

TENDER

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL MADE BY WOMEN

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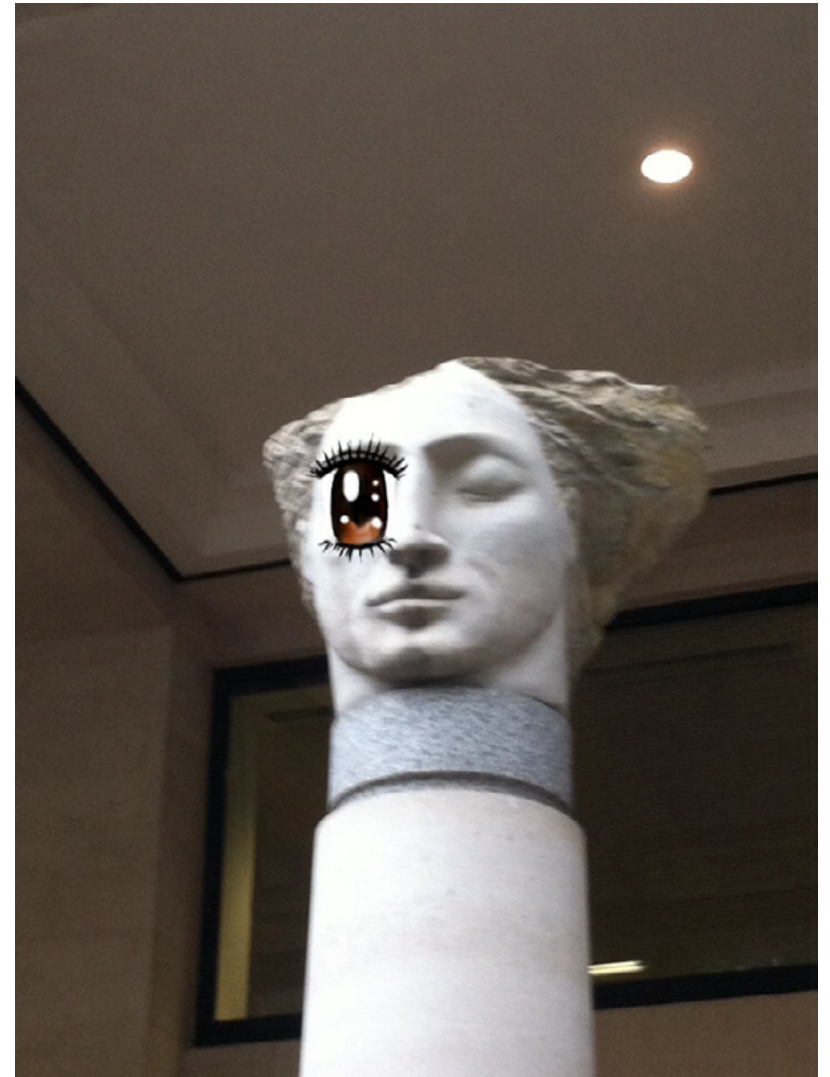
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Kathryn Maris

JESUS WITH CIGARETTE

Michael said there was a painting of Jesus
smoking a cigarette, maybe by Giotto, in Rome.
I had never been to Rome but there I was
and it could have been Peckham, which has a garage
sometimes used for installations. Nowhere
could I find this old master Jesus with cigarette. I rang
Michael, a smoker, to say I could not find the Jesus.
He laughed. Gabriel, a former smoker, was next to me
and also laughed. Gabriel said, *Michael was pulling
your leg!* Michael said, *We are Jesus. You are the painter.*

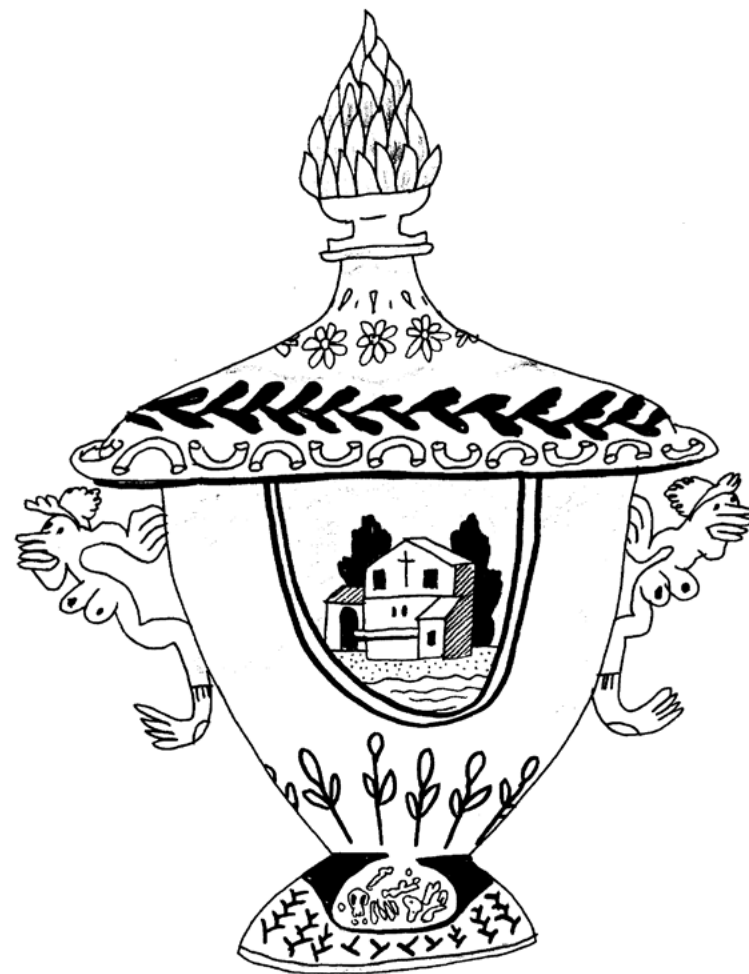
CASE STUDY: MS C

Ms C, 32, attended counselling with her father after discovering he was romantically involved with a woman her own age who bore uncanny similarities to Ms C in that they shared a birthday (a fact that seemed of significance to the patient), they had both attended Harvard Business School, and both had worked for Ms C's father, a figure of international prominence in the hotel industry. Ms C described her reaction as 'devastated' when her father announced his intention to leave her mother, whom the patient described as 'a devoted wife for over 35 years.'

