

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: OTHER IDEAS

Hannah Marie Baker, Master of Fine Arts, 2006

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Other Ideas is a poetry collection arranged into three sections determined by subject matter. The first section focuses on navigation, the cold, boredom, gravity, and motion within the discourse of natural science and the philosophy of nature. The second and third sections further this concern with the sources of information, history, and experimentation as the sources of identity, survival, sanity, and memory; section two analyzes the art object ranging from Henry Moore sculptures to ale bowls, spoons, pebbles, the floor, and knucklebones; section three focuses on the book object with its varied interpretations by Freudians, Deconstructionists, and Feminists as well as readers and writers who view the book as a vessel.

OTHER IDEAS

By Hannah Marie Baker

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I

From Wilkes Land

Named that after tries like Termination Land, Termination Ice Tongue, Shakleton Ice Shelf, and Wall of Ice—it's after Wilkes dies. You'd expect an apostrophe, and it's not like you don't have them. Earlier everyone adds *his* to his name, the possessive; when Purchase, a man who sounds like a verb, doesn't write Purchase His Pilgrims, but apostrophe-s on his sign, it's real. You've got nothing like that to work with, only a good short-term memory: a language that makes you better at learning it. Don't stop counting in it under your breath just because a man listening quietly walking in back of you crosses ahead. Don't think if there's nothing you're good at, you're *rehelping*. You know who's not helping the situation in hearing after hearing, but you like to see a man like that: Mr. Upshur, Secretary of the US Navy with his *bare-faced denials of the discovery*. He's right if you can remember. And didn't the second map of this coast make less sense? But Wilkes is serious. Only he's not if he can redo an entry: *Antarctica is a continent* when the French log January 19th. *One man's word . . .* It was more than that. Everyone saw the colors the seaman raises, two vessels nearing. —But there's a desert mirage: out of warm air in this cold, light makes something far come closer, which is why they call it looming; then the ship's nowhere near. If Wilkes's *a cork that cannot be sunk*, would you write your father again? You remember thinking the word for *ship* was *three* when your father said, *Look, three*. No one knew you thought this, late to talk, five. *Indet*, for unknown, is a species and a sign of work; Peale is the new scientific gentleman: zoologist, plantsman, doctor, draftsman, herbarium curator, ichthyologist, herpetologist, entomologist, gardener, and botanist. You'll put in: a commonplace book on ginger. A woman says that foreigners use the same adjectives; you're adding to a small book you call *Adjectives for everyone*. You keep a specimen inside *Paradise Lost*: finding it again's easy. See the writing's in two ways, with four pages to an open page. See the word *Notes*, one's upside down. An upside-down word's not mirror image. It's not backwards either. What is it? You don't want to turn a specimen over—envelopes are for particles and seeds you lose. This plant isn't mounted to a large sheet; but if it was, you'd want to keep it in a natural position. In your drawing, Sydney, also where she's from, is lying on an ice island for sun and air.

Navigation without Instruments

The false one, not the Southern cross, has a middle.
You know where the Equator is, North is easy
so is studying in case you need it, although the hope
is if you're lost you're not. You'd make decisions
without thinking, better that way. What if you're left,
promise not to sing or say anything, conserve energy, save your life at least.
Who else will? This is the age you die any age.
There're only four stars to the true cross, which gives you your latitude.
Hold the book over your head,
look up at the drawing, the Belt of Orion,
imagine yourself to the north, south, east, west of the seven stars,
really three, the only ones that show up, the close-together
ones. What would it look like? It doesn't take a genius
if you already are, know Sunbawa and Sumba,
Solomon Islands, Santa Cruz Islands, Society Islands, a bunch
you forget but the other map's the dark, how you find the South Pole;
make a line from the axis of the cross to the water
and another line, straight across two stars, bright, east,
then bisect the line at a right angle, make the line longer until
you hit the first line, the one down the cross axis: this is the point
directly above the South Pole. It doesn't look like anything you know.
You don't know you'll do better in a warm climate. It might as well be
the age before bubble octants. But if this was the North Pole,
Polaris would be here, not nothing,
what they call the Coal Sack, though it does the job,
roughly. Everyone can do a job roughly. Not everyone.
Part of you says *Be quiet, no one move while I think*: draw a line
from the point you found, draw to the horizon—look
at the angle against the edge; the degree's your latitude.
One degree in latitude is sixty miles, why you won't
make a mistake. You'd spread your parachute, make your life boat
sail, end up in the woods. Then what? Monkeys make good meat,
hard to catch. This is where you remember making traps as a boy: you'd dig
a pit, throw twigs and leaves over top, now the sharpened bamboo. Now
there's meat to save; you'd cut long strips, one-inch wide,
a half-inch thick, soak them in brine for two hours, hang them on a branch
near the fire. If there isn't meat, you still have rotting wood with larvae the size of
your finger. You'd live forever. The path's clear: wild pigs in droves.

for K.J. Baker

**Not Going on the *Racehorse* & the *Carcass*, the *Discovery II*, the *Providence*
the *Investigator*, the *Lion* & the *Hindustan*, or the *Hecla* & the *Griper*, 1773-
1817**

*Joseph Banks Sends an Order out with the Captain of the Racehorse & the
Carcass for the expedition to Spitzbergen, East Greenland, April 1773*

If you forget what you normally do first, then what? If this happens don't worry about anything if you can just try going from the Northern Pole to the other side. Or if it's too hard just see if it could possibly work. That's the main thing here. There's a lot in the way. I understand. Look carefully at the trees floating in the sea. Take samples of what you can & bag the pieces of bark. I want you to tell me if there's any bark left on the trees past Spitzbergen. Where are there the most trees? Find these parts of the sea & find out is it the force of winds. Check if the trees are unrooted or are they cut down cold. I need to know who is there & what they have done, if anything, to the trees. I need to know where exactly the trees are hitting into things in the water. My door has letters through it from all over. If it's possible bring a young white bear. I've cleared the spot. Bring the fetus of a whale. There is a cask for it of malt spirits. You won't be long. Soon it will be over. I remember the female wallaroo in my dog's teeth a few years ago when I was with Cook. I have greyhounds if you remember. The wallaroo was eight pounds. I can't write the narrative but here is the skull. I am thirty. *Salt provisions & Sea air have been to me like too much hardmeat to a horse.* See what's heavier in air & water: the musket balls or the brass weights. There's a bottle of water that you weigh each in. Leave them in the water & cork the thing. Show me. Do this for me, please: everything. *I have meant well & so many of my Macaroni friends are convinced.* I want the seal that has long, shaggy dog's hair. And another thing: dry each plant between two quires of paper. Every day for three days change the quires. Some plants will need more time. Save everything. A boy who sits on the deck with the used quires can make sure the wind gets both sides of the quires dry. There is the Galley Fire he can sit at with the paper if it's wet out. Bring a puffin & a murr.

*Banks Writes the Surgeon & Naturalist for the Discovery II a Guide for Friendly
Cove, Nootka Sound on the West Coast of North America, February 1791*

If it's in your power bring the skin of a wild sheep. I want to know everything you find about the sea otter's natural history. What is it doing? What is it doing there? Skin one of everything. Dig up the plants that are the best. Keep the specimens in the glazed cabin, the Glass Frame, on the deck alive. Save the cuttings, slips, & any part of them. Tell the Commanding Officer how much water you need weekly or monthly. *I am not a good woman's correspondent...* Watch when one of the natives dies what takes place. Make a note about the cause of death. There is natural death and there is unnatural death. I don't know where suicide fits in, but with cannibalism it's clear. I don't know where warfare fits in. You can figure it out. Love is a whole other thing I don't want to get into right now. Take notes on

how everyone is treated in general. Observe who sits down last. See if anyone is talking to himself. Reflect on this but only if you see it on a regular basis. Is there singing quietly? There must be a way to get someone back. It wouldn't matter how. It doesn't matter if they look different or you do. See what happens to someone slowly dying & who is the one who cares. Am I dying? Keep a journal on this. Your journal in the end goes to the Secretary of State for the Home Department. See if it helps to do the most important stuff for a half-hour every morning before you eat. You can think a lot more when you're hungry.

