are in my heart when there are many tiny
silver bubbles and people follow them
if there was a hook you would take it in
your mouth to spare me if you were dying
you would not even tell me in case I
stopped swimming fish are not thought of
as affectionate creatures

pearls

I have big fat white pearls so fat an oyster
would have to have a haemorrhage to have one
of them they're obviously fake and the faker
things are these days the more I fake it
for example I've lost my friends and I keep
on talking

try

try explaining to somebody who's rather ugly and will have a very hard time being loved that truth is beauty they're busy constructing a beautiful soul and even then they'll never make it because beautiful people have even more beautiful souls that everybody's just dying to let into heaven because it gets the place good publicity you feel sorry if somebody beautiful dies you even stop while your whitewall tires are being cleaned and you think about it about how the beautiful person expired usually by a beautiful disease like tb or if it's one of the unreasonable ones how probably it polished them off before they lost their looks beautiful people get loads and loads of love they inject it like a drug sideways ugly people pay their bills try explaining all this to an ugly person who is building character like the slaves built the pyramids

when I was 16

when I was 16 I wrote poems under a pseudonym
I called myself francesca saletes francesca
sounded like a woman who had martyred herself for love
and saletes sounded like the french revolution I
got a poem published and my acceptance letter got
put into the mailbox of our apartment landlord because
it was his name saletes I had stolen he was a
handsome man who played around with other men's wives
and he had given my mother a nice new grey
tile bathroom but poems weren't too important
to me then what was important to me was order
I kept all my things in boxes and when the boxes
got smudges on them I covered them with green
paper and flower stickers I played around with
words but what I loved most was supplies I loved
pads and pens coloured pencils erasers and ink
bottles I had all kinds of coloured ink and
I would take out the bottles periodically and clean
the tops with damp kleenex and screw them
back on again and when I put the bottles back in
the drawer which was warped and you had to slam
shut of course the ink in the bottles swamped the
tids all over again

chocolat

there's an old roman story about these greedy
relatives who wanted to inherit the earth and
the kingdom too so they had to take a boat ride
to a deserted island where they had to eat a
rich relative's corpse before they could get
hold of his fortune but why does it have to
be that disgusting suppose someone you loved
died and they turned into something delicious
like a chocolate cream pie or a giant tootsie
roll suppose when he lay there I could have
eaten him instead licked the truth from him
round and round like an éclair bitten off a
toe like a vanilla wafer biscuit poured his
courage into me like the thickest fruitiest
jam with the seeds still swimming in the
sweetness carried against any stream

well

well I think I'll have my hair done
this time it'll be something dramatic something
with spikes and I think I'll sleep with my hairdresser
even though he's gay and I'll give him a huge tip
and offer to take him to europe I'll pat his ass which
is about two inches wide I'll absolutely and positively
insinuate my way into his life because from what I
hear about him he's got a pretty interesting life
you know artistic with all kinds of interesting arty
friends that do interesting arty things like go to new
york to museums and bathhouses just hate the thought of
all that fucking and art makes me jealous because the two
go together he has black hair my hairdresser and he looks
like something from italian vogue that just hasn't been
discovered yet he even has a portfolio of pictures a
friend took of him and the best ones of him are with
glasses I mean you just want to rip the picture out and hang
it up in your shower stall or something how can anyone
be that gorgeous that magnetic and that popular popular
is the thing who just doesn't want to be loved loved
to death

marilyn loves me yes I know
her bare bosom tells me so

I'm going to do something that may offend
you but it's basically because I'm quite a
religious person even downright spiritual
I'm going to try and imagine what might have
happened to me in sunday school if they'd
taught me about marilyn instead of the
transmigration of souls you see this was
the point where I left sunday school one
day a teacher who obviously had a para-religious
bent because this was a very conservative
united church sunday school drew little
stick men on the blackboard and they
went in a circle like paper dolls she explained
that when you died your soul escaped like
gas out of your body just a wee wisp of a
thing and then it underwent various blackboard
transformations and I never went back to
sunday school and my mother understood
because they had made her go almost every day
of the week and the other thing they had made
her do which she detested was clean chickens
and even wring their necks so she didn't make
me do that either