Ms C had no history of depression, and did not present with depressive symptoms. When asked if she believed herself to be depressed, she said she did not but that she believed that she had been 'replaced by a Korean woman who had all of her attributes' and who would 'inherit all the money.'

Ms C was given further tests to rule out Capgras Syndrome and was advised to seek one-on-one therapy for future monitoring of her moods and delusions.





[LIKE *BARREL OF MONKEYS*]

Like me using one thing in the service of an unintended other, scientists have used the monkeys for the *modeling of polyhedral structures, including virus particles and other protein structures ... a pair of monkeys can hook around each other in more than eighty different ways, forming quite stable links. The links may be either symmetrical or asymmetrical.* Unlike the *Barrel of Monkeys*, you cannot just dump me on a table. Go ahead and try!

[LIKE *BARREL OF MONKEYS* ADDENDUM]

My mother thought the word *asymmetrical* hilarious, accenting the ass as she did. Which reminds me of those *Red-Ass-Monkey* dolls. Yet another toy that Meggie had and I did not— though they were so scary that I didn't want one! Couldn't imagine why any one would want one.

[LIKE THE *VIEW-MASTER*]

Like the *View-Master*, I present enchanting stories, of, say *Bambi* and *The Flying Nun*. Also close-ups of the Statue of Liberty, Grand Canyon, and Carlsbad Cavern. Unlike Dr. Bassett who collaborated with the *View-Master* inventor, I do not have a talent for dissection and I have never caught a fish with my bare hands. Unlike them all, I have a dim view of masters.

[LIKE *TROLLS*]

Like *trolls* – or in the days when I *had* a troll – I have long hair. So long that when I brush my hair in the dark, sparks fly! Like a troll, I smile even when I don't mean it. Like a troll, I am part of a family but typically hermitical. Unlike a troll, however, my child never had shocks of peacock-purple hair (ah, me in my punk days!) nor did she pop out of a gum-ball machine in a little plastic bubble. I love those protective bubbles. I wish I had one now. Large enough to curl inside. Even risk losing consciousness.

DIAMOND DOVE

Inside an exotic garden there were 6
diamond doves in an exotic bird house &
no one came the whole day so I stood &
watched them

PEARL

I am part pearl
after the one I swallowed dissolved into me

POWDER

There was a beautiful white stone cast out all by itself from her installation.

I much preferred the stone to the artwork, in fact, to the whole exhibition, which I had been looking forward to seeing immensely.

I picked up the stone and took it home with me.

The next day I grated it all up into crystalline powder, poured it all into a bottle of clear nail varnish and painted my nails. I have some left





HOW TO BURDEN THE GIRL

TRANSLATED BY ASA YONEDA



What was I thinking, getting involved with a girl like her? The only reason I was interested in the first place was because I thought she was an innocent young thing standing up to an evil gang all on her own. I had no intention of getting mixed up in such a violent love affair.

‘You said you’d do anything to get to know me’, she said, inching closer again. I said that, sure. But I’m thirty-four. I was dubious about my chances of understanding someone so much younger than me, and anyway I know nothing about women. I just thought she must be lonely, what with her entire family having been killed by an evil gang, so it slipped out. There was no need for her to take me at my word.

She moved slowly towards me, having just recently blown the heads off nineteen evil henchmen. I watched her closely as I retreated. The tears of blood she was crying because her beloved father had just become the last of her family to die, killed in a manner so diabolically cruel as to seem beyond human imagining. The special tears are the whole reason the gang are after her. I don’t know the details. I was simply taken by the way the girl’s thighs looked, sticking out of her skirt. The pink hair, the emerald green eyes— those were a little freakish, admittedly,

but they didn’t bother me. Women were completely foreign to me to begin with. I’ve never paid much attention to the outside world, so I thought some women must just come like that. My old man would cry and sigh and call me a hopeless ignoramus, if he knew. My mother walked out on the two of us a long time ago, so my old man’s all I’ve got.

I kept creeping backwards, and before I knew it, I’d left the living room and my foot came up against the staircase in the hall. Her house is enormous. She, her father, and her five brothers moved here sometime last year, settling into a quiet life next door to the house I’ve always lived in.

It looked like the girl’s father took care of all the errands and things in the huge house behind the high wall, so at first I was simply excited to know there was someone next door in the same situation as me. I rarely feel any curiosity toward other people, but I took to watching her through the windows occasionally, and would see her taking really good care of all her five little brothers. This made me feel pretty inadequate. I leave all my cleaning and laundry to my old man. His stuff I leave up to him, too.

At some point, I started to find it strange how she never left the house. What’s more, the five little brothers, who looked so alike they could have been quintuplets, seemed to be disappearing one by one. I mean, one day there were only four boys playing in the garden, then there were three, then two. The little brothers carried on tumbling around the garden without a care, but on the days just after one had vanished, the father would usually come out and hold the girl’s hand as she sat in a chair on the decking. On those days she’d forego her usual bare legs and cover up in a dark outfit, looking glum. But why no funeral? Why no police?

One night, I saw one of the little boys nearly get snatched by members of an evil gang. The reason I knew that that was what they were was because their getup was pretty unmistakeable: masked faces, capes, in black from head to toe. The girl and her father were fighting them off in their huge garden— him with a gun, and her with the kind of long sword I thought only existed in movies. (People around here pay no mind to moderate amounts of noise, or gunfire, because there’s a massive ballpark around the corner; their hearing’s shot.) I was taken aback by the girl’s almost superhuman physical ability. Her father looked realistic enough, like a man holding a gun, but the skill with which she wielded the edge on her sword as she killed those henchmen was way out of the ordinary. I should have realised then that she was different from your average woman, but what can I say, the only

person I could compare her to was my old man.