Banks Has the Gardener for the Providence Bring the West Indies Breadfruit trees from Matavai Bay, Tahiti, June 1791

When you reach Tahiti, Captain Bligh will get out and take the small breadfruit trees that will furnish the West Indies. There are pots, tubs, & cases on the ship. Water & shade the breadfruit. Tell the Captain exactly when they take firm root. He won't interrupt anything you do. Is it like making a Cat of nine tails in front of everyone? People are only interested at first. Take charge too of the sweet plantain & the large yam. The worst that can happen is all the plants you bring are wet with seawater & salty dew. The wind is high and it makes the waves have what seamen call white caps because of the salt. The white caps that rise over into the ship will crystallize on the plants. The plants dry out unless you can speedily wash them off & afterwards rub them with a linen rag or fine-picked oakham. Rain water tastes like tar but it is better for the plants. Don't let monkeys & goats on because they'll wipe out the garden in half an hour. What a waste. The ship's natural enemies are rats, mice, & cockroaches. Watch out. Constantly look to see if the bark & young buds get gnawed. All you do to keep the mice & cockroaches off is make a powder to kill them. Take white hellebore root & mix it with bread dust with a little sugar. This powder you put on the deck kills millions. Whenever the ship stops take this opportunity to sluice the plants so there is never salt on the leaves a long time. It doesn't matter if this takes half a boat load of water.

Banks Sends Orders & an Encyclopedia called The Illustrated Compendium of Heaven, Earth, & Man to the Embassy's Ambassador Going to China on the Lion & the Hindostan, January 1792

The encyclopedia is a Ming one in the universal language & there are hundreds of volumes. It has exact explanations with figures of the mechanical & handicraft tools used in China. I am sending you 70 volumes. Do you want the rest? I think this is enough. Take as long as you want with anything. You know Herman's work. I was telling you about the short account of the Chinese Empire. That was a while ago. It's not like the Empire can be in ruins when there are these histories. The Empire kept at a higher pitch than the rest of the world I am sure. I'm lost. We're lost. I wish there was a way I could go with you. You have to tell me how many wrecks there are. In your journal make a category called "wrecks" and remember that spiritual ruins would go in that list, also. Art is a wreck. You and me are wrecks. The ship is a wreck. I want to know about the great inventions

said not to have arrived because they were stolen from the Chinese or reinvented. Write about the top four inventions: gunpowder, paper making, printing, & Arabic notations of figures. The porcelain is what we really need.

Banks Writes the Investigator's Scientific Assistants Going to New Holland, the East Coast of Australia, April 1801

All of it will take three years from when you come in. There is everything to be arranged. I update the bibliography but not on purpose. It's in front of me like nothing else. *The pleasure of adding a new plant to it when the collection is nearly complete is all but indescribable.* I have to work. I want time to look at the drawings. I want the write-up from you. Cook's is what I am looking for in a narrative. Cook was waiting for the transit of Venus before he secretly made a passage to New Zealand. Hawaii Islanders killed him. Australia became a convict colony later. I shouldn't have to say what I like about Cook's. I like everything. Well, what do you want in a narrative? You get the idea. Engravers & draftsmen have a lot to go by. Fill three boxes with minerals, a case with insects, & two thousand quires with drawings of plants. Send seeds. I want letters. I will grow whatever you send. Hundreds of them. The sketches, charts, & journals are the work you can count on—no matter what kind of weather someone can take notes. I want a number of animal skins, also. Flinders is the writer. Westall is the landscape & figure draftsman, Bauer the botanic draftsman—Bauer's brother is busy with microscopic drawings of wheat with blight, mildew, & rust—Good the gardener, Allen the miner, & Brown the Naturalist. You have to all sign your names. Bring me the memo & sign it in front of me. I don't want a mess between the Commissioners & all of you. You are paid for the whole of your time. Who can say how long you will stay or what you will like the most? You have to have a sense of what your connection to New Holland is. You have to have an internal standard for the work you do. I don't know how long the work takes. Part of me wants to be with you and part of me wants to see what you will come up with. Expect that all journals, remarks, memos, drawings, arms, ornaments, habits, & utensils belong with the specimens you bring. The narrative goes out into the world.

Banks Gets the Admiral to Back Another Expedition to Greenland where the Captain of the Hecla & the Griper Names an Island after Banks Who's Dead by Then, November 1817

The Arctic Ocean is completely new. All the ice that covered Greenland before is done. There were 2000 square leagues of ice. A whaler from Whitby says there is none & he saw & would have reached the land but for whatever reason didn't. You'll agree someone goes now, this year. Think of who we should send. They have to want to go. They should have a sense of humor. The ship that got close is a collier vessel called the *Earl of Pembroke*. Send two ships then. Is it this easy? It is easier than resting. My arm hurts. Do it for me. *I did not expect to become a victim of anger originating in a want of information that might have been easily*

procured. The ice that used to surround the northern coast of Iceland & stay unthawed until summer turned into a flood like the snow off mountains into a river. The Arctic seas are never this open. Does Baffin Bay exist? Try going all the way. See where the northern coast of North America takes you. I know you are tired of this order. I just want to know if you can go from one coast to the other. It's important to me for absolutely no reason I can think of now. Tell me I am not the only one who wants to know. I need someone to go from Davis's Straits, & from there in a north-westerly, & possibly afterwards in a westerly direction. Someone else takes the coast of East Greenland & goes Northward, & if practical, afterwards Westward. The late Captain Phipps who had the *Racehorse* & the *Carcass* was blocked by the ice in the sea just north of Spitzbergen. There is still so much I sent them for. Nelson was midshipman. It's that we need to get more out of ourselves. No one has been to the west of the meridian of Greenwich in these latitudes.

From the Private Journals of William Reynolds, Passed Midshipman & Keeper of the Official Log for the U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842

The American Sloop of War, the Vincennes, in the South Atlantic is Nearing Madeira, September 1838

The brigs & schooners don't keep up with the *Vincennes* under short sail for the morning. We are a day from Madeira. I can see. We are close or close enough. I'm on forenoon watch. It is boring. I can get into *boring*. You should see me. I keep the log for crying out loud. Now everyone is swearing for joy. I think joy. It could be worse. You swear when your friend dies & it's the same when he saves himself—I don't know which shock is which. A surprise is different from a shock. Seaman Porter is flying down from the topgallant sail by the small rope around his neck. There's a mess of waves. Porter's feet are hanging heavily. He comes towards different ones of us, but still yards above us. The rope is one of the smaller ropes. Whoever saw him first is losing it. I'm getting used to Porter coming closer & closer to banging into something. No, I'm not. I swear I'll crawl inside a hole inside the hollowed world. Western Newton's theory is what I came for, and not to say the same thing twice by studying my notes. The northern & southern poles have the best drops. The holes in the poles theory could work if you wanted a place in a desert. You could have the space to work, really spread things out, few voices, but what would it do for you? I am standing all the time, and when I sleep, too. The brandy helps with some things. We are the magpies on the watch & the ship is the gallows. I don't know how many minutes it's been, seconds. What have I been thinking about, girls' names for my musket? I don't know any. The generic name for a gun is Betsy. No one's name is Betsy anymore. I'm not in the mood for a Betsy, and neither is my generation. Not with the four-year commitment, the seven-knot speed, the hoped-for twenty thousand specimens, and the volumes from our narratives, notes, logs, charts, sketches. Everyone on the deck fits, watches the doctor fly up. Earlier, Porter went up at noon to spread more canvass, chase a brig down. Whose brig? Porter lost control: the small rope fell over his neck & then he fell. For a while it seemed like no one would help. No one said anything about a plan. Everyone has an idea but not everyone says it or can say.—But I don't have any ideas that work. We haul down the rope, yank it, Porter hangs now & dies. Do you want to touch him? He will hit something hard enough to die. But he's bruised only. The doctor calls down to the deck. The rope stopped his breath but was mostly run around his jaw to the back of his head. He didn't breathe for a while, but was fine. Now his neck itches.