marilyn 2

I have several other sunday school memories one was that we sat on small painted chairs and they showed us the bible stories with full colour illustrations another was thursday nights when I got to go to church again this time for girl guides in the basement and before going home I would drag my friend meg who was retarded and had no willpower up to the pews and we would climb onto the altar and jump off

now imagine if they had showed us pictures of marilyn in some like it hot with black and white photos instead of jesus with the loaves and the fishes we might have sat on our small wooden chairs and been explained that famous photo in a white dress where the dress rides above her legs like the crest of a wave marilyn and jesus definitely make a pair I liked daniel in the lions den but I would have appreciated marilyn's vacant eyes even more with her head tilted back all the time like she was just exhausted from doing it all the time or like she was having a hard time holding her breasts together she had the best high high heels I've ever seen she had the most sadness suppose marilyn turned into jesus and sat at that long table with the apostles and took pills and suppose jesus turned into a marilyn doll and you could dress him for gethsemane in a tulle dress and various sets of miniature plastic sandals

marilyn 3

a photographer took pictures of marilyn
just before she died in her new house
he said he was certain her death was an
accident because she had so many plans
there was one upholstered chair in her
house and her foot is on it in one of
the photos suppose as sunday school
children we saw just one picture to make
us love god instead of the nails and the
crosses suppose it was marilyn finding
peace

practice

when you've just made love you lie against
your lover maybe because there's no place else
in the bed or maybe because you want reassurance
there is a piece of newspaper caught in my
asparagus fern I rescue it from the ferny jaws
of death it says female vocalist needed by
songwriter and comedy auditions for amateur
night I am certainly an amateur even though
I'm living and I practice living every day
I've never quite got the hang of it

sleeping habits

in indonesia when you look at your bed you see a long sausage shaped thing in your bedclothes it's not a giant worm or a dead person it's a kind of cushion called a guling or dutch wife and the indonesians wrap themselves about it and pass out like a light I am 45 years old and in my country and my apartment I wrap my legs about nothing

which is fine with me because I get a good night's sleep I hate being tired even if there's a good reason I only wear a nightgown if I'm sleeping in somebody else's house which is practically never and I always put on clean underpants in case I'm carried away in the night by zeus I sleep with a small toy koala in grey plush which I'm careful to pack on business trips if I play with myself

it's with a certain reserve because I'm most anxious to get to sleep in fact I've started out with the best intentions and just dropped off I'm always careful too just before going off to sleep to fold up my grandmother's quilt which I would never ever sleep with it is white with tiny edges like toast points and colonial ladies with flower bell skirts and parasols the ladies don't have faces you just see their bonnets and assume there are faces inside

stardom

I like to watch women getting along or not getting along I like it when women don't pretend don't layer on the sweetness when they want to leave stretch marks on each other's faces I would like to plan a meal with my latin teacher and noella who is a transvestite I met at a movie theatre and then I would like to watch them eat from behind a glass the kind they use in police lineups my latin teacher wore satin blouses with long sleeves which emphasized her bust which stuck out like a shelf and she wore a blue beaded thing that looked like a small indian tomahawk she had lovely pink skin for an old lady and purred her rs we were rough with her and she couldn't control the glass noella always wears black a short black leather skirt black blouse stockings and high heels which she walks in awkwardly with bow legs she is very tall and wears a red wig and knows everything about films and doesn't mince words about being you know so what if I planned a meal my latin teacher would keep on talking latin and anyway you can put words in latin in any order and noella would just run her long nails over her net stockings which are very black against her legs which are very white and they'd just get through it like the best of friends get through a friendship before they even know what's happened

plastered

I think I know what it feels like when
a whale falls on top of you when he was
drunk he just passed out on top of me at
the beginning I liked it I liked him
about as much as I have liked anybody
even more which wasn't enough he lived
in a colouring book where even if you
tried till you got a headache you just
couldn't keep inside the lines but there
were so many wonderful thick crayony colours
in that book in fact you might use three
yellow crayons just on somebody's head and
then blue trying to get their nose right.