They managed to save the little bro from being taken that day, but a few days later, the gang came back and killed the kid in a gruesome fashion. That was my first sight of her tears of blood. The gang members held her down and used a dropper to collect a few tears into a kind of vial, then disappeared into the woods behind the house with a purposeful swirl of their capes. The garden was littered with the bodies of the little boy and numerous dead henchmen, plus the girl, sitting on the ground, clutching grass. And her father, coming up to her and gently putting his hand on her shoulder.

I started to piece the situation together: the gang were after her (for whatever reason), and it was no use trying to run (because they'd catch up at some point), so the girl and her father were trying to force a showdown next door. That much I got.

I did think maybe their setup was in a little bit of a rut, what with the way the gang seemed to insist on attacking the house repeatedly instead of just taking the girl hostage, or how she and her father kept the little boys around for the taking when they might have been kept out of harm's way in a shelter somewhere. But I don't like to sweat the details.

However, if it had occurred to me, surely it had occurred to her— that once all the little brothers were dead, her father would be next. Reduced to just the two of them, the girl and her father expanded their arsenal with the zeal of mercenaries, and kept their guard up around the clock. It's possible they were staying put because they were using the father as bait, to lure out the evil gang and eradicate them once and for all instead of going after their HQ (location: unknown). Their epic daily battles racked up mountains of dead henchmen. But today's would be the last. Her father was finally taken down.

The gang took just one drop of her blood tears, and then left, as usual. The girl sat on the lawn and wept for ages. Her father, who'd always been there to hold her hand, had been blown to smithereens. Seeing what a blow this was to her psychologically, I was moved – despite not being in the habit of empathizing with people – to pop on a pair of sandals and make my way over to the by now familiar stately garden next door. I entered the grounds through a segment of wall that had been damaged in the fighting. When I got to her, the grass where she was sitting was entirely slicked with red. So these were the tears whose mysterious powers

the gang was after.

She didn't even raise her head as I approached, as if I was completely irrelevant. What do you do to get a woman to stop crying in a situation like this? 'Cheer up, now', I said, trying to keep the squeak out of my voice. And told her that I understood something of her suffering in losing her last living relative. That I had no one besides my doddering old man.

I thought I might be in love. As she raised her face, I saw a red tear trail down her cheek, and knew I'd do anything to take her father's place as her right-hand man. I didn't know how to shoot a gun, but perhaps I could learn to drive instead. I hardly recognised myself. I know what they call it: unconditional love. The gang would probably be after me next as a result, but to be beside her, even just briefly, would be worth it. My very first experience of love for a fellow human being. I'd bare my heart to her, tell her everything. How I've never been able to sympathise with anyone, but might be able to understand the loneliness that must come from having extraordinary abilities. That we'll no doubt face plenty of obstacles, but hey, there's always my old man.

She'd been still for so long, but suddenly she got to her feet. 'Love?' she said, moving toward me, head angled inquiringly. 'Love? Love?'

'Think you'll still love me once you've heard what I've got to say for myself?'

I didn't know why she was acting so aggressive toward a guy who's obviously trying to help, but she's probably confused. 'Nothing you can say will shock me,' I said, affecting calm, nodding like a man of the world. I hadn't brought up the spying on her, but it's possible she's been aware of me for some time.

'All this is my own fault,' she said. 'For falling in love with my father.' I was dumbstruck. She looked into my eyes, and began her tale.

'I was ten years old when Mother first suspected I had designs on Father. She warned him repeatedly, but he always brushed her off, told her not to be absurd. Said she had a bee in her bonnet. That I was only a child.

'But Mother's intuition was right. I meant to take him away from her. I used every trick in the book to turn them against each other. They'd been so close, but Father defended me until the very end, saying it didn't do to suspect a child.

He wasn't interested in knowing the truth. He wanted to think of his daughter as some kind of angel, I guess. He should have realised that was hopelessly naive, if he remembered anything about being ten himself.'

She stepped toward me, holding out her little hands. I should have been thrilled, but for some reason my body felt all tense, as if it's looking for an escape route.

'Mother seethed, grew hysterical. Unable to prove that I was a wicked child, she finally cracked and shouted at me, and raised her hand in anger. That was the moment I'd been waiting for. I stumbled hard on purpose, and fell into the road. I was taken to hospital and had to have a dozen stitches, but after that the court made sure she could never see me again. Father, who'd adored her gentle nature, divorced her, and we moved away together. Do you see? I got the law on my side.

'That's why Mother joined the gang of evil— she needed to find something that was more powerful than the law. I'm sure she made a study of every conceivable means of murder, purely to make me suffer— you know about the wonderfully imaginative, almost artistic ways my brothers were killed. You couldn't do that without a genuine love of killing, or a serious obsession.'

She gave me no time to respond. 'That's right— those brothers weren't my little brothers, they were our children. Mine and Father's. I could hardly go to a clinic, so I birthed them all at home, in the kitchen. I admit I was pretty surprised when the triplets turned up. This isn't a fight for justice,' she said, pausing at last. 'It's an overwhelmingly personal matter.'

I tried to rouse my tongue, which had gone stiff. 'But aren't they collecting your tears?' I said. 'Those tears of blood, they had some kind of special power.'

'The tears?' She shrugged. 'Who knows? They don't do a thing. Mother just takes them as trophies of the misery she causes me, drop by drop.'

I'd obviously got the wrong end of the stick. What with the pink hair, and the fact she's just a girl, I'd simply assumed she was a plucky young thing fighting on the side of justice. I wanted to get away, back the way I came, but as she kept trying to close the distance between us, I'd inched my way back over the decking, eventually finding myself inside the house.

'Do you really love me?'

She sounded sweet enough, but I no longer felt like saying yes.

'I should really go check on my old man,' I said, gesturing vaguely toward my house. 'He hasn't got anyone but me to look after him.'

She seemed to sense the advantage was hers. Grabbing my arm, she says, 'If you love me, then find out how it feels to be in my shoes.'

'How it feels?'

'To lose your family. You try it.'

I'd realised a while back that I was in over my head. Something I'd done went over so badly that an apology wasn't going to get me off the hook. She was confused. I couldn't let my carefree smile slip just yet.

'Lose my family? I couldn't kill my old man,' I said.

'That's not what I mean. To feel what I feel,' she said, immobilising me with one hand, 'you need to seduce him.'

'I need to— '

'If you want to get to know me.' She was adamant.