The English Brig, the Superior, is Seen Drifting into the Breakers near Valparaiso in the South Pacific, May 1839

The colors are English. The original Captain of the *Superior* fell overboard, the Mate tells me. The then 1st Mate becomes Captain, and the 2nd officer, the Mate. The new Captain's sleeping. One way to move up the ranks. You can't help it.

The new Mate is a few years younger than me. You can't help that either. I toss chips of wood in the water. The chips float beside us, & then as our other shore boats arrive, the chips fly behind us, astern as we go forward. The three boats together by pulling up pop the *Superior* out of the breakers. The Captain wakes, and, eventually, after looking over the charts, says, *I give up the Brig* . . . I furl the sails, stand on the night heads. More of my men come on board, do what I say. Others avoid me. Now what? I remember my last time in the rain: Bastille Day, when I washed my feet a second time & used up my friend's soap. We ate paté, bread, golden raisins, melons wrapped in some kind of meat, lemonade, & white wine. I wore my friend's clothes, black shirt and pants with a white stripe down the side, grey long socks, while my clothing was being dried since we were in the downpour, which you can't cut across like a normal field, but the rain will skip where your money is kept one time and you wonder how did that happen, one back pocket only. Earlier, my friend lifts the Devil's coconuts in the basement where I worked, a few conservators lingering. What I walk up to, touch lightly, when I'm bored, thirty-pounds maybe, but they look like two. A section of Redwood in the other hall. Right then though, I eat on the bed, & drink from two glasses. (Because there's wine in the house doesn't mean *alcoholic*. Not when there is no therapist.) I walk on the bed to the wall and see the red church outside. The heavy rain isn't here anymore, but came from a hurricane that moved. In the kitchen my friend smokes into the open window so it doesn't come inside, the smell, & I sit on top of the counter behind him, but he turns to talk and to listen. Especially about the man who shoveled the dirt on a grave & the face he made, the steps he took to the side, how he folds his arms, how the dog died afterwards & there was no warm body for the mother. I anchor the *Superior*, pull up: where the bull comes through. He runs men into the water. I watch from the deck. The bull turns to run up the shore. The bull has ropes tied to its horns, so one man waits behind a post on shore & when the bull shoots by, flicks the animal on its side by jerking the ropes.

The American Schooner, the Flying Fish, Makes it to Oahu, Hawaii, September 1840

But as long as the molasses lasts, we have a roach problem. Everyone is on it. I help everyday when I'm in the mood. I don't always feel like it, but a day is long enough to feel like doing anything once & quickly. I have a headache. I'm thirsty. We heave clusters of roaches overboard. They go across our food like this. You don't want to get carried away. You don't want to overrate the plague. I think the key here is peace & quiet, which is a lot easier to deal with than plagues. I wouldn't want to die of so many causes like starvation & an accident & loneliness & wounds & friendly fire & a navigational error & weather & melancholy. One reason if it's good is all. We kill so many roaches, but we can't get at their food supply because it's our own. The numbers are enormous, but I'm not even that interested. They're a constant presence. Not that I can't remember my own home. I want more letters so I can remember who I am there & then get over it—not the bad parts, the good parts. We have to wait a second until we pull up. Everyone

talks about themselves like a ship. I want off. *The Ex. Ex.*, the Exploring Expedition, takes up your free time. My father writes, *Well, how are you otherwise?* How can there be an otherwise? Someone told me about the value of self-talk. Tell me why we charted Antarctica twice. Pick one: *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern* or *Guildenstern & Rosencrantz*? The Queen reverses the King's order—but it's not the King, Hamlet's father, it's the new one.

The Carpenter is Setting up the Gallows for Two Convicts in Oahu, Hawaii, October 1840

The Chief's wife is poisoned. The murderers are marched & counter-marched on the ramparts. The guard ties the ropes around the necks of the two men. The prayer is made. There is a trial before, & the man who's skilled in the art of poisoning—a man of the common order—and the Chief, were tried & convicted for the murder of the Chief's wife. In his defense, the Chief says that he couldn't bear it anymore. His wife is so irritating & there are so few options. The Governor & Clergyman have a few words to say. The men hang as soon as the drop's sprung. It's something out of *Oliver Twist*: the two men are *soon changed into dangling heaps of clothes*. The crowd is right under the scaffold. I can see the hanging from the topmast cross trees. I have a glass out. It makes the scene closer yet removed. The crowd runs & is running like someone's pursuing their lives. The wind blows & spins the dead men for two & a half, three hours. I watch the quick burial. Captain Wilkes will kill you: if you steal liquor he doesn't tell the guard stop with the lashing.

The Deserter from the American Schooner, the Peacock, Sleeps in a Tent in Vancouver, June 1841

The superintendent of Hudson's in the Northwest, Dr. McLoughlin, and I take the *Vincennes* to Reverend Frost's & his wife. Yesterday Wilkes has Knox *up the anchor* & get a head start. We fly so fast that it gets colder. It is already much colder on the craft than the shore. The weather isn't different here . . . we're more aware of it. Wilkes says don't I have a pea jacket. Do you think if I had a coat . . . The water is high or that is just more fog. *The sky is a general pea jacket*. It's raining. It's raining another day. I remember when my frock was thrown in the lucky bag sale. The fog is shutting everything down like night. Wilkes says we should head back now. Coming back is easier. We sleep in a tent this time. A fire is going in the morning. The Scientifics say sitting around the fire calmed the cavemen & talked them into sitting beside neighbors instead of only family. The fire kept predators away, & no one was afraid of death. Then their brains grew more over time. You could stay next to someone else longer than you used to. The person didn't have to be your brother or your mother's uncle.—But you felt as safe. I take my time sailing today. No Wilkes. There's no fog, & we are moving fast enough. I think everyone's face is thinner. You start to notice a person's long chin & hands more. I am happy to sit across from Mrs. Frost, the Reverend's wife, & her friend Mrs. Kone, who is also young & beautiful. The Doctor is

interested in talking to the missionaries. At the time I didn't know where the Reverend was. It was a non-issue. The Columbia River is impossible in the fog, but we're here & on time. The Doctor is asking Mrs. Frost a lot of questions. Mrs. Frost admits to keeping another Marine here. You wish you had your dogs.

The Flying Fish, is Anchored, the Last Vessel to Make it to the Navy Yard, New York, July 1842

I am thin as a shadow & as ugly. My older brother Sam doesn't recognize me. He comes on board as soon as we are anchored, & I don't know who he is until he says, *Which of you is it?* The three men on trial for mutiny will be hanged on a brig here called the *Somers*. They do the hangings on the vessel out in the water a ways from the shore. People can still see the bodies. I'm not interested. The happiest moment I had was in New York, a few weeks ago when we stopped at Longwood where Napoleon died. We saw the exact place. *Just where that black horse stands, just there Napoleon died.* I met two women who lived in the area. One of them says she sat in Napoleon's lap during the exile period. Her name is Miss Legge & her friend is Miss Ellinor Anne Carroll. When their skirts were soaked in the wet grass, they had to leave for a minute. I couldn't bear the wait. The women came back in time when my vessel was underweigh at 10 in the morning. Neither of them has ever seen a railroad, a steamer, plains, cities, or anything off their island. This is how a ship can feel sometimes: an island. It rained the whole time I was there, only two days that felt longer. Porter wasn't with us then. He died of a fever two weeks ago. He was so close to coming home with the rest of us. It makes you sorry to be left. Once we pull in we stay at the American Hotel for one night first. Everyone else who isn't married is talking about a girl from their home town. I feel older than this. I'm probably not really. I sound younger than the crew. I'm afraid no one will know who I am. If Napoleon's body stayed here, we'd be famous.

