

# Pareidolia

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## Abstract

Pareidolia

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*Pareidolia* is a poetic cross-genre (creative writing) manuscript in three parts that interrogates techno-colonial-capitalism's and the medical and wellness industrial complexes' individualizing constructions of mental health and illness. The first part is comprised of lyric poems that conceptually foreground the mediated and/or dissociated psychology of the speaker in the digital age. The second part draws on the form of the feminist surrealist short story to defamiliarize themes such as nature, medicalization, and neoliberal routine. Finally, the third part hybridizes poetry and the essay in a case study of three monuments from 1962 that I see as co-featuring in creating our dominant societal affective atmosphere: the International Style building, Place Ville Marie, erected as an "archetype of technological know-how" in its "physical, aesthetic, and emotional presence" (*Place Ville Marie: Montreal's Shining Landmark*, Vanlaethem, France et al., 9), and the concurrent publication of two psychological texts by major emotion theorists, Silvan Tomkins's *Affect Imagery Consciousness* and Magda Arnold's *Story Sequence Analysis*.

With references, mainly, to affect theory and various figures of the modernist canon, I plumb the material and ideological origins of our cruelly optimistic state of political and climate crisis. I examine, further, the technological prescriptions and products that have become ubiquitous. How does our dependence on such products and diagnostic and commodifying formulas of thinking shape our emotional and physical dynamics with ourselves, others, and the land? How do our products and formulas alter or distort the way we project ourselves in the past, present, and future? *Pareidolia*—inspired by contemporary thinkers like Lisa Robertson and Dionne Brand as much as Sianne Ngai and Anna Tsing—attends to the porous and temporally fluid relationship between the body, mind, technology, and environment.

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As a settler in Tiotia:ke, or so-called Montreal, my learning has taken place on unceded Indigenous land, and the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) people.

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***If you like to be looked at and I like to look at you,***

*we may achieve an enjoyable interpersonal relationship,*  
said Silvan Tomkins in 1962. But the way she feels alone is  
orthogonal at 6am, standing naked at her kitchen  
table to eat cold chicken leftover with her fingers, body-  
hunger depressed, and depression, hungry, its colour, flat  
and yawning, the pale nausea of the dust pink  
linoleum floor. If a neighbour sees her through the  
window ahead of her, she hopes not to know. The glass,  
grey, a shade to see through or across, never  
in. She watches herself gloss her own mouth, open  
her need upright, close it with teeth, a divisively  
finite excavation, and wonders: from what algorithmic  
distance does meat go off, like shame? When does  
a woman's reflected body in its undressed instant become  
data, a theory, that threat? In the apartment below, a bird  
trills in a cage, or a cellphone rings the alarm, colic; upstairs, the cut of a baby's blind crying

## **Window Tabs:**

open: greed in atomic grapefruit: radiation was astringent: gamma ray: lycopen: after healthy heart:

open: anxiety in wolf spiderweb: dewpoint's heat is rising: spinnerets: mean snag: noose of silks:

open: shame in losing rafflesia: rootless threats to parasite: slit: petal: white sores: red mouth:

open: mindlessness in cellophane: purity of drop sheet: cloud glass: screen crack: a droning:

open: terror in what's permanent: plastics glitch the oysters: vaseline fist: vaseline tongue:

your poison's also salted:

**After "Sea Rose" by H.D.**

This was a rose, *harsh rose*, yes,  
sand in your petals, so *stint me*.

These keys needled—  
aciculate, pixelled—our carnal  
inclinations. It was all you could

use, then: sand splintered petal—suspended  
pain with displaced ease,

coiled & coiled it on  
wind, because this  
was to be continuous, to try to be

together



After "Sea Lily" by H.D.

And there you were again, then: virility, lush, in  
damage: black seeds  
tarred to rot in blood, because greed-  
deep, you chipped your teeth  
on plastic, rinded your  
mouth purple, blurry with  
too much froth, too many  
tannins, broke  
skin, fingernails, each soft  
thing you could—  
rubbed urges  
until dumb  
moted drifts like  
fruit flies behind  
glass

And here you are again,

now: left alone with  
kinesthesia-  
spins, a verb  
that hovers  
round, knotting

slack what hurts with what  
blisses: porn, rusted wire, stinging  
nettles. Carpet burnt  
pennies on spine. Hiss  
of cut to salt

**After "Sea Poppies" by H.D.**

When *stalk caught root / among wet pebbles*  
there was bloodflow there in the flowers: red  
opening, red opening, vital-viral shove, copper taste.  
changed? What makes what we waste, such licentious-  
ness so *Beautiful*?

What is this richness? What has

\*  
\*

Spinoza thinks,  
Love-Pleases, Hate-Pains,

Kant thinks,  
*disinterest* in pleasure is Finality, the Beauty,

Lacan thinks,  
*jouissance*:

*Can you bear the life that you have?*

You think:

I don't need you anymore

and take the traditional

hot bath:

## Proprioception

red ribbon / drunk apple mouth / rainy head / keen teeth / I think your hands / remained in me / like  
stones / knotted / closed / it was hard to fit / inside / with you / when I woke / numb-limbed / my  
arms long / at the pillow / my wrists / fallen / to floor / you / fallen asleep / on / within / me / each  
finger / leftover / in your / apple mouth / sore / I left the bed / but drunk / couldn't / remember /  
where my body / was / the door slammed / I looked / for me / but you had gone / outside / in the rain  
/ and inside / without hands / I couldn't tell you // I couldn't hate you / then / for stealing / from me  
/ but I wanted you / to give me back / my body / tried speech / in touch / tore sheets / cotton / thread  
/ ing / in / out / rended / for you / to unknot / me / said / I / don't fit / in the bed / the singularity / of  
your red / ribbon / too tight / your teeth / made me bleed / too much / yes / your head smelled like  
rain / your mouth / like apples / but no / your hands / made too heavy / my body / too drunk / too  
stoned / and I / didn't want / you / to keep me / there

## Affinity Code

Since 1909, add wine gums to empty mouth. Sugar, gelatin, tartaric acid  
to the fear, a precipice there, swallow:

because you can flavour singularly—make viscous and one—so  
many finite things, can't you? Ache sweet

and sore in red, then blue. As if what stings is a secret on tongue to  
chew in a drop, and you can taste your choice hard, tanged, in time. In a dream, you walk

naked through a silver birch thicket, a lake on the other side, water still  
enough to be sticky, water colourless that you bleed into. As if

your pain, each brier of it, touches something similar, but bigger, pierces outwards in the oscillating  
tactility of circle. Blah, blah. Wakeup and pour fake lychee juice

on your head, your clit. Online, order sticky creams formulated to  
smell like babies, orange rinds, for your face, thighs, and the rough parts,

each knuckle, too. It's winter and dry. Drag yourself through your  
body and your body through yourself. At the beach, collect frozen alga strands one

by one. Try again to be with another: with my laptop's charger cord, I tell you to bind my wrists,  
slow my history in imported coconut oil. Smoothe on / off like a glass

screen. Speak in code: *I'm so sorry that I hurt  
you, you hurt me, we did those things with our bodies.*

*If possible, hold me  
brief, with affinity, in one place*

## **Pareidolia**

You leave your body in bathwater greased  
with pine oil, because each departure  
should have scent and heat. You leave  
your language sublingual, tabbed under  
tongue. Words, sour, melt to chalk—small things you say before  
you mute, pinch inwards, sleep: vinegar,  
stomach, forget the cursor, blink; open the curtains,  
the window, the certain dash and slant. Remember to down-  
load the room with white light, try to feel clean  
like the sun. Remember, this is your mother  
speaking, because the weather is morning. No—  
wrong incision—this is your brain speaking, because  
it's snowing again. The window's iced closed.

For these reasons, you see thin panes  
of glass where they are not, or a glint of reflection  
where absent, fail to understand where  
things really are—the frames when clear, your face  
foggy in the screen-mirror, what the precipitation  
disinfects and blots out. Your document glows blank  
before it freezes. There are flaws in the technology of your head,  
but hope, too, if blanched. Could there be science,

a soft exit, to this formula of belief? Balance  
or clarity in liquid, or the new colour of this prescription? Maybe  
something as solid as body, as sadness, as history, must break  
or dissolve entirely—before air can enter—  
and make you mean it, make it matter, being here

## Swimming in Winter

You watched yourself walk into the Pacific Ocean in January: an aerial view with snow, rime, foam, retrospectively specific. But when underwater, there was consolidation, a solution to fluoresce in. *Psychology Today* says that cold can compress time in a body, and that what we lose, year by year, is intensity of temporal perception. *Wikipedia* says that skylight, when wet, absorbs strong in the red, weak in the blue, scatters greenish where phytoplankton blooms. The prescriptions have been cyclothymic if not rapid cycles of weather. Acid yellow pills for biochemical tides, internal waves, their spills. Runoffs of the primary coloured elements of seasons. You've learned to blur pain through the frame of Turnerian storms: clumps of bitumen craquelure, *pictures of nothing*. You've learned sadness in cobalt, anger in vermilion. And you've hoped with the poison of viridian:



## Growth Line

*I see nothing. We may sink and settle on the waves.*  
—Virginia Woolf

### a.

How many lyric poems have been written about sisters who can't swallow scones? Self-starvation is a contextual calamity—here, know the answer, that you are wrong, but still—stir the dough. Out the kitchen window, rain acuminates. Yet the mountainous valley blurs below the house, beyond grain of beach, the silver pixels of saltwater. Cleave it in the glue of milk and flour.

