MOMENTS: A DIARY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

By

Mendy J. Craig, B.A

Denton, Texas

May, 1998

In my preface I have tried to show what diaries are, why they might be of interest to others, why I think they are valid and should be considered as such. I have defended my diary as being worthy material for a thesis, or myself as worthy of being called a writer. (Traditionally, writing in a diary doesn't qualify one as being a writer, even though you might write millions of pages and spend your entire lives doing it.)

Edited selections of my diary make up the body of the thesis. These selections are divided into four main sections which suggested themselves during editing. To summarize the diary as a whole, I would say it's about human relationships.
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Introduction

I write everyday, yet I will never have a completely finished product. I am a writer, yet I don’t write short stories, and I haven’t yet written a novel or a book of poems. I am a writer of diaries, filling up one blank book after another until there is nothing left to write, until there is no life to write about. The diary is my work; my work is my life.

When it came time to decide what I was going to concentrate on for my thesis, I knew immediately that I wanted to do some kind of prose and that I would use my diaries. Although I had mainly concentrated on poetry in school and did well in the workshops, I wasn’t interested in working with poems for my thesis. Poetry was a large part of the diary; not only did I practice writing poems it, but my style of writing tends toward poetic prose. My poems came out of the diary, and to study the poems would inevitably lead me right back to the diary because I considered them a side effect of the diary, an excerpt from the entire work. For the workshops, I would sift through my diary, find either a poem I had written or a passage that had some good poetry in it, and I would pull it out of the diary and start manipulating it to look more like a poem. I would pay attention to line breaks and other technical aspects. But this wasn’t what I wanted to do for my thesis. I didn’t want to come up with twenty poems and play around with spacing and line breaks.

In my first graduate fiction class, I had tried to write stories that were separate from the diary, but I had a difficult time. Throughout the class I had been turning in pages of my diary to show that I had been writing. My professor told me that the writing I was turning in was alive and full of the energy my stories were lacking and asked me if there was any way I could transfer that energy into the stories. I tried but was unable to do it. Now,
instead of pulling out excerpts from the diary to make poems, or trying to carry the writing of the diary over into the writing of the fiction, I would instead be working with the diary itself. I was interested in creating a larger body of work. I was interested more in prose or in the combination of poetry and prose, a melding of the two. I wanted to delve into the diary and find out what I had instead of taking from it. I wanted to study the whole work.

At first, I thought I would simply transpose the material in the diary into personal essays, poetic prose, or memoirs. I would shape the material into what I thought were the acceptable forms. I was influenced by a book I was reading *In Short*, edited by Judith Kitchen, which contained short pieces, sometimes a page or two, of non-fiction prose, some poetic, others not. I also came across Susan Griffin’s *Chorus of Stones–The Private Life of War*. This book was hard to place in a genre, and I liked that about it. The pieces contained real history of the world and a very personal history of the author, a melding of historical facts and autobiography. One section in particular used a journal and told another story around this particular journal’s story. I considered creating personal essays out of my journal material or a personal essay around my actual journal. It still hadn’t occurred to me that the diary itself might be a valid form, not until I started to read collections of other people’s diaries.

The first collection I came across was *Revelations: Diaries of Women*, edited by Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter. This book is a collection of excerpts of diaries by thirty-two women from the early nineteenth century to the recent past, young and old, and from many different countries. The editors wanted to show what the form has meant to these
women, why they kept diaries, and what made them individually interesting to the editors. "We wanted to know about the inner lives of women. We wanted to read everything we could about those inner lives from primary sources: what women had written about themselves. We wanted to see if it was possible to define the diary, in particular, as a valid literary form, one that for women has often been the only available outlet for honest expression" (Moffat 3). They found a literature by women about themselves that was so vast and varied that they realized they would have to narrow their focus. It would be virtually impossible to try and document the full range of women's lives in one book. They chose diaries that were personal and psychological rather than political, leaving out women in the suffrage movement, working women, prostitutes, women in prison.