Individual Weapons

You sleep with your musketoon,
musket, cutlass, and pistol, don't die
in your sleep but while recovering a ship at Karaktoa.
Not Captain Cook yet, but a servant; not working straight through the winter
on *Freelove*, the Whitby collier, at sea,
rather breathers at Walker's, the Grape Lane
shipyard, the house with apprentices sleeping
in the attic: Mess Boy, Hammock Boy, Dictionary
Person. Modelled later, put beside a one-pound coin for scale,
the armourer with his mate is tool-making.
Everyone calls the small ships that carry coal *cats*. You don't
see why not. If no one sees, next time would you cut the hair from the almost
hairless elephants, who themselves make tools out of tools,
and would you make those bracelets? Maybe the next instance
you'd place where you know her from: the blonde-haired woman in
her long black dress sleeping with one knee up, her eyes open,
on the back of an elephant who's crouched down. The woman's fur
coat is wrapped once around her arm and falling down the elephant's side.
You imagine knocking the enormous silver-gilted pineapple off the overmantle
in the Blue Room, and there are other places to hide: Voyages Room, Scientist's
Room, Print Room, Green Room, London Room. You've already been the child
asked by the older man to sit in the chair in the middle of the room. Now
you could be the face on the *Resolution and Adventure* medal unless
you don't want to. When does everyone know you're the Ocean
Investigator? It's not like knowing you're an inventor: Robert Henderson
and his long-case clock, that painted pine case,
twenty-four hour timepiece on the wall next to the looking glass
and two brass candlesticks. Another Henderson,
a sailor who finally gets permission for the telescope, says his
one eye's better than any other two; on Lucky Bag Day
you hear bidders win his spyglasses, cloak, hand-spikes,
cleavers after the Minnie Ball whizzes through his heart.

Illustrated Geological Walks

The real butterfly stills
on the barbed wire,
wire with mini butterfly shapes;

the red purse
saves your daughter,
maybe saves her

post-electroshock-coma body,
the trick purse with its knife
outline on the side;

the dead whale
splays
the activist's

language
on the Japanese
Embassy

steps in Berlin:
*Stop the senseless
whaling!*

*Science
doesn't need
harpoons!*

Before, in Florence, a stranger points
or waves to the level of steps
near the bottom:

the bird ticking between two
of the Baptistery steps.
Not the only motive

to move,
pain.
You'd run much faster, farther,

from art,
beauty another kind of pain,
why Edith Wharton says we run

from the opera faster
 than we flock there
 in carriages,

New Yorkers fleeing,
 especially
 those who arrive late

to begin with,
 Archer with a name like Archer.
 You say some people are great

with names,
 great memories.
 You say if you were blind,

you'd pick out which kid
 coming down the stairs
 it was.

Are you always
 the kind of walker
 to say, *Turn left*

at the dead bird?
 You take geological
 walks, lots

of them,
 and illustrated,
 Lake District Green Slate,

Kentish Rag,
 Swedish Green Marble,
 Terracotta,

Old Gold Granite,
 Texas Pink Granite;
 and exact the next

person's
 memory of the city
 with the word Wolver in it,

city with the next name
 wrapped in barley balls

in the golden urn.

Newton: *Questions from the Optics*, 1671

UNTIL the earth be dissolved by the water—I know no body less apt to shine than water—and separated into smaller particles;

IT SEEMS TO BE all bodies are either hard or may be hardened—even the rays of light seem to be hard bodies—for otherwise fluids would not congeal, as water, oils, vinegar, and spirit

of vitriol do by freezing, mercury by fumes of lead, spirit of niter and mercury by evaporating the flegm, and spirit of urine and spirit of salt by subliming them to make sal armoniac;

IT SEEMS TO BE this crystal polishes better upon pitch or leather or parchment and must be rubbed with a little oil or white of an egg, to fill up its scratches,

whereby it will become very transparent and polite—but for several experiments, it is not necessary to polish it;

IT SEEMS TO BE of no use, and the heavens are much emptier of air than any vacuum we can make below;

IT SEEMS TO BE salts are of a lasting nature, being scarce destroyed, for in the universe, there are many mansions;

IT SEEMS TO BE, but these things cannot be explained in few words, flies walk upon the water without wetting their feet.

Newton: *Axioms, or Laws of Motion, 1686*

If a body impinges upon
another, if you press
a stone with your finger, the finger's also
pressed by the stone unless
the bodies are hindered by any other
impediments; if a horse draws
a stone tied to a rope, the horse
will be drawn (this law

takes place also in attractions, as
proved in the next scholium)
drawn back toward the stone; if a body
walks east in the ship, partly from
the motion of the ship to the west,
under full sails, with a fresh gale,
and partly from the earth's true
motion, the velocity of the sailor

in immovable space, toward the east,
is one out of 10, 010 parts
and relatively on the earth toward
the west, nine of those parts;
projectiles continue in a right line,
or else retarded by the air
or impelled downward by the force
of gravity; preserving their

motions both progressive and circular,
comets continue for a longer
time, with less resistance, being
greater bodies in freer
spaces; a double force generates
double the motion; a body
in absolute motion translates
from one relative place into another.

Newton: *Method of Natural Philosophy*, 1686

That we find impenetrable,
not from reason but sensation,
those bodies which we have handled,
and all bodies by extension.

Our sea gravitates toward the moon;
the moon gravitates toward the earth;
bodies about the earth toward it—
I mean nothing but inertia.

As to respiration in a beast,
respiration in a man;
reflection of light in the earth,
reflection of light in the planets.

A hard and solid body breaks;
the undivided parts suffer;
that all bodies are movable;
that division is re-occurring.

II

To Nicholas Hawksmoor

Nicholas, what a past you are, a crypt doorway,
at St Alfege, the sex in St Anne's bell
tower, shoes this girl buys in Stepney
to say she's tough,

the East End where St George is, who is three
Georges, one insane who was saying What?What?What?
real fast, shaking hands with a bush he thought has been one
of the ambassadors.

The devil is important, also. Tell me how we're him,
when it's a surgeon and architect, Sir Christopher Wren's idea, the fire
so he can get commissioned to build new sights, nothing like
those pigeons burning

over our heads, still going for a V like they do until both
wings burnt off and the bird, it has no choice, Nicholas.
Wren put you where you are, making up churches for Anne
like out of nowhere,

so why should you feel unorthodox? A pyramid with glass
unicorns and lions, King George, pineapples, gigantic keystones,
is in your head, fine, draw them as steeples.
Not like our fathers cared

because everything is on its Philosophers' Stone, Mercury of Seven
Eagles, or Green Lion, half on methane waiting as luna, balsam
of sulfur, cinnabar, markasites to go into a gold—all being
the same, you know this.

Chekhov's Geese

Man pulling his sunglasses out of his shirt collar quickly, holding them
in his right hand, hugging a woman who works with applied art
intended for the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris but not finished in time.
That one casket has dragon heads, none of it's used, not the ship
in dragon-style metal, but it goes with everything: the coffeepot, two spoons,
necklaces, bracelets, vase, box, saltcellar, desk set, brooch,
arm chair, shelf, bookbinding, dish, covered jar, ale bowl.
It's so you can be connected to the house.
You haven't been in your apartment for months.
You were traveling, are reading, some of what you saw, say where
this is from, the gallery that begins with a B, who says a woman
couldn't have painted this, only this; but here is Artemisia.
Whose book has the mother in it contemplating her gun?
You have everything, will sell or give away what won't fit in the car.
When someone asks what you are doing, say *this* again.
Do not say *People should stick to their strengths* again.
Where do you want to go? You remember the saltcellar is the same form
as the casket, or there is nothing to think of but your worries,
the shape, a variation on Vikings, Norsemen, but also Christianity,
zoomorphism,
the narrowest parts, cliffs on two sides, the fjords,
see the painting *Deep in the Fjords*; now think of the mother
of the monster Grendel, whether a name is awful enough or not,
who fought Beowulf for hand-payment in the mire,
the depth it takes the day to reach or the ninth-century Oseberg
burial ship or ruins at Sutton Hoo, pictures of ruins.
All this up against eighteenth-century trade, silver as money, silver-gilt
tankards, drinking horns, ale bowls shaped like geese and chickens.
Chekhov calls migrating geese the lucky ones.
You said you heard lovely ones, wrote it on the program in the dark.
You would like one of these at home, mangle boards,
not mangled the text but the machine, heated rollers, the cloth being pressed,
your clothes that are hanging on the shower rod, linen drying wrinkled.
Some boards have chip-carving designs, Karveskurd.
There are leaves, vines, also on everything, or in low-relief,
Flastkurd, on columns, molding, pilaster, posts of a Telemark storehouse.
Before Paris is Chicago, the world there selling, nothing but good things to say
about it,
except pieces that weren't done, all worth having.
Before the azaleas look like that, you have mile-a-minute—
it's the triangle-shaped—everywhere. You can be walking past the same trees
all summer, someone says *Linden*, pulls it close, do you take your leaf?
Something about you is different, how you're saying you'll get more
but it was two, three hours ago you had the iced tea.