if I really

my kiwi fruit sit like hand grenades
on the counter waiting for me to pull
out the pin today is my birthday
they had to do away with the presents
and the cakes with the pink meltdown
candles the cards and the caring
I had to stop thinking anything
special would happen on this day
that it would be a day just like
any other day when I took the bus
washed the floor wielded the grey
mob like a disembodied head but
knowing knowing if I wanted if I
really wanted I had me to rock
gently me

prom queen

I was a prom queen once in my own mind wearing my pink prom dress but only when I looked at the dress not at my face my prom dress had tiers of ruffles I was a walking wedding cake though I did not go to the prom with the boy I almost married I might have enjoyed the prom if my hair had not been plastered to my head in one fat curl I was the conch shell that didn't dance and when it came down to it my prom dress wasn't so great either from a distance it created an impression but up close it wasn't the right material for the ruffles besides I'd made her sew it when she came home from the hospital from the operating table to the sewing box ruffle after ruffle I marked her progress I was determined to make my entrance as a woman and she'd had her womanness all scraped out

geography lesson

I'd like to be sitting in geography class right now geography was my worst subject all I remember is that rich countries used to have lots of exports and poor ones had hardly any because they needed everything for themselves kind of like our poor period at home when you could tell we weren't buying anything because we didn't even have one extra paper bag I remember that bunga used gourds as dishes and that I didn't like the graphs with curves but I liked the ones with columns because I could colour them pink and lime green I'd like to be learning about produce and temperatures right now I'd have the motivation and the attention span to do it I remember the perfect green map I made which was the last thing I ever had to do with geography it had to be carried into class by several people because it had things stuck on it marzipan vegetables right across europe, and rice crispies in russia I remember my best friend the only best woman friend I've ever had who was brilliant and liked to draw all the time she even wrote her tests in two colours of ink and she was beautiful I loved being her friend she wore skirts with more crinolines than anybody else in class and she carried a white purse in hard plastic which she arranged at least 15 times a day

geography lesson 2

she could make anybody do anything because she was brilliant and beautiful when you were supposed to be paying attention when you couldn't even reach out and touch your eraser they let her draw because they knew she understood everything she always drew women who looked like tarts women from other centuries in costumes with busty bodices and beauty spots on the bus she would only throw in half a ticket and she wasn't afraid of boys it started with chocolate bars she began to give drawing lessons to a girl in return for chocolate and she was very greedy first she drew women naked and the girl had to dress them I watched them from behind my desk become friends her new friend learned how to make breasts that were perfect circles and draped we didn't know the word sexy at the time

the law

it may be the new testament in our head
but it is the old testament in our heart
if someone blows smoke in your face the law
says love thy neighbour in the no smoking
zone but if the angel of death in one of
those white nightshirts could come and take
the smoker away so you could finish your salad
you would do it because the lettuce is green
and the cucumbers are crisp

you need a father and a mother to get into
this world but you don't need anybody to get
out of it and you only need a few people to
get on with it it's the middle part that kind
of worries me these days and days of stinging
consciousness I've been near death a couple
of times once by my own hand once by a
jelly fish that looked like a purple easter
bonnet I was 13 years old and swimming in
florida except those near deaths weren't
much of a useful rehearsal because life
just seemed around the corner like the next
welfare cheque I do have something to go
on though something more pointed than death
it's the memory that never got properly
memorized it's the tiny hand losing its grip
and flailing helplessly

