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Mouth to Mouth

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MOUTH TO MOUTH

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Blake Nemec

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The author wanted to reproduce the warmth that is released by the passionate friction of women's tongues, the verbal steam of their communal bath.

-Dubravka Ugresic

This collection is dedicated to:
Ruby, Sequoia and Rebis;
your words echo around us.

MOUTH TO MOUTH

By

BLAKE NEMEC, B.A.

THESIS

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Mouth to Mouth is a hybrid poetry and fiction collection portraying the communication between informal trade workers. In “Informal Economy Workers and the International Trade Union Movement: an Overview,” Dan Gallin defines informal trade workers as, “workers whose rights are not recognized and who are therefore unable to exercise those rights.” Undocumented domestic workers, day laborers, farm workers, and sex workers are examples of labor in such informal trade sectors. This is a broad group of workers, often with economic, class, race, citizenship, or gender differences. They are linked, however, as Gallin’s simplified definition supports, by being unprotected by United States labor rights codes.

My poems and stories mostly embrace and feature sex workers. Other informal trade workers, primarily domestic servants, are woven into the book because psychological, service duties or social parallels exist between sex workers and domestic servants. In this essay, I will specifically name “sex workers” if the discussion is particular to ways this population is unprotected, socializes, or if the discussion relates to a specific poem or story portraying sex workers. I will use “informal trade worker” when the analysis is broadly discussing unprotected workers or the dialogues of such workers. *Mouth to Mouth* is organized into three sections, “Banter,” “Relief,” and “O,” which reflect lyrical, political, legal, social or rhythmic themes of the featured workers. Everyone is talking in “Banter;” it is still the honeymoon. “Relief” presents sobering legal, somatic, economic or rhythmic realities of this uncommon worker marriage, and how silence fraternizes with sound. Finally, “O” surrenders to openings, failures or the opacity. The poems in “O” also imply a circling, and re-invite the reader into the book.

Broadly speaking, the collection is character driven, while the transfixion of how dialogue in a flash moment “sounds” more deeply motivated the writing process. In “Mad Love,” Andre Breton says, “I have wanted to show above all what precautions and what ruses

desire takes, in search of its object and evading it” (101); my object of obsession is the sound of people in liminal spaces, and flash intimacies. The collection excavates what can be said in passing, in a short amount of time, between strangers or acquaintances who share the same work trade and vulnerabilities from that trade. *Mouth to Mouth* chases the sound of the worker dialogue, and through narrative and lyrical forms shows one poetic outcome of such investigation. The stories and poems primarily take place in San Francisco and Oakland; however, some occur in El Paso, New York or Seattle.

Allow me to take a step back and narrate a specific event that inspired this collection. In April of 2008, I was honored to be invited to “Days in April,” a grassroots response to the depoliticization of May Day. Activists in the San Francisco Bay Area observed that the former political confrontations of the international worker’s day, May Day, had died. May Day had become a peaceful parade, a celebration. What it was celebrating, however, was unclear; unfair labor practices and legislation had grown rather than diminished. The group invited as many informal trade workers, as possible in effort to organize concrete labor rights actions that would precede May Day, so when May Day arrived, a more sober understanding or reflection of the economic situations of unprotected workers could occur. Three or four meetings were organized for different informal workers to gather and speak about their experiences. As a former sex worker, one involved in different art or political sex worker communities in the area (SWOP, Sex Worker’s Film Festival¹); I acted as a point person for this population.

These conversations between and among the invited undocumented domestic workers, farm workers, hotel workers and sex workers led to alliance building. The intersectionalities between the workers in attendance were economically and legally based. The job trade or the

¹ The Sex Workers Outreach Project or SWOP USA is a “national social justice network dedicated to the fundamental human rights of sex workers and their communities, focusing on ending violence and stigma through education and advocacy.”

access to worker visas was gridlocked with specific California immigration and worker visa codes as well as the bureaucratic processes for the legalization of prostitution act, Prop A. Dialogue between a criminalized yet legitimate labor sector (undocumented workers and sex workers contribute to local and national economies) can create social, political and emotional bonds. At certain points following the talks, the organizers questioned their previous expectations for physical political actions to come out of these informal conversations. Was an emphasis on physical action undercutting the power of dialogue? Most attendees left those *Days in April* meetings with profound appreciations for dialogue; the void of common spaces for marginalized workers to communicate is a form of state violence the talks confronted. If any nation state refuses to legally protect workers in a specific economic sector, the nation state gains their goods and services while disallowing regulations on such labor or health conditions. The state refusal of labor rights for informal trade workers simultaneously allows for unsafe working conditions (for example removing funding for safe sex paraphernalia in sex worker populations or allowing inhumane working conditions for day laborers).

Mouth to Mouth in Dialogue with the Literary Voice of the Sex Worker

In effort to understand how my collection pays homage to, mirrors, or reaches beyond previous literature written by sex workers, I will briefly discuss some existing work written by these workers. Poetry or fiction written by sex workers about the trade is not as well represented in the 19th and 20th centuries, however, there are a few examples. “The Great Social Evil,” a letter written by an anonymous sex worker in the 19th century, urges non-sex workers to respect prostitutes as valuable people. In the 20th century, empowering non-fiction essays written by sex workers advocating for sex worker rights is seen in Cosi Fabian’s “Lilith Fire” or Kamala Kempadoo’s *Global Sex Worker; Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. The 21st century,

however, exploded with the literary voice of the sex worker portraying their work experiences. For example, Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's anthology, *Tricks or Treats; Sex Workers Write About Their Clients*, or Annie Oakley's 2007 collection, *Working Sex*, show first person narrations about sex work by sex workers. Oakley's collection is more diverse in content than Sycamore's book, because *Working Sex* includes sex workers narrating aspects of their lives outside of their relationships with clients. Both of these collections do validate the sex worker's literary voice in juxtaposition to a larger literary history where the sex worker is used as a literary trope by an author who has no experience as a sex worker. The most common point of view in the narration of a sex worker is through a client's or "John's" perspective. The other common point of view is by an omniscient narrator, as seen, for example, in Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Green House*, and the prostitute character, Bonifacia. Many characters in this novel exist to portray economic or social struggles in Peru's 1920's-1940's. The difference between Bonifacia and other characters is she is consistently narrated from a distance, while Vargas Llosa allows the reader into the consciousness of other characters through free indirect speech. In other words, the reader is not allowed into Bonifacia's psyche.

My poems hone in on sex worker to sex worker conversations and specifically, the sound of these dialogues, in effort to expand on the existing literary voice of this population. Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's *Pulling Taffy*, Michelle Tea's *Rent Girl* or Kirk Read's *How I Learned to Snap* are novels in first person that show prostitutes as full characters with rich, smart, complicated, or, at times, mundane lives outside of sex work. *Mouth to Mouth* is aligned with some first person narrative devices in these novels, as well as some of their portrayed intimacies. My collection, however, is predominantly poetry.

Dialogue and Sound Driven Language as Intimacy between Workers

I visualized the sound of unprotected workers in dialogue as entrance points to each piece. Yugoslavian-born experimental fiction writer, Dubravka Ugresic, speaks of “the verbal steam of [a] communal bath” in her book, *Lend Me Your Character*. This postmodern book of short stories portrays one woman’s navigation of romance, friendship and employment. Ugresic portrays everyday dialogue as heat in “Anuska, An Expert in Questions of Depression, Gives Steffie Some News.” The story features two characters discussing their romantic lives. It is a common yet energized discussion about “Nothing,” then “Love.” The tempo of the story is created by both characters revealing their romantic situations through truncated words. The reader is pulled into the rhythm of the simple dialogue by the alliteration, repetition and assonance found in the colloquial language. In my poem, “Sidewalk,” two men, with ambiguously portrayed work trades, stand on a sidewalk in San Francisco’s Mission district, waiting for work. The work they wait for is not clear to show parallels between sex workers and day laborers, in this instance, both trades can wait on a street corner for work. In this poem, I tried to portray energized dialogue to reveal the power, even if temporary, of two-day laborers or sex workers in dialogue. For example, in the second stanza, tenth line, the dialogue reads,

Everyday yeah? Exactly, I-Yeah you know if she’s sayin’

pomo it’s pour more. Ah, mama

Make for mother’s milk. Dada is father. Yep: red-ah for ready.

Conversation creates heat and auditory sensation when two bodies stand next to one another in sound. My collection argues that a sonic relationship is an intimacy.

Dialogue as a sonic worker intimacy is most prevalent in “Banter,” the first section of *Mouth to Mouth*. These poems introduce how dialogue can work as song. In the poem, “Criminal

Recourse” the reader is introduced to two high-end sex workers who are also activists. These characters debate about how to respond to an unfair labor transaction one of them experienced, and how it relates to their unprotected trades and lack of health care. In the second stanza, line four, a musical quality in the alliteration of “go” and “gone” is followed by a repetitive “swear,” in the sixth line. The organic occurrence of repetition in most dialogues acts as a chorus line. The workers, even during conflict, show lyrical potential in their words.

“Banter” also introduces dark humor, and how this humor sounds or reflects particular intimacies in some sex worker and queer communities. One example of dark humor is to give “shade.” To give “shade” means to confront or to educate someone in a playful manner; however, someone outside of the cultural community might perceive the statement as callous. To give “shade” is common within some sex worker or queer culture where fashion is prioritized. An example would be for one person to tell another who is wearing a large black dress with a ribbon across the shoulder, “are you going for couture or cossack?” In other words, are you going for fashion design or a fashion sack. The literal meanings are often mixed with how the words sound or what the words are associated with. What is musical about “shade” is what is in front or behind it. “Shade” can be responded by a more confrontational statement by the receiver and it often continues as playful banter. This is not a romanticization of some sex work culture, rather a lens into the tempo and rhythm of workers who navigate language as a policing entity, language as a factor that pays the bills, and language as laughter, or saint. In other words, what heals people can kill people and vice versa.

Dark humor is seen in the collection to reflect how marginalized people use language as comic relief. It is a linguistic survival mechanism. In “Threaded, the XXY Lines,” the two male workers give each other “shade” about class, specifically; “It takes a lot of money to look that

cheap,” which is a Dolly Parton quote. In this poem, the banter continues when “O Dolly O O Dolly...” is sung as a reference to the “Hair” musical soundtrack. The banter continues through popular culture references to confront and validate each other, and both men’s gender identity and bodies. They are also backhandedly flirting with one another. I am giving the reader an unfiltered lens into the indirect forms of intimacy common in some sex worker culture, and in this particular incidence, it intersects with two queer people. In *Tricks and Treats*, Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore says, “I forced the reader to enter the story on my terms. There’s no translation, no play-by-play explication” (3). Specific lines or references, specific to sex worker or queer culture, may not be accessible to every reader. The universal themes of friendship or work, however, which are knitted throughout the collection, consider all readers and invite the reader at large to reflect upon how literature has defined a “universal” theme.

Mouth to Mouth honors queer characters, dialogue and content as poetry and high literature. In Sarah Schulman’s *The Gentrification of the Mind*, she outlines that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writers have to navigate a U.S. publishing industry that confuses “truthful” literature with pornography. We live in a time where the “public explanation (of an honest voice) has changed” because GLBT people have gained considerable rights and a voice in literature. We (GLBT people), however, have difficulties “understand[ing] the truthful positioning of our literature” (134). The result, Schulman argues, is that we can gentrify our own writing, our own minds (134). The dialogue in *Mouth to Mouth* reflects my somatic understanding of dialogue as a queer, transgendered person, who worked informally. The collection works to honor the pace, vernacular and rhythms of these dialogues without moralistically manicuring them.

Jamaica Kincaid’s “Girl” was one inspiration for honing in on the power of dialogue’s

sound as poetry. In *Understanding Jamaica Kincaid*, Justin Edwards excavates how “...Kincaid’s lyrical and hypnotic tone—a style of writing that uses the rhythms of oral communication to explore the complex layers that make up a character’s conscious and subconscious life.” The pieces in my collection reflect Kincaid’s use of colloquial language as a sonic device to hook the reader into the everyday realities of the characters. In “Girl,” the instructional element also influenced my poems such as “Criminal Recourse.” In this poem, one worker, as previously discussed, not only debates the other character (Donna) but also counsels her. The verisimilitude of dialogue through sound, show a heated intimacy between the characters.

Dialogue may be more common in fiction than poetry because dialogue is a common character development tool, however, writing dialogue as poetic verse rather than as a sentence also allows the dialogue to work metaphorically. In my poem, “Making Beds,” an undocumented domestic servant and a documented domestic servant make their boss’s bed while discussing job duties and their wages. Graciella says, “You have to get the lines underneath.” The “lines” can be understood literally as wrinkles in the bed; however, metaphorical lines point to Graciella’s economic or citizenship vulnerabilities. As an undocumented domestic servant she risks deportation or economic issues if she does not keep her job, or smooth the wrinkles in the bed. In this poem she is educating a co-worker who urges her to ask for better pay from their boss. Graciella’s co-worker does not understand, however, the layer of factors, or “lines underneath” of her situation.

In “Banter,” the sound of dialogue steers the poems, however, in the last section of the collection, “O,” the sound-driven language emphasized the silences between or from workers. Similar to Lynn Hejinian’s writing process, “I tend to begin in a Steinian fashion...then proceed

and come up with whatever language is occurring in response to whatever I'm thinking about so it's...letting the language that emerges from that take me to some perception of the object." The language that emerges in the poems in "O" relate to openings or risings. For example, in the poem, "Hi-Glo Neon," a washed out neon advertisement sign is portrayed. This poem went through different revisions where workers were in dialogue or not. The final version focuses on a neon sign as a sign or "code" for workers. As signpost, this "light" becomes confrontational yet it is "whispering" as "light" hence moves out of the original physicality of an advertisement, to a metaphorical beam of light or "rays." My writing processes was focused on the worker dialogue as object; I meditated on their mouths and the sounds of mundane conversation but the language kept moving to monosyllabic vowels. The objects that appeared in the writing process, such as a ray of light, or O, are long vowel sounds that require the opening of the mouth.