'But I'm— '

'That's what you need to do.'

I wasn't lying when I said I wanted to understand her, but there was no chance of me seducing that geriatric. Just picturing it makes acid rise in the back of my throat.

'Aside from Mother, no one realised that I'd seduced Father, not even Father himself. He was full of guilt for having ruined my life, and I planned to use that to make sure we went on living together like man and wife. With Mother legally out of the picture, there was nothing to stop me from lying to everyone else, and taking the secret of my wickedness to the grave. Or so I assumed.

‘But I was wrong. It was a miscalculation. Because then it all kicked off. First my hair: I used to have beautiful black hair. Soon, it started to turn pink from the roots out. I dyed it, but it wouldn’t take— when I woke up the next day the pink color would be deeper than ever. That wasn’t all. It grew out at an incredible rate. I always wore my hair in a bob, but now it comes down to my waist. Eventually I gave up cutting it, because it just keeps growing, but anyway...’

‘Wait,’ I said.

‘Next was my eyes. Each time I looked in a mirror, my irises had lost some of their color, until they were finally emerald green, like a doll’s. And then my brothers. I told you they were mine and Father’s children, but the thing is, we only ever conceived the first one. The rest of them we don’t recall making. So all we were doing was living together, but my belly kept swelling, and I was in hell from permanent morning sickness and unending contractions. Then, at the births, their little heads would get caught inside, putting me in agony. Some of them got stuck for too long, and they didn’t make it.

‘I was gradually starting to understand what these changes meant. There was something out there that wasn’t going to let me get away with what I’d done to Father, even if I’d managed to fool everyone else.

‘By then, I couldn’t even leave the house, thanks to my outlandish appearance. In the early days, we kept moving from one place to the next, but every time we did, I got pregnant with another one, so we decided we’d go somewhere new, buy a house, and then stay put. Once we got here, my perpetual pregnancies finally let up. We breathed a sigh of relief, thinking we might be forgiven at last.

‘But there was another change yet to come. You know what I’m talking about?’

I said the first thing that came to mind. ‘The tears?’

‘That’s right.’ She nodded, still clutching my arm. ‘I started to cry tears of blood.’

Was this some kind of sick joke? I was too confused to work out where her lies started, or how exactly she was different from other women. I mean, they were all completely foreign to me to begin with. I tried to pry her hand off my arm. She wouldn’t let go, and kept on talking, like she was trying to unburden herself by confessing everything, which was infuriating. I kicked her in the gut as hard as

I could, and in a mad scramble, half leaped, half tumbled down into the garden, clambering toward the shadowy darkness.

‘Seduce your father!’ I heard her cry. ‘Then you’ll know what I’m talking about!’

*

I’d meant to aim for home, but I was in the wood behind her house, through which the evil gang always made their exit. I ran and ran, but it went on forever. There was no way it could be so vast. ‘Old man! Old man!’ I shouted, but maybe he didn’t hear— there was no sign of anyone coming to help. I didn’t have a phone on me either. When I looked around, I was surrounded by countless mounds of disturbed soil, where the girl and her father had evidently buried all the gang members they killed daily. There were capes and masks scattered everywhere. Further on, I came across five secluded graves. After a while, I finally spotted the lights on in my house. I went to my room and slipped quietly into bed to avoid suspicion. The next day, my old man brought me some lunch. The moment I clapped eyes on him I remembered the night before, and promptly lost the will to eat his food. Couldn’t bring myself to even speak to him.

BUT WHY DOES MY TAILBONE HURT?
(OTHER SIDE EFFECTS OF EARLY MEDICAL ABORTION)

not sore to touch when sitting
or as I stood up she fought somewhere
swinging on a curve lopped
the friendliest part of my back

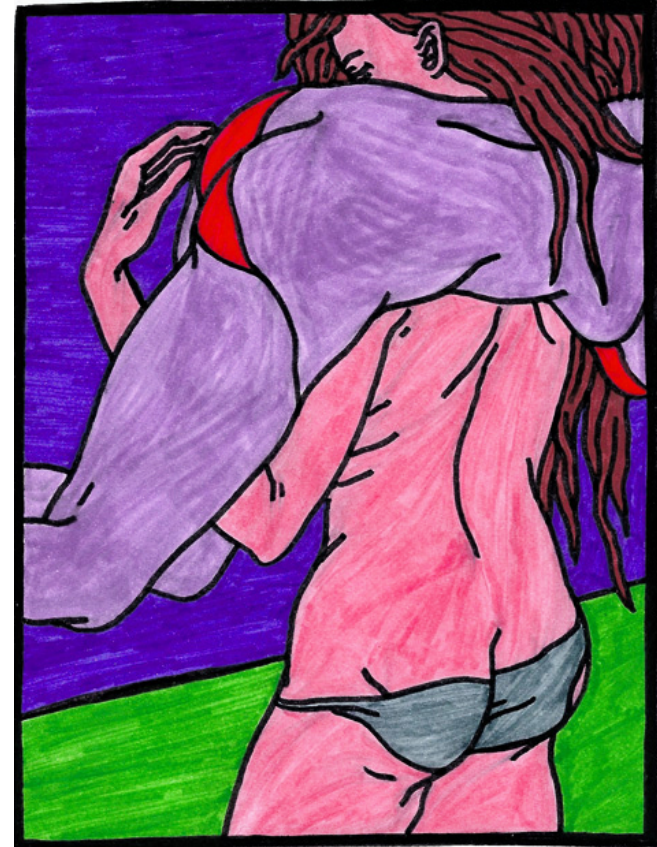
me as monkey seat at the base
of my rear, bent over the A10 and method
caring
no not abdominal pain t a i l b o n e pain
call me mad but that's where it lives now
adoringly so that incurred
body part trails off
they said expect blood clots
and retained products —something else to own?
no beware retained products rats!
leak the body god's a customer
in the centre getting support
existing between happening and rind