Pictures from a Bruegel

after W.C. Williams

Children's Games

The girl rolling a hoop using a stick and her knee
doesn't notice someone in her path:
the boy inflating a bladder after
pitching two at his friend who made water wings
and is swimming out.
The boy looking back is setting up for the others—
the ones wearing hats: red, brown, blue,
who look serious but calm
in a huddle. Some pieces are on their sides.
The boy picks them up.
The knucklebones go like this
against a stone building. In the street
further down are a strand of figures,
and others coming from their doors,
around the festive St. John's fire.
When you are older you have watched a fire
straight through for five hours once,
and opened the glass to add wood
twice: Does the air leave it here for now?
The morning is partly dark like five in the winter.

The Woman Steps

out of her house to pour all the urine onto the road
while the boy nearby walks on top of the cellar door,
up it like a ramp, his arms reaching
toward the wall he is closer
to, rising. Everything is to his back.
He likes what he's doing.
What time is it yet?
Those who are overdoing things
are happy anyway. Of the two stilt-walkers
one is into everyone's room, the other is still
thinking, and even with this girl looking up,
hasn't gone ahead.

Another Boy is Tying

himself in a knot.
He rests his face on the
one knee, and grabs his ankles
where his legs cross. He is sitting like this
in the grass with his eyes closed.

The boy in a headstand must be counting,
and everyone is counting something
like them over there playing “How many horns
does the goat have?” and the one who will go
somersault more times.
Who could hear their name when you’re so close
in, and someone far away shouts?
Up high out a window someone waves a ribbon.
At the same level across the street a child looks
down and holds a porcelain mask to the yard.

Boy with His Hand behind His Back

She touches his left shoulder.
He says nothing but brings
his left hand to the front.
Is this where?
He looks at the girl but she is trying to see in.
They call it “odds and evens” and
“guess which hand.”
The game is better outside.
It looks warmer out than it is.
Children are watched like the magpie on the gallows is
watched: they will get off later.
No one can say when.
The boy’s coin is foreign.
It’s here or you would show me.

He Still Has the Other Hand

closed behind his back.
She has come into the road with him holding onto his hand.
Oldest sons are like this.
They will say it doesn’t count.
Who else knows?
They have lived in Antwerp forever.
The boy’s friends are playing tug-of-war with a knotted belt,
and you have to be on someone’s back
and get the belt to yourself.
The closer in the one boy has it, the more
the other one slides off.
The girl and the boy with her are in long-sleeves
and aprons. No one has to go home.
Will you do the same thing again?

Boy on a Hobbyhorse

The girl with her eyes closed is an inch away.
She plays the pipe and tabor at the same time,
a small drum for rhythm.
There's the boy who whips himself on the leg
as he takes off on the hobbyhorse,
coming closer.
There's the girl who is stirring dung with a stick
staring down like the boy.
How do you know when stirring is over with?
The pipe player is in the middle of the girl with a stick
in the dung cake
and the boy whipping himself.
The boy isn't hurting himself.
It's time to get going.
The other boy with a whip is dressed like a monk,
wearing a cowl,
and is spinning a top
on the portico under the Gothic arch.
The girl nearby with her head between her knees
sits by the wall and urinates.
Someone says the building is the old
Antwerp town hall.
It's across from the house.
The boy on the horse is near his house.
No one is watching over him right now.

The Older Girls Are Starting

knucklebones and saying who will "throw Venus"
the first this time
with all the bones on different sides.
They are sitting in the doorway.
One knucklebone is in midair.
They watch how it will fall.
The pipe next to the boy is normal
and could be coming from anywhere.
There is also music you think of.
Everyone has that.
—Or they'd be bored to death.
There's more to pay attention to
than there is to see.
You aren't worried ever, only afraid or not.

Girl Calling into a Barrel

Two boys are riding a tipped barrel.
They are on either end.
There's a bunghole in the barrel's middle part,
and the boys hold onto the edges
of the opening.
Both their hands fit.
One boy's hair is sticking up.
The other boy in the coat is about to fall.
He pushes off the ground again
with his left foot.
Nearby a barrel is standing up.
The girl gets down near the bunghole
and calls into the barrel
with her hand near her mouth.
The boy with a hoop goes by with something
in his mouth.

Two Boys Hanging from a Rail

In the old townhall's doorway
the girl balances a broom in the air—
the pole on her pointer finger.
The broom itself is partly hidden
in the dark inside the place behind the arch.
Just in front of the building there's a wooden railing
with two boys hanging.
One of them is smiling.
The satchel across his chest is almost touching the ground.
He is slung like the bag
under the rail. He folds his hands around it.
The rail's also between his legs.
He crosses his legs at the end.
He is holding his breath.
The other boy is almost in a headstand in the air
hooked around the rail with his legs going up.
All the blood drains.
He looks straight out upside down.
In his path there's the boy with a hat over top his face
who is holding up an enormous pole,
playing "blind pots" with another boy
who hits the overturned pot with his knife,
hinting where to come: here.

Girl Making Powder from a Brick

The boy on the ledge where she works
has a knife in his belt.
His friends are ramming into his lap:
two sets of piggyback riders.
They are playing “How many horns
does the goat have?”
The girl ties two porcelain bowls to a branch
with some string—
for the powder.
She is playing apothecary.
There is a pile of bricks in the grass
next to four hats tossed off:
one red, one black,
and two brown hats.
One brick on the ground is slanted against the ledge.
She will be at it forever.
The boys in back of her are playing mumblety-peg—
one boy tosses the jackknife
but the blade doesn’t go into the ground.
He draws a peg from the ground with his teeth.
The other boy has his turn with the knife.
You can toss it again.
The girl uses the ledge back and forth
to scrape red powder from her brick.

Girl with a Blue Apron

The girl at the wall, the corner of the house,
and the boy against her with his hands
on her shoulders are safe.
The closest to being next—*it*
in blindman’s buff—
is the girl in the red with her back turned.
The boy with his right hand on his lip
is keeping the smaller girl in the yellow off to
the side, his left arm against her chest.
She is about to go for it—
you could slide through to the yard.
What are you doing?
The girl with a blue apron over her face reaches—
if she touches you she has to say your name
and then it counts.
There are only six names.
A bridal procession passes:

children in gold, red, and blue over their heads.

Children Making Butter

A few boys have his arms and legs.
They are on either side of the ledge.
They are yanking the boy back and forth
and shaking him.
They call this “bouncing up and down”
and “making butter.”
Three boys do all the work.
There’s one boy not even watching.
There are six of them and the boy who
is the butter—
he’s in green pants
and a white shirt.
His mouth is open—
same with the boy pulling on his arms.

The Gauntlet Runner

The most play this right now.
There are eleven children.
Where’s my friend?
Half of them sit against the backyard fence
and kick.
The others sit across from them,
making an alley—
also kicking—
for the gauntlet runner.
He goes through
like a gauntlet glove in combat.
The boy has the fence to his right,
and reaches near it as he jumps in
and out of the mess.
The boy behind him leans in.
When do I go?