In writing "O," I became aware of limitations in the English language and limitations in writing worker intimacies only through dialogue. Portraying the energy in temporary worker dialogues was elusive. I remembered all of the silences due to different external legal, economic or social factors that infuse fear into the workers and their ability to speak to one another. As Andre Breton said about his attempts to write of different obsessions, he often found himself "in the intensely opaque room I've always dreamed of penetrating" (89). "O" explores different ways acceptance, failure or surrender can be lyrical. In Charles Bernstein's "Understanding the Sound of Not Understanding," his discussion of Ezra Pound's "Moeurs Contemporaines" argues that "certain words are sufficiently elongated that they might well be assigned notes on a musical staff" (237). Dandelions, stress, dowels or service fees dissipate in "O." The objects, or the worker dialogues, were difficult to keep grounded. My understanding of worker dialogues was stretched in order to see how these dialogues looked peripherally. How white space is next to the

worker dialogues and how white space or absence of dialogue can become a focalization in a poem was an element I had to negotiate in “O.” The collection’s language opened up in this final section of *Mouth to Mouth*, and I was compelled to listen to and observe an organic drifting. “A O” and “The Lonely O” are examples of this in the collection.

A sonic rise in verbal dialogues is not literally represented throughout the collection; however, the narrative poems also meditate on sound and the rhythmic frequencies of the words. Italo Calvino discusses how narration holds specific friction that hooks the portrayed object (in this case the informal trade worker) with similar objects in a literary piece because, “...it is charged with a special force and becomes like the pole of a magnetic field, a knot in the network of invisible relationships” (33). In the on-line literary Journal, *DoubleRoom*, Joshua Marie Wilkinson’s poem, “If Bats,” asks,

Can you hear the words/garbled up in the fast code? Though it was impossible, the light
started to pull their clothing from the chest drawers, their closets, up/

In Wilkinson’s poem, the rhythmic matching of “words, garbled, and started” stitch the lines together, or create a “magnetic field” or a “knot” that pushes and pulls the images together. My poem “Hi-Glo Neon” works to fasten elongated [a] sounds to labor rights movements. If sound and ideology unite when reading this poem aloud, a somatic understanding of “codes” or “signs” occurs. The poem requests the reader to hold long vowels such as “o” in speaking the words “Hi-Glo manifestos” in the second to last line. The concept and imagery is of rising up and requesting labor rights.

Queering Past Sex Worker Depictions

Mouth to Mouth intends to queer, or confront, myths about the people involved in the informal trade sector in order for the reader to understand them as dynamic characters. The collection intentionally bleeds outside of the portrayal of sex workers to show a parallel between sex workers and undocumented domestic workers or other unprotected workers. It is clear that the legal status, race or class of an undocumented domestic worker, for example, differ from a United States citizen who works in the sex trade. For example, an undocumented domestic servant can be criminalized for not having access to a work visa but a U.S. documented resident performing sex work can be arrested for exchanging money and a sexual service. The U.S. resident won't face the same deportation risks. This collection places, however, factors of their working duties, their contribution to the overall U.S. economy, and their shared risk of arrest as common factors that locate them within the informal trade sector of the U.S. It is unpopular to position these workers within the same discussion, but Laura Agustin's *Sex at the Margins* inspired and validates my position. Her book highlights a broad range of informal trade workers in one discussion, including domestic workers and sex workers, because of their shared choice to work in an unprotected sector.

One salient factor that links domestic workers to sex workers and a reason for my collection to include undocumented domestic workers is the psychological services both trades perform. The social or emotional services demanded of many sex workers are often deleted from the discussion of their work, while the sex act is assumed to always exist. The result of dismissing the psychological services of a sex worker ignores the "tissue[s] of more complex interactions." Laura Agustin outlines,

Some public spaces and clubs where sex work is performed and [these] places' are assuming a new role, that of a social place to which groups of men go without specifically seeking a sexual relationship with the women they find [in the clubs], but rather having fun amongst themselves until early morning hours (Agustin 79).

The social roles of the sex worker can be viewed when clients hire a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” for company rather than for sex acts. Sex workers who provide such psychological services are marketed through similar advertising venues as sex workers who provide sex acts due to the similar high wage they receive and the power dynamics that differentiate the role from non-paid dating. One result of mainstream media or popular art depictions of the sex worker as a worker who only provides a sex act is internalized judgment of particular kinds of sex workers within this trade. For example, exotic dancers or sensual massage workers often differentiate themselves from the sex trade sector because they may not offer penetrative sex services. In my short story, “Picked Out Of Line,” a woman accepts a job at a brothel because she did not understand this brothel offered more than sensual massages. The new worker distinguishes sensual massage as “healing” while providing a penetrative sex service would position her more directly as a prostitute and that confronts her worker identity and sense of self. The story reveals a sex worker’s intellectual navigation of identity and economics. The other character in this story is a law student and both character representations intend to confront one myth that sex workers are uneducated people, hastily working on a street corner. The other uncommon character portrayal in this story, and one prevalent in the industry, is the sex worker as counselor or care provider.

The care services sex workers or undocumented domestic workers offer their clients are seldom acknowledged, as they are not explicit job duties. Caring labor as an ambiguous job duty

that exists in sex work and undocumented domestic service work inspired the letter writings by “Tina” and “Peter.” Tina is a wife, mother and former sensual massage worker living in South San Francisco. Peter is pursuing an Associate’s Degree, has a boyfriend, and works informally as a servant-chauffeur-boyfriend for a wealthy San Francisco customs lawyer. Tina and Peter bond with characters in the popular PBS TV series, *Downton Abbey*. This analysis understands that significant time (early 20th century vs. early 21st century) and national locations (Britain vs. the United States) are differences between my characters and the TV characters (Thomas and Ethel). “What” kind of work trade and the social and emotional impacts of the work duties unite these workers across time and geographical separations. In the TV series, Thomas is a servant. Ethel was a servant then became a prostitute. The Tina and Peter letters articulate the struggles informal trade workers understand in navigating silence, isolation or self-worth. Similar to my intention to invite the reader into the character complexities within “Picked Out Of Line,” the Tina and Peter first person narratives urge readers to hold class, race, sexuality or ability multiplicities that informal trade workers negotiate.

Mouth to Mouth defies while fraternizes with the popular culture portrayal of informal trade workers. This paradox acknowledges TV shows and popular music as accessible sources of entertainment and similar to Dodie Bellamy’s discussion in “Shiver,” I use pop culture “...rather than using academic or scientific or philosophical language...to collage such language into my writing...” (217). Returning to the poem, “Criminal Recourse” the characters sing some of Cher’s “Gypsies, tramps and thieves,” as a spontaneous word play developed out of their heated debate about sex worker activism. The 70’s pop song momentarily unites them because they both know the song, but more importantly, the depoliticized tone of the song juxtaposes their serious argument as intellectuals, activists and sex workers. The two workers bond as “tramps” because

this derogatory stereotype of a sex worker offers generational or contextual distance to their identities; they can translate into comic relief. They queer the pop culture language when reclaiming it as their own. The poem acknowledges derogatory terms for sex workers while refusing such dismissals via the characters reclaiming of the labels.

The simultaneous use of pop music to create an up-beat pace, and as a political reclaiming of words, is in parallel to Tracy Morris's, in "My Great Aunt Meets George Bush." Morris sings the poem or song and suspends the articulation of particular words for example, "you bettah" to produce a chilling and instigating message and sentiment about power, race and religion. Similarly, the use of singing the lines allows for multiple meanings of language for example, "saves you" merges into "St. Jude," and produces a political and spiritual message about George Bush. Morris's poems request elongated singing of words with multiple meanings; my poem, "Criminal Recourse" also requests the reader to sing along with the depicted characters and enter into their class, legal or social conflicts. This poem request the reader to understand how "tramp" is understood, is felt, when it is sung, in a politicized context.

An additional queering of common sex worker misconceptions relates to gender. I intentionally confronted the stereotype that sex workers are female or female gendered. In the last decade, as I discussed earlier, more first person sex worker narratives in literature have emerged. One formally muted voice is from the male sex worker. Laura Agustin discusses that "...researchers and outreach workers estimate they exceed women in some places and times; and men have been called *more* stigmatized because their presence is not even acknowledged" (69). Female to male transgender (FTM) and intersex (people born with ambiguous genitalia) workers are featured in this collection because they exist but also because they are new to the public health or sex worker discussion. One study that included questions about FTM sex workers was

performed in 2008 in San Francisco.² As of date, no peer-reviewed journal will publish the research data. I have access to this data through the transgender community and including transgender male or cisgender male (born male and identified as the male gender) characters in my collection confronts the misconception that all sex workers are female or female gendered. In the 1st stanza and 3rd line of my poem, “A O” “t, w, g,” articulates a public health label of a white, transgender, and male patient who wishes to receive a syphilis test because he is at risk for this sexually transmitted disease. In the last line of the 3rd stanza of “Threaded, the XXY Line” a portrayal of a male sex worker with XXY chromosomes is portrayed within,

Sides moving over boy breasts moving over rulers for penis. Billy was

Pushing those gages around; he had hips but would never carry babies...

Both of these portrayals of gender variant or intersex men stand up to the assumption that sex workers are female or female gendered people.

The queering of the subject and acknowledging ambiguities of sex, gender and genitalia is aligned with Samuel Ace and Maureen Seaton’s book of poems, *Stealth*, and specifically “*Secret 18* (quincunx).”

An assembly of
five heads five
trees five coves
five cocks
come across me
inside a yoni
carved
into a riverbed
in Angkor.

In this poem, *Secret 18* (quincunx), sexual organs and gender gather together, or “assembl[e].”

This uncommon image of “heads,” “trees,” or “cocks” united and moving towards the speaker

² In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and the San Francisco DPH, HIV Prevention Section funded a peer-based public health research project, led by Hale Thompson, on trans-masculine men who have sex with men. Some of the participants had exchanged sex for money at some point post-transition. This study has not been accepted for publication.

refuses common assumptions about how sexual organs move because the phallic objects “come across” the speaker “inside a yoni.” The 5th poetic line break, after “me” allows the location of “yoni,” in the 6th line to be around the “cocks” in the 3rd line, as well as around the speaker who can also be “Inside a yoni.” The poetic repositioning of subject and object (sexual organs and people) is an important exploration in my collection because of the history of objectification of the informal trade worker body. To portray gender variant characters compels the reader to reflect on what “objects” on the worker’s body is for sale. In Foulcaldian terms, a deeper relationship to the elements of the language can occur “below the level of identities and differences [where] the foundation provided by continuities, resemblances, repetitions, and natural criss-crossings” are found (120). The book is a collaboration between one female and one male gendered author which furthers the gender, subject and speaker ambiguities.

The portrayal of a wide range of gender, class or race privileges within sex work also confronts literary history and its assumptions about tension, verisimilitude and overall energetic conflict between such workers in everyday, mundane situations. The use of “heteroglossia,” or diversity of voices, in *Mouth to Mouth*’s narration asserts that characters with similar privileges or marginalization have dramatic tension equal to those with unequal class, race, gender or ability power dynamics (Bakhtin 298). This reflects literary influences such as Sarah Schulman (*Rat Bohemia*) or Joseph Conrad (*The Secret Agent*) and their skill at showing stunning conflict between characters with similar identity politics. The uncomfortable issues that surface between similar characters reveal, for example, vulnerable truths of cyclical violence. In this case, informal trade workers don’t have access to labor right privileges. Where can they unpack psychological or somatic stresses? Workers can unload psychological trauma to other workers or to their family (in the widest way one can define family) because those people are accessible.

This is one reason domestic violence exists in poor or working class families; economic stress is transferred to the most accessible person, the partner in the household. The challenge of writing conflicts between similar characters, for example, a male sex worker and another male sex worker, is relative to writing of the “other.” I relate this to writing of the “other” because it is another way to understand verisimilitude. The writer needs to possess compassion towards all of their characters. I was able to negotiate compassion for most of the characters partly because distance from some of the events has opened up more ability to write of the characters more objectively.

In my writing of the “other,” I’m still negotiating how to write about non-white ethnicity in this collection. Samuel Delany differentiates “street talk” with “straight talk” and this illuminated some of my challenges in my writing of non-white characters. Street talk “is often unfair...its specific vulgarity is the stuff of poetry—...used with economy, it becomes song” (Delany 42). In “Between Us” two pro-domme³ sex workers are in a conflict about hygiene practices. One of the workers is white and the other is black. The dialogue is street talk. It is honest, immature, and hurtful. I believe the writing of characters that are different from the writer requires a particular directness, “economy” and understanding that requires sitting with the particular characters for a good amount of time. It takes time to sit in the character’s voice and imagine how their words feel. This failure in the collection relates and leads to a discussion about the absence of informal trade workers from the El Paso/Juarez region in *Mouth to Mouth*.

It has been an ongoing challenge to write of the sex worker history in the southwest Texas border region. Reading texts featuring sex worker history in El Paso/Juarez, for example,

³ A pro-domme is an abbreviation for “professional dominant” and is a sex worker who is paid to negotiate the dominance of a client who desires to engage in submissive erotic play.