In assembling some past moments in the lives of individual women, we are offering what is only a beginning effort to reclaim diaries as a unique literary tradition of honest expression in which we have recognized aspects of ourselves. Jorge Luis Borges says that every writer creates his own precursors; we believe the women writers of the future will stand on the remarkably strong shoulders of women diarists who wrote to please no audience but themselves. (12)

As I read the diaries of these women, mostly unknown and unimportant historically, I realized how interested I was in their lives and in their diaries. I was now seeing diaries of others like me, when before I had only known my diary or the diaries of famous, well-
known people. I found out that the lives of the unknown are just as interesting, revealing, and worthy of being read as those of the famous.

The next book that I read was *Private Pages: Diaries of American Women*, edited by Penelope Franklin. She traces the life cycle of women from adolescence to old age during the last two centuries. The editor found that most of the diaries ever published were those of men, but that there were thousands of unpublished women’s diaries in archives and attics all across the country. She noticed that the men’s diaries were often about exploration, war, politics, or adventures, and they were by famous literary or historical figures. In contrast, she felt that the publishing of the women’s diaries was important because they revealed an almost foreign landscape—the inner lives of women—as shown in the fact that the only diaries published by women were by those women who were wives or family members of famous men, and only the sections that were about the men were published. These publications did not concern the actual diarist—the woman herself. Franklin’s research for the book began to focus on diaries that dealt with the inner landscape as opposed to the outer one. These diaries “do not merely record events; they tend to become an integral part of the diarist’s way of looking at and moving in the world. These diaries capture the process of living” (Franklin xiv).

Other publications I found were *A Book of One’s Own: People and Their Diaries*, edited by Thomas Mallon, which catalogues the different kinds of diaries: travel, exploration of self, writer’s diaries, philosophers, etc, and includes brief excerpts from the diaries; and *Anteaus*, a journal which has issues that are for the publication of journals, notebooks, and diaries that are being written now, usually by well-known writers.
After reading at least one hundred diary excerpts, I began to see the possibility that what I was doing was part of a tradition and, perhaps, a valid literary form, one that was interesting and as varied as it was similar. I became interested in the form of the diaries, why people wrote them, in the tradition itself, and how mine fit in with the others. I knew now that I was not just going to use my diary as the material for my thesis, but instead the diary would be the focus of my thesis. I, too, would try to define it as a valid form, a genre of sorts. I would keep the form of the diary, but I would edit, rewrite, cut out what was unnecessary. Both Moffat (*Revelations*) and Franklin (*Diaries of American Women*) discussed the editing of diaries, and also Gunter Stuhlman who wrote the introduction to Anais Nin's diaries, talks about the editing of her diaries. I would work from the knowledge and advice of these people.

In my preface I have tried to show what a diary is, why people keep them, why they might be of interest to others, why I think they are valid and should be considered as such. In a sense, I have defended my diary as being worthy material for a thesis and myself, as worthy of being called a writer. Traditionally, writing in a diary doesn't qualify one as being a writer, even though you might write millions of pages and spend your entire life doing it.
From A Diary in Alphabets and Birthdays
Gertrude Stein

Why does a narrative replace a diary. Because it does not.

One day.

One day day before yesterday...

There is a difference between omitting and there is a difference between adding...

Yesterday today...

A diary is not a line a day book...

Three days added together...

Yesterday evening Bravig and John were here. They will be here again.

Several times other people have been here. There is a difference of opinion as to the desirability of their being here....

A diary should simply be.

Yesterday hyacinths and anemones were under-foot at that.

Yesterday at that...

This makes a diary.

Who is reputed.

This makes a diary.

Who has had whom.

This makes a diary too tenderly...

Nothing has happened today except kindness...

Yesterday we turned hyacinths into wisteria.
Today we turned them back to hyacinths from hyacinths to wisteria...

Yesterday we had both a ham and a fake bird. It can be very much enjoyed very much enjoyed. Today in the midst in the midst in the midst to know in the midst...