raccoon love

making raccoon love which is love with
a black man if you are a white woman
which I am have you ever seen the way
raccoons lie on trees they lie on them
on their stomachs with their feet hanging
over like bath towels on bath racks making
love with a black man is like having too
much sugar in your diet and we've only had
sugar in our diet over the last 150 years
when you first make love with a black man
it goes right to your head you want black
babies and you pin pictures up of them
on your refrigerator you vacuum every inch
of your bed searching for tiny hair coils
like watch springs you kiss a mouth that
is very thick melon lips that tell people
even the bank that you are good in bed you
touch a body that is free of hair a depilatory
dream and the colour of coffee that's holding
on to its cream you allow penetration at
least a dozen times a baker's dozen because
you are light and powdery you let him knead
his doughy voodoo into you and then one day
black is simply white

despair of a despicable kind

I think of all the scenes I can think of with snow
 Jean Paul Lemieux's painting for example where people
 are all alone in great white blanks like salt and
 pepper shakers on a huge tablecloth or Christmas cards
 that would pile up in my parents home with scenes of
 farmhouses and old mill streams sometimes bits of silver
 sparkles glued on I can feel myself drawn into one of
 those cards right now into a landscape that isn't really
 like nature but perhaps heaven white heaven when you die
 very peaceful I can hear the water running in those
 streams and those branches with bright red berries against
 snow and farm equipment against snow and sleighs and
 horses and bells and steeples I think people who made
 up the cards didn't realize what they were doing and hit
 on this world this other world accidentally just watching
 snow is like death and dying each flake is distinct for
 a moment before it hits the ground and the spaces between
 the flakes are like me and him we're in parallel right now
 in space and in time but because I love him I am ashamed
 that despair is the tangible thing we've found to talk
 about after this long silence the short being away
 which has become longer than the time we have loved each other

snow falling on a thousand maybe even a million
 cemeteries white on white snow falling on soldiers
 frozen in little lumps covering them up so just a face
 peeks through the softness of it the hardness of the ground
 when they try to dig a grave in winter there is a balcony
 on the old mansion opposite a pencilled balcony a lick
 and a slick of wrought iron it is the shape of a trundle
 bed with a fat white comforter of snow the bedroom outside
 the house outside the windows

when we were children what we liked best about snow
 was snowhouses tunneling into drifts building cold
 wombs no one could find us except there was nothing
 to hide from but pure happiness

one for tea

I can remember the china canisters with blue windmills on them there was one for tea one for coffee one for sugar one for flour they had hinged brown wooden lids and you'd open one and get very irritated because there was nothing inside I remember the neon light which made everything ugly and medical an operating room with blood and guts instead of cereal and meatloaf so I kept switching the little light on instead but she preferred the neon

mother and daughter

there were many old people in the room
selling old shoes old purses old linen
she was one of them

there is a secret between us most poetically
expressed by a kiss made very rapidly

if you love someone you may want to leave
them on a windy night or even in the middle
of traffic I left her still selling but
something happened before I did

her table had tablecloths on it at her
end and handkerchiefs at the end I was
inspecting strange handkerchiefs in cream
silk with stiff black lace edges I had
never seen handkerchiefs like this before
and I looked at each one like it was a
snowflake that had just come out of a
chimney it was the black lace stiff
against my fingers those are mourning
handkerchiefs she said don't buy them so
I didn't because we both wanted to live

juggernaut

there is a black horse plunging out of the sky
in front of me which is appropriate because
leonard and I have been talking about juggernauts
leonard says that the reason time passes faster
and faster is that it is weighted down by all
the years behind you like a juggernaut. I never
knew what juggernaut meant before. I didn't
know it meant a heavy flying menacing object I
thought it was maybe a colourful three dimensional
kite with bright diamond sections bobbing
in the air not something that's supposed to kill you
there is paint everywhere in the studio nothing
to do with writing. tins of paint and paint splatters
and people's painting on the wall. the girl is
scrubbing her brushes behind me. it sounds like
my mother washing socks in the deep kitchen sink
and rubbing them together. swish swish.
that rubbing was so reassuring. everything
was so clean love felt through so many tender things
done without gratitude. there is jazz on the radio
the kind of sad background jazz they play which
is quite terrific but nobody's listening just
swinging around on their barstools looking for
their next pickup. I wonder if my mother went
into bars when she was young or even older
probably not. except her life seems like a
bar song who has been listening isn't there
anybody out there with a stethoscope checking
for irregular heartbeats