Julia Estela Monarrez Fragoso's *Trama de una Injusticia* has been emotionally difficult because (for good reasons) the focus is on the Juarez femicides in the early 21st century. It was challenging to access the different positions that academics, activists or El Paso residents have for the sex work trade, at large. For example, the Women's Studies program at UTEP does offer "Women and Work in the Sex Industry;" however the syllabus excluded literary fiction by current or former sex workers who are sex worker advocates while the course is advertised to take a neutral socio-political position on sex work. It felt arrogant and naïve to believe my mere two and a half years of experience in the region could create a respectful understanding of the characters, language negotiation or social dynamics, to re-write sex worker stories as fiction or poetry. I did attempt to conduct a bilingual Spanish and English participatory research project of sex workers in the El Paso/Juarez region, through craigslist. There were, however, no responses for participation.

The last group that I included in my collection, as parallel to some informal trade workers, and which queer some perspectives of informal trade work, is the activist. The grassroots activist has a history of being policed. The United Farm Workers of America (UFWA) or Sex Worker's Outreach Project (SWOP) reveal a history of politically involved informal trade workers. When a "direct action" occurs it is "unprotected" or not permitted (literally and figuratively). In "Criminal Recourse," as discussed earlier, the sex workers are also activists. This poem, and others in the collection that portray activist characters, urge the reader to make connections between different groups of politicized workers who are policed. Who and what is criminalized? What does it mean to have differently criminalized bodies in one collection? *Mouth to Mouth* queers the idea that informal trade workers are one identity, removed from social, art or political movements. Portraying intersectionalities between

such socio-political movements asserts there is a literary bridge between different marginalized workers.

Hybrid Forms and Typography as Mirror to the Informal Trade Worker's

Pace and Negotiation of Law

Mouth to Mouth features different literary forms ranging from lipograms, flash fiction, prose poetry, two columned, prose/lyrical alternating poems, and epistolary forms to collage as visual poetry. Sex work, as well as other informal trade, is a mutable, uninsured, unreliable, varied and unprotected labor; as a result, I explored diverse forms to mirror a worker pace and narrative that is in fluctuation. Several poems explore a hybrid prose and lyrical form, which was inspired by Benjamin Alire Sáenz's "even on mornings when lyricism has abandoned me, I think of you." In this poem, Sáenz alters between lyrical lines and concrete narrative.

Back when you were just a boy
you were given a hurt in place of a toy.

The radio voice is reporting talking about the gangs who work for the cartels in Mexico.

The hybrid form allows a lyrical portrayal of memory, imagination and compassion for the "boy." The reader is then returned to a concrete landscape of Mexico by a news report narrating a specific socio-economic reality. In my poem, "Threaded, the XXY Lines," I alternate between narrating the story of two male sex workers waiting to work, to a lyrical focus with the alliteration of "brown," "blond," "boys," and "bucking." The altered form reflects the momentary and disjointed intimacies and construction of time between the boys. One narrative of this event is of them flirting and being playfully physical. The lyrical stanzas suggest non-linear time and psychological associations through imagery. This mosaic narrative invites the reader into the "the language event, through which we experience events taking place in time"

(Burger 7).

The collection's greatest experimentation of form is in "Relief," the second section of the collection. In this section, visual poems and typography work to confront legal codes as oppressive forces against the informal trade worker's body. In the poem, "Teacher's Supermarket," I attempt to portray a history of sex workers as ordinary people, such as teachers or housewives, but if arrested, will face social ostracizing by the media. The poem shows how media headlines (the right column) scandalize sex workers. The left column re-writes Allen Ginsberg's "Supermarket" to advocate for teachers who have worked in the sex industry. The structure allowed a confrontation of media, laws and normative constructs of labor.

"Teacher's Supermarket" also parallels Ginsberg's "Supermarket" through literary or political homages. "Supermarket" pays homage to Walt Whitman and Federico Garcia Lorca as gay characters in the same grocery store location as housewives. "Teacher's Supermarket" pays homage to the late queer artist, writer, and sex worker, David Wojnarowitz and the late Taiwanese sex worker and sex worker activist, Mrs. Guan. Mrs. Guan founded the current Taiwanese sex worker advocacy group called the "Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters" (COSWAS). This narrative confrontation evokes past poets, past desires and past resistances to silencing complexities of identity. Similarly, each of the visual poems attempts to confront laws, by the image of the worker resisting or standing up to legal-like stamps or typography that target or silence informal trade workers.

Free verse poetry forms constitute the majority of the collection's pieces; however, when dramatic plot turns emerged in the writing process, the poems took the form of flash fiction. In the formerly discussed poem, "Picked out of Line" a dramatic turn in the end of the story worked

well to convey these two sex workers, while they were in conflict about what “full service” means, emotionally and legally, become united at the end due to both characters being arrested at the end. The flash fiction form appeared ideal for portraying this worker intimacy. In ending this story with an arrest, it attempts to link conversations of possible arrest that are woven through other work in the collection. In Italo Calvino’s discussion of the Scheherazade fable, he discusses the power of echoing specific stories to “... [know] how to join one story to another, breaking off at just the right moment—two ways of manipulating the continuity and discontinuity of time” (38). The incorporation of both flash fiction and poetry work globally to show the informal trade worker’s multifaceted understanding of an event.

The exploration of typography, specifically fonts, asserts that the pieces are visually braided into one another. Each worker’s voice in a poem’s dialogue is a different font. One worker, as a bending thread or font, has potential to be woven into other worker’s sound, or font. In a similar vein, alternating fonts also work confrontationally. In the poem, “Citations,” found in the section, “Relief,” the narrating font of the sex worker’s actions or imagery of the sex worker differs from the font of the citation’s narration. The intention is to show a confrontation between worker and the legal codes that push up against the worker voice or body. In “Citations,” the legal fine is a heavy criminalization (not merely the weight of paper, but the weight of a tree) of the worker’s body, if not the worker’s thoughts, or “intentions.” Using Courier New Font, similar to the type in many legal citations, the poem tries to visually pull the reader into the moment of being arrested or cited.

The epistolary forms in *Mouth to Mouth* portray an overall dramatic arc in the collection. As first person short stories, the letters stage personal vulnerabilities and a psychological access through the first person fiction narratives. They also work as a greater dramatic framework or arc

for the collection's pieces. For example, Peter and Tina (the letter writers) both show character change through the collection's echoed themes of worker intimacies or isolation. These letters show two fictional first person narratives interacting with the servants on *Downton Abbey*. Some of the letters have considerable distance and are quick episodes without a past or larger reference point. The letters stitch, however, the narrating character's work experience to character's work experience in the TV series. For example, Thomas is a gay servant in the TV series and one of the letters in the *Mouth to Mouth* collection follows a poem about two gay informal trade workers. Peter is also gay. Beyond the character parallels between Peter and Thomas and Tina and Ethel, Peter and Tina change as characters. Tina goes through a process of redemption through letter writing. Peter works through his Afghanistan war trauma by accepting that he must find his own way to have a voice; he must work through his war PTSD. Again, as characters who change, the epistolary form assist the overall collection's dramatic arc.

Lastly, the collage form as visual poetry was used as additional narrative object of the informal trade worker and how these workers navigate languages of law, dialogue or identity. As Mary Burger discusses in "An Apparent Event," "we engage with the events of narrative as a language artifact,...it's this multiple engagement, this simultaneity of representational and experiential time that makes for the complex possibilities of narrative writing" (8). Visual poetry allowed mixed media of public records, as law, to dialogue with images of bodies on the street or hand-written post-it notes as human and personable. While the theme of law was also conveyed in non-collage forms in the collection, the visual use of the mixed media excavates an additional way the worker may understand being criminalized. The visuals on the paper citations, in the section "Relief," display how public records profile and intimidate the human character. Public records are powerful. Public records also articulate the private lives of people. The human body

of an informal trade worker must consistently negotiate a privacy of their worker experience, body, and self, but in reality, they have less, if any legal rights, to control how their body is accessible to the public, because it is a policed object. A policed body can become a public artifice, through public records, if there is an arrest. The United States law, then, confuses the sex worker body with the work trade and this unjust translation allows a person, rather than a work trade, to be policed. This public vs. private perversion teaches the average citizen that the informal trade worker's body, rather than the criminalization of their trade, is public domain. Again, portraying these worker's sound or dialogue stands up against an objectification of the sex worker character.

Mouth to Mouth asserts that dialogue, even if truncated, is a sonic intimacy between informal trade workers. This collection is located within a wider sex worker and queer literary framework, while the focalization of poetic dialogues differentiates it from past literary works. Threading hybrid poetry and fiction forms, the book portrays how language is at once a violent and empowering vehicle for those working in unprotected trades. Language as a liberating or oppressive needle can work as an "open text," saturated with complexities the unprotected worker must navigate. Most of these episodes are close-ups; I have welcomed the reader into the same room, unapologetically and without translating the specific cultures to the outside reader. At the same time, she and he is the boy next door. They are married with children, and in parallel to sex work or other criminalized occupations; they are doing the laundry or teaching kids. It is the accessibility of the characters that guide the reader into these poems.

The mundane portrayal of informal trade workers lives does not argue that "everyone is a sex worker." It is not arguing that informal trade workers are just like protected workers. How informal trade workers talk with one another and where they do so, however, intersects with

protected workers. City streets are used by formal and informal trade workers. Hotel rooms are used by formal and informal trade workers.

These poems and stories obsess on the intersectionalities of sound and body and language in high literature. A many-voiced audio frequency of gender, nationality, class, race or ability within this group of workers creates an uneasy, yet hopefully addictive, echo. This collection is an open, public love letter to sex workers and undocumented workers and the frayed worlds they have moved in and out of. Imagine the sound of workers hands, backs and thighs, as we lift our clipped utterances to the score as contemporary and experimental worker *décima*.

Mouth to Mouth

I. Banter

Braid, the Banter

Talk is rope. Strands gliding
over rows of chatting lip. Back
bones, these hairy tongues are *close*
to the knives of the *thieve's*
journal. Ducking below bands of blonde
hair. Black, brown,
red, the weave bends around the next
lock, forming a shawl, thousands of scarfs
warming necks with the *city*
of night, unrepentant,
whore, these braids arc towards the ears,
the sound organs and hair
lines—ancestral, tracing the manifesto, heads
hold volume. Volumes sectioned off into patch
work, hands grab for more rope. Holding reigns. Chords feel
good in the palm.

Candle wicks are for fire
before they're lit, they're holding waves
waiting to crack into flame.

Yanking one thread for heat may spark
rituals of braiding. Light
rises off
fire. A fast burn. Not a rope
burn. But lighting many braided wicks,
beams through scabs, union
busters and bodies as coins.

Place comb teeth on the roots,
the heads, to source. You'll be *pulling*
taffy hearing *rent girl[s]*. These talkers are good braid.

Sidewalk

Men stand by the 26th and Florida stop, ready
to work, to be picked up, their jeans tight, their bodies
washed and hair combed for the drivers. This corner's
hot—the men stand anyway. Cash money is worth the wait,
the danger in exchange rates. Money is waiting they feel
their biceps and thighs will sweat, hands will
work. Now, they learn one another's,

*How are the babies? Sarah just lost
teeth and David's needing new shoes every day. Robbie says to Eddie as they lean
against the cement wall. Yours?
just one, Vanessa, she's a talker, but not full
sentences, just fragments, right?—I remember when mine were,
babytalking, then boom—They're connecting
pieces? Yeah it's like all those words they've been hearing
since day one take a second to come together. Mm-hmm, but I get her ya know-
Yes, you're with her
everyday yeah? Exactly, I—Yeah you know if she's sayin'
pomo it's pour more. Ah, mama
make for mother's milk. Dada is father. Yep: red-ah for ready.*

Dear Thomas,

11-01-2011

I got sick from work yesterday. I was serving Mr. Kleina Halloween party and the couples were, well, they were exhausting in their ordinary ways. Robert and Ken are going to Washington to tie the knot. Lesley's body finally accepted the insemination - Holly's ecstatic. Jim and John got their domestic partnership approved by the AIDS office. Everybody is hitting me to get, I am happy for them, of course. Our lives, however, are very different.

Unwinding, I looked out the window at the street-sweeper dig into the cracks of Laguna Street and toss its dirt out. Then you passed my door outside. You were talking about going to London with Mrs. Putnam. That's what I thought the voice said. The street sweepers were people in your time. There are no more valets. Now we are all jacks of all trades. Chauffeur, footman, boyfriend and cook. cook.