The Swimmer

Two girls are swirling in their red skirts
and landing down in the grass again
and again. Next to them the boy climbing a tree
is taller than they are.
Nearby the swimmer using the bladders for wings
goes by in the river. There is the boy,

also naked, with his legs in.
He sits across from the tree climber
and looks into the water.
It looks warmer than it is.
The sun is behind the fence where the harvest
is. The boy with his white shirt over his head
pulls it from his back.
He is sitting by the haystack.

Floor Piece

On the motorbike their teacher, either he fiddled, cradled, or there was *laying on of hands*, a cliché you have to unlearn, why Larkin likes unkissed, unconfessed, uncoffined in Hardy, the different boys he took turns bringing different ones home, while driving with one hand, past the woman, an important person's wife, doing charity work, doing nothing, reading, looking out the window at traffic, who saw, wrote down the license number, saw it really happen in Bennett's *The History Boys*. It's the bad boy or favorite depending on your politics who says to his teacher if we're having a drink together next week, we're saying you can suck me off next week, not in the subjunctive mood anymore. *It's going to happen*. You know the only reason someone would have to say that. You know what Freud says about saying something won't happen, and it goes both ways, reversed, what is going to happen, how the floor piece, Jim Lambie's piece, which is the entire lobby for a moment, different museums showing him, the floor covered in colored vinyl tape placed edge-to-edge, how the color looks under the thirteenth-floor elevator, a blackout after a motorbike accident. You remember your fear, or you call it fear, of sex, of the man with long hair just above his shoulders, who that afternoon repeating what he learned about masturbation when he was fifteen, something about wasting seed, but you were lightly sleeping on his shoulder, who all afternoon it seemed is telling this friend in the seat in front of you both on the bus to or back from Oxford, that he learned you had to have sex with your wife every Saturday, how you have to be completely naked, how he likes that part, how he used to think he was Job, how God was testing him. Later you actually gasp when he lets go of you.

In the Same Half-Light

He pulls the *Katherine Hepburn as Coco Chanel* portrait from the white paper envelope when she dies. You say nothing. No one thinks of the other Hepburn as related, the small Dutch child who lives off tulip bulbs, grass in the Winter of Hunger. Other people do. He says, *Here*, holding it out on his lap, not letting go of the oversized portrait where she wears a black hat. Yesterday, he doesn't go out, sick with a stomachache, sleeps the whole entire day. You have no memory of doing anything exciting. Now in the museum lobby, he says, *I'm done*. You did the museum already, also. That last night in London, he accidentally breaks a pen open on the outside table, then, for whatever reason, photographs the blackness to go on to make copies, extra prints, of this table, of the plum tree, of Avesbury.

Wedgwood's Pyrometer

Public Experimental Work is never going to bring about new porcelain, Josiah Wedgwood's jasper version of Flaxman's Portland vase—engraved by Blake, and, in Dr. Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, also the name of his book, *The Botanic Garden: The Loves of the Plants*, the cheapest copy sold at Lightning Source.

A politician's a public experimental work. A queen is, Elizabeth I, the new Madonna, sitter associated with fifty-six portraits, or any sitter.

The portraits are one thing, even all three hundred thirty thousand at the National Portrait Gallery, but, then, the artist and sitter—who together will implicate you, students, man winking at a woman rolling her eyes, woman holding a man's hand in her green gloves, woman with orange hair and one unzipped tall boot, man walking a bike here, woman afraid of the dark, woman afraid of people, woman who does laundry in the sink with cucumber-melon soap, woman whose book you used to teach, man with lighter, art critics, quiet people, child asked to find the number, child who likes maps, and who together will want to pull you in—are the other thing, uncertainty, the hypothetical, conditional sentence or question that comes from involvement in the way the mouth of the gun in your mouth is a version of the self-portrait, the color photograph of a Venus statue inside the artist's mouth, *The Sculptor and the Goddess*, 1995.

There's a sense in which you can't leave one of the first beds you sleep in—why the child in bed lying on her back, with two hands on her heart because what if *they* come, and she's off guard the way someone sneezing is,

when something bad could happen, something enter your mouth. You've slept in the same bed three nights, more than the whole summer combined. You remember your old bedroom, where the existing case of "I" and "other" is your playing Scrabble with your mother, playing the mother and child where one's much smaller, the other a mountain, two mouths, wise, undeservingly kind, which is why Henry Moore keeps up with Henry Moore: turning the Madonna into knee, elbow, oval with points, row of sleepers, all inventions on the level of Reproductive Physiologist Howard's work with panda births or on the level of the penlight in the month-old giant panda's mouth like yours.

You write, *My mouth's my best idea*, on the level of language, phonography, Sir Isaac Pitman's Stenographic Sound-Hand. Not that his knighthood, or sainthood, for that matter, means anything post-death, when in 1897, he leaves us dashes and curves for consonants, dots and pecks for vowels, Milton and the Bible in the Mikmak language, complaints to the New Church, and what are complaints without a vowel scale and a shorthand system? If only we could define Wedgwood without the new thermoscope, the pyrometer. . .

If only we could define son, or you, for that matter, without his father's death, will, inventory: 1 red cow, 1 walnut table, 1 hackle, 1 fowling piece, broken set blue-edged dishes, 1 work bench, 1 oil stone, 1 ox chain, 1 milk strainer, 1 logwood axe, 1 lump of chalk, 2 flowered pitchers, 1 jointer, ½ dozen tea spoons best, 1 compass & sash saw, 1 oven & lid, 1 garter, 2 bolection planes, 1 ploughe, 1 dye pot, 1 glue hammer, 2 white dishes, 4 gallons paint, 1 sleigh . . .

Pebbles and Bones from Natural Places

Fast drinker with no Zen tea left in the square-shaped purple mug, you're help in
some rooms,
help-help in another kind of lighting with the flexibility of this: *Now how much
time*

do you have? All the tea urns, silver samovars, all on the table, worth collecting,
if not worth having such as the sideways but tall UPS package that your younger
brother knifing

into it hits an artery, trying to open. Your brother says, *I was trying to open my
scooter.*
Pound says the girl asks her mother if she can open the light. The light of Henry-
Moore-

of-Pebbles-and-Bones from-Natural-Places fame. Outside, winter light rather than
Irina
on the Sun Porch, Mary with her Father, Moore Carving on Vacation in Italy.

Winter with competing interests such as earlier silence. What are you trying to
remember?
If it's not the riddle about fishnets, then reliving stops along one line of the train,
trainwreck

songs, suicide on the train track at 5 am, the body's gone, the human hambone
song, nursery rhyme, name songs, someone's name whose father moves South,
opens a frame shop, kills

himself, time when agency-existence isn't in jeopardy, when there's a touch-your-
shoulder song without your shoulder—and your latest shoulder, if it's still life-
like as a good ear.

III

To Dr. Cotton from William Cowper

It's ending options I've come for with my years, take
the hey-anyone? dawn as is, I'm breath played up a long time so Dr. Cotton,
here are my several, my lots how we manage, you see the Nonsense Club I'm
five-time member of, Giles Gingerbread, out of pounds I owe crossleg.
Does pseudo-Cicero say nephew, Dear nephew on purpose
is that what bleeding's for? the asker an invention for writing.
I'm writing off my head to you.
I once (three times) tried killing myself second with a shoe buckle, sin is I didn't
cut it. Why because my lungs are ribbed over like football's lacing splitting up
an otherwise fist, God holds it against me, unless, no.

Do I have to guess? It's nothing to do with the Inner Temple,
nothing to do with the friends from there, but what's in that ink blot
from our talk comes in my dreams. There's my hand covering my knee,
a nervous finisher of paying visits except to Theodora.
Theo in my leg now of the poem with a shark's tooth she shows her father,
my cousin if she marries me. Answering him what would she do, says
wash all day and ride the great dog all night.
A woman with her jam-rags every month seven days all day
the smell of washing Theo, the smell of hares, Bess, Tiney, and Puss,
three of them with different personalities I miss the more I stay on.