At the old pine table, she reads about morphologies of seashells on her laptop: how a mollusc's hunger can colour its shape, soften the anatomy through hardness of lack. You wonder about ultraviolet radiation. Consider the more visible components of gas oven system: safety valve, burner assembly, igniter, control. Enrage methane blue flames.

### b.

Enervation is common, hasn't been difficult to master. You outstretch efforts to locate and fix body's point of entry—that body, a girl's, your sister's, a malleable technology.

The steam feels orange, sweats from pilot ignition, towards a vertically winding cursive on windowpane. There are fragments of spiny snail sculpture on the sill. You fear the sign of black mould, try not to signify. But muscle memory lifts in coils of heat.

### c.

Yes, secrets fossilized in the doorframe, warbled under white paint. The desire to refract female hunger, to elongate and curve it like a blue wire, current it from stomach to sea, was contagious, intergenerational. You were communal with clumsiness, each wasteful spill. She told you she cried longing for the beauty of the mollusc. With a wet face, tried to convince you that burning her palm on the stove was an accident.

You lied to her, too, about the temperature of the ocean—claimed it didn't sting so cold in winter. That your wrists did not ache from drawing circles, from all the baking.

## The Jellyfish

A small jellyfish just floated to the surface of my bathwater. At first, I mistook it for the remaining skin of a Sea Lily essential oil bead, which I bulk order from H.D. & Co. I wonder if it originated from an unseen corner of my body, or if its appearance is a psychosomatic clot of lorazepam, sertraline, rosé: three milligrams; two hundred milligrams; 900 millilitres, and counting. But when I pluck it from the water and hold it in my palm, the pink incandescence of my antique lava lamp illumines the fragile umbrella of its bell, a wisp of algae-like arm.

I meet the venomous thread of tentacle when The Jellyfish stings my thumb. The sting is so quickly delicate, though, that I feel a sobering needle of shame for being this large. I put The Jellyfish back in the water. It undulates by my toes in tandem with the lava lamp's boluses.

A few moments later, The Doctor enters my bathroom. They wear white suede platform sneakers with their oversized white coat. I admire their accessories: turquoise tinted safety glasses; a teardrop lapis lazuli pendant; nitrile gloves in Heavy Duty Blue. Their fingers are exceptionally long, and their short dark hair sprouts in clusters of elastic moulded waves. I count them: one, two, three, four, five, six. The hairstyle seems to tug their face towards the ceiling and sky, rippling their forehead with wrinkles and widening their already capacious dark eyes.

*How did you feel when you first noticed it?* The Doctor always wants to know how I'm feeling. They kneel at the edge of the bathtub and click on the LEDs attached to the temple hinges of their glasses. The Jellyfish gleams clearer in the cool light: coral in gelatinous transparency; a red splotch in its bell center like a drop of Rorschach ink. Fine ruddy lines venously trace to the frilled circumference. It's hard to believe that The Jellyfish, guided by ocelli only, is without blood, brain, and heart.

*I've been depressed again.* I can be honest with The Doctor. *What should I do?*

*Relax. You don't want to disrupt the habitat.* Even though they haven't touched anything, The Doctor stands and firmly wipes their blue hands on their coat. They undo the top two buttons and retrieve a thin silver foldable stick from an inner pocket, which they shake to extend—like a wand—and immerse in the bathwater. The stick lights faintly in a diluted blue.

*What's that for?* I ask.

*Measuring repression*, The Doctor says. After refolding and returning the flimsy-looking device to their coat, they pull out an amber vial from another inner pocket, unscrew the dropper lid, and squeeze it full of an azure liquid. When they squirt the dosage into their mouth, their forehead lines briefly disappear. They refill and re-release.

*What are you drinking?*

*My new brine.* The Doctor half-closes their eyes as they answer.

*Can I try?* I realize I'm very thirsty.

*No*, The Doctor says, as they pull a circular screen from their pocket and take a seat on the toilet. They proceed to tap and scroll. *It's a type of Hydrozoa!* they announce after a while. *The smallest jellyfish are of this taxonomy, and there are genera that can survive beyond saltwater.* But then they shake their head. The Jellyfish, a mobile medusa, is not sessile like freshwater polyps, nor a pink-hearted hydroid, nor tubularia. It looks nothing like the Portuguese man o' war, actually a colonial siphonophore, which grows up to 30 centimetres with a gas bladder of carbon monoxide. They continue to tap and scroll. *It's not a moon jelly.* A long time ago, a bloom of these Aurelia auritas clogged the world's largest nuclear power reactor in Oskarshamn, Sweden; but this jellyfish lacks the distinctively glowing tetrad of horseshoe shaped gonads. *It must be a Pacific sea nettle!*

*I no longer live in that region*, I say.

*Hmm.* The Doctor frowns again, taps and scrolls. *It can't be the box jellyfish, either; it doesn't have eyeballs, and its poison doesn't seem potent enough. It's definitely not a cubozoa. Is it stalked? A staurozoa?* They sigh. *There are over 10,000 species of cnidarians!*

I'm overwhelmed. There are too many things that could be. *Should we call the Humane Society?* It has become hard to breathe.

*That wouldn't be very helpful*, The Doctor says. *Please just try to relax.* They pass me another three milligrams of lorazepam, which they keep in a special inner pocket. *You look sweaty. Maybe you should wash your face?*

I speed up the tab of medicine's dissolution with more rosé. I typically exfoliate my T-zone with black charcoal in the shower after I brush and floss my teeth, but I can't disturb The Jellyfish, so I must improvise. Through thorough experimentation, I have finally formulated a skin care regime comprised of natural and medicated products to combat my hormonal acne and overproduction of

cortisol: an even layer of 2.5% benzoyl peroxide and 1% adapalene cream every night; three layers of moisture every morning to quench the subsequent dryness. Cold-pressed rosehip seed oil; plant-derived squalene; 2% hyaluronic acid. Above my sink, next to my shelf of serums, I have pinned a line from *Mrs. Dalloway*: “Rigid, the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame.” I typed the quote in EB Garamond font. Virginia Woolf is my favourite modernist novelist.

The Doctor hands me the products one at a time.

*Are you hungry*, they ask when I have finished the face treatment process.

I nod, hungry.

The Doctor pulls their cigarettes from their hand pocket and lights one. The smoke elevates my nausea, and I'm not sure if it's healthy for The Jellyfish, but I need The Doctor around, so I don't comment. They tap their screen with their pinky, and the number for shrimp dumplings is speed dialled.

Soon after, The Delivery Person enters the bathroom with the order. They wear an indigo tracksuit, an amethyst choker, and violet circle shades. The Doctor says thank you and sets the styrofoam takeout box and chopsticks on the edge of the tub. I take another gulp of rosé, open the chopsticks, and pierce the first dumpling as a heat test. It seems cold, is gummed with oil.

*What's the matter?* Without breaking their own pair of chopsticks, The Doctor stabs a dumpling and sucks it into their mouth. They chew rigorously, and the erect waves of their hair oscillate with the jaw movement. They swallow hard. *You need to eat. These are your favourite.*

It's true, or has been: I have only been eating shrimp dumplings for the past two weeks of dinner. *I don't know*, I say, with my eyes glued on the hole I have punctured in the dough. A shrimp chunk is visible, and I extract it with my fingers, pruney. There is a little black filament curled at its underside: the digestive tract, now fragmented. I glance at The Jellyfish. It pulsates energetically, and I decide that it has definitely grown. The dumpling wrapper and its ruffled seal suddenly feels weighted—rigamortised—beneath the chopsticks. My stomach clamps and rumbles. The back of my throat spasms.

In one smooth gesture, The Doctor extends the garbage can to me as I start to gag. I hang my head over its plastic rim until the roughly 1000 millilitres of wine has been ejected. The liquid froths a

diluted pink. The Doctor places the garbage on the floor and pats my back with their long rubbery blue fingers. *It's good to let it out*, they say.