A diary means yes indeed...

And now. Today today is celebrated in our annals by perfect satisfaction.

That was just the same as yesterday...

Yesterday was a sad day.

Today is a daisy day...

Thinking in terms of a diary its origin and its nationality and its return...

A diary should be instantly in recording a telegram. Also in recording a visit also in recording a conversation also in recording embroidery also in recording having wished to buy a basket. That is it...

Defining the Diary

Diary writers fill blank pages with their day-to-day lives, emotions, ideas, or whatever comes to mind. The form is flexible enough to include anything and everything; it’s an extension of the mind, a private place, a dialogue with oneself. A diary is whatever one makes it. In the moment. The moments of life. Today. Today. Today. Endlessly renewing itself. Today I remember it this way. In the diary there is always the process of discovering for the writer. It captures the immediacy and energy of daily life and allows for irregularities, contradictions, messiness, chaos. A diary is concerned with the process of living: not an account of a life, but a life being lived; not the explanation of a life, but
the process of discovering an explanation; not just the answers, but the process of searching for answers. The diary’s form is perhaps the closest to our actual lives: “No form of expression more emphatically embodies the expresser: diaries are the flesh made work” (Mallon xvii).

The most basic definition of a diary, found in Webster’s, is an account of daily events, transactions, observations or a record of experiences, ideas, reflections, or emotions. The most common conception of a diary is a blank book that someone writes in. What the diary writers write in the book is usually unknown, as is the nature of the diary, but the subject matter is known to be private and personal. A diary may be a collection of loose papers, a school notebook, fancy expensive books, or, in the modern world, a computer file. Some people write for hours at a time while others write a few words. Some might write every day, others once a year. In this way a diary is a lot like time-lapse photography. If the camera is set on once a day, or once a year, after a period of time, both will reveal the unfolding of a life, day by day, week by week, or year by year. Each diarist probably has their own personal, unique reason for diary-keeping:

A safe place where new roles can be tried out, protected from censure; a sounding board for ideas or emotions that may not be acceptable to friends or family; a means of regaining a balance when caught by conflicting emotions; a valuable record of progress or growth, a place where past, present, and future all live together, a friend, a confidant; a place to develop hidden parts of the self. (Franklin xix)
Ever since I can remember, I've been writing in blank books. At the age of maybe seven I was given a little diary with a lock and key which I filled with one liners such as "ate breakfast today and played with Carol." It was a tiny book, smaller than a paperback, brown and gold with the word diary in gold letters on the front. It was a five year diary: each page had five entries, one entry for each year and each entry was only a few lines long. (Perhaps this is where I started to learn poetry, having to fit an entire day into two or three sentences.) I remember immediately understanding what this book was for and how I was supposed to use it, but I didn't stay interested in it for very long. The sentences I wrote were what I thought I had to write, and I wasn't interested in keeping a list of what I ate and with whom I played. But the idea of keeping a diary had been placed in my head, and so it was the diary that I turned to when I reached puberty, a time when I actually had secrets to keep. I started to fill up diaries with accounts of the boys I had crushes on, the ones I had kissed, and other such things. The diary became a place to be by myself, someone to talk to (even if that someone was myself, it was somehow different), someone who listened, a place for secrets. As I grew older, I found it was a way for me to understand myself and my experiences. If I could write things down, I could make sense of them. It became a process of understanding. I used it for therapy when I was angry or depressed. I used it for loneliness and self pity; I used it to express the teenage angst that I thought no one else would be able to understand.

At this stage, I wasn't trying to create anything other than a record of my immediate feelings and only the surface ones. There is nothing underneath, no depth. These diaries are immature, childish, and now, they embarrass me. These are not the diaries of a writer.
But without even realizing it, I'd been learning a way to make sense out of my feelings and my experiences. I had been learning to express myself, my emotions, experiences, ideas. I had never really paid attention to the techniques of writing, didn't know I was