How long is an evening without air?
What January the first was, what 1764 was, you wouldn't know,
Dr. Cotton, what it was to wake up to, hot and cold. It's over with me
the dream called me a thee and used the word
perish in a real, journalizing dark
between rooms tunneled, the corded tin John Johnson a cousin of mine
said into A Happy New Year to Mr. Cowper,
it will find you working on your Ho-mer.
I heard time has come that always means torment with me, in my shaded
face I waited now press I have forgot what.

Other Ideas

As Seen in Kar Wai's 2004 *Eros*, Li Gong, where Prada gets the headband idea from. If you can call it an idea. An idea is the mother of other ideas. Mother, at the mercy of different ones of her sons, is *a bitch, Old Grandma, a fantail pigeon, mother soil, a musty smell of a vestal on a slope anesthetized, Giantess, redeemer of mice, the new moon, Eve, she-wolf, Mother Golden in the cereal field, a comedian to the bone, hedge-sparrow, holy mother, cross-outs* then asterisks over the f-word in *Howl, inexpressibly beloved mother, Love, Woman of the South, mamma, wife and mother in one, Magdalene, LaGuardia's girlfriend, single mother, a gazelle, a woman neither young nor old, live bait, a little girl, mother tongue*. How many mothers is *Rugby Chapel* missing? Heaney calls himself the *x* to his mother's *so*, letters she stitched on his sheets made out of ripped flour sacks, an O like Jocasta, Medea, Grendel's mother, Augustine's mother Monica, Gertrude, Martha, Marfa, Amanda, Bissoondaye, old Naomi, and counting the pregnant woman looking at her husband's foot in the water, eats it, dies, and her children inside, Keats writes Rice, alive, eating. One kind of son throws a whole cabbage at the chandelier. The same kind takes the medicine doll like a servant over to the doctor's home, points to the doll's body where his mother's sick. Well, tell Ginsberg, having signed for his mother's lobotomy, he did what he had to do, or had to do what he did. Now the doll's turned into part of the lamp, and the other part's a tea caddy the National Trust locates. In February, New York, Elbaz on the apparently random floral numbers from the Lanvin collection or on himself, says, *Because after perfection there's nothing left*. Or there's a manhole plus a sign, *Changed Priorities Ahead*. There's Marc Jacobs, not waking up, not putting *The New York Times* into Fall One, but velvet Peter Pan collars, wide white ribbons, tweed skirts, fur collars, short dresses—all ideas, all mothers, you can call it what you won't, such as The Holy South.

for Joshua Weiner

In the Imperfect Tense

Even a detective story is the same people again, more mother-son, nurse-patient, zoologist-ape love: all the note-taking, lullabies, witch-craft, strange details, the advice to “sleep on it,” the hypothetical, the attentiveness, the massiveness, the magical-medical texts from the fifth century with various incantations to choose from, treatments, substances, theories about ideas. You meant to say you used to read a lot, but what you said in the imperfect was that you used to read one book. You were going to say Holmes, but someone stopped you, spoke for you, said the book was big, *librone*. It wasn't. It wasn't the same book over and over again. A play has different actors all the time, or the same actors, different nights: opening, off-night, mid-run, full house, closing. Toward closing, Thursday the third, London National Theatre, Lyttleton, you now wish George in *Jumpers*, having questioned only himself like any moral philosopher, keeping a real hare and tortoise in the study, operating only in the conditional, hypothetical, is someone else in the strong way you wish you are someone else, when he sits on the bed, asks his wife Dorothy—a former student who wears a fishbowl on her head on an off now, can't sing like before, quotes Milton—asks Dorothy innocently, the way a boy might speak to his drugged mother, “You mean you've been bad again?” Your mother knows someone who works where Kate Moss checked in for treatment in Phoenix. Which is best, Kate Moss or all the Kate Mosses? There is more to come. Plus there's a reprint of her in the Freshman Composition reader, *Re-reading America*—pathetic appeals slash women's studies. In *Details*, there's one of her best, *Obsession* ad # 81, where a piece of hair flies across her eye across the bridge of her beautiful nose—not that a broken nose would be bad; people used to roll lint, make other bandages. She is whatever you want, even a little boy. She is the skeleton in many photographs, both the woman's skeleton and the child's at her ankle. With degrees in Egyptology and Palaeopathology, a woman knows for certain a third of the dead are young. A child's skull has legions in the eye sockets. Green eye paint is good for fighting infections; it's because of the malachite. Why would your mother keep asking if the man you saw die really died? The man who was driving his motorcycle on the unpaved, coned-off part of the highway where a red car killed him, is lying on his back the way you float. His helmet is on, which is nice in the way the Queen's boyfriend, Leicester, placed his wife's hat back on, having thrown or paid to have her thrown down her own steps. You lit the first cigarette backwards.

The Common Memory and Deep Memory of Charlotte Delbo, 1913-1985

And by *others* you mean *those who help hold you fast*
or maybe those Reverdy (after the first war
now when the round table's memory, the lamp a heart giving out,
the speech in the doorway, *Farewell, I'm falling*)

recalls: *everyone, even those who are gone—*
and you mean the remnant of your group of political prisoners,
including the one who says when asked where she's from
Auschwitz, the seven of you reflected in the shop window

who didn't recognize yourselves and so you shot up your hand (Now, aren't you
her?)

except everyone of you waves an arm at the strange figures in the glass,
you recall even Viva, maybe only her (*Yes, she will have struggled a long time,*
Viva); also you've remembered the telephone numbers of everyone you knew,

the metro stations along one line, the boutiques along rue Caumartin, fifty-seven
poems, you would recite *all of them, one after the other during roll call.*

Hitchcock Blonde

You have to let go of my arm, he says, to light your cigarette. He helps you walk a second in front of him, holding onto your hand. In the passageway, he says sorry to the couple waiting behind the stroller. You don't see this at first. Is he laughing at you because of them? Maybe they are sharing things with him the way women can share things. You only tell your girlfriends at first about the anorexic young woman who is cut out of the smallest baby swing, and by the firemen, that you were young, that it was a game at first, the baby food, pears, applesauce, and water, the starving, then a good feeling. You tell him gradually, although he already suspects more. The audience in *Swan Song* has forgot all about its clown who says, *Who do I belong to? Quick, quick, the fool's lines*, he says to the other. You remember the nightmare where someone breaks in, stabs the white-crested bird with a fork, then switches the light on with the back of the hand he'd just swept across his bloodied scalp where the bird had pecked, a cockatoo. It is getting darker later. Inside he tells you your cigarette is done but you want to play with it on the orange saucer, twist it around while he looks for a poem. Earlier he says something about your crying next to him, years ago, when the James Bond Blonde cat-walking nude on stage, also filmed, asks Hitchcock to touch her. Hitchcock in real life is impotent. You're not far from the camp who says of their lover, *He uses words on my mom like treacle syrup*. You also love the poems he chooses that end or wish to end with children pissing in the grass. You say you would drown the baby in the bathtub. He says you can still mess up a kid afterwards. You wish your father drowns you when you're old enough to wash yourself.

To Occupant

In the garden you're third director of, where you were buried but the landslide
moved your head-
stone, you keep looking up, tapping the toy deck of cards the size of your thumb.

Since West Nile, you're up to thirty crows, their bodies in your freezer, some of
the ones you've known *since their mothers were eggs*, not that you started out as a
crow person.

What kind of person? Tony Hoagland writes about a dinner party where he's
embarrassed to say D.H. Lawrence's good. Lawrence's fifty books in twenty
years, and there must be letters, too.