When the immediate need to purge encloses an accumulated desire to binge, it feels like loss on the level of self-concept. The Doctor assures me, though, that all of this was already scheduled: that my personality, in each of its phases of psychosocial crisis, has been fixed since my birth. That soon, I will master the current crisis, and I will feel better. The Doctor tells me to envisage myself like a statue, continually calcifying. They carry the garbage can across the approximately two meters of floor space and push it outside of the bathroom. After closing the door, The Doctor wipes their hands vigorously on their coat. The rubber to cotton sounds uncomfortably dry; I still feel ill.

*Would you like me to read to you?* The Doctor asks.

*Please.* I always want The Doctor to read to me while I bathe.

The Doctor retrieves their amber bottle to squeeze, drink, and repeat again before choosing *Selected Poems* by Christina Rossetti on their screen. Of late, The Doctor has been drawing on a *Pre-1900* literary collection that they assure me is more mentally hygienic than *Modern and Contemporary*. I'm not totally sure what they mean, but Rossetti is my favourite Victorian poet. They clear their throat and start with "A Birthday":

*My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;  
My heart is like an apple-tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;  
My heart is gladder than all these  
Because my love is come to me—*

*Look.* The Doctor stops reading to point at The Jellyfish, which has swelled at least three inches in its umbrella's diameter. Its coral colouration has thickened. I gasp. Enlarged, The Jellyfish's movement is enunciated: a phosphorescent vortex that furrows the bathwater. I temporarily lose track of my measurements as The Jellyfish jet propels over my body, moving from one end of the tub to the

other. Its swollen bell contracts, squirts to vibrate through tentacles, pauses before it propels. Its beauty is overwhelming, and my breath catches in my throat.

*You need to relax, now*, The Doctor says. The Doctor always wants me to relax, to be still, to wait. With another tap of their screen, ocean waves sound softly. They hand me my gel sleep mask, which I keep cool on the toilet tank lid. *It's time to sink insiide and breaaathe*. They dramatically lower and elongate their voice, as I imagine a poet at a poetry reading would:

*Here you will find the catharsis that you have been dreaming of. Here, our psychic experts will gently guide you towards your truly ideal symbolic hue. Surf through easy-to-order swatches like ROYAL, NAVY, CORNFLOWER, SKY, YALE, SAPPHIRE, INDEPENDENCE, AIR FORCE, OLYMPIC, PIGEON . . .*

*Shades of Blue Ltd streamlines your past, your future, your real, and your imaginary with HARMONY, HOPE, LOYALTY, TRUST, NOVELTY—*

*Are those wall paint shades?* I ask, slightly confused. I've been meaning to repaint my bathroom, something The Doctor previously suggested as a form of self-care.

*Shhhhh*, The Doctor says. . . . *and PROFESSIONALISM. Our heavy duty gloves feature diamond texturing for efficient wet and dry grip. With our primary colour an optimal 450 nanometers long, we can multi-reference with expertise . . . We 100% guarantee that you will benefit from this interior wavelength therapy.*

My listening becomes spotty, and eventually, the sound waves melt in the direction of whole-body vibration. Finally, I unclench: my shoulders and spine rounding, and my gurgling stomach neutralizing. Each inhale becomes less volitional, towards automatic, with my thorax expanded, ribs elevated, calm incited in globular shapes via the xiphoid process, intercostal muscles. With each expiration, I envision a bluish and pinkish series of pulsations that swell to a collection of spheres. I try to count them as they arise, but they quickly morph, splitting and narrowing into a tributary of strands, tentacularly knotted like stems, like trunks, like roots. My skin tingles.

As I begin to feel a fluid pleasure heating and growing under my thighs, rising by way of autonomic nervous system towards my pelvic region, I lose all points of reference. With the familiar rhythm of muscular contractions, there is fast electricity in my brain: a sweet chemical tide with a thin blade that tangs with the pressured release. But such an acute and slippery sense of gratification has

often evoked grief for me. And in my heart, there is the subsequent sting before the strain. I well with tears.

When I feel The Doctor's rubbery knuckles slide by my feet, I'm sobbing. Crying makes me feel smaller, closer to ground, with a neurobiological need that is perhaps subconscious, but neither wasteful nor theoretical. The rush of water sounds harder in my ears. I remove my sleep mask.

To my shock and utter confusion, water is shooting from the drain, spilling over the tub's edge, and quickly flooding the bathroom. And The Jellyfish, now as wide as my torso, has suctioned to my belly button, where it continues to undulate. Its tentacles cling to my waist and lower back. I open my mouth to say something, but can make no noise.

The Doctor's eyes are unusually liquid-like in their bulbousness. Their pupils have dilated to eclipse the irises. I've never seen them like this before. *Don't panic! I've called for help*, they say, holding the unattached drain stopper against the stream of water. The flow shoots more aggressively against their effort to resist it. When the spray hits their face, knocking their safety glasses off, they stumble backwards, dog paddling.

I cry out for The Doctor but my mouth only fills with water, mildly salinated and lukewarm.

The water level rapidly climbs halfway up the wall.

I'm rising above the tub with The Jellyfish still stuck to my stomach when, a few moments later, The Electrician opens the bathroom door. They wear copper bib coveralls over a cantaloupe coloured T-Shirt. The waterline, now three-quarters of the way up the wall, steadily mounts ceiling-wards, and as soon as the exit is cleared, the four of us surge straight through the hallway. Alongside bob an unnumbered collection of things, including, but not limited to: my lava lamp and scattered array of toiletries; the empty bottles of rosé; pieces of the leftover dumplings; the styrofoam, chopsticks, and puffed plastic bag; The Doctor's glasses; The Doctor's amber vial of brine; The Doctor's repression stick. I reach for the tube of benzoyl peroxide and adapalene, even though I know it's futile. The Doctor and The Electrician are flailing their arms and legs wildly in attempts to keep their heads above water. I realize, though, that The Jellyfish, like a mucilaginous lifejacket, is keeping me buoyant.

At the end of the hallway, in the foyer, The Paramedic, dressed in green, stands waving before the water knocks them down. And when The Police Officer, clothed in highlighter yellow rain gear,

opens the front door, the waves—having become progressive, with crests and troughs that travel speedily at right angles to themselves—carry everyone outside. The apartment block, too, has flooded; the sky is at storm. It rains monsoonally. Fire trucks float in futile zigzags across the street.

No one has arrived in time. The Doctor clings to their screen, but it is quickly sucked in the undertow, glinting as it sinks, a blurred fragment of mirror glass reflecting the prism of the professionals' uniform colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet.

I swim with The Jellyfish, its radial symmetry, a mysterious form that feels accumulatory, out of order. I try to breathe slowly as my life indoors grows small and distant in my wake. In my mind's eye, I see a distant oceanscape that rotates 180 degrees to become a spangled sky. Zooming in, the sky blooms with jellyfish, glowing in primordial multiplicity, having existed much longer, and much larger, than me. The future is unclear, but soon, I think, we will leave the city. Soon, we will reach the sea.



## **Passiflora Edulis**

The Monogamous Couple's relationship had grown toxic when they woke up and noticed that they were beginning to vine. Their left hands' fingers had tendrilled: five stipules each, purplish-green, curled around their oak headboard.

The Second Lover, who was physically stronger than the First Lover, opened their eyes, attempted a stretch. *Oh, shit!* they said, and yanked themselves uncoiled.

*What!* The First Lover groaned, still half-asleep, before realizing that their arm was tethered in folded position behind their head, too. The ceiling screen's SkyScene on this Daily Session was clear: cornflower blue, of spring.

*I'll get the nail clippers,* the Second Lover said, and walked to the bathroom. They had been on a bender, and had not changed their black tencel outfit for a few Daily Sessions now.

The First Lover wiggled their fingers. Their tendrils were still fairly loose, and one of the threadlike stipules unhooked with relative ease, curvaceous as a question mark. They quickly reattached it to the trellis, though—they wanted the Second Lover to help them. They were grateful that the Second Lover cared to attend to the situation. To be so tender.

If the Couple fell asleep in synchronicity during a Nightly Session, then, they laid convex: the First Lover, on the right side of the bed, arced towards the window, its potential for ultraviolet light; the Second Lover, on the left, limbs pointed at the door, the elevator, and the tunnels below.

The First Lover had been diagnosed with a perennial brand of seasonal affective disorder, marked by an over-absorption of water and a lack of vitamin D. They cried often, and readily. Although they had never breathed or seen beyond the walls of their apartment or the upper and lower tunnels, they longed for the natural smell of petrichor, for a first-degree beach burn, sea wind, running with leashed dogs on a sidewalk, the milk glow of a moon. They had read stories, poems, and personal essays about these things, many of which were gifts from the Second Lover. Before things had changed globally and irretrievably, The Second Lover's great grandfather had owned a large bookstore.