ad nauseum

I used to write ads
in the daytime I saw clients and found out
what kind of ads they wanted me to write
then I would come home and write the ads
writing the ads took me till about 10 at
night then I would have my dinner I never
ate before I wrote the ads because then
I was too sleepy to write them but
after writing them I would take a frozen
lamb chop out of the fridge and thaw it
under the tap and cook some rice and some
broccoli and some cherry tomatoes and
some apple juice and I would eat my food
on my desk looking out my window and then
I would retype the ads which took me till
about 11:30 then I would take my makeup
off and put calomine on my acne than about
midnight I would have my bath that is why
my sheets stayed relatively clean during
those years because I had my bath before
I slept on them I would turn on my metal
adjusto-lamp on the corner of my bed and
I would turn off the green deco lamp on
my bureau with the three gold fish on it
and I would take out a book and I would
read one page and I would fall asleep now
I'm married and living in california

I refuse to let a rose die
a rose with me is promised eternal
life because every time it shows
the slightest sign of wilting I
revive it under the hot water tap
that's what you do with roses shove
those stems in hot water and the
petals just perk up but people
aren't so motivating it's hard to shove
an arm or a leg in a tumbler the
person protests and if you offer
to give them a bath and the water's
extra hot and you push their head
under for good measure they get
suspicious

goodbye

I said I'd go and even though I was afraid to
I went it was the 75th anniversary of my old school
a girls' school miss edgewise and miss crumb now
called ecs in deference to progress I was afraid
to travel back in time to those painful days afraid
to meet old classmates and resume that crippling
hierarchy I have kept anger even hate alive in me
like a glowing coal but a ghost is a ghost I
discovered walking up the hill so slowly I could
have been carrying shopping bags or been overly pregnant
the school is a long low building and has been
rebuilt since my days so it is even stranger it
was rainy cold autumn and there were 75th anniversary
banners and flags at the entrance getting wet and
a helpful man was running across the lawn trying
to reattach the unattached we couldn't get in
at first because there was a ribbon cutting
ceremony at the front door and it gave me time
to study the faces generations of women like
gradations of shell there was a softness in the faces
and I felt ashamed of my hostility the crowd
suddenly surged forward and we walked into history
assembled by the newest generation of students as
fresh as petit fours on a plate we walked past
memorabilia old uniforms yearbooks I saw my name
on a wooden scroll like the lists of the dead in
world wars one and two I hadn't counted on the
human factor the feeling of people's pulses heartbeats
fingernails they seemed more important than the fact

goodbye 2

that I ever went to school here all drawing breath here seemed more important not feeling it necessary to stand up to defend one's speck in time being mute seeing through water out through the windows of the school to a woman coming up the hill in the wind with a huge fashionably unfashionable hat too late for the lunch we ate together in the gym turned cleverly into a spencerian bower complete with a backdrop of pink puff trees this is a woman's school and women have always intimidated me got anything they wanted out of me there was a choir singing while we ate salad and french bread two women I grew up with were at the table our lives grated together for an instant like a nail on glass we talked like hallmark cards on this very pretty day we sat together and were gay one said she would not drink much because she had to drive back to ottawa to her children we said goodbye it was as easy as swallowing a canapé I retraced my steps to a boarder's room recreated from the 1920's a small white trundle a pair of silver party slippers with tiny heels and straps I could only bring myself to try on one it fit perfectly balancing on one foot in this little white room saying hello to what