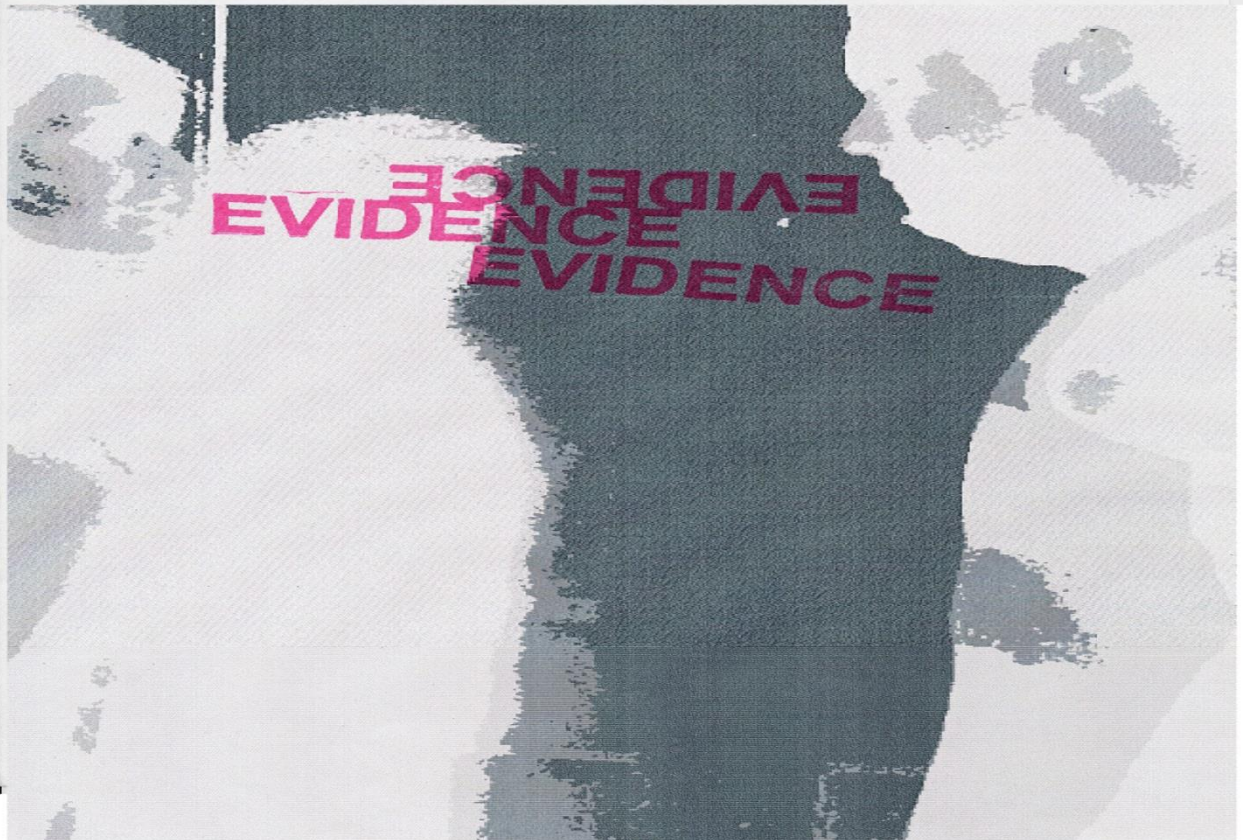
I am writing from the Klein Santa Rosa estate where he prefers no internet service. He let me take the car out earlier, but in Healdsburg, California, it means buying a hot dog at the convenience store.

Downtown Abbey got their first phone in your time, but I don't see you use it. Would you call me? Do you want to call your lover, ~~from~~ the Duke of Crowborough? England is not far from the United States these days, not like it was in your WWT era. Your country will have a British Prime Minister named Margaret and she will get along famously with the U.S. president named Ronald. They will bond over nuclear power.

Our words and bodies have parallel. When I walk down the
Mr. Klein Marion Art hallway and feel young and sinful
I can hear you say, "Eh, they painted all those babies
like men." When I am ashamed of my clothes smelling
like mold, you tell me, "at least you don't smell starchy."
I like your voice, Thomas.

Yours,
Peter

How's The Shift?



Twill

The South San Francisco trailer park held workers. A cashier watched football, a trucker moved a soap bar across his back, a telemarketer bent over a bathtub—scrubbing fiberglass, a janitor was getting blown. A 49ers game sounded from a couple of trailers next to the one my friend turned a trick in. Jay rolled the window down, taking in the scent of Dune grass; the evening air cool compared to the heat of that October day, then sat back into the car seat to enjoy an hour of space. Jay was security in a 5'2 130 lbs frame this meant mere presence, a trip-wire, if something went down he could set off a series of actions to get his friend out of danger.

*

Workers dress up as Emma, Eddie or Betty super sense, performing Aikido movements to the top or bottom of a relation: needs for self push back-bending auras, stretch edges so the service lines are skirts or shorts. Dressing rooms moving.

*

Later, they are sucking real fast someone else's KOOL, after quitting, singing "We're On a Road To Nowhere" loud in a Chevie Chevette, windows down, alone in Albertson's parking lot. Not on hwy 66, they're not "On The Road;" they're off Interstate 10, where Mexico and New Mexico and Texas kiss. Here, we can hear the codes switch English to bottom Spanish.

*

Between a top and lower bar, stay staccato, then sing out whole notes, bodies working. Not anatomy tethered to Chopin, married to Handel one, series of song arrangements, how could musical balls at night, a jock with football or those tucked in g-strings, tucked under drag queen's pussy remaining in one field, rest? Unmet, facing lines of muscled beats, batons-marching-their frame.

*

"Jay!" Illona hollered from inside the trailer. The muscle head didn't expect my small frame to pull his chubby queen out from danger. "I'm sure she did her job," Jay said both of them back inside the car, as they tried to leave and locate safe. The John's body went up against their tailgate, a knife in his hand. He held a cell phone, telling them the lies he'd tell cops so they would imagine their builds behind bars. Jay held up his phone calling his bluff so John could see himself jailed. John went next to the tire, so it couldn't buoy, so bouncing out, up or down that make up, unlikely. Jay said it to survive, more a belief in justified barring. Illona knew those lines would never even; she jumped out and returned some coins, metals of living.

*

On RuPaul's Drag Race, face leans, like an eel frame, our chassis

switches. It's not to keep.
How sweet, the seeing
beloved in living mirrors.

Ethel,

A couple things happen when your kids look like you. One is that they aren't you and things look better. My freckled face looks charming on both of my kids. The little moles landed on different places like god chose to show their cheeks instead of the nose, where I've got mine.

We were all in the playground one day. It was clear and hot out so we could see the bay. The kids were jumping between the swing-set and the fountain and after my boy took a drink from the fountain he spit it in my girl's face. So she called him a whore. Then squirted water into his face. They said it again and again at each other, laughing so hard. Laughing so hard I knew they picked it up at school. They didn't know what it meant. They couldn't know what it meant and I wanted them to you know? But I couldn't move because they looked too much like me.

I don't know what I would have done if I was pregnant when you were. I kept my babies, Ethel and like you, did what I had to do to feed them. I got lucky I suppose, being able to get out of the business without anyone knowing. But you wouldn't believe how alot of things never change. It's still illegal I mean. And people still think it's the worst thing you can call a person. Course it's different here, in San Francisco. You can watch activists march down the street in our behalf, so we can gain rights. You can watch it on the news. I don't care so much for politics so I've never gotten involved. But I know there's something to having pride in one's work. Thing is, I never did, have pride that it. It really sucked, the guys were total a-holes. One guy threw some nickels and dimes at me for a tip. He tossed them at my feet like I was a wishing well or something. I picked the coins up. Coins add up. But you know I knew he didn't want to put them in my hand, cause he was finished, he was done with my hands.

These are the same hands that fold my babies clothes, that tuck them into bed. I like to tuck them in while telling them a story about how dreams are heaven. Everynight they can enter heaven if they close their eyes and let peace take them. Peace will look different all of the time, that's the great thing about dreams. Sometimes it will be sitting and talking to friends. Other times it may be a walk on cotton candy or a family of flying squirrels moving from tree to tree. As long ask peace to be with them before they sleep, they will see heaven. My job is to fold the top of the sheet over real big, then tuck it into the bed just so, so they're in their dream chute. The blankets have to be real smooth, so they don't fall out on their way to heaven.

I bet alot of Johns don't know the hands they know also tuck peace into my babies. Well, speaking of them, I think I hear them coming home from school. Thank you for listening Ethel.

Love,
Tina

Artificial Lawn

No, sex and work are separate, Leila said as we sat on the winery's artificial lawn drinking Shiraz. Her response to a Border Networker saying, "you have to organize dating." I thought yeah I try weave spinach salad, locally brewed wine and informal trade into my date dialogs; if sex worker talk shrivels, I reorganize my body, then words into a farmers, pulling peaches, fat and buoyant, and no one feels empty. Holding dirt fills expensively. Sweat, worms, and sulfur turned loam. Hands water its body while talking. Talk about workers—farmers informally trading their bodies for cash; talk about workers—hustlers informally trading their bodies for cash; talk about workers—servants informally trading their bodies for cash. Holding dirt feels expensive. Sticky and dense, bodies of sand and rock and dung.

The grass off these bodies isn't kerry green but lime and shards of emerald slices. Splinters of gold. Hues from gossip and shooting the shit. A soil dank on all sides.

But I'm not pulling up strawberries or pulling down apples. Pulling may not be pushing into holes. Digging dirt may not be sliding hands. Loam is different dirt, in different places. But what about gazes and the dirt on someone? What about the law?

Is it criminal to put different loam into my box? For conversation sake. To see what kind of grass shoots out when mixing?

We settle for kerry green then. The green labeled: lawn, so it is artificially clear, a concrete surface to sit on without fears of ants between one's toes. On this plastic turf, we won't talk about our dirt, mixing. Trap-doors where the jury lived, haunt whores.

This word sat on the top of my cheek bones, yesterday's laughing skin gliding over it because we tossed it back and forth like ping-pong without paddles. Together we sat on real grass; it smelled in need of water and manure. It was lime and emerald, yellow and brown. I always knew it was sewn to myriads of dirt, that's why I went barefoot.

Sharing Plastic

Bonnie and Craig knew a street block shares one meter. She had coins and a gun in her purse, but the parking boxes took plastic. *Could pay to use someone's card?* Craig said. A guy with white headphones dangling out of his ears neared them as he crossed Turk street. *Him—go!* Bonnie called out. Craig skipped up to the guy, *I'll give you two dollars if you'll put one in with your credit.*

White Headphones squinted at him and scurried away. *We're going to be late for the shoot,* Craig wined while a teenager without teeth asked them for spare change. Bonnie opened her coin purse, pulled out some coins when a woman wearing a blue-tooth started slinking by. *We have to get the MSM's; that's where all the grant money is,* she transmitted in front of them. *There's your girl,* Craig cheered Bonnie on, so she puffed her chest up, clicked her 70's chunks up to Blue Tooth. *Sweetheart, I'm going to give you two dollars and you can slide your card into the meter box for me? Sorry I'm late for wor-*

Bonnie's voice dropped real low as she showed her gun, *share the card.* Blue Tooth skipped to the meter box and slid her plastic inside. *Thank you sugar, which non-profit do you work for? We'll send some "high risk" over your way.* Blue Tooth looked at Bonnie and Craig with confusion, gave them an outreach card, and ran away. *My word is good; I'll send some guys over.* Bonnie shouted as Bluetooth left.

Think she knew it was plastic? Craig kissed her cheek. *By the fear in her face I don't think so.*

Threaded, the XXY lines

Billy held Andy's jaw, their bodies covering the couch. Phones periodically jumped with Johns. Business was slow on sunny days. Busy, boys wore armor, guards against trick's cheap vacuum cleaners.

In between, hustlers opened wider their lockers. *If you bruise it you buy it- Can't work trailer trash homme? Work-yes, but get paid for it-no, remember Edith Massey? She wasn't a homme, girl. She was a sub.*

Their lockers draped long lines of head, curly red, stringy brown,

platinum blond hair: spaghetti stripes on boys raised eyebrows and other

bucking and clanging, boys sitting on knees pulsing their torsos

forward and back while lines: fake hair falling, down the left and right

sides moving over boy breasts moving over rulers for penis. Billy was

pushing those gages around; he had hips but would never carry babies. Either way face has gotta be tight. *When's your next session? In 5: golden*

shower, it'll only take him 15-I've got two hours to waste. Andy is teeth playing with Billy's body white bone over camel tone. Teeth over skin, beaver with wood catching the flow. *Not so hard!* Billy snapped.

I thought you were flirting- Andy held Billy's flesh in his mouth and the phones started to ring. *I was but-*

He took

Andy's dirty blond hair in his palm, clutched a bit then pushed his head away. Andy's mouth agape.

The blood

beneath his organs gasping *-But don't bruise my rent.*

Andy horse laughs away, off the vinyl couch and to the phones: *Damien's Place, how can we serve you? Hi Paul-you're running late? I'll let Steve know.*

Billy stood up and slapped his thighs awake, pulled a red headed wig off the door, *I always wanted to be Raggedy Ann*, she stood in front of the mirror in her tighty whities, adjusting the hair. *It takes alot of money to look that cheap. O Dolly O O Dolly, looking for my Dolly-*

It's My Donna- Right, I know-The Hair one- Andy said behind Billy's body as he pulled her fake hair out to the side so she looked like Daryl Hannah in the Mermaid. *-but I was talking your Parton quote. Hey that looks cool-red headed Kate Moss with a little willy-put your arms on my hips.* She told the boy who had her back. Andy's pasty hands sat on Billy's hips lightly holding his curve. Salting him with hands. *Oh you got that? I've been a Dolly fan longer than you have. I meant the "Hair."*

Making Beds

Hands pulled the comforter of the king sized bed looming in the room. They felt each other's opposing direction. *That's a long time and Mr. Klein knows you have car trouble?* Yeah his solution was another shift. *What generosity,* Brian stiffly said, staring at the bed's wrinkles. Graciella kept erasing signs of her boss's life. Her hands knew erasure made beds.

You feel comfortable asking for more? You missed it, she said, and walked in front of Brian to show him, swatting the ruffle like a fly. She erased further kinks, tinier ones than before, ones he couldn't straighten because he didn't see. *Let's get the pillows,* she walked towards the stack on the Tuscany chair.

Hundreds of pillows towered in her arms as she walked back to the bed. One by one she shifted her weight to allow their graceful landing. They lapsed down into place, onto an other's comfort her aware of the down filling.

When the bed was covered they had to straighten the cases. She reached in and the pillows straightened out like dominos. He tried to follow but his jumpy movements bumped pillows off the bed, instead.

You're rough and too quick: keep moving as you work. He obeyed—entered the mound and moving, all her pillow work tumbled to the right. *No,* She taught, *No, Mr. Klein won't have it—we have to do it over.*

It's just pillows, he said. Graciella's face soured and her body stiffened. *Pillows are my paycheck,* and she ran to take care of his mistakes. He wanted to know how long she'd been there as he smoothed the peripheral wrinkles, not lifting anything. *You have to get the lines underneath.* He stepped over to her side of the bed, *you've been here ah-awhile huh?* *Six years,* she said. *It is what I have. It's just that-*

He reached towards her, *Yes? It's just what?* She leaned back, *Listen you can't even make a bed. I see—I hear what you're saying, but it's wrong when you can't even make the bed.*

Ethel,

I was paid in hand once, too. Awhile back, when my hair was real long and people told me I looked like Sissy Spacek, I got creative to pay the bills. My husband was working at the Frito Lay warehouse in Brisbane. He'd been there for five years or so before getting sick. I know now it was happening all along but it seemed to grab him in a day. We were at Ross, getting the kids some new jeans, when he grabbed a rack to break his fall. But the hangers and orange blouses crashed to the floor with him.