The Couple's Holistic Specialist, Dr. G, had prescribed the First Lover a minimum of five Conferences per Daily Session of Light Therapy, one Conference per Daily Session of Treadmilling,

and a maximum of three RainShower Conferences per Weekly Session. The First Lover, therefore, found themselves scrolling their right hand Mirror and UV window screen for approximately half of their life. They chose the SunScenes that they hoped would excite them. For example, the previous Daily Session had included: yellow flowers from a diverse array of genuses blooming in global simultaneity; PolyPleasuring in the form of Tripling, Quadrupling, and Hybriding (which involved multi-petalled biodegradable toys cast in pink pop floral shapes); and vintage Björk YouTubes. The First Lover was, additionally, a prolific gardener. They spent about a quarter of their Daily Conferences spritzing, deadheading, and pruning their kitchen's herb wall, or in their solarium greenhouse, where their succulents and tropical fruits thrived especially. Their panda plant, string of pearls, and aloe vera were flawless, and with all the guavas, tamarillos, and bananas, the Couple maintained optimal levels of vitamin A, B's, and C, as well as potassium, fibre, phenolics, and flavonoids. But despite this, the baseline of the First Lover's mood remained low, and sometimes, dangerously so.

The Second Lover was diagnosed with binge alcoholism and methamphetamine use disorder. With each of their crises, Dr. G noted that their maladaptation was incompatible with the First Lover's. The Second Lover spent about seventy-five percent of their Nightly Sessions in the dimmer paths of the underground tunnels, flowing from club to club with an almost inexhaustible thirst, and leaving the First Lover, who often suffered from insomnia and wanted to cuddle, feeling abandoned. The only guaranteed remedy for the First Lover's insomnia was liberal amounts of cuddling, massaging, and/or being read to; sleeping pills had stopped having any effect long ago.

And yet, by chance, they awoke together again on the next Daily Session. This time, their left hand's tendrils had thickened and tightened in their grasp of the headboard. Petiole stems had sprouted from the axils of their fingers. Small rosette leaves, lilac veined, and smelling faintly of baby grass, were poised to open. Now, The First Lover was genuinely stuck. They needed the Second Lover's help.

*Does this hurt?* the Second Lover asked, having to cut the First Lover free with kitchen shears.

*It does a little,* the First Lover said, even though they didn't feel acute pain, but a tingling weight, something harder to describe in words, a phantom limbing. After their stems were pruned, there was a slight buzzing discernable in the nerves of their hands, like a multitude of small wings,

electrified. When they closed their eyes, they could feel the gravity of the fallen foliage, as though it remained, ticklishly, attached to their arms.

The Second Lover frowned reflexively. They did not want to hurt the First Lover.

The First Lover scheduled an emergency Communication Conference.

Almost immediately, Dr. G appeared on the window screen. They sat cross-legged in their plush sod cushioned meadow chair in their ochre office. This Conference's outfit was a manatee blue shift, vinyl sneakers in a matching shade, a braided tangle of copper necklaces, and triangle glasses with semi-transparent lime green frames. The Dr. was always up to date on the latest fashions. When they smiled at the Couple, there was a smudge of their signature forest lipstick on their canine.

*Congratulations*, they said.

*What*—the First Lover said.

*I see the two of you have taken root. Treat this as an opportunity to meet in the middle*, Dr. G said, and placed their hands on their heart, as they often did.

Dr. G could be rather vague. They were optimistic when it wasn't clear why, and a loyal fan of slogans: they decorated their office with holographic projections of a few of their favourites, which changed most Weekly Sessions, and which they personalized in embroidered chestnut silk thread. The First Lover found themselves puzzling over one phrase in particular: *Challenge yourself to extend your self-definition wider*. The First Lover reasoned that the lack of specificity in some of Dr. G's diagnoses and prescriptions was a result of their considering every angle at once, because they were so connected to the world, and so committed to understanding what was wrong, how to talk about it. This had become such a daunting task.

That Nightly Session, feeling hopeful after their Conference with Dr. G, but perhaps more vulnerable than usual because of it, the First Lover brushed their hair in the bathroom and self-reflected. Hanging by the vanity mirror was Charles Darwin's illustration of a Porcelain Vine, *Ampelopsis*, in two temporal phases: unattached, and then attached to a wall via a woody tissue, which formed after the secretion of a white viscid fluid. Dr. G had urged them to pursue their own research, and the First Lover had 3D printed Darwin's monograph, *On the Movements and Habits of Climbing Plants*. They didn't understand the science, but they found the antiquely sketched diagrams beautiful, delicately erotic.

The First Lover squinted at their image. It was difficult to be entirely certain, but they sensed that the olive undertones in their skin were strengthening. Were they strange-looking? They held their arms out, and their span was nearly as wide as the room. Were their limbs lankier than usual? They called the Second Lover in.

*Am I still attractive?* the First Lover asked them.

*Yes*, the Second Lover said, and, half-rolling their eyes, turned to leave.

*Where are you going?* the First Lover demanded.

*I need to get out for a while*, the Second Lover said.

*Are you serious?*

*Just for one drink.*

When the Couple first met, they would descend into the tunnels together in celebration of their fresh love. Their favourite place to dance was N, where the shots were infused with fixed nitrogen and dyed chartreuse, their favourite mood hue. The concrete walls were thick with geraniol scented moss, and the waxy, sweet rose odour, Pavlovianly, amplified their desire to party. The First Lover would smile and sway, grateful that their protein synthesis (for the vitality and growth of their brain, metabolic, hormonal, and immune system processes) was promoted in entanglement with their intoxication. Dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin were in abundance, back then, and the Couple would hold hands riding the elevator up to their home. Sex was voracious.

After two Yearly Sessions, though, The First Lover had grown tired of the hangovers, the Second Lover's generally brooding if not subconscious presence, and frustrated by the Couple's lack of evolution. During their Communication Conferences with Dr. G, as the First Lover wept, the Second Lover would surrender, promise that they did want to stop, but that it was difficult, as it had been for a while, to live in the world as it was. Occasionally, they would quietly burp mid-Communication Conference, a common symptom of spending a lot of time subterranean, and an effect of all the nitrogen. Always, and without delay, they would excuse themselves. But more Nightly Sessions than not, they would feel the need to get out of the apartment all over again.

*Please don't leave me*, the First Lover said, following the Second Lover into the living room, their heart beating faster. When the Second Lover was out, the First Lover, with the jagged panic of abandonment in their body, would try to Mirror them through their right hand screen, leave them

messages pleading with them again to come to bed. But when the Second Lover finally did return, the SkyScene would generally be brightening with the start of another Daily Session. If the First Lover had not left the bed cold, they would be waiting, naked, ready for battle. Naturally, the more distressed they became, the less they wanted to wear clothes, and the more barbed they were in the given argument. While their outbursts were cathartic, and might have been understandable, the First Lover always felt their proceeding guilt stronger than their preceding anger. Desperate makeup sex would follow. It was possible that the only thing holding the Couple intact was their sexing: their orgasms were consistently simultaneous, deep, strong. But both Lovers knew that the routines of their Monogamy were not sustainable.

*I'm sorry*, the Second Lover said without meeting the First Lover's eyes, and heading for the front door.

In an instant, the First Lover found themselves running towards the exit, blocking the Second Lover's way out.

*Come on, let me go*, the Second Lover said. *Please let me go*, they said louder, when the First Lover refused to budge. *Get out of my way!*

Eventually, realizing that the First Lover would definitely not move, the Second Lover turned around and walked towards the greenhouse. They returned with a terra cotta pot in each hand: the First Lover's aloe vera and string of pearls.

*What are you doing*—the First Lover said, but The Second Lover had already thrown the succulents against the wall by their head. With the explosion, two of the aloe's daggers split; the pearl succulents were sprawled in stress amidst the red clay shards and dirt clumps. The First Lover was shocked: the Second Lover, while typically a stonewaller, was never physically aggressive.

The Second Lover suddenly began to cry, and then sob, which they hadn't done before so openly in front of the First Lover. The two of them stood facing one another, feeling wilted, helpless, inevitable in their childlike weariness. But when the Second Lover tried to hug the First Lover, they let them. The First Lover soaked in their tears, and the two of them went to bed, still holding each other.