She left no note, Art Spiegelman says, his father having burned his mother's
diaries after her suicide. Tell me about the man in love with a girl from his
childhood, how a former lover

will grow *elite but accessible*, more so if she died, how he never modelled nude
again for two
hundred dollars for the upper-level figure-drawing college class, conte crayons
everywhere,

how every day, he slides a note under the man next door's door, asking for flour
for cake, not really, not as a real request—the door's rarely unopened, but the one
man feels better.

About what? Paul de Man separates Paul de Man from current occupant,
purloined ribbon from
surrounding words. Are you meant to separate the reddish Canadian Eskimo on
the cancer floor

from the world from the sign *Wheelchair-accessible* near the cliff, from the cliff?
Do you think the pitiable are close to the mildly horrific? The eyebrow taken off,
put back on.

Peonies

Baez says, *I'll sing you a song that I think was written to be sung while people are still walking into the hall.* Walking from one hall into the other hall, maybe it's Head of a Young Girl, Woman with Fan, Red Head, or Boy in Blue, but unfortunately not Reclining Nude from the Back. Halls are both meeting places and passageways, public and private receptions, bowers, academic buildings, common halls, cloth halls, guild halls, assemblies, not a ghost-laden corridor but something along the lines of a Goat-man citing, complete the next morning with a severed dog on the railroad. You call a hall, keep a hall, or keep to yourself, hall reader with hair in summer mode.

You walk tight, boxy, slow circles the way a practical normativist reading Sartre's *Baudelaire* without a grammar guide might. Your first time you read anything hard while sitting down not walking, and if they give you two hours in an empty room that has a dictionary and grammar guide on the round table. Walking with a book is the pleasure of holding a book that you have some connection to that you couldn't explain, even if you think you know whether the great passages are funny or not. And some decisions you couldn't make sitting or standing or walking in circles or pacing. You're different sitting looking at that Francis Bacon diptych: *Study of the Human Body*, the calming effect of studying, knowing the work will be there, past your saying, *there's something to that*, past your counterpoint, *but there are so many ways he resists that*, past this panel, the woman's torso, a take-off or a spin on *Turkish Bathers*, now this other panel, the man's half-sitting position, wicket-keeper's gloves, shinguards. Both panels with arrows on the studied body, red arrows. Is directing our attention

averting our attention? Later, you're eating a raspberry vanilla cupcake, remembering you still haven't done anything with your photographs. There are too many now that some critic would call you lazy, say that there are in fact good ones, but you just have to look for them in this great body of work. When it's down to three definitive, pivotal pieces, would you agree it's those three of the plate of pastries—your obsession with narrative, whether the next thing is the referent or antecedent for another next. Maybe this is because of the way your mother introduces you still as the next. You're next after your older brother, also next in terms of your middle name. Are all your siblings next in relation to your older brother or are there levels of "next" so that each kid is next to the one closest in age but older? Your alter-ego as athlete, hall boy, philosopher of experiment as well as the experiment, runner-up experimenter,

supplier of over two-hundred tape-measures for your father-figure going through many of those tape-measure chairs for *The Facts of an Irrational Fake*, and your other alter-ego as an irrational fake really shows when you're with your whole family and you become a different person. You don't remember chewing your shirt collars of all your collared shirts, picking your thumbs until they bled, or leaving off the doorknobs in your earliest drawings, but all your female relatives

say this really happened. In Bachelard's topoanalysis, the study of the sites of our intimate lives, the psychologist of houses calls this doorknobless universe significant: cold, narrow, rigid, closeted house, a house lived-through not lived-in, survived: *the peony is an empty house*. Is this the house where anything can happen? *Everything is done in the name of self-defense,*

*so they can do anything...*an official says about the CIA. Then does it follow that living in a house, more so or less so your fifth move, is an act of self-defense? What if the house requires further self-defense? What about your mother, house with the particular cellar, bedrooms, corners, shells, universe, text, body, peonies, machines, closets, drawers, doors, garden, attic, hallways, and staircases? You say you have no memory. You lost it in the way you've lost Catholicism. You used to have it, then you lost it, is what you tell people. Thinking of ways to tell people is as important as telling them.

You know before anyone else on the train which side is the one with the opening door, the right door, and you move toward it. You used to take the train everyday, a long time ago. Today, you say you used to know, you memorized it. But you still know.

To the Oldest Son in Child Ballad #79

You don't tell your mother her little finger's
better than so-and-so's whole body. Better
to tell so-and-so. Mothers aren't lovelessness
the way blues artists don't have the blues
themselves. If a mother's love's self-addressed,
call it something else: hunger, incantation, warm-up,
grammary, prayer, double vision. Do the dead
speak to or through? Your mother's making you
with your brothers come back: the linen tablecloth, bread,
drink, the question, *Is there sex after death?*,
an oldest-son problem. That and your mother
trying to kiss you when everything you've read
says not to, hardly supernatural—says you'll tell a bird,
tell a miller, who'll tell your father, lover, do X,
Y, and Z, your burial manual, or pay off
a bird not to tell your story.

Woman Resting Her Arm on Her Head

Charles is Julia's but only after her brother Sebastian,
who meets Charles from drinking then throwing up in his rooms at Oxford,
has him. The next morning the place is filled with jonquils.
There is a note to come to lunch at noon.
There are plover's eggs to start with.
When Sebastian doesn't want Charles to meet his family—
They're all so damn charming—
when Sebastian drinks alone or he may as well be alone,
it's as if Charles is already lighting Julia's cigarette
because she's doing the driving
or she's talking with her hands,
as disinterested as a professional ballerina
in the four o'clock meal, a jar of pears for babies,
talking about Sebastian,
as if Charles has already had to sneak away from his seasick wife,
to Julia, sneak his wife's red roses to her,
only after Sebastian's *disappearance* if you can call it that,
if all loneliness is self-mocking (the way a name that rhymes is,
the way in one family, brother and sister can have, not have, one lover)
if sleeping with Rex is like keeping him from a greater sin,
Julia asks, resting her arm on her head, and appears to be asking the priest.

The Contents of Several Chapters

Four, five men sprawling over the grating,
the dark enabling the light and smoke,
a minor flame clothing, water takes care of.
Someone *re-accommodates the sails*, sailing.

A man named Tombe when you ask at midnight
What are you doing here? falls off your goat.
There are no more questions, but a dowry.
The general rule is to just enquire.

In *Because of That War*, the rock star
remembers touching his mother's arm,
What's this drawing? He is two. She tells him,
For me it was a triumph for him to know.

Another child of a survivor stutters
having seen his father, blue, choke on bread.

Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*

How the bulldog barks at every bird it sees,
leaving its game, how you see the head
of the dog in your cup of water,
how Lonny Glossam's harmonica says

back to him, *I want my mama*, and then,
I want a drink of water. Or draw the air through
the harmonica, bend the notes for a cross key,
instead of blowing air into it, you

play backwards. When you sit alone, you swear
you hear the quietest shutter, don't see
the flash which would have been a dead giveaway.
Your throat is sore. Artaud writes, *This is merely*

an icicle stuck in my throat, signs off a note
to his doctor. Burton says the causes are God,
parents, old age. With all the kinds as diverse
as the sections of the head opened, cut up.

Gentle Fire under a Live Mole in an Earthen Pot

And to destroy Earwig, Captain John Smith writes later in his diary, you would lay Kexes near the bottoms of trees, set the section of woods aflame. To gather weasels, you would take a lizard's gut, beat it in half a pint of water, and pour it on the ground near the weasel haunts. But to gather moles, stop the live mole close in an earthen pot over a fire. When the mole feels the heat, she will cry, which will draw all the moles in hearing about her. Maybe writing this sentence about crying is the moment Smith remembers kissing a young woman he has significantly calmed down, how she asks if he's happy, asks right afterwards without thinking. How the voice inside says, What have I done? She asks if he is happy now as if she is one who knows what, if any, the association between smoking and drinking is. The adders in the out-house, occasionally, to get rid of them, you would burn Wall-wort, scatter Rue and Worm-wood, and the scent of these will drive them, all venomous creatures, away. As will the smoke of the burnt soles of shoes.