cataracts

families are like christmas balls that
get packed year after year in the same
red tissue that crumples like skin and
fades and tears but it's part of
christmas and new tissue would be a
heresy almost all the balls which are
silver with coloured inserts have remained
intact and the broken ones have been
kept in the box with plans to repair them
each year have you ever heard a christmas
ball smashing it sounds like weeping
when you are not allowed to weep

lavoris

I hate to be morbid in fact this is one subject
I rarely look into I won't even go to movies
about it and when my friends bring it up I clap my
hands over my ears but here I am bringing it up
it's nuclear war and what object would I keep
with me

and here I am imagining if I were allowed to keep
one thing on me assuming I was still alive what
would it be and I'd have to say my lavoris bottle
at the moment that's the perfect exemplar of life
a happier time I suppose you're disappointed because
you think a lavoris bottle is ugly you see them
in drugstores with very thick white caps big plastic
bottles of red stuff but there was a time when a
lavoris bottle was beautiful round with little
circles around it and all it said was lavoris as
glibly as pepsi or have a nice day just lavoris
floating on glass

holding my little bottle with maybe just seconds
to live I might choose to remember being little
myself and sitting in a big white leather dentist's
chair just the minute before the end when it was
all over and my teeth and gums were sacrosanct
I'd get a little white paper cup no lavoris ever
tasted like my dentist's

carpathian mountains

we're all going to the moon she would say
when he got really excited about something
then there would be a sock to mend crumbs
to wipe off the counter with crumbs she
was relentless manoeuvring around you
with the dishcloth like a u-boat there
were the little cardboard collars to
remove from his shirts that was in the
days when we had money to send things
to the laundry there was his dressing
gown which she lived in like a ruined
temple and smoked a thousand cigarettes
when I was 21 he and I watched jackie kennedy
attend church right outside our house
and once together we saw a hot air
balloon streak across the sky they shut
each other out they broke each other's
wills as you might break a window for
no particular reason but they did love
us

warm as toast

I'd like to say a thing or two about melba
angel who made poodles out of plastic bags
and worked for the government melba's mother
made things too and named melba after her first
project a melba toast box converted into a
sun visor they lived in a round house and all
the tables and chairs were covered with their
projects which melba had to work on nights and
weekends and then give away to bazaars

melba had a thing about kleenex she made
kleenex wrappers that looked positively byzantine
wrappers for individual packages and wrappers
for whole boxes in gilt and precious stones

I never saw melba but I knew she must exist
because things kept piling up on the tables
and because her mother kept talking about her
and about the vacations they took together
she even showed me her room which only had
furniture no personal effects I have to admit
I knew melba by her art by the toothbrushes
with the plastic roses glued onto the handles
so you cut your hand when you brushed your
teeth by the pink and green sprayed brillo
pad coasters that scratched your table and
spilled your drinks melba was the first artist
I ever met even if I never met her

warm as toast 2

melba inspired me at an early age taught me that art
is life and you don't have to be weird to live it
you can be tidy and happy and close to people you
love and everybody loves you because you're true
to what you do art is like melba's match boxes
made out of recycled ink pads in which the ink of
course has dried up and when you take out a match
and strike it it doesn't light but the whole box
ignites because it's art and there's a lovely
little faded blue patch on your finger melba
blue

sometimes I sleep

when I read other people's stuff I just want to throw in the towel and even fold it so I just try to forget about it sometimes I sleep

sometimes I try to remember times I was really happy that was definitely in the past now if I get lucky and get happy it's not with a situation it's with a thing an object to me is a little burst of happiness for example the vase of tulips in the middle of my living room floor right now