When the Couple woke to their first bloom a few Weekly Sessions later, they knew that to resist the situation would be futile. They could no longer leave the warm damp of their sheets; despite their

pruning attempts, the vining of their left hands had increased and complicated. In circumnutation motion, their stems had pulled together—their tendrils, lengthened just to allow them enough give to roll from side to side, from facing to spooning position. Having grown into one organism, they had little choice but to be mutually supportive. They touched often with their free right hands in the UV light, and their routine became automatic, an autopoiesis. However, Dr. G had still not settled on a diagnosis. *We will have to wait and see about the next set of symptoms*, they would reply when the First Lover asked what was happening to them. It was becoming clear that the Dr. might not be able to help. Somehow, though, the Couple remained calm. Drowsier than usual, sleep came easily and simply for them. The ailments that they had each felt as individuals were alleviated by the sensorially binding nature of their condition.

The flower was located in between them, but closer to the First Lover's side. It had white petals, soft green sepals, indigo striped corona filaments with a bit of a wave, like curled eyelashes, and a delicious, truly indescribable smell: honey and salt, tropical. Earthen. The First Lover could distinguish the flower's major botanical parts from Darwin's diagrams. From the top down: the violet dumbbell shaped antennae of the stigma, the five pollen dusted arms of the anthers, and the bulb of the ovary, a pulsating shade of new green.

*What should we do?* the Second Lover asked.

*Wait*, the First Lover said, and stroked a ringlet tendril from the Second Lover's cheek.

When the berries began to appear the next Weekly Session, the First Lover had never been so full. From the ovaries, small round pepals had budded. And when the SkyScene indicated that summer had arrived, the purple-red rinds softened, darkened, and pruned; with heat, they were ready to be harvested. The Couple, by that time, were sweating and delirious. The Second Lover plucked the first egg-shaped fruit, shook it, and entwined in its form, the First Lover felt the back and forth motion and sound deeply: a liquid pressure that increased their heart rate and left them lightheaded. The pulp was golden, viscous, with hard, jellied, black seeds, and a musky, guava-like perfume.

As the Couple lived for and passionately because of one another, they lost track of the world's standard linguistic units of measurement. They stopped trying to define things, and thereby, began to feel the grain of their singular specificity. They no longer missed what they had never had, and could

never have. Their uncertainty about the future, which they used to experience as dread and fear of their unavoidable decomposition, finally, allowed them the simultaneous pleasures of the present moment—made them possible.

*Taste me*, the First Lover said. And in spite of their satiety, how it verged on nausea, the Second Lover did.

## Interest-Excitement:

is *eyebrows down, track, look, listen*,<sup>1</sup> tentative with your angles. To filter stores in alphabetical grade online, click: Bijouterie Orly, Boheme, Brioche Dorée; to conceptualize the complex before body perceives it, ask what is *necessary* or what is *possible* for you to be interested in at the underground mall? Excitement—or hunger—could be why you choose the fast Parisian café, a tart for its containment of blackberries, the way jammed fruit pigments like a bruise, an *object* handled with volition in middle, unfungible, as if, we have been *programmed* to *invest* in the coolness of this shade. Interest recalls that before the computer was a machine, it was a person, a clerk, gendered, approximately two-hundred women keying a wartime *symphony of metallic digits*;<sup>2</sup> it notices the barista's mouth like a grammatical opening, her dash of violet lip paint, her eyes, turquoise, natural, or unnatural. It is anticipation of sweetness, a gag, a longing for sticky fingers. After the transaction is made, to think of licking, all the words you learned in attempts to reward with your touch. Excitement is aerial, forgets the gelatin emulsion, greenwashing, Big Blue upstairs, absence of sun down below, pretends real butter in the subterranean. It is to sugar the *sampling*, its spatial dizziness, the astringent of tannin. Yet you feel obvious for the gravity of your drive, not your inability to *co-assemble* it with your emotion: *perceive and appraise*<sup>3</sup> your self-view in the *sub-system* as you shiver at a metal table, cognize the tinted glass and sandstone facade from inside, out. Swallow the pastry's purple-black drupelets and try to take interest in nature, an antioxidant possibility, but reach for what you can't touch. Devour this before grandeurs darken, *current* stunts in *circuit*, you turn off:

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, italicized diction is an important concept or term in Silvan Tomkins's four volumes of *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (Springer Publishing 1962, 1963, 1991, and 1992), which draw on the vocabulary of first-wave cybernetic theory to delineate a modular and neurobiologically rooted program of nine affects (which each poem in this series is titled after): interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise startle, distress-anguish, anger-rage, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, dismell, and disgust. These affects, Tomkins argues, evolved in the "central assembly" of the human mind and, preceding and exceeding the influences of one's drives and thoughts, serve as our "primary motivational system."

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine* (Westview Press, 2004), pp. 3, 71-72.

<sup>3</sup> See Magda Arnold, *Emotion and Personality* (Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 8.



## Enjoyment-Joy:

is *lips widened up and out*, because dentistry invented the Duchenne smile.<sup>4</sup> It is automaton *relief* of escalator: motor assembly to main drive gear to idler sprockets; anchor truss to comb plate, *landing cite*;<sup>5</sup> the *triumph* of skylight to marble, fluoridation, an orthogonal *ideological posture* that fits the floor plan. Enjoyment might be the privilege of a curvaceous breath, or the free moment, lavender scented, because you escaped interest in L'Occitane's Imortelle Divine Eyes, only bought the hand lotion you needed. It is caffeinated, vitaminated, and medicated, an *obscene luxury*<sup>6</sup> with *steep decline* in *neural firing*, a drain of white heat like snow thaw: through a high west office window, how Mont Royal's peak must italicize the cut of its valley and tunnel. Here, joy is an expensive proprioceptive ease, to recollect spring, a field of indigo inflorescence, a picnic mood and *script*, to clean and shine your childhood. It becomes emotional when grasping the soft fingers of familiarity: a baby likes to localize her parents before she can believe in them, objectify the *recognition*, and this is with *differential repetition*. Does it have anything to do with your aimless returns to the RBC vestibule? Enjoyment is contiguous to reapplying lotion, only brief in the claustral corporate bathroom: when washing your hands with warm water, and the smell of antibacterial soap triggers stale taste of the restaurant peppermints your mother would stockpile, that you would steal from her purse, that melted to spikes under tongue before breaking. Joy could be such lather towards nostalgia, pastel, because in the stall is maximum intimacy, or widest imagined *opportunity*, to make-believe a sustainably moisturizing *reciprocity*:

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<sup>4</sup> See Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made* (Pan Macmillan, 2017), p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> See Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *Architectural Body* (The University of Alabama Press, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> See Lisa Robertson, *Occasional Work and Seven Walks from the Office of Soft Architecture* (Coach House Books, 2006), p. 217.

## Surprise-Startle:

is *eyebrows up, blink*: when an RBC employee swings open the glass door before shutter clicks in the vestibule, though you only meant to photograph the prismatic reflections. It is hypothalamic, your *nervous system's* lag when she asks if she can help you; there are just partial modes of *autonomic* response. Startle's unwelcome interruption prompts a double take, a yank at *central assembly*, the potential for light leak in mauve, blue, or yellow, diffuse of shame, fear, and/or excitement, yet surprise is simply precedent, *transient*, an almost-event. Silvan admits each glitch, that it can be difficult to securely attend to a minute's *information*, though when you startle, he thinks, you should learn to be rapid, electrically efficient in *transmission*. And paradoxically, you can expect that surprise will occur: there's a hole in the chamber of your camera and temporal snags in your memory, a misplaced *address* of a neural firing pattern, and this isn't always about projection. While you can't decipher what figure has cast shadow in the *black box*, the cumulus shape is invariably enigmatic as Daedalus' labyrinth, umbra moth wing dust, automata. Startling is to wonder, then: can your *emotions*—what you *report* and *remember*—rupture you, change your direction? Is the sound of a thought ever as loud as the wrong heels on carbonate crystal? To surprise might *motivate* hope for an escape from the incriminating interaction, your visibility in loitering on white grid of bank lobby floor. But to wish for decorum is impossible. If there is punctuation between feelings, it cleaves achronological, at random. Within this *impasse*,<sup>7</sup> we know the racist-capitalist devices are *predatory*,<sup>8</sup> wired to reset the debt economy with renewals of estrangement and withdrawal:

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<sup>7</sup> See Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke University Press, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> See Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (semiotext(e), 2018), p. 17.