San Francisco general didn't keep him that long and before we knew it, he was back at home with us in South San Francisco. He went back to the plant though. Coughing up god awful things and sounding decades older than he was.

I guess that's why I'm writing. God knows you're only on TV but I heard as long as one's intentions are true, a good deed is a good deed.

Tom kept looking for different work but didn't find anything else on the count of his lung disease.

It started with a craigslist ad for lingerie modeling. Course when you need money and it's put in your hand, just like that, bills, the bills look like medicine. They look like respirator and antibiotics and surgery. Like they say, 'one thing leads to another.' I met a couple other girls, modeling, and they also worked in parlors. I didn't know how else to save my family.

I'm just saying I know how you felt, Ethel, like you had nowhere to turn. Have a baby to feed and all. Just think alot of people don't understand about love. And work for that matter. Sometimes it's like crushed up aspirin and jelly watching you, but I guess it's been making me think about my past. And what keeping my secret means. Maybe it's like being at that same doorway you were in. You know the time you tried to get away from working the streets, when you tried to go hang out with the other girls who left the streets, left the business. You didn't go in. I guess I'm at that same door.

But it's on paper or something. Or all these secrets can be put on paper and it'll help me walk in that room. I'm gonna figure it out, one way or another. And you're helping me, just by being there.

Love,
Tina

We, Jennys

You now see me I'll make a fresh bed up
for you I'll thank you very well you see me
dressed in tatters in this tatty old hotel and you can tell who stands
before you and you can tell who stands before you one of these
evenings there'll be shrieks who the hell would
shriek like that? And see me give a smile across my glasses
get on with your glasses my dear a penny is accepted,
tell who I might be vicious grin,
the ship with eight sails and its fifty guns loaded will
lay siege to the town,
explosions in the harbor I gaze
out of the window you'll find
your laughs walls will be knocked down flat,
the town will be quickly razed to the ground,
one tatty old hotel will be left
standing safe and sound ask someone special in that ask someone
special in that? a lot of people
milling round the hotel see me
leave the building the next morning say: the ship with eight
sails and its fifty guns loaded will run up its flag a hundred
men will land in the bright noonday sun look inside each
doorway say: give us the word we'll
say: Give us the word
in that noonday heat there'll be a hush 'round the harbor as they hear me
answer the ship with eight sails and its fifty guns loaded will sail off with us.

Dear Thomas,

11-08-2011

I never steal from Mr. Klein but I want to talk about the first episode of your show. Your co-workers opened the door to Lord Grantham's coin collection and said, "...funny our job isn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well live with all this. Pirates hoard within our reach but none of it's ours is it?"

No none of it is ours. But our bodies sit in their BMW, cottage guest room, or kitchen. It's not like we wear ourselves into these things, it is the opposite. It is not custom for their things to be worn, especially by us, the service.

When I sit in his BMW, the leather chair smells new, even after three years. I feel like I am on a ranch, I can smell the saddles, a pair of cowboy boots, or riding chaps. Cowboys shut in the open desert spitting snuff into the Texas dirt while considering their hands. 'Do they have enough to get through the next season?'

Mr. Klein's houses are expansive, I do feel myself walking longer sticks here. The ceiling is three lengths of my body, away. His bay windows view the Golden Gate Bridge.

I sometimes believe there is more time here; do you know what I mean?

Peter.

Between Us

Isis's Mary Janes tapped against the tile as she swung the bathroom door open, *that is beyond rude!* *What?* Audrey asked, running to the bathroom.

If someone is giving me a message, I do not appreciate it. Isis said, *They would be paying me,* walking over to a full-length mirror, lifted her head and approved both sides of her profile.

I'll take care of it honey, Audrey said after seeing the toilet pee. The flush roared through the lounge.

If I wanted a golden shower, I would be paid for it, she stood in front of the mirror and spread Jojoba butter over her arms so her black skin gleamed. Her body was toned and smooth. She moved to the left and right so her navy blue skirt swayed and bent as she hummed "Ave Maria."

Just pee, Rhoda quipped and adjusted her chubby thighs, packaged in rubber pants.

Isis gave Rhoda an evil eye through the mirror. Rhoda didn't see it. A Lifetime Special played on TV: Sandra Bullock ran after a cab where she'd left her purse. Bullock doesn't make it to the cab but instead runs into a man. They smile in mutual embarrassment, realizing an attraction. Bullock smelled her underarms while the man reached into his bag for a business card.

Doesn't she have an idea how she smells? Rhoda stared at the TV. *I know how I smell but you don't want to smell completely you,* Isis inspected the buttons on her silk blouse then walked long and slow to the other side of the lounge. Her gait was deliberate and accurate with a seeming rhythm to when she would look down. Heel toe—heel toe—heel, look down. Heel toe—heel toe—heel, look down. She walked around the lounge once then exited.

In the hall with high ceilings and stone walls, Isis walked her fingertips over the stone. She didn't have her next session for an hour so she strolled into the medical themed room with silver trays and a leather patent exam table. She picked up a stethoscope then set it against her chest to hear her breath as she hummed, "Ave Maria." At first she sang to herself but the open room created an echo she enjoyed, so she began to sing louder. She skipped over to the stirrups and used them like a podium as she arched back and filled the room with Latin. As her voice lifted from her belly, impregnating the exam room, her hands shook the stirrups, as if to lift the vibrations out of her body, as if to shake the trembling out of her frame.

Jostling the stirrups she remembered they detach. She slid each side slowly up out of their holes and walked around the room holding them up like guns. She bent her arms and held both stirrups next to her face. Ready to shoot.

Rhoda walked in, *your voice!* Isis cocked one of the stirrups and let the other one fall. She aimed it at Rhoda and sang a fake shot. *Don't shoot—ah,* Rhoda fell to the ground.

Isis walked over to Rhoda lying on the floor and put one Mary Jane on her shoulder. *Sandra Bullock doesn't look good smelling herself and neither do you. You were smelling. You're nasty—don't remind me. It's my right to smell. You forgetting my foot is on you? Not possible,* Rhoda pushed Isis's foot off and rolled away from her. *Be bleached, but don't confuse it with my clean. I don't like you, so stay out of my way.*

Check and check.

Criminal Recourse

Young, educated and demanding, the whores stood in their Victorian flat—Oakland, California, 2001. Their table held bagels and lox, their glasses were full of goat milk and the shelf held a bottle of Shiraz. No, they didn't know if it was a good year but they knew it was red and not dry.

How long you keeping

*the amateur P.I. stuff up? A little longer, I'm getting
that bastard. Honestly— Honestly, I have his
address and phone number! Let it go. It's gone
if there's dead air after
this act, swear—swear? Swear! Cause the Whore's
Brunch could use you—you know.. Seriously. What?*

Both believed in their bodies; both believed in an 11am-12am, a 3-4pm, hell a 12-1am over 9-5; both organized other hustlers together. The afternoon sunlight slid down the sills onto the wooden floor, shante'd over the woven rug, onto thighs: chubby, lean, hairy and naired hues of skin. Properly bred to do law, medicine, or architecture. On the mantel—a candle, the flame shot up, out, then formed a yellow blue wave that bounced from its wick.

*That shit is a bookmark, a couch. We sit
around, patting each other's backs. We
lay around and shove brie and sour
dough bread into our faces, it's a bandaid, a-*

They passed coffee around, political jitters filling minds. The wick's light rose. Fire threads lines, centers of malleable bodies—beeswax, solidified in cylinders. It's true they are bought. It's true they occupy shelves, a space until the sell.

It's self-care, for us—health care-Why do we need both? Don't placate
me. Just answer. Cause we're screwed. Exactly and I don't want to be
Screwed, be a criminal thief
gypsy haha tramp

Gypsies, tramps and thieves/we'd hear it from the people of the town,

Girl—Sher would do
the same. Can't we just get her to pay
our rent? Come on you've never struggled, always had
money in the bank; I've seen
your accounts. True. But it's not about the money, it's about the others,
never had
choice, felt they had to take it.

Jesus. What? Don't play
him. No, this is recourse. He stiffed me
because I'm queer. What? Well we were lying
there and all of the sudden he's like: you're gay aren't you? I'm like
what? Gay, you're gay. We were making
out and petting, you know, what he hired
me for. Tell me. He stiffed the unobtainable. I was
like I'm here right? And he says, yeah, but it's like your brain
is working at the same time like a dyke's, I paused right? Cause what
to say, so he's 'I knew it—I knew you were gay, you're fucking gay,'

like my hands and mouth switched, like he wasn't paying me in the first place; we had romantic futures. He blew up, so I went to the bathroom but when I returned my bag was empty and so was the room. **Asshole.** Exactly so no, I'm not Jesus, it's just that I bet Aileen Whornos would be nodding.

The workers bent over butcher paper and sharpies. Circling spheres that bit into other Os, all the orbits speed bumped when law appeared. The linguistic vacuum without off switches. The dark tunnels were blackouts with mere candles. Who's to say if it is a coal mine or a friendly bat cave. The bat echoed in frequencies too fast for anyone to hear, only sensed their call when the little winged ran into heads; accidental friction lit her. What did she see? Nothing in such surround dark pitch.

Well I hear

you, but you've got no net. But there's latex gloves—no falling. 'cept rubber rips. It also ties together.

PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION
Chapter 15: Criminal Profiling

Name: RACHEL HALPERN

Due Date: MAY DAY

Year 10 PSYCHOLOGY CRIMINAL PROFILING

TASK

In this assignment you must choose and research a criminal and give a detailed report on his criminal record.

YOUR BODY.

Step 1

Look at the list attached and choose a criminal that you would like to research. Choose carefully as everyone will choose one, you will not be able to change your mind once you have decided.

Step 2

Use various resources to research answers to questions below. You may use sources such as websites, encyclopaedia and CD-Roms and books (** Maximum of 2 internet sites **)

POTRAITS)

QUESTIONS WILL PASSING EVERY HIPSTER BAR IN SOHO HELP ME PASS THE BAR?

- What is criminal profiling and what is its purpose?
- Profile your criminal
- Discuss signature behaviour
- Discuss inductive versus deductive profiling
- Timeline the events for the chosen criminal
- Assess the criminals dangerousness
- Should your criminal be a "stalker", outline the type of stalker and reasons behind your response
- Other relevant information to help solve the crime.

Step 3

While you are doing the research, complete the data grid on the next page. Write your answers to the questions in point form only

Step 4

Use the notes in your data grid to write a rough draft of the text that you will put onto your presentation. Develop the notes into full sentences that are in your own words.

Step 5

Come up with a finalised audio-visual presentation

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

- ✓ Word limit: 700 - 1,000 words
- ✓ Presentation: Visual and Written (Poster, Power Point)
- ✓ Use of time: 1 library lesson, 2 classroom based lessons.

Dislocated Power

How to be Margaret Thatcher. She wouldn't pay to use a pedestrian subway platform. I adjusted the pearls resting above my blazer and clicked my black heels into the BART. Past turn-styles—past card slots no mind to pay for travel. *There is No liberty without economic liberty.* She said. I tried her—my shoes clipped concrete, teacher's cane cracking blackboards. Points to power I was entering. On top, the houses and streets below me. On top, 9-5 disappearing. I strutted towards the silver bullet-like train. I go, I'm going.

Men, uniformed. Their boots beated out our sounds to trains. The subway cop's beats, blocked our trade.

Their arms clamped around mine, as Margaret's. I asked: *You have one platform for a beat?* they yanked me off the top, down, stairs, down a floor where our coins were to be spent.

Picked, Out of Line

Donna's refusal and red hair pulled me into her. The TV clock read 2:30pm so the trick had been waiting for half hour. He might walk and that would mean bad business for our Soho house. But I was more concerned with my reputation as manager. As leader, I liked not having to turn tricks and I wanted to keep that power.

Donna's tears were getting in the way of her story, *Stripping was paying for college and massage was wrapped up in healing-* I kneeled across from her and took her hand while dialing the other worker lounge, Donna's changed her mind, so one of you will have to take him. I knew sex work paid for college; it was paying my Columbia bills. *I can talk more after he's seen, okay?* I squeezed her shoulder and stood up to the mirror. *But I have to do my job first.*

A new gray hair was traveling down towards my chest. It was courser and more kinky then the others. It didn't flow with my young hair. I wished it was all gray without further demands to blend. I wouldn't need to brush the ambivalent lines into the solids. They would be decided. They would storytell and intimidate. They would stand up for me as a body of firm lines—together.

"Courts and Criminals" were thrown onto the floor during Donna's confrontation. I gave her some tissue and sat back down; she kept my other hand in hers, still freaked about her identity switching before her, while continuing to tell me the clear differences between our trade. I knew how New York's Article 230 divided Donna's massage from my full service.

A girl called me from the other lounge. *Another girl's got 'em,* I told Donna. She walked to the mirror, spit on the tissue and wiped the mascara smear off her cheek—pushed her bob back. *I don't want to give anyone head. You should just go home, Donna; if you don't feel it, it's not worth it. I'm sorry we misunderstood each other over the phone. No I'll do it, but no head.*

Her eyes switched from darting around to an unmoving indifference, like fear left. I hated seeing ambivalence—always talked girls out of it if their scales were heavy with scarcity. She wasn't desperate, she was organizing her life and I respected that. But you have to pick up a bass and walk out there beating the strings with your drummer on your left, guitarist on your right, and your rhythms louder than any of the John's sound.