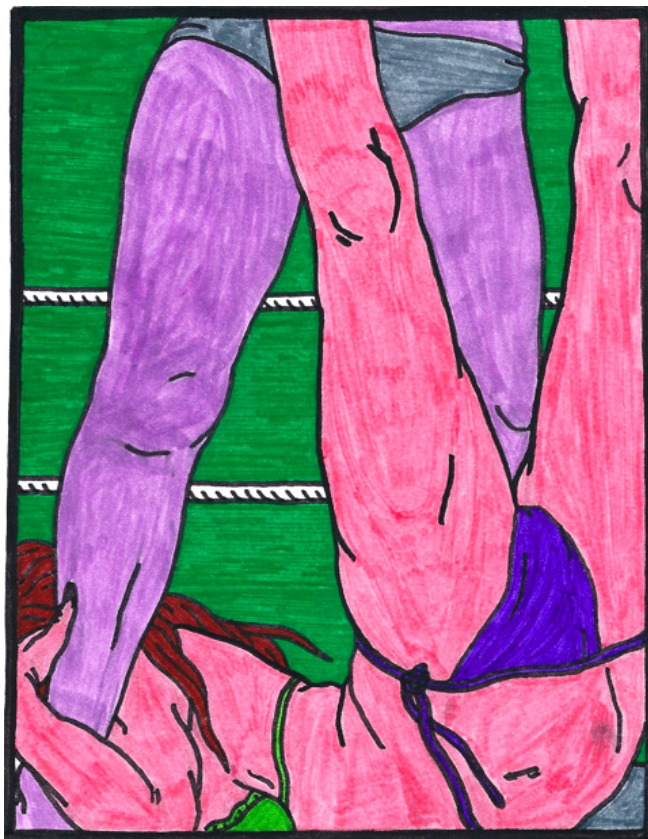
Ache my ape my tailbone exists
it fixes itself to the air and points at satellites look
I made a joke planet now I'm difficult
with spurs on, tailboning myself
this week I'm sponge a mystic
with thug pal and hormones in coat pocket

where do you bear weight?
it only hurt iFYOUSWIM
later I call it expression
my miracle squid ink

my matter of practice
my thing
my work song

you can only see it if you screw your money up
or buttock injection hope that helps— yes thank you Margo thank you Yeti has
a large welt from tanning







MAKING THE MOST OF THE TRAGIC

The duck is sceptical

agape
it faces the deep
passing time.

The duck sighing
shuffles
its beak

writes the word
blame.

BLOOD ON THE WATTLE

after Yhonnie Scarce

Nail soft/bush glass/tear
mat/bent black/flash teat/thin mass
low peak/ripple rot/limp cot/rubber
bulb/finger tint/crack yam bright
roots/short blink/back
box/sharpen streak/
shiver work/digitdro
p/wrinkle sham

DIFFERENT BUILDINGS
INTERVIEW BY HARRIET MOORE



A couple of years ago, in a tiny basement during an unusually hot May, I saw Kate Kilalea read from her sequence 'House for the Study of Water', and the world went very still. I thought of the moment in To The Lighthouse when Virginia Woolf describes the human mind as an alphabet: very few people ever reach Q, and Z is 'scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance [...] only reached once by one man in a generation,' I was certain I was squinting at Z, or something painfully close to it, glowing from a faraway uncharted place.

More recently, in that peculiar time at the edge of the year when one waits for the next to begin, I emailed Kate to set up this interview before setting out from an emptied city to the middle of nowhere. I kept returning to what the poet Jack Underwood said about Kate in an interview, 'I don't even know what to do about her poems; I feel like I ought to go to the doctor about them,' because I knew exactly what he meant. I found Kate's poems had gone very deep and, to use a line from the poet Emily Berry, were 'polishing my feelings.' Kate is a remarkable emotional surgeon. She lays out what it is to be human, and with tenderness, and an enormous precision of language, she cuts into it, peeling back the surface of our own lives so we can see what's really there. So we can move towards some kind of understanding.

What follows is the ground we mapped over email. It covers psychoanalysis, dream-work, Anne Carson, tennis, literary architecture, wounds, and more.

The moon was acting strangely.
The moon was moving fast.
It was cloudy but hot.

Electricity cables gathered round a pole
like the roof of a marquee.

He wore a gold vagina on his chest.
He had gold lining on the flaps of his jacket.
She lay her head against the window and sang a song
by Silvio Rodríguez
wearing ten gold balls on a chain around her neck.

*Dear Circus,
Sometimes we are just so full of emotion.*

— from 'Hennecker's Ditch'

HARRIET: When I first read your poem 'Hennecker's Ditch', I got the sense of a writer who had found a way to set herself free, and in doing so had created a work quite unlike anything I had encountered before. Could we talk a little about the process of writing it? I know you have said it is best listened to with 'a kind of floating ear'— did you set out to find a more fluid form to work with?

KATE: It's funny that you talk about being 'set free' because that's what it felt like to write it. I remember, after my first collection came out, suddenly looking at the poems I'd written and hating the kind of wise or knowing tone they seemed to have. The idea that I had anything to say about anything seemed totally false, which has something to do with my having started psychoanalysis around that time. The process so drastically undercut the way I'd seen things that not only did I not know anything anymore, I also felt totally incapable of thinking or saying anything that made sense.

And obviously you can't write anything meaningful if you can't make sense, so instead I found myself writing down certain phrases I came across – street signs,

snatches of other people's conversation, my own strange inner conversations – in my notebook. There was nothing significant about them but at the same time I found them appealing— like an atmosphere my ear had developed a taste for. Over time, I messed with these phrases, sort of mindlessly shifting them around, and infrequently – mind-bendingly infrequently – a cluster of phrases would come together in a certain arrangement that, however bizarre it was, was also somehow unquestionably 'right'.

HARRIET: Don Share's commentary on 'Hennecker's Ditch' for New Poetries opens with, and is structured by, the moment in a video from the launch of your debut collection *One Eye'd Leigh*, where you introduce the poem (then called 'Dear Circus') by saying 'there is no work to be done' to your audience. I am hoping you could talk a little more about this idea of whether we should or shouldn't 'work' in order to read a poem?