## Distress-Anguish:

is *arched eyebrow, mouth down, tears, rhythmic sobbing*, beginning with birth, the first *blindly stimulated* distress. Of course, anguish is a ubiquitous press, breaching our enjoyments at *high-decibels* and deadlocking us to our objects. When you try to rewind your roll of film, and the crank's slack, counterclock, the roll, blank—your camera, old machine, does hurt to your heart. Distress elicits your purchase of salt and vinegar chips, *remedial action* of sodium acetate, a *modular* hope to transmute acetic and citric acids, the Advil hue of liqui-gel turquoise, a crosscut in the earth to Pharmaprix. And Darwin, too, thought about eye spasms, tired pathos of man's strain on reflexes of exocrine glands, their toxically aqueous secretions. Distress is such sting, negative spatial insertions. It is related to (im)permanence of ocean, the emotional and environmental loss of pastoral cliché, plastics in the oysters, how you will always weep for tropes of saline. It is the *phenomenology of fatigue* that tides you back to the main floor and The Keg: the Happy Hour sign glowing like firelit cave, a shelter from the rough ventilation. An estranged boss took you there once. Silvan says anguish requires *warm soothing baths, cocktails, tea, snacks*, and the reassuring state of *modern pharmacology*; daily distressing failures ensure that the problem of human sadnesses can upkeep the high *tonus* of their *peripheral musculature*. So you order a gin and tonic again, cruelly optimistic with the quick release of the pour. Because anguish is like a knife to rare steak in the *translation machine*<sup>9</sup> of science, its experiment with your head and the world: such a shame you can't afford to enjoy the tenderness:

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<sup>9</sup> See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 217.

## Anger-Rage:

is *frown, clenched jaw, red face, amplified* in the aisles' mediating *corridority*.<sup>10</sup> It clogs in the grey matter, with shopper collisions, wide gaits of men's airs and colognes: all of the universalizing aesthetic decisions. It is because they bump into you, walls are washed in white Ripolin,<sup>11</sup> ads pixelate skin, try to tattoo in ruddy temperatures. And anger follows, pained in L'Occitane, when the beautician asks you to think critically: how finitely multiple are the problems with your chin and its reflection? It spreads in allergic reactions to the various glazes prescribed for your irritations: *inflammation, rawness, and chafing*.<sup>12</sup> Yes, anger rashes. Silvan simmers it down, says rage can bloom from *abstract activators* like bad papercuts, sunburns, or chilis stuck in cheeks. He claims it could be a *by-product* of stubbed toes that ignites *deviants within society, barbarians without*, while the colonial code calls Kanien'kehá:ka land the Dorchester Street *hole*, and Place Ville Marie, a route to solve the *stain* of railway trench.<sup>13</sup> But with *perceptual* thorns, anger burns through such myths of pure forms; after Duplessis's iron grip and the Quiet Revolution, the aluminum curtain wall signalled six floors of Alcan and 47 stories of hydroelectrified grid, sparking up cybernational tower. Rage selectively springboards the affluent to *vascular* vocality, lustful self-righteousness, an *ancestral* spice in their professional glower. Yet it also keeps you warm. Rage heats like a shot with VR1 cell's *urgency*: a star in the throat, in the chest, in the belly:

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<sup>10</sup> See Kate Marshall, *Corridor* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> See Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today* (MIT Press, 1987), p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> See Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 184.

<sup>13</sup> See Don Nerbas, "William Zeckendorf, Place Ville-Marie, and the Making of Modern Montreal" (*Urban History Review / Revue d'Histoire Urbaine*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2015), pp. 5-6.

## Fear-Terror:

is eyes frozen open, pale, cold sweat, facial tremble, hair erect, is an emergency *motivation*, getting locked in the wrong elevator with card-only access. Fear needs a *team of security guards 24/7, computerized control, 260 plus surveillance cameras complex-wide linked to a digital recording and viewing system*,<sup>14</sup> the bank's bluish white beacon by Northern Electric feigning sky, scanning nightly, panopticonal. Your terror is elevated 600 feet high: in the rooftop Au Sommet, a multinational conglomerate corporation in grey flannel uniformly chewing Mujol caviar canapés. Fear blazes after sunset like the ceiling track's flare of red bokeh, stuttering beep codes, and might be the main stem and medulla of PVM's creative destruction, the alarmic rhythm to evacuate soma, the building, and run for your life—yet again, if you escape, it remains as *terminal condition*. This is because terror demands that you habituate yourself to its very *scene* if you're bent to be *master*; fear replicates itself within, toxically recycled, if avoided. The accelera, accellera, accellera of neural flames propel you with the force of steel, of cement. And more concretely, terror is in the contraction of the neck's *platysma muscles, cyberstructuralism's*<sup>15</sup> historically strangulating concepts, the modern struggle to pay rent. More severe than any other interruption, it sears like peripheral gunshot within cortex, in chilly womb of International Style. It is why human beings are *the most violent and the most anxious of animals* (and this is one of the mistakes of the *evolutionary process*)! For these reasons, the potentially dangerous or revealing epiphanies (fire, women's bodies, blood) still must be housed, clothed, and examined upstairs; you were supposed to stay shopping underground:

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<sup>14</sup> See Place [Ville Marie website](#).

<sup>15</sup> See Marsha Kinder, "Medium Specificity and Productive Precursors: An Introduction" (*Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, the Arts, and the Humanities*, edited with Tara McPherson, 2014), p. 4.

## Shame-Humiliation:

is *eyes down, head down*, violent blush towards soil that was never tabula rasa. Inhibiting interest, it is overexposure, in pressure to blanch, and might scaffold with the fact that Montreal calls Place Ville Marie, *grande dame, crown jewel*,<sup>16</sup> claims that the cruciform ensures brightest effect of light's penetration—yet the construction's negation, what's under and through, is gravid in pictures, dark centre. It colours the basement gym fluorescent: when the man through the glass wall, watching the news as he walks the elliptical, sees your screened reflection and stares at your camera as accidentally, it flashes. Humiliation is why we are *deeply contaminated creatures*, and the *high-speed moving picture's* lens can figure shyness with *feedback* and precision. It is *vicarious*, to be pinned looking because you saw, and were mirrored crooked, in a refraction of dissociating dimensions (and this is uncanny, but it would be dangerous, Silvan says, to reduce the experience to *Freud's furniture*). It is every useless law, imperial and metric, which maintain that you can *image* nothing straight or rectilinearly *harmonious* about your body; why you lack ambition towards Le Corbusier's Modulor math, the purported golden ratio. Shame is in the fenced heft of shade below the concrete perimeter columns and metal girders in summer, the wasted de facto civic space of the plaza, while humiliation glints in the greased foil interior of the plastic chip bag, its flavour film gummed with sweat to your palms, the crumpled layers of polyethylene glossed hot in the garbage. It hangs in the adjacent PVC tree, the ficus drooped, crudely waxen:

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<sup>16</sup> See France Vanlaethem, et al., *Place Ville Marie: Montreal's Shining Landmark* (Québec Amérique, 2012), p. 9.

## Dissmell and Disgust:

*sneer*, magnet and *magnify* nausea: all the real and the *performative*<sup>17</sup> toxins. They are what David's Tea does to you, with weak copper syrups in mini paper cups, collective sicknesses, clotted. Concentration of *contempt* in an object, dissmell is a self-pollution pill, tastes of old pennies on tongue, othered bitter rust drops, and depression. It is discriminatory renunciation, spit ups shamed in the nursing room, because of the disastrous neglect of milk left to sour: why a woman shopping in Marie Claire was prohibited from breastfeeding in a changeroom at a quiet hour.<sup>18</sup> Disgust phantomizes nipple under guise of defense against who's and what's noxious, opposing oxygen, *auxiliary to hunger*. It might be a bad tang of electrical shock, or *rejection*, a *permanent power*. Dissmell happens in the proximity of diesel to doctor's office to chain-cooked sirloins and seafoods (in '62, *La Presse* boasted that the telephone wiring would have been enough to serve Magog,<sup>19</sup> but the socialist Italian who invented the first desktop computer was secretly murdered in the CIA-IBM plot's fog).<sup>20</sup> And disgust will curdle in hierarchical individuations—like dining below the Esplanade's gourmet biergarten's glass ceiling, or stepping into the elevator, out of the smog. Dissmell is acidic, uproots like white baneberries, poisonous, not radical. And therefore, in the promenade of CN Real Estate, this commercial centre of gravity, is it the way that cosmos frames chaos that disgusts you? A door that slams shut and an umbilical cord cut, and forever, it may be why, in the intermodal clash, we pull away from each other with one eye on the network and the other on the exit: why you eject here when you have the narrow chance:

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<sup>17</sup> See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Routledge, 2015), p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> See "[Breastfeeding Mom Denied in Marie Claire . . . at PVM](#)," *CTV News Montreal*.

<sup>19</sup> See France Vanlaethem, et al., p. 157.

<sup>20</sup> See Meryle Secrest, *The Mysterious Affair at Olivetti: IBM, the CIA, and the Cold War Conspiracy to Shut Down Production of the World's First Desktop Computer* (Penguin 2019).