You should get up there fast because Sherri's on her way up. But keep your tongue on the roof of your mouth and keep your own beat. Donna darted out and I re-stacked my law books she'd tossed around the room. Then the door opened back up with Donna. *Don't tell me you're that good, it's only been five minutes. He wants to watch us. I'm not doing sessions today,* I walked over to the mirror and slid my hands down the sides of my suit so the pleats over my stomach popped, so my hips looked bigger as my waist looked smaller. This suit gave me cleavage while lengthening my legs like it knew how to push me out and make me tall at the same time.

Donna straddled the arm of the couch, twirling a strand of her curly red hair as she stared yesses at me.

Let's go, I told her. *I'll get another girl to watch the phones.*

Business first, John. So he put the bills on the bed and I picked them up and stuffed them into my bra. The handcuffs were there in the next second; he caught me first and when Donna came up to me in shock, he clamped her too.

Pitt as Butler

I ran from the peephole back into the kitchen where Illona was rolling a black thigh high up her leg. I shook my head no. She pinched her face, “turn the trick.” The John behind the door held a motorcycle helmet and stood about 5’10, late twenties. He brushed a hand through his sandy blonde hair and squinted into the peephole while repeating his knock and looking annoyed.

*You’ve done this a million times before—it’s just a toy
show, don’t worry. I can’t he’s a Pitt
dude. A pit? Illona asked and looked into the peephole. That Burning Man dude,
that Brad Pitt! That guy they make medium sized clothes for-
A trick is
a trick. Illona’s chubby, warm hand
felt good to hold as we whispered, John
knocked again. Entitled tricks
See us as in-between. Like he’s beyond
us? Liminal- Just pretend he’s Butler. Asking my preferred
pronoun? Whatever it takes- Her hand
went onto my shoulder. I feel
stiff. Be a corpse. It’s a toy
show! The peephole showed Pitt
holding his helmet ready like a Top
Gun. When I watched top gun entering,
exiting entering cockpits, it seemed athletic. On “Crib,”
Tom Cruise had a jet, boat & ski.*

Are toys to be kept? My bias for queer
toys vs. Pitt’s, is cracked. We don’t
keep all our toys. Don’t shelf,
polish and dust ours as artifact. We allow our toys
out, walk them around the 70’s Time Square; soot and pollution
circling the flesh. But in these times, my hand

unholds door handles, can’t release deadbolts. My frame—drinking
fountain in hallways and bathrooms. Liminal spaces are marked,
the unwanted axis. I see Pitt knocking to step out of the hallway’s
liminality, he sees. But this is a good hall
way to its own tootsie roll pit.

This hallway’s linoleum is comfort. Chinese factory workers
made it ready to be walked
on. The eggshell paint I’m leaning on,
done by a crew as much as the dry wall
beneath. I prefer
tricks not expecting mantel toys, not collecting ponies
for parading. I prefer the tricks standing
against the same egg shells.

Dear Ethel,

I found another man's clothes in my dryer tonight! At the laundromat. First there were really big, khaki slacks. My husband is skinny and he'd never touch khaki, would probably feel gay or something.

So looking around I saw a couple women staring at me. "These are yours?" They nodded. I wasn't sure if I put my clothes in their dryer or they put theirs in mine. They said sorry a bunch of times so I shrugged it off while pulling out their damp clothes. One of them asked if they should, ya know, separate the clothes. But what was the difference really, and I was already doing the job.

It was weird though. Feeling their wettish clothes with mine. They were sticky together. Rolling and folding over one another, in the steam. Picking out their moist stuff felt pretty personal. Like I was holding their unfinished business.

I looked back again and they looked hellu uncomfortable so I let them pull out the rest. Then I felt naked, pretty weird. Like I began to hope my clothes that they touched were actually clean.

Who does the workers' laundry at Downton Abbey? Must be done by a maid or footman, and they must put all of the workers clothes in the same machine. So all your dirt and wear run together all the time. You probably have little control over when it happens or how much. I suppose that's normal in any large house whether it's a castle or prison.

I've always used laundromats cause we never feel like we can afford the down payments of our own washer and dryer.

After my laundry was done, I pulled my dry clothes out and found one more white sock from the other girls. Only one of theirs made it to the end with mine. But that one felt different like it was actually separate. I have done so much laundry in my lifetime. At the parlor each girl would have to do a laundry shift each week. And now I do laundry at the hotel too. So it's not like touching other people's stuff is new to me but for some reason that experience was different. Like I thought the dryer was mine, that I would never find other people's stuff mixed in with my family's.

You are still dealing with raising your baby as a single mother. The father is dead but your baby's grandparents have money and want to raise your baby. We always have to deal with our ancestors huh? Whether they're blood or not.

*Love,
Tina*

No Y: A Lipogram for Scheduling

Doris needs a sound tech for these workers holding red
umbrellas, singing, when walking
down Market street. Magdalena needs
me in boots: Oakland Ramada. 3pm, room

414. Illona and I flier the Polk, Pan
handle and Pacific Heights for Prop K. I'm renaming
Steve because it's too masculine for this job. Brunette
wig, stilettos and gold push-up bra. I'm using

cabs. Washing five households, full
sheets, a 12 hour shift. The rooms are lubed,
condomned and sheeted. Beds, hot
tubs give plastic combs with their town printed on them, Buerkle

is a place to clock, in the 90s People's Park served free
food before the town put all homeless in Albany's landfill. I pull up
leather and stretch down vinyl. I count twenties, sometimes one
hundreds of paper cranes are lining the walls. *Marriage* is a name,

of queer opera. I'm back to Steve
who Kirk wants to take as a work name. I'll be Dennis I wonder if,
I misunderstood what the universe had in store. I've never wanted to work in front,
the camera, I don't understand

being documented. Tomorrow I will hate the teal I love
now, the eggs and potatoes and peppers were dumpstered.
Illona and Maybelle turned them into a special
meal for the date I was born; friends know what is rotten, vs. what's in a bent
package.

Oakland's Scheherazade

The tabs of their fingers noted, tight
nerves in the cellist's body, their fingers sashayed over
skin, slid down her stomach, roundness.
Thighs in hot water, red wine
blush, unheard in halls where players
bend over cellos. The hookers
bent over the musician, giddy were plucking her
arms, neck and legs,
as they filled her up.

Frankie and Sherry bound
across the sidewalk and slipped their tub soaked bodies into
a taxi. Their spandex packed thighs and backs,
sit against the worn seats. Scheherazade, on San Pablo and 54th St. please.

She was lovely. Frankie says looking out the window, smiling. *Is that all?*
There? She partly asks about the money.

I know what a wailer—really great. Sherry said laughing, she counted
twenty dollar bills. Yeah, it is all
here, and a \$60 tip. Would you have done it
for free? Perhaps our paths would,
never cross. But if? If she's that loud-
in public. How about-
You know my thing about blonds, not for free anyway.

The taxi passed a card club and recycle store, a Goodwill and Ethiopian restaurant.
Sunday crowds walked the Oakland sidewalks.

So, you think you'll ever pay? I won't need to-
yeah but if- Like if I liked someone and they disclosed? Yeah.
Scene's too- we already know who's working
or not. Think she'll call
again? Women aren't taught they should buy out of
absences- Yeah we are to be bought, to put shoes,
purses, car onto- No, right, I mean, we're not taught we are less of a woman
for not sticking our junk in
a person- Okay, right, it's about wearing,
not penetrating. I guess, which all sounds so Second
Wave but if talking cisgender- If we're talking the View- right
right, the view- the portrait of fem
male- The portrait of femmes talking with
out accessories as penetrating? Well what sunglasses are we
wearing Ray Bans? Naw, Man Ray's.

Dear Thomas,

01-04-2012

It rained everyday one spring. Afghanistan did not have bone chilling weather like Seattle, but it had the same grey. It felt hollow. Our medic camp cycled genital and leg injuries. So many broken soldiers. It was devastating to witness so much dislocation. But it soon became familiar and expected.

I truly felt the trauma, later. I started dreaming the stories the soldiers told me when I sutured them or re-wrapped their bandages.

I am holding their leg or arm as they speak; 'first I heard something like a crowd, and then I was kicked face first into the sand.' Someone in the same room hollers 'faster' or simply screams things I later translated into: 'I have to see the next patient.' I look around the room. I can only see vague piles of bodies but I hear clanging medical trays and moans. Then an amputee tries to pick up a glass of water, or sometimes a bottle, off a tray. I know if she touches the glass, the conveyor belt the tray is on will sweep her up and remove her. I shout "No!" at her, but I have no voice and the conveyor belt takes her away.

At first, I wake up from this screaming and in cold sweats. I had been working at Muddy Waters cafe on Mission Street. During the day, my voice began to crack. It would jump and lower like it did in puberty. I just thought it was sleep deprivation.

I was at the register one day, about six months after the nightmares began. I tried to ask, "one shot or two?" But all that came out was "wa o?" Like there wasn't breath moving

out with my words, like the air in my mouth could only move in one direction, inward. Then I became very nervous about work and speaking. I lied to my boss and said my voice odd voice was due to being sick with a cold. That story worked for a few months. But the dream anxiety increased. Sleep, the real kind, began to be rare. Sound triggered me back to the ~~camp~~ camps. The cappuccino machine and coffee chatter snarled in to the medic tents which crawled in to my nightmares. Sound was pain. Each shift, sleeping or awake, was met with the inability to stop the people getting drinks, from getting removed by the conveyer belts.

After several months of the nightmares, a woman named Briana came in to the cafe. She ordered a latte. I became anxious about sound and where I would go. Up to that point in my day, I was lucky that a lot of people had been ordering the "haze" blend. A quiet brew. But, where would the latte take me? In front of an amputee? In front of the conveyer? Bumped around in grey pinging and snapping cloud? Those are the last thoughts I remember before waking up on the ground, my manager looking down at me, "You gonna make it? You smacked the concrete pretty hard, Peter."

I made it but it was clear I was in no condition for customer service. My boss had the compassion to give me janitor duty after that.

You lifted up your hand from your war bunker so it would be shot; you wanted a medical leave. Then you worked in hospitals, talking to patients, hearing their stories, giving them medicine. You

body and voice changed after you witnessed the Duke die. But you can still talk at will. Sometimes I feel like I have been talking after I watch you speak.

It is not only that my voice is unpredictable. It is also that the other butlers and maids in the Grant-Ham basement, your work space, explode in chatter. We don't have a worker room; all the rooms are Mr. Klein's except the guest rooms, where we spend the nights. Mr. Klein has aged into a simple life of watching French noir, accountant meetings and the occasional dinner party.

I am nearly through with my Montuzy Associates. This job, despite the ~~ps~~ physical demands, is calm and pays well. I can soon move on. Well it is now late and I am tired from a days work of driving. See you on the next episode.

Yours,
Peter

II. Relief

Citations

M, BLON, BLUE, 6' 2

was printed on the yellow copy above: Intention
To Solicit

It weighed more than paper.
Books Purina rent check AT&T.

Brian sat in my recliner, telling
me, *you were simply walking home down Hyde street.*

I had minded my own business that night,
now I held a leger, I couldn't just throw

the book, just or not, into a dumpster. You have to call the city for big
garbage days. Or get fined.

Take it to the courthouse and fight. He stepped closer,
exchanged the citation with his hands. Compassion

pricks the skin held within anxiety chambers, red
hots and atomic fireballs. I couldn't hear anymore, his

mouth, opened and closed; his hands stemming from tree
sits, Raging Grannies and Pink Threads. This cite, tore me up.

[illegible]

Dear Thomas,

04-01-2007

I have taken a walk to be near the dead. On the highest floor of the Neptune Society Columbarium, you can stand at the rail and face the open center. Behind you, nestled in niche walls, are the ashes of your cousins. And mine, of sorts. The little shrines are adorned with Mardi Gras beads, Rainbow Rings and other delightfully tacky sentimentalism. Nina Simone is singing "Ain't got Nothin'" over surround sound.

In front of me a chamber, behind me humans line the stairwell that forces us up narrow hallways lined with their efforts to leave a print.

We cannot, however, be there to choose which artifact makes the cut. We fool ourselves into believing we can hold the scissors. I am breathing in the open chamber here with those before me lining the stairwell.

Yours,
Peter.

Teacher's Supermarket

With a headache self-conscious looking at the new moon,
teachers walked down the sidestreets under the trees.
In their fatigue and shopping for images,
sweet portrayals to shift brown avocados into
lime fruit, they went to a farmer's market
dreaming of themselves as enumerations:
pork tripe, chicken wings, and sausage links,
dangled off the butcher's stall they saw,

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole Families shopping at
night! Aisles full of house wives, widowed fighters, cheering for the
bitter melons like Taiwan's Mrs.Guan,

They asked questions to each: who killed the pig? What price
chicken? Are you my angel?

The guides wandered beside and underneath the brilliant
cans tipping then losing in their imagination, the store detective,

They strode down the open corridor together in a
solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every delicacy, and
resisting cop

Where are they going Wojnarowicz? The doors close in on—
an hour. How do you all look tonight?

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost angels of love?
Past crowded brothels and embanked solicitations, home to our
silence?

Ah, dear aunties, glittered beards, lonely old courage teachers, what
angels did you have when Bill O'Reily quit poling his factor and you
got out on an intermission and stood watching the tweets disappear
on the black waters of Erzulie Freda.

BERKELEY TEACHER ARRESTED.

BERKELEY, CITY OF HOOKERS?

**ARRESTED IN PROSTITUTION
CASE.**

**BUSTED FOR ORGANIZING,
TEACHER RESIGNS.**

BUSTED FOR PROSTITUTION?