KATE: I'm not sure about working when reading, but I think there is something special about listening to poetry, which is its speed— you can't really think while you listen because if you stop to work out the significance of a line, or its relation to something earlier in the poem, you might miss the next line. Which means that thinking – or intellectual work – gets disarmed, but also that the ear is free to experience sounds more immersively. Of course there's some thinking, but without a page to consult, one's impressions are fleeting and inconclusive. I'm reminded of Swann listening to music in *In Search of Lost Time*, how he's 'blinded, deprived of his logical faculty', cast into a 'strange frenzy of intoxication'... stripped of 'the whole armour of reason'. I wonder whether part of the pleasure of listening to music is that you can get lost in it— listening without the pressure of having to figure out what you're listening to.

HARRIET: What are you working on at the moment?

KATE: For a long time, in one way or another, I've been writing about Alpine Architecture, which is Bruno Taut's design proposal for a glass city to be built in the Alps. Taut's design – or his fantasy – was to build a city that was more human and less functional. So the buildings were designed, not as factories, offices, etc. but as places which might, for instance, encourage the 'study of the play of water and water vapour and cloud formation'. I like this idea of the 'contemplative' life but am also suspicious of it. It feels dangerous to stop somewhere and do nothing. Some days, when I'm at home writing and not working full-time in an

office like I used to, it worries me— the feeling of not having a clear purpose. There's another parallel between Taut's proposal and writing which is the element of exposure inherent in both. A few years ago I started writing a sequence of poems set in the House for the Study of Water. Recently, perhaps temporarily, that project morphed into an 'attempted novel' set in Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. I'm also working at the moment on a text to be set to music for the composer Edmund Finnis as part of the ENO's house composer programme.

HARRIET: Do you think there is more 'work' to be done in reading poetry than prose? Is this why people often seem so wary of it?

KATE: I often think about the question Don Share raised in that (wonderful) piece about work, and what it is. As I understand it, he associates work with travel— *travail*. I've always had a more pessimistic notion of work as effort – especially effort exerted against the grain – like reading something you don't care about. I'm not sure if I would read something which didn't, in some way, matter to me personally. But is that why poetry worries people? I think the wariness is less about intellectual work than emotional blows that poems – like dream-work, wild and inappropriate – sometimes strike. In poems you might come across something you might rather not have come across.

HARRIET: Is there a different impulse behind writing poetry and writing prose? How do your poems and prose originate— do they emerge in different ways?

KATE: The underlying impulse, in whichever form, must have something to do with the desire to talk and be known by other people. And in my experience, writing poetry seems to carry a desire for others to feel as I feel, whereas perhaps prose is a desire to be understood. There's a pragmatism about writing one way or the other too. For me, there's a stamina required to write poetry because it seems only to 'work' when I have no idea what I'm doing, so writing poetry involves a complex mental gymnastics where part of the 'work' is trying to extract my brain from the room to stop it interfering with whatever produces poems. It's a kind of wilful mindlessness – like waiting to take dictation from someone who might not turn up – which I find very taxing. Part of prose's appeal is that it feels more tangible— it has coordinates like characters and plot and research to work on when I get to the computer.

Part of reading a novel is that it has characters, so in that way it has something

in common with being with people. I remember not wanting Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* to end because the whole way through the book I felt as though I was in the presence of someone with such a great capacity for understanding – I felt so understood – that I could hardly bear to be without him. I don't know whether I wanted to be with Nabokov or to be like him, and whether part of my desire to write novels is to have people feel about me the way I felt about *Speak, Memory*.

HARRIET: In an interview in the *Paris Review* Margaret Atwood talks about 'lines of descent' in her work; how for her 'poems open something, like opening a room or a box or a pathway. And then the novel can go in and see what else is there'. She thinks this true of lots of ambidextrous writers. Is this your experience— do your poems open doors to future novels?

KATE: I'm not sure—I think poems do more than open things up. That a satisfying poem really exhausts whatever it's going after. Writers who do both often seem more comfortable in one or the other form. I've always had the idea that writing poetry and prose is somehow damaging, like how tennis and squash strokes counteract each other.

HARRIET: The texts which have made the largest dents in my soul over the past few years have often occupied, and explored, the foggy space between poetry and works of prose. Anne Carson's book of narrative verse *The Beauty of The Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos* is one of them— it even alludes to its refusal to be classified in its title. How do you feel about these types of hybrid text?

KATE: To be honest, I've never given a thought to Anne Carson's form. I remember hearing her saying on the radio once that the narrow columns in *Red Doc* were the result of a formatting error with margins, which perhaps gave me the impression that she was less of a formal experimenter than somebody slightly indifferent to it, who thinks of it as an add-on. Her poems – or whatever they are... – seem too unwieldy for form, as if form is too weak to really contain them. I wonder whether it's less literary form that she challenges or the norms of self-expression, like discretion— the limits of what ought and oughtn't be said. The psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden wrote somewhere that 'you know the truth when you hear it'— part of what makes Anne Carson's writing so effervescent for me is the way she seems to be transgressing socially, ignoring everyday self-censorship. I get the same excitement from Emmanuel Carrère. He used his book, *My Life*

as a *Russian Novel*, to expose the secret (which his mother had kept all her life) of his grandfather's being a Nazi collaborator. If form, in literature, functions as a kind of container, then personally (in that book) it does the opposite because Carrère, so he says, writes it to 'let out' this family secret whose hiddenness he found so toxic.

HARRIET: I love what you say about form being too weak to contain Anne Carson; it makes me think of other texts which push against the boundaries of genre such as *Dept. of Speculation* by Jenny Offill, Heather Phillipson's *Not An Essay*, and Katherine Angel's *Unmastered: A Book on Desire, Most Difficult to Tell*. It interests me that all of these texts are written by women, and there is an energy to them which makes me recall the opening of an Adrienne Rich lecture where she describes The Modern Language Association as 'a congeries of old-boys' networks, academicians rehearsing their numb canons in sessions dedicated to the literature of white males', insofar as this kind of invigorating writing feels like its opposite. What are your thoughts on the relationship between women writers and (defiance of) genre?

KATE: Reading Heather Phillipson, I hear a seriousness which really appeals to me, a preparedness to 'talk about' things in quite an uncompromising way. Again, I don't find myself paying huge attention to questions of form, which is perhaps because I'm just not a very critical reader. What you're saying reminds me of Gilles Deleuze's idea being on the margins is good because if you're not 'normal', you're uniquely positioned to do something new or 'abnormal'. I've always wondered about the way he unquestioningly supports novelty though— is it always good to be surprised, to encounter something new instead of something familiar? It's true, there's an energy and precariousness about it, but isn't there something valuable too about the reassuringly familiar? Like the certainty you have listening to anything by Bach that the final three chords will almost certainly sound exactly as you expect them to sound. There's an argument that for children, predictability and constancy – no precariousness – is the precondition for being able to play. Wordsworth makes a similar case in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* where he says – I paraphrase – that the function of poetic rhyme and rhythm is to provide a regularity for the mind to hang onto, that the security of form is an anchor which enables the reader to endure passionate feelings which might otherwise be overwhelming.

HARRIET: You often write using the male voice. I am wondering whether you

could talk a little about your decision to inhabit a male point of view, and whether your novel's protagonist is male?

KATE: Yes, the protagonist is male. Consciously, it's a decoy I thought would help me write more frankly about myself— as though changing the sex would make it harder to trace what I'd written back to me. When it came to it, I didn't really think about the sex though. Maybe, as Freud says, we're all a bit of both.

HARRIET: The world of your poems is often disorienting, dark. I am thinking here especially of 'Hennecker's Ditch' where men and women fasten their lonely shadows; snow/cars/dogs sob; 'the pained months are coming for us'... I recently listened to an old recording of you reading the poem, and was fascinated to hear that you wrote the sequence during a year where you felt a lot of anxiety; you said that 'the poem was something to do with trying to come to terms with that emotion.' Could you say something more about that?

KATE: I think the description of anxiety as 'nameless dread' – the feeling that 'something's going to happen but I don't know what it is' – is apt. The threat's namelessness is what makes it so compelling. If it's not attached to something in particular then it becomes a gloomy atmosphere which casts everything in a portentous light. I don't know what I was hoping for with that poem, but I don't think it was about understanding anxiety. If anything, it had something to do with provoking anxiety in others. Like the way that when you love someone, the desired response is for them to return your love, not to 'understand' it.

HARRIET: Do you think there is a form that is particularly suited to transcribing pain? Does writing and reading poetry, for example, tend to our wounds in a way that prose cannot?

KATE: Psychoanalysis has an argument, that writing – in whatever form – makes one feel better. And Orhan Pamuk seems to be making this argument for prose in his Nobel speech when he says that 'the desire to talk about our secret wounds is at the heart of the desire to write fiction... My confidence comes from the belief that all human beings resemble one another, that others carry wounds like mine—and that they will therefore understand. All true literature rises from this childish, hopeful certainty that we resemble one another.' I wonder if what's hoped for is more than just being understood, which seems quite a reasonable desire, or if there isn't also, in writing – especially about things that are painful – a childish

hope that there's somebody out there who actually cares about one's personal trials and griefs.

As to what form it takes, I enjoyed wondering whether you could be forensic about it, whether each of the hundreds of different pains (loss, lovesickness, regret, shame, loneliness, waiting, being overlooked or undervalued or left out, not being cared, insecurity, insufficiency, worthlessness, humiliation, physical injury) might have its own literary cure. Whether the company of a long book like *In Search of Lost Time*, for example, would be a better cure for loneliness than a shorter book, or whether recasting somebody who's slighted you in an unpleasant fictional character (as Orhan Pamuk suggests) is an apt revenge, or whether any kind of shame – the worst thing about shame being its secretiveness – benefits from just being revealed, in whatever form is manageable. But that's just sophistry. Poetry seems made for the acute, it can get closer to it somehow. Prose has a distance about it.

HARRIET: I know you work for architects, and I loved what you said in an interview in 2013 that 'there is an economy about the way architects express themselves – the writing is descriptive rather than evocative', something you were able to draw on in your debut poetry collection. Could we talk some more about the language of architecture in your work – is it still a strong influence?

KATE: It is and it isn't. I'm working towards a PhD which hoped to find general points of correspondence between architecture and poetry – the fact that both struggle with the word 'form' gave me the impression that such a thing was possible. I started looking at the concept of space in poetry. I.e. How 'going into' a poem is similar to going into a building (which it is, for instance, researchers scanning the brain while it reads discovered that the way one's mind's eye moves through the images in a text uses the part of the brain which orients the body in space). The feeling of 'being in' buildings is very powerful and it would – in theory – be interesting for the manipulation of the mind's eye (zooming in and out, etc.) to be treated as a poetic tool like rhyme, meter, etc. Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye is encircled by a band of ribbon-like windows which, when you look through them, are so narrow that they cut off the lower and higher reaches of the world (the pavement directly outside and the upper sky) in a way that, depending on your erotic appetite, is either frustratingly partial or tantalisingly withholding. I tried to think about whether this 'peep show' presentation of the world (showing a bit, then taking it away) was something I could mimic in my own poems, but of

course I couldn't. Not because it's not possible, but the idea of imposing an idea onto a poem just isn't how it works for me.

HARRIET: A year or so ago there was a slew of pieces in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and so on about writers as architects; apparently there was an MFA writing program at Columbia called 'Laboratory of Literary Architecture' where the students were asked 'to find – or, rather extract – and then physically build the literary architecture of the text'. Do you think of writing poetry and prose in architectural terms— is one more resistant than the other to this kind of analogy, and how different are their structures?

KATE: I think you can find 1:1 points of comparison between architecture and both kinds of writing. But in prose it's more straightforward. For instance, the idea of narrative – the way we move through something sequentially – exists in buildings and novels. Poetry and architecture tend to get connected at quite a superficial level— through things like concrete poetry, or poems on building, or weird spatial layouts.

HARRIET: Moving forward, which building do you intend to spend more time in, poetry or prose?

KATE: I'd like to do both.