## **A boy in a white collared shirt looks at a violin and rests his head in his hands.**

This *story*<sup>21</sup> is a projection of an acetate foil of a scan of a photographic print on cardboard stock of Christiana's pen and ink redrawing of a portrait: it is Yehudi Menuhin's halated mop top in Lumiere studio, contemplating his instrument in *Parents Magazine*.<sup>22</sup> The backstory is that, off camera, a banker gifted the prodigy a prince's Stradivarius. Einstein blessed the child with a kiss; the geniuses were fed strawberry ice cream backstage. This story pedestals the modern musical machination, the baton before the symphony before Place Ville Marie, the tallest Commonwealth tower's erection. It was the *successful* broad-based cover, boilerplate text, and remains as varnished acronym on the screen. It is humanism's black-and-white suit and grayscale tripartite movements: the maestro who became a yogi, then a knight, then a Baron! Because if this story exclaims its climax, Magda says, it is the *ideal self* control, the soundtrack *positively motivating Life* and its simulations. It is quantifiable, the *biocosmogonic*<sup>23</sup> "Man and His World," told *straight* with his *origin, plot, outcome*, and mythic "Solar Phallus." (For his accumulated joy, he thanks, for example, the supercalendar's rewind function, the kaolin clay mined for the magazine page's gloss, his ivory fingerboard, HMV, and The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.) This story's algorithm replays all-electronic Beethoven from the blank walls of BBC TV factory: from D, to G, and back to D, when they filmed Menuhin's '62 duplicate, their International Concert Hall tried not to be chronotopically specific. Five years later, after Moscow's withdrawal, his Orchestra penetrated Théâtre Port Royal's speaker system at the Montreal Expo. But this story, as we know, sounds affectively subtractive: one month earlier, on the Virgin Island of Saint John, Christiana, tagged a lay psychologist and made into a nude statue, removed her emerald ring and drowned quietly.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Unless otherwise noted, italicized diction is an important concept or term in Magda Arnold's *Story Sequence Analysis: A New Method of Measuring Motivation and Predicting Achievement* (Columbia University Press, 1962), which proposes a cognitive psychological methodology of scoring a subject's succession of "imports" in their narrative interpretations of the Thematic Apperception Test images. The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), developed by Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan in the 1930s, is a projective test made up of cards depicting people in various ambiguous social situations. In this series of seven poems, each is titled after one of the cards which Morgan, a Jungian artist, originally illustrated.

<sup>22</sup> See Wesley G. Morgan, "Origin and History of the Thematic Apperception Test Images" (*Journal of Personality Assessment*, vol. 65, no. 2, 1995), p. 240.

<sup>23</sup> See Sylvia Wynter, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (edited by Katherine McKittrick, Duke University Press, 2015), p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> See Claire Douglas, *Translate this Darkness: The Life of Christiana Morgan, the Veiled Woman in Jung's Circle* (Princeton University Press, 1997). p. 313.



**Someone huddles with their face hidden in a couch; there is a revolver beside them.**

This story is a projection of a photo of an illustration of a halftone newspaper image about a murder. While this is mysterious, and the chiaroscuro and film grain indexes how Christiana also went missing, it is not another story about her as mystique or as muse. (*The New York Times* has already described her as *passionate*, one of Jung's *acolytes*, and an *exceptionally beautiful woman!*)<sup>25</sup> In an interview, when asked if the story was nonfictional, Henry, her on and off lover, a personologist, patrician, Melvillian, and ex-OSS officer, affirmed that it *originally happened*, though by then, he had submerged her drawing in the Harvard Clinic's trash.<sup>26</sup> This story seems, therefore, to illumine his professionally entitled subjection—how, nine-to-five, he mined Christiana's art as a *fluorescenting screen* for his patients' *unconscious* emotional projections.<sup>27</sup> And zooming to read in further, there are deeper, socially rooted repressions: how her name became a footnote haunting the vaulted database; how Jung owed his *Visions* to the dynamism of her trances. Magda asserts that, while the story is *subjective*, it should not be read through a lens that is psychoanalytically nor metaphorically limiting and passive. But less critically, she instructs us to *omit dialogue*—to *perceive* and *appraise* the *information* only to take *functional* personal *action*. Meanwhile, Henry's biographer purports that Christiana sought her own admixture of *panic* and *pain*,<sup>28</sup> never acknowledging the bias of his interpretive extractions; Place Ville Marie advertises its sky high Clinique Médicale as *first class* for its *psychology*, *aesthetic medicine*, and *treatment of varicose veins*.<sup>29</sup> This story disappoints us once again, skipping on the trope of the woman aging in the concrete tower: after an affair with a younger student, Henry built her one by a river before he found her too late at the coral beach. The Old Man, suckling his pipe, called her *anima*, his *femme inspiratrice*.

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<sup>25</sup> See Ben Macintyre, "[A Woman of Visions](#)" (*The New York Times*, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> See Wesley G. Morgan, "Origin and History of the Earliest Thematic Apperception Test Pictures" (*Journal of Personality Assessment*, vol. 79, no. 3, 2002), pp. 431-432 and Wesley G. Morgan, "Origin and History of an Early TAT Card: Picture C" (*Journal of Personality Assessment*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2000), p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> See Annie Murphy Paul, *The Cult of Personality Testing* (Free Press, 2004), p. 89.

<sup>28</sup> See Ruthellen Josselson, "Love in The Narrative Context: The Relationship Between Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan" (*Qualitative Psychology*, vol. 1, 2013), pp. 81-82.

<sup>29</sup> See [Place Ville Marie website](#).

**An older woman is profiled against a window; her back is turned to a man with a perplexed expression.**

This story is another of Christiana's defaults, scanned, up, and down-loaded before it was reprinted transparently and projected. A grandmother and father stand by carbon black curtains as cold rain falls in stipples, the children are sleeping, autumn sky pixelates—there is a quarantine, nausea, fear of an external defection. This story ciphers the tie around the neck and the Crisis in October; despite Magda's fear of the *brain machine metaphor*,<sup>30</sup> how psycho-architectural war tech powered Le Corbusier's house, CRAM, Atlas Supervisor, thin-film memory, every one of International Business Machines' hydraulic actuators. At paranoid speed, it connects gravitationally to *Spacewar!*'s Expensive Planetarium, the star-maps' cathode ray tube's fields and borders, spangled of electron beams and red, blue, and green phosphor. And with a program in the program, it embodies the prosthetic phantom limbing of segregation, the Bering Strait, the nuclear script and scene, and the familial, then the personally wearable, computer. In '62, this links to the United Farm Workers, the Ole Miss Integration, Villa 21, Esalen, and the Marsh Chapel Experiment. However, with mildewing torrents of manila file folders, what we overwhelmingly saw were the reductions of the lucratively and *ethnocentrically intuitive*<sup>31</sup> cognitive-computationalist revolution: after accelerating the Third Reich and playing checkers, IBM, underlaid with real estate agent bots, Big Pharma, CT, and CBT, were configured in Place Ville Marie. And this story became about the bunkering in of brain chemical technologies for xenophobic revelation, compartmentalized hopes for *powerful cosmic homecomings*<sup>32</sup> via binaural beats within The Law of Ripolin's masterful sensory deprivation. Still, Henry insists that the image source is unknown; twenty years later, on stolen land, Laurie Anderson sings through a vocoder, *are you coming home?*

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<sup>30</sup> See Sheryl N. Hamilton, "The Charismatic Cultural Life of Cybernetics: Reading Norbert Wiener as Visible Scientist" (*Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2017), p. 414.

<sup>31</sup> See Thomas Teo and Angela R. Febbraro, "Ethnocentrism as a Form of Intuition in Psychology" (*Theory & Psychology*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> See William A. Richards, *Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experiences* (Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 46.

**Behind a younger woman’s portrait, there is an older woman wearing a shawl on her head.**

This story is a projection of a noisy scanned photo file of a redrawing of Augustus John’s oil painting, titled one of his “Strange Companions.”<sup>33</sup> Gridded due to downscaling errors, it is about how they prescribed Christiana, with her multilayered visions, an openly entropic secret, the veiled woman, while they tried to look under and speak logically about her unlocked but unfulfilled passion. It is reminiscent of her blue gouache sketch of the *ancient mother* and her *grain of wheat which the bird took*. With shame, it recalls how Jung misappropriated her symbolically appropriative work—bound it to his standard patriarchal German Romantic pages, numbers, and names. This story is about how the bureaucratically hierarchical methods of archiving and archotyping are causally, as in militarily, economically, and religiously chained: the postwar DSM and MBTI<sup>34</sup> begot data psychometrics, affective computing, sentimental neural network analysis, and, in spite of the photo pollution, faith in the \$2.1 billion mystical services market for our personal optimization and introspection! Jung sustained interest in the Mass’ doxology<sup>35</sup> and the excitement of his Catholic Cult following, while Magda tried to circumvent her oppression with installments of *firm belief*. And indeed, it was Father John Gasson who preached that Mary would provide her *soul* with *peace*.<sup>36</sup> Because the cruciform tower is *autopoietic*<sup>37</sup>—socially shaping its inhabitants and consumers—but such constructed symmetry was never psychosomatically balanced on the shoulders of the sagittal plane. Christiana was nonetheless open to wonder as she gazed through tryptic stained glass windows, mantraed with the high modernists that the cross’ value was transcendent and arcane. But in coal and oil-sintered ink, this story projects an obsolete future: *dormant* and *fiduciary*, Dionne Brand notes, is what modern art became.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Wesley G. Morgan, “Origin and History of the ‘Series B’ and ‘Series C’ TAT Pictures” (*Journal of Personality Assessment*, vol. 81, no. 2, 2003), p. 139.