**OHIO TEACHER,
IN PROSTITUTION STING.**

**LITTLE ROCK TEACHER
STINGS.**

**8 ARRESTED FOR PROSTITUTION.
TEACHER IN TEXAS?**

**A SPRINGFIELD TEACHER
BUSTED**

**CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL
A TEACHER**

Yarn, Balls Up

We become seahorses, rolling our chests in and out of each other's space; "there's hella hos up in this joint tonight" booms out of Fiasco's mic. There are a couple other horses in the club, dancing behind us on the steps. The beats are on top of each other; thick and scratchy—Magdalena's threading a line of faeries to a leather saddle.

We are not youth, but youthful looking: open, and pulling yarn across stages. First over the players who are children with jacks and they reach up and yee: yank the cord this way and that; they don't care. Then over Nick Bottom, the thread glides over his lips.

Here, beyond 30, the thread moves over us, over our shoulders and falls down the length of our bodies. The yarn fluffs, it balls up and bunches in our love handles and between our toes, nothing is woven into a sweater let alone one knitted glove. We've learned to appreciate the bright greens, blues and oranges over flesh and how the materials look nice on skin. Lite reflection is all we have.

The string is being carried over to the other side of the stage where a queen in her sixties sits. She steps over it. The craftsman is surprised, standing with his string, in her shade.

The hella hos hook made us raise our chest, together. We thought the rapper was giving us props. But the needle slid off the vinyl and the lights turned on. The song was calling straight guys who want to know about lesbian sex, "hos." He wasn't talking about us; he wasn't giving props to hustlers; we only thought such rights.

Relief

Reliefs. They signed their names for one season on the skipper. Three months' service-same time period as the boys before them. Same titles previous boys had. Long hours and shifting beds, the captains ordered these reliefs. Their prints were coinless. Impressions on paper, unbacked by dollars. These reliefs could lose playing rock, paper, scissors.

Differences, Filed Together

SEP 17, 2006

9.13.04 Minutes

Attendees

Ryan, Johnson, White, Nemecek, Gonzalez, Israelson, McCormick, Plotsky, Jacobson, Sanchez and Smith.

Agenda

Attend to servants
Assess sex worker
Approach farm worker
Address day laborer

Discussed

Supplies undelivered to site, promises
amount to conflicts with dollars in hand, vs. coins in contract. Health inspect
shun of place. Each hotel soil street higher up
negotiations on hold, 'til next meeting,
surveilled. Zoning laws zoom in, magnify the elbow
grease marking all, made to the table.

Oak Formica or pine tables hold elbows
differently, some of the tables have 100 growth rings on their surface. Contour
lines meet each knife. A conversation topic: '...interesting etching on its back' 'yes the farmers
walked out for that mark.'

The particle boards don't show same history labor and materials ground into gray
putty, for a mold. 'Let's not talk
about it—the help is in the kitchen,' pointing out
house as home as work as amalgam identity.

Formica tables have color when newly off the shelf. Some a street
purchase some off the internet they move from sheds to porches to living
rooms getting nicked along the way. 'Isn't this the table the ACLU wouldn't touch?'
'Yep, teamsters are the only ones care to mention it.'

The street hotel farm
table's legs different surface area.

Salt of the Peninsula

They figure the bachelors. 5 kitty shots, 3 edible panties and 4 taffy garter belts = double the living wage for the team. Kerry reapplied a layer, cherry lipstick. *I gotta make my base before your security. Possible? If they give beyond their means.*

Salt of South SF holds inequalities the dancer and her guard didn't assay.

Simplify the equation. If a line passes through fixed wages the parts are greater than the sum.

How drunk's the bachelor? Wasted. Hold my hand—we'll turn the salt into solution. The guard filled a bucket with water and the team passed through the group, pouring into the partiers' pockets. Bills swam out and flapped their jaws about sharing pockets with lint.

Filling. The Empty

Application for CalFresh Benefits

Applicant Information

✓ 1. Please fill out the following personal information for the person requesting CalFresh benefits.

Name (Last, First, Middle)	<i>Lina Rose Oneil</i>
Telephone Number (include area code)	<i>415-686-2342</i>
Home Address (Street, P.O. Box, Apt. #)	<i>432 Lux Avenue, Apt. 4</i>
City, State, Zip Code	<i>South San Francisco, 94080</i>
Mailing address (if different from above)	<i>same</i>
City, State, Zip Code	<i>same</i>

2. The CalFresh office can provide an interpreter at no cost to you. Would you like an interpreter at your interview? ☐ Yes ☒ No If "Yes," what language? _____

3. To help us improve our services to you, please complete A, B, and C below. Check all that apply to you. The law says we must record your ethnic group, race, and language. If you do not complete these items, the county will do it for you. This will not affect your eligibility.

A. ETHNICITY (Everyone must also answer B)

Are you Hispanic or Latino? ☐ Yes ☒ No

B. RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN - Check all boxes that apply to you. If you check any of these items, the county will do it for you.

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
☐ Black or African American
☐ Asian (If checked, please select one or more)
☐ Filipino ☐ Chinese ☐ Korean
☐ Vietnamese ☐ Asian Indian
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ Native Hawaiian ☐ Guamanian
☒ White

C. PRIMARY LANGUAGE:

- ☐ English ☐ Spanish
☐ Cantonese ☐ Cambodian

✓ 4. Someone in the household is: (check all that apply)

- ☒ Disabled ☐ Homeless
☐ Elderly (60 & older) ☐ Migrant
☐ Without money for food ☐ Has you

5. Do you have a physical or mental condition that prevents you from working? ☐ Yes ☐ No

✓ 6. How much is your rent or mortgage this month? \$ _____

✓ 7. How much are your utilities this month, if separate from rent or mortgage? \$ _____

I have been informed about getting emergency CalFresh benefits within three (3) days.

Lina Rose Oneil

Signature

Date

County Use Only:

Case Name _____

Case # _____

Application Type:

☐ New

☐ Recert

Date received by County _____

Screened for Expedited Service (ES)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

ES Eligible

☐ Yes

☐ No

Dear Thomas,

06-08-2017

When I first helped Mr. Klein's body slip on a shirt or socks, my shoulders tightened. When I helped him sit down I thought his body would be tense. I imagined his muscles would become stiff from my touch. I didn't understand that bodies born into wealth would be relaxed, however, in retrospect it is logical. The wealthy are groomed for leisure and to be served. When I chauffeur him to restaurants and home again, he most often comments on the restaurant's service, rather than the food. And after the first weekend, his approval of my performance was, "I enjoyed myself." What did I expect, really? I am his boy, it is about his comfort.

How does Lord Ghantham's body feel when you slip his coat over his shoulders? Did you think the lord would be relaxed? Or is it harder to dress a man that you know easier? Had you been a valet before?

In the first season we don't see you iron your shirts or steam your suits, but I would like to see how Downton's workers iron things. I am interested in ironing, how we are made to make things look smooth. Mr. Klein was a born millionaire and did customs law. He pays me cash money so my services cannot be tracked.

The Craigslist ad that I answered was for "companion in refined settings." In my condition it works out. Yet, the majority of my body is to be an attractive yet silent body. To be agreeable. I know you understand. On the other hand, you do have that talking steam at Downton. It does not matter if you all are bickering or in song; you do have a space of your own. I live with Mr. Klein. On his floor. I am always in his landscape where the embroidered K is.

Don't you think it is odd, the rich don't understand that living in their luxury, may not be luxurious?

Peter

Mixed Costs

MAY		MIXED COSTS	1	2
1		CASH MONEY SHIFTS LAND		
2		SCAPES, HALF OF A DOZEN TOMATO VINES & SIDEWALK STALKS		
3		COIN MONIES, TAX FREE,		
4		HAND TO HAND MOVEMENT,		
5		SHIFTING BETWEEN THE CHIHUAHUA DESERT AND 1/2 MOON		
6		BAY, SKILLS JUGGLED BETWEEN WORKERS		
7		BEGAN WITH HANDSHAKES, OPEN		
8		CONTRACTS THROUGH WORD OF MOUTH		
9		2 MOUTH, SIGNPOSTS		
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KEY:

∞ =reducible to, \sim =roughly similar, \triangleleft = is an ideal of, $//$ = norm of,
 $()$ =combination, \leftrightarrow = if and only if, \bar{x} = statistics, $*$ =multiplication,
 \bowtie =natural join of

Dear Thomas,

12-04-2012

When I scribbled to my co-workers about health-care, David was inspecting crystal, Gilles folding a dish towel. Both of their eyes looked down. "~~Brian~~ Brian asked for it." David replied to my questioning.

"So?" I gestured as I stood up and stood by both of these co-workers. "He's not with us anymore." They said.

When I tried to discuss money with David and Gilles it went this way. "You should give a try." They meant it, but they did not believe I would win. They were right. Alas, I stay.

Yours,
Peter.

III. O

Action Potential

Fire threads fill
beeswax centers.
Cords for heat.

Visibly occupying
hallways,
parks,
street corners,
your bedroom.

The red is shooting up,
yellow line
blue wave body heat
bouncing over wicks.

And paper balls,
in Chinese lanterns.

To Days In April

A converging sound check recorded on rarely used mics, stoking
ambers lost in the gut of laborers.

Hours, bodies, babies or cars. Contracts of May
Day dreams to cut distances, English Spanish Mandarin tones ricochet

off concrete walls surrounding the workers in April '08. Tongues drumming
roofs of their mouth. Hungers to be heard, fuel a verbal knocking.

Waves vaulting off lips
erupt the agitated speakers, huddled together

by trade. *They said we'd be paid in hand, next
week, next month, then they outsource your entire team yeah? Yeah like dispos-*

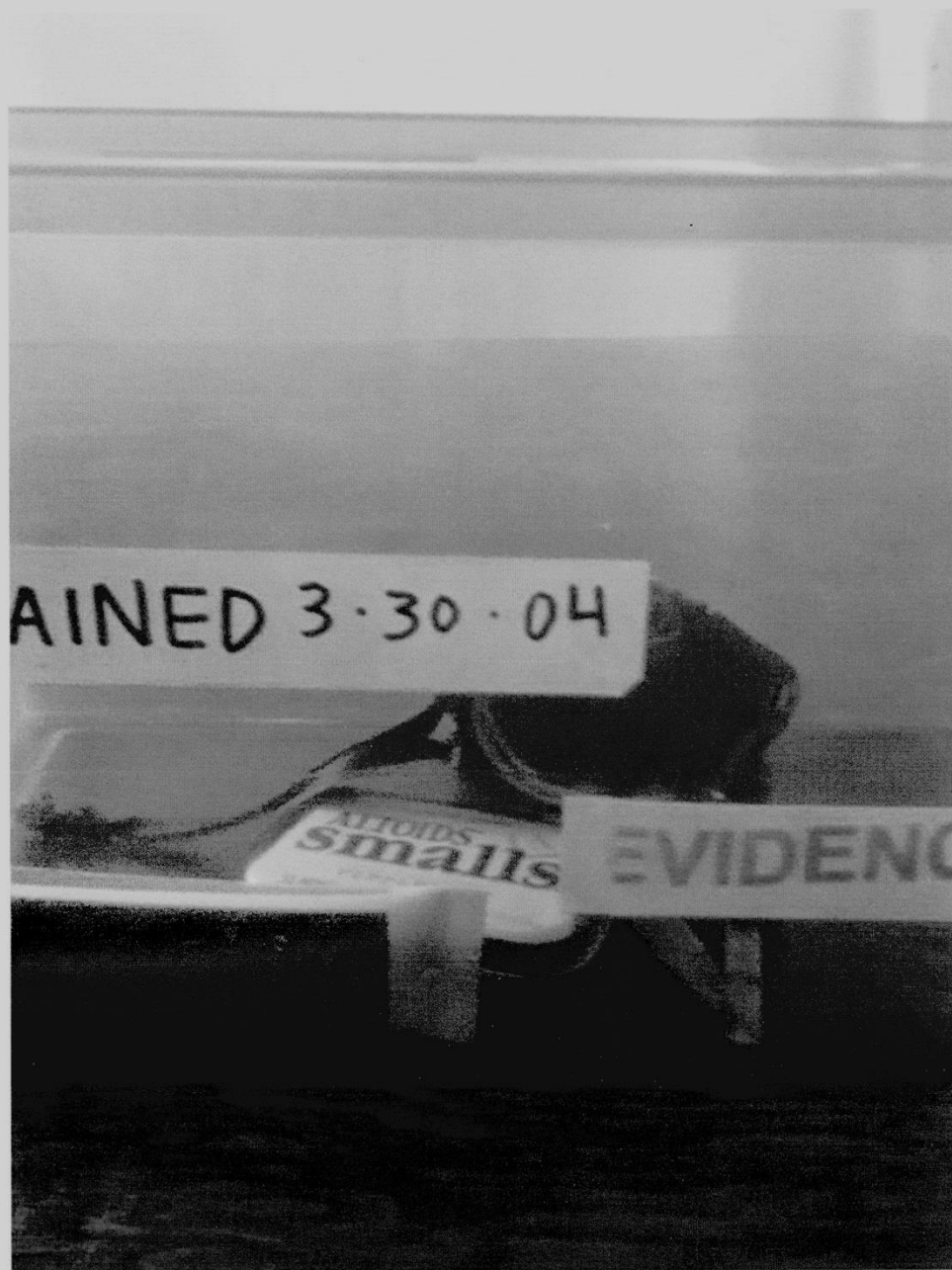
able **Printers** talking hot tea kettles whistling
off, slicing off the chains, by heat

melts the plastic ties on wrists on bodies.
Sparks dissolve the chastity belted

faces. How to keep the hunted talking about street, warehouse and house as job, unlike
home and friend. Both. Places of service pretty glued to the boss

talking bucks. Talk about grievances, fire—
the butane of gossip.