I was really happy with him once but of course that's when happiness wasn't a concept we did so many things together I was thinking today of how I liked tidying his room much more than my own I'd start with the shelves which were a kind of turquoise green he kept his little metal cars and trucks on them for a period I used to discover burnt matches behind things because he was experimenting matches have always made me sick so I would go to the bathroom and get a piece of kleenex so I could pick them up to throw them away

he used to build houses with minibricks he just like building them then he left them on the window sill and I was allowed to furnish the insides then there were his model airplanes he was spoiled and he used to get a new model almost every week which he built in a matter of hours and then lost interest

sometimes I sleep 2

I remember that room with the turquoise walls
and the dark turquoise checkered drapes and
bedspreads and the two pine beds when we were
very young we had baths together and the part
I liked best was the end when I scoured the tub
but I put him at the front near the hot water
tap to keep him warm so he wouldn't get
impatient sometimes I scoured extra long

he wore corduroy pants with little suspenders to
keep them on his tiny frame and when he had his socks
on I'd pull him back and forth by his suspenders
like an arrow on a bow

the game he liked best was war the game I liked
best was reservoir sometimes on the same day
we would play both he would build an armada
of ships with shoe boxes and building blocks and
bits of timber from his log cabin frontier set
I would lie on the red leather couch while war
raged about my feet and then he would humour me
he would wear a helmet and charge with a stick and
save me from falling into the beyond

when she was

when she was a child I don't know what her hands held I know she lived with an aunt in new york who was a great cook made rubharb swallowed her tongue went stiff as a board on the floor in fits I know once they gave her socks to wear when it was cold instead of mittens I know in the shame of it she turned to opera to characters like madame butterfly who have held on dearly I know that she longed for her father's store and the broken linoleum in the kitchen for her brothers sisters mother but I do not know the one thing she wanted for herself

love

I think that love is an alloy of white or
sangria there is a café where they serve sangria
in summer watered down it is filled with arabs
and beautiful women very tanned wearing high
heeled sandals in irridescent nail polish colours
wearing bare legs I wouldn't get away with that
in the summer these streets are filled with
people in sunglasses eating salads people with
big bums wearing pants with little sailboats
on them

when ursula was dying I made a point of walking
straight from the hospital to these streets
ursula loved food the last meal we had together
she had swiss fondue and I had veal cutlet

I've only watched one other person die before and
it was a clean death with tubes and oxygen and
the person far far away but ursula was alive
like a little flower like the bedsheet
somebody brought from home with the tiny sprigs
budding all over her cot

love 2

going up to the hospital was a kind of religious journey first of all you had to go up a very steep hill the road was lined with woods and it was always hot and sunny I brought gifts like the magi flowers and even a nightgown which ursula did not like and told me so even when somebody's dying you can be petty I nursed my feelings while the cancer swirled and bloomed inside ursula's body

the part of the hospital ursula was in was the oldest wing kind of victorian with a sun porch instead of a revolving door no sounds of intercom in the lobby no one about really old wheelchairs with cane backs and lots of green paint you could have sat down and got served raspberry vinegar nearby you could hear people splashing in the hospital pool which wasn't supervised so people in the city who found out about it would just come up and use it even I could have gone for a swim

for a while ursula was alone in her sunny room then they put other sick women in with her which was easier on visitors but not on her I've read in a book about the stages of dying it's supposed to work out and you get to the acceptance stage but ursula was angry it was just too unfair even when the drugs turned her into a paperweight and she lay there holding down the sheets the anger blazed I lifted her legs onto a chair I watched her spit thick white sputum into a bowl

love 3

I never said ursula I love you because I don't know much about love except it's not supposed to count unless it's measured on a voltmeter two lovers throttling each other in the dark a mother a daughter gouging each other's hearts out

one day I went up to the hospital and ursula was gone but really gone because there were no friends no relatives to discuss anything with not even a funeral notice I will always remember one thing I will always remember when ursula looked at me lying on her bed she looked right through me one paperweight to another she did not look at me with love even though the room was soft with wings beating and disease and the heavy night air of summer she saw everything and even in the tearful shame of it she made me feel alive