<sup>34</sup> See Merve Emre, *The Personality Brokers: The Strange History of Myers-Briggs and the Birth of Personality Testing* (Penguin, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> See Ilona Melker, “Christiana Morgan’s Final Visions: A Contextual View” (*Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2015), p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> See Elissa Rodkey, “‘Very Much in Love’: The Letters of Magda Arnold and Father John Gasson” (*Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2017), p. 286.

<sup>37</sup> See R. Humberto Maturana and J. Francisco Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> See Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk: Ars Poetica in 59 Versos* (Penguin Random House, 2018), p. 125.

**A man is silhouetted against a bright open window; the rest of the picture is dark.**

This story is another projection of a redrawing of an unsourced magazine clipping: two-toned, contre-jour. It is impossible to know whether the backlight enunciates entry or exit, and this unclear *theme*, in the future story *sequence*, will recur. Originally, the man gazed into a room with a framed picture visible on the wall through the window; in this quadrilateral reiteration, the exterior view is overexposed with moiré effect, though. This story reflects the dimensions of the subterranean technocratic mall, porcelain tiled floor, Post-it Note, and Rule of Modularity: *discrete and interchangeable parts plugged together via clean interfaces to decrease “global complexity”*.<sup>39</sup> And flashing back to Vari-Vue’s plastic lenticulars (billboards, postcards, “Winkies,” and “Magic Motions” with spacetime, wartime, biblical, Elvis, Batman, and Santa motifs), Kodak’s KH-7 Gambit, and 3M’s overhead projection systems (and office, photographic, energy control, radiology, pharmaceutical, and dental capitalisms), it is about the “kitchen debate,” *Family of Man* exhibit,<sup>40</sup> ON/OFF switch, and other binaristically destructive Cold War New Criticisms. It has been misconstrued as a *black box*, Magda says, with its austere right angles and centrally negative space, and rightfully, she bemoaned the behaviourists’ and Big Science’s banishing all *thought* of what might be going on in the unlit mental place. But this story, *more than an X ray*,<sup>41</sup> has been abstracted, as if, when *homo-economicus*<sup>42</sup> grabs for a white box, there is a *moral* input, output, percept, and protocol—with dry-silver microfilm, it has been created *clinical*. The hue, oversaturated, might (fore)shadow, for instance, a chemical orange box of Tide, a royal blue box of chlorine packets, Bleach and Glow cream as advertised in *Ebony Magazine*, and how this dyed the twin tub water of the rheostat-motored washing machine.

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<sup>39</sup> See Tara McPherson, “Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation.”

<sup>40</sup> See Sarah E. James, “A Family Affair: Photography, the Cold War and the Domestic Sphere” (*Photoworks Annual*, no. 20, 2013), p. 168.

<sup>41</sup> See Silvan Tomkins, “The Present Status of the Thematic Apperception Test” (*American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1949), p. 359.

<sup>42</sup> See Jason Read, “A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity” (*Foucault Studies*, vol. 6, 2009), pp. 28-29.

**A man in a suit is clutched from behind by two hands, one on each of his shoulders.**

This story, redundantly, is a dark backgrounded sketch of an uncited image yoking opposites, but this time, employing the inverse square law. Henry emphasized that, in Christiana's depiction, the figure of the *antagonist* is deliberately *invisible*; blurring the setting's details with shallow depth of field and limited dynamic range was their *cognitive intention*. Therefore, this story encodes, all the more, its context of synergistic relations: the wounded couple, writers, readers, architects, citizens, doctors, and patients, along with their rationalist skyscrapers, refrigerator-sized disk drives, projectors, briefcases, notebooks, and defensive, but multiplexed retentions. Though Magda would resist it, this is suggestive of Melanie Klein's notion of *projective identification*: while its *instinctive* nature makes its operation seem arbitrary, like artistic, figurative, or alchemical *interpretation*, it remains a tangibly powerful tool of social *control* and *communication*.<sup>43</sup> It was in this tragic mode, at least, that Christiana's and Henry's dyadic romance seems to have culminated in Nietzschean creative destruction: contrary to narrow computationalist belief, the mind is neither vatted nor mirrored, and when looking through such individualistic, synchronic, and dualistic apertures and curtain walls, narcissistic reflection might be mistaken for intersubjective connection.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the entwinement of the storyteller, architect, analyst, and scientist is interdisciplinarily blinkered and oft-gaslighting (Henry was written as *the much brighter hemisphere*).<sup>45</sup> They called Christiana *a beautiful flawed cameo*,<sup>46</sup> Gothic, poetic, and chthonic, as she spent days underground, pre-linguistically trancing in the basement. They say she chain-smoked, drank pathologically, and in 1943, had a radical sympathectomy, from which she never fully recovered. But in her garden, she planted irises, coral bells, lilacs, and peonies to remind her of her childhood summers.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Priscilla Roth, "Projective Identification" (*Introducing Psychoanalysis*, edited by Susan Budd and Richard Rusbridger, Taylor & Francis, 2005) p. 200.

<sup>44</sup> See Shaun Gallagher, *Enactivist Interventions: Rethinking the Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 1-12.

<sup>45</sup> See Forest G. Robinson, *Love's Story Told: A Life of Henry A. Murray* (Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 171.

<sup>46</sup> See Edwin S. Shneidman, "My Visit with Christiana Morgan" (*History of Psychology*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2001), p. 295.

<sup>47</sup> See Hillary Morgan, *The Tower*.

**A woman covers her downcast face and holds a door open to a room where a man lies passed out on a bed.**

This is Christiana's monochrome rendering of a two-colour illustration by Pruett Carter for Margaret Deland's short story, "Captain Archer's Daughter," an abridged form of the novel, serialized in *Woman's Home Companion*. The distressed protagonist wears a dust rose dress with a red waist ribbon and regrets her marriage to a sailor, blacked out again from too much whisky (and this is from the literary realist's POV). While Christiana reported it as the fifth test picture she drew, Henry arbitrarily designated it "C" and hired Samuel Thal to flip the image—erase all but the objectified foreground—to delete it from his canonized TAT Series D.<sup>48</sup> Before he blue-pencilled her involvement, he agreed with Magda that the patient's narrative response, whether *helplessly inactive* or *selfishly indifferent*, would fixture how they would act in such an *emergency*.<sup>49</sup> Loyal still, Christiana appraised her and Henry's identities inextricably, wanted to reify their mythico-ritualistic bond as Wona and Mansol in their tower's carved walnut walls and Highest Philosophy. Analogously, Gordon Pask writes that *the machine for living in will relieve the inhabitant of the need to store information in memory!*<sup>50</sup> But an anticipatory daily anguish about what she grieved as endangered, personally and environmentally, is what Christiana languaged most lucidly: *the long drawn out pain of the provisional life—not yet . . .* she wrote in her diary.<sup>51</sup> In the Eleusinian mysteries, the serpent is the theriomorphic form of Demeter, the goddess of the earth and her fertility. But Christiana's snakes were psychopomps, depicted crucified, open-mouthed, dangerously encoiling women and their babies, emitting *hideous green lights*, writhing undersea. With lust, she envisioned herself turning to steel, not unlike Place Ville Marie (in its aspirational solidity).<sup>52</sup> While a door opens, it simultaneously divides, hides, allows for leaning and for leaving; yet she *scored* dysphoric, one-sided, too easily rhymed, in her ineffability.

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<sup>48</sup> See Wesley G. Morgan, 2000, p. 90.

<sup>49</sup> See Henry A. Murray, *Explorations in Personality* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2008), p. 407.

<sup>50</sup> See Gordon Pask, "The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics" (*Computational Design Thinking*, edited by Achim Menges and Sean Ahlquist, Wiley, 2011), p. 74.

<sup>51</sup> See Claire Douglas, p. 230.

<sup>52</sup> See Ilona Melker, "Revisiting the Visions of Christiana Morgan: What Was Left Out of Jung's 'Visions Seminars'" (*ARAS Connections*, no. 4, 2016), p. 45.