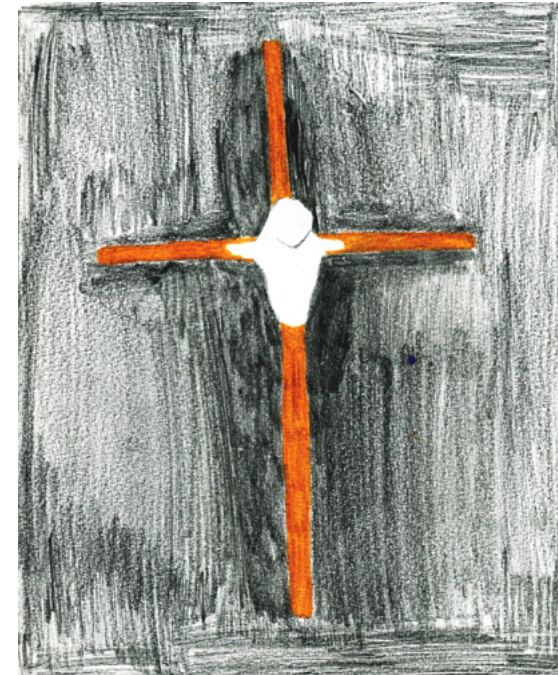
SOMETIMES I THINK THE WORLD IS JUST A VAST
BREEDING GROUND FOR MOSQUITOES
(FROM *HOUSE FOR THE STUDY OF WATER*)

Dear Max. The stars grow
paler. The sun is rising with
grace and power. I lie here in
my shirt being tried (repeatedly)
by a council of mosquitoes who
find me sorrowful and stupid
and ordinary and rather dull
and worst of all, *his tastes are
vulgar and he writes like a dog.*
But am I an animal? *A dog can't
write...Exactly!* In the afternoon
heat I sit with my feet down look-
ing out of the window. What's so
awful about me is not my envy
or my competitiveness or my
cruelty. What's worse is this dog-
like devotion. How sad I seem,
sitting here. About who? About
what? Sometimes when I close
my eyes I imagine *you're* here
watching me. I can't explain it
but I've this bizarre notion that
you might come and carry me
(*like a dog... Exactly! Exactly!*)
out of this house, this life, this
world.

NOTES ON BEING DOG-LIKE:

‘But the hands of one of the gentlemen were laid on K.’s throat, while the other pushed the knife deep into his heart and twisted it there, twice. As his eyesight failed, K. saw the two gentlemen cheek by cheek, close in front of his face, watching the result. “Like a dog!” he said, it was as if the shame of it should outlive him.’ (Kafka)

‘...all this inventiveness, not only lexically, since the lexical matters little, but sober syntactical invention, simply to write like a dog (but a dog can't write—exactly, exactly). It's what Artaud did with French—cries, gasps...’ (Deleuze)





Rebecca Perry

IMMORTELLE

at the time of writing a single apple costs 45p
the writer is sleeping well

at the time of writing
the glasses in the cabinet have never been quieter

the writer is thinking of eating her own hands
at the time of writing all

blueberries appear to be shipped in from Spain
the writer dreams of millionaires with blue teeth

her childhood friends in white theatre masks
the bones of their feet

the valley of cherries in Ljubljana
that keeps the whole country well-stocked in cherries

the writer dreams them as tiny blood buds
which is to destroy the image

at the time of writing the boundless joy
of a pre-walk dog is suggesting itself in the writer's chest

a bruise the size and colour of a grape
intensifies on her thigh

at the time of writing the writer is thinking
of composing a painting and a subject is needed
a reclining night sky? canyons of fruit trees?

an abandoned baby bear?

* * *

the writer is running her fingers
over the carvings of an Egyptian temple

so much past seems absolutely impossible
it later deflates her to learn

that the temple has been moved from the original site
the experience now seems less valid

* * *

at the time of writing the writer refuses to believe
she will ever die, as the flowers in the streets

refuse the same, as too do those in homes,
parks, cemeteries, places we cannot see

* * *

at the time of writing the days are wide as lakes
and often deeper

the writer feels verbose and embarrassed
by her overwhelmingly positive experience of life

while traveling for a writing project
the writer meets another writer

seeking refuge from his home country
which was is no longer a safe place for him to write

the writer drinks beer with the writer
she searches his eyes for something

she asks if he misses his home
searching for herself in him atrociously

he says not home, his family
the writer asks when will he see them again

the writer answers he cannot imagine when
he talks about home still as my country

the writer cannot imagine ever using these words
in her hostel room the writer cries

loudly over the bathroom sink
which is full of cherries soaking in water.



ELLEN ADDISON is an artist and writer living in Oakland, CA. She has self-published sixteen comics and zines, including *Soft Matriarchy*, *I Miss Brittany*, *Touchy*, *Read Me*, and *Ugh Finally*. ellenaddison.tumblr.com

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ÉMILIE GLEASON is currently studying illustration in Strabour, France. She grew up in a Belgium-Mexican family, and has an unexplained love for semi-trucks and walruses.

KIMIKO HAHN is the author of nine poetry collections, including *The Narrow Road to the Interior* and *Brain Fever* (forthcoming in October). She is a distinguished professor in the MFA programme in creative writing and literary translation at Queens College, CUNY.

MARTHE JUNG is an artist from Nancy now based in Lyon. Her work often shows provocative scenes with naked women in dark atmosphere.

Originally from South Africa, KATE KILALEA moved to London in 2005 to study for an MA in Creative Writing at the UEA. Her first book, *One Eye'd Leigh*, was shortlisted for the Costa Poetry Award and longlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize for writers under 30.

KATHRYN MARIS is the author of *God Loves You* and *The Book of Jobs*. She teaches at the Poetry School in London.

HARRIET MOORE's poems have been published in *Best British Poetry*, *Clinic* and *Short Fiction*, amongst others. She works at David Higham Associates, where she is building her own list of poets.

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REBECCA PERRY lives in London and works in publishing. Her pamphlet, *little armoured*, was published in 2012, and her first full collection, *Beauty/Beauty* was released by Bloodaxe in January 2015.

HOLLY PESTER has worked as an archivist, lecturer and practice-based researcher with readings, performances and sound installations featuring at Segue, New York, *DOCUMENTA 13*, Whitechapel Gallery, and Serpentine Galleries. Her collection, *go to reception and ask for Sara in red felt tip* is coming out with Book Works in April 2015.

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ASA YONEDA is a literary translator living in Bristol.



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