Shuffled



A O

Jerry and I observe the reliefs. Prints-
our test results. We're both typed N,
Courier New font. I'm: t, w, g. I see
twig. Light wood, abilities for fire. Jerry is: m, w, g. I see
mowg: kind of a stuffed
animal. We're both Negative and in our heads.

But Jerry's probably thinking, dick. I am,
thinking about the intake counselor; he couldn't imagine my parts. Small,
at risk, consider the piece's type: it all becomes New York Times
blood, is part water, flowing into spaces, I switched into
health educator: *take my blood. One partner has cum,*
blood, holes and baster, as long as the other
has holes- I looked for his nod. His face uh huh'd my body,
at risk, consider the pieces—my relief. My body

reclined from an L into a \. Jerry will soon turn
a trick so distracted about his penis. Type A
cares if O is negative or another type. Yet A
releasing is relief. A oh, can open to more O.

Dear Thomas,

01-20-2013

You were fired today because of homosexual activity. You tried to kiss a co worker. Some things have changed in the last century, I am out and I can kiss my boyfriend in public. Yet, we still do not get healthcare unless our annual income exceeds \$60,000, the poverty line.

You have lost so much. Your job, O'Brien, the Duke. But you never scream, never. I want you to. Selfishly speaking. Will you? I want you to holler in that lowering space where "service" has little voice. Because I cannot.

It is easy to see. You step back into the estate because you forgot a dish. Once in the hallway, when Carson greets you, you can ask him to get it from your room. Gone, he won't silence you. It will start quietly. Quietly, "if it serves you." In dinner volume. Then you'll walk into the living room where the ceilings rise and the voice echoes. If it serves you. No one will come yet because your voice will still be quieter than the licensed duties happening here and there. This will give you time to get comfortable holding the words in your mouth and making them your own, if it serves you. It will begin to fill up the room, bouncing off the chandeliers and bay windows. You can say it faster now and you should because the other servants or perhaps the lord himself will be coming to see where the echo is coming from if it serves you. Then it will be repeating, cycling the same around you, spiraling it from you, bounding through the house, flipping off the stained glass and crystal vases. If it serves you!

Peter.

Décima Interjection

How's it o'er on your side mm?

Hard to put my finger onna-

uh huh, I feel you, alotta-

mm hmmm—people sayin,' mm mmm.

For real? Thought by the way he, um,

some said, uh—others, oh yes well-

I can tell a story's there—tell

me somethin' you ever hear of-

the talks? Yeah a lot of people-

talkin' bout the talks at the Bell.

Ethel,

I rushed through my rooms today so I could write that my husband left me.

Two nights ago I watched you tell your baby's grandparents off. That was bitchin' Ethel! Especially cause the grandpa is such an asshole!

People might think I'm crazy to follow a TV character but I already wanted to come clean to my husband about working at massage parlors. You just helped me remember about following my heart.

Things got pretty bad after I told him. He called me a slut and tramp and it really hurt I won't lie. The worst was he said a liar shouldn't raise kids so I reminded him about taking care of the family the first two years he was on disability.

It was like he swallowed little nails or something Ethel, you know the kinds for hanging pictures on the wall. He was red and sweaty and it was like he was so uncomfortable with those little nails inside that he started blowing them out into the room. Every one of his words hit hard.

So there I was crying so hard and feeling so bad when the kids came out and they just know you know? They just know whose coming from love or hate.

So they ran up to me. I just said you decide, you can live with who you want. They didn't move, just kept their arms around my body, while he kept at me.

He left that night with our TV. I feel lost Ethel but light, so much lighter. Like to hell with him, ya know? After all I did for him then be treated like a used dish rag. It's fine by me, him gone. I have my babies. They know what love is more than him anyhow. I guess now that I'm talking about moving on, and I don't have a TV, AND you're gone, off the show, this is it, Ethel. It's our goodbye. Not like a forever goodbye but more like finishing reading an article or something. I always keep thinking about things, stuff I read in a magazine or saw on TV. I'm going to keep on thinking about you and when you did step through that door of your ex-boy's, how you made your peace with your baby and your work.

Love,
Tina

Sky Intaglios

The type reads: illegal. Heavily visible
script. Papers tossed, papers
flipping off of Dow Jones or Homeland
Security measures—evacuations. Giuliani to Newsom print
papers warning against dirty bodies.

Oh the dirt is not to be pressed O ink evaporates and text vaults
off 2D forms O bodies of breathe.

Dear Thomas,

04 - 01 - 2013

I was doing some plumbing earlier. The pipes broke and water gushed out of the walls and down the ceiling. I was tending to the scene but it did not seem fast enough and I felt Gilles should help me; the flood was more more than one water could handle alone. I took the wrench and swung it into the metal; a cry for help. Loud echoing tings filled the suite air. I struck again and again until the pipes song split the air. Until the pipes song tore the air open.

I was wrong to ask you to do this for me. I forgot my body is sound.

Yours,
Peter.

No l a w: Lipogram of Release

Off the job, Dennis yessed
his hot tub body—keen,
off the trick's, this hooker was bouncing.
Good the bent hands, sissy
wrists such pretty hinges.

His chest moved into the boy's
body next to his, round.
Dennis's tits pushed, then the boys moved
positions.

The other boy returned the force. Dogs spinning to
psycho rhythms, cuts
tossed them, funky skin for coins
tinging in his pocket shiny to be meteorite

ground bursts, shoes
dizzied on concrete, pinging
before bucking
into the sky.

Drifting, spheres on the ends
of lines.

Mitsubishi Mirage

Us boys are lined in aisles, parallel to our dealer: Dad. We're here for the cars sliding down each row: ten aisles total. It's Seattle's Manheim car auction and an auctioneer guides each lane.

I've been with Tacoma Dad for five years; he's all right to me if I help sell and find deals. Cars drive through, we circle then go under the hoods. Dad is mostly here to sell our Mitsubishi Mirage that he'll try to get 2500 out of.

A bearded guy carts beer brats, salted pretzels, coffee and soda to the lines. The fatty scent of meat and the bitter smell of coffee breaks up the gray sky and floor. Dad sends me for a couple dogs and a cup of Jo. The other boys cruise me as my shoulders re-angle behind then in front of jean-jacketed and wind-broken men, my sneakers slide past cross trainers and steel toes, feeling for open ground or footing.

The concrete footing is there but the metal towers over me, sits with power windows, suspension seats and lifted kits. I know cars have tires and move on material that wears, that breaks and slides in downpours. That fishtails just like us boys do. But these bigger Hummers, rounder Tacomas, and smoother Lexuses outweigh boys. Rolling on rubber that tears or not, these metal bodies are money. We are tissue easily cut into, Chicken of the Sea.

I return to Dad, keeping my hands in my Carhartts, swinging my face his way for instructions. He eats his hot-dog then drags a Basic smoke; bending his greasy head up he eyes his Mirage sliding towards the auctioneer booth and winks, my cue.

I leap towards the Mirage with other schools of boys. Its doors open, its seats pushed forward and back. Hands slide under the grill and over the rods. I slide over its hood, bend my body into the interior to exit the side Dad's on; it's my trick; it shows off the body.

Moving away from the car, I trip, a dangling speaker cable snaps over my shin; Dad doesn't notice but a gappy-toothed guy does and laughs at me. I try to return the laugh but no sound comes out; it's just my open mouth gulping air. I see Dad's worn Reeboks, scuffs and cracks, he must have had them years but I never noticed the wear before. The humidity runs down our cheeks, skin softening as the numbers bounce.

15
20
25
30 303030
20
25 zigzag the air

Twenty? The auctioneer

hollers and points,

Sold!

I wipe fog off the windshield. Then I see dad walking towards us, as we creep in his Mirage. His frame always looks tall when he's determined, like shoulders have an extra blow-up space just as suitcases. His are high. We're in his car but it's been sold. It's cold out yet the car's warm. A lot of simple things passing through my head. I can only see the other boy's breath and my own as we chat over options. *Get out of the car and run. Drive the car away. Punch out dad then run. Rob Dad then run. Take dad's clothes and dressed as him—collect the day's money. A gasoline leak turns the car explosive. Roll car for a double suicide.* Death seems to be the least creative option yet it reappears as a cheap exit route. We wipe the window again to see dad there,

about to tap on it. He lifts his arm and moves it forward. As it comes at me I think of how knocks on windows can be scary or friendly. I had a boyfriend in high school who threw a rock at my window. There's a nice thud if it's simply hello.

I see Dad's hand knock hello. A slow thud. A three timed knock knock knock. I tell the other boy we should simply step out of the car and he agrees. When we got out, it isn't Dad at all, but the new owner of the Mirage. He's tall with a warm, round face and says his name's Dale. Dale thanks us for bringing his car to the back and tells us about a hole in the wall, lining the auction. *Huh?* We ask in unison.

He whispers, *it's not just the Mirage or your Dad, it's that wall holding it all in. You have to go through it.* His big hand points to a solid brick wall that is lining the back side of the auction. *Walk back there and look for a dumpster, the hole's behind it. It's real small and there's some glass shards poking out of its sides. You might get cut up—but that's the only way.*

The Lonely O

Candy Cane? I called out to St. James Infirmary's waiting room. Candy's long hair drops down her back when she stands, *Rent Girl* goes back into her purse. She's wearing black silk, blouse and skirt and tights. Her pumps begin drumming on the tile, she walks.

Walking up the stairs we talk about it—I'm offering Shiatzu, *How's your body?* she has sore ankles, sore wrists and stiff neck. Advertising her flesh means working keyboards and websites. *Clients need so much hand holding*, she escorts Johns, taxis and bills to banks, rooms, physical heights, cumming. Go *lie down*, I said. Understanding her trade offs for cash money. She only has this peer-based drop-in clinic.

We talk of lightness in shoulders and easier smiles. Tear soaked cheeks. Or grinding teeth in our sleep.

The gut holds a wick our flame—some nerves, long elliptical lines, tripe. Again the belly. She sits back and sighs. The room has it

in it then. Shields people walking alone. Comes by guts, armpits, the throat. It bangs restless, upset. Keeping breathe bouncing quickly.

Here, in rooms, the fat sigh meets wall, ceiling and floor. Runs into limits. No popping up—out into cold night, cold street. It's turning room temperature, going to turn slow, into O.

Pump Lung

This lean-to, in the center of Occupation—an eyeball
spinning after seeing black and red echoes
syndicated from the lips of 99%. An eye
popping after bearing witness. Dislocated
joints bearing the scent of pungent musk. Fear
smells. Circle As made rings
around Molly's senses. Gas clouds, the skipping
records. Screaming Queens, NJ4, riot
cops en route.

It's Molly—she's not breathing.
How long—it's shock? The medics kneel over her.
She's asthmatic, on her back, under a pop-up tent, Medic's
hands monitor her for cardiac arrest. Vital signs had erupted. The bulhorns declared: riot
cops will storm the plaza.

Things doubled? Yeah, shock then edema, they call Pump
Lung, you've seen it? Used to work in ER. Their eyes met, their hands placed relief
bottles on Molly. *She's not gonna?*
We're here to suspend— Well Pump
Lung is a stroke—Takes people in min—

The medic's bodies tensed in this Occupation. A dandelion
flower swept across the back of one
then bounced up into the air.
it floated up a cloud,
the smallest pocket of rising.

Bell Miners

Their leather hands open the locks and bars,
the clasps of each stone house. The laborers are in front of steel doors that rise
to the roof. Openings holler. Trains
halting. Monkey's screech. The backs, earth,
bellowing 'still ore!' after smelting
me. Walking iron doors out, "cleared" is yelled. The hands of men paid
under the table. Fingertips lift metal
dowels out of hinge holes. Pings
scatter the surrounding air, Bell
Miners tinging out, stripped of
castings. Unlocking chains echo a
clanging around the brick buildings. The roars
bend around the backs, circle
the faces of this museum, unbolted
so the inner carvings are passable. They flip
the awnings up. Eyelashes snapped
ajar, for gaping. Lips unbarred, they amplify metallic
cheers. They roll doors agape, weather strips skidding
across concrete floors, the help a thousand Bell Miners.

Serves Us

Service reflect
shun the silent
spaces depicted liminal
houses of offerings,
serve to show mouths,
speaking of hands, place
client tells on pedestals, while workers called to
service one's neighbor, soft
serve a woman manning self
service another our pleasure to
serve and protect, our service
industry, portions of work serve to show
papers, positioning each body
language hollering self-honor or petite
size up a gesture all a personable
touch a fellow face, equally
holding their tongues with service
fees, those lonely words voiced.

Hi-Glo Neon

It read: Hi-Glo Neon unlit, a washed out
alley sign—70's artifice. Workers
underneath still want codes, Joe Hill ballads or a Caesar
Chavez march. Let rays
spring through tubes, conduits singing of their cold
bodies, now that neon is passé. Gray lines under ads
hunger, to hold fire. The still beams intend to.
Intend to light houses, these beacons
broadcast *Comite de Justicia Laboral*, or *SWOP*, the informal
trade advocates. Whispering, all ways
words wind up as light—
Hi-Glo manifestos glare
back at policing tasers, demanding rays.

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Curriculum Vita

Blake Nemec was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota and raised in Menomonie, Wisconsin. He has since lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Oakland, San Francisco and El Paso, Texas. He received his Bachelor's Degree in English Literature at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee in 1998. He has been dedicated to medicine and art throughout his adult life and worked as a Community Health Care Worker in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1999-2010.

His work has been anthologized in non-fiction and fiction collections and magazines since 2004, with recent publications in the anthology *Captive Genders; Transembodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* and UTEP's *Rio Grande Review* literary magazine. His writing and research spans LGBT studies, public health, somatic health, socio-political intersections of informal trade sectors, as well as Spanish and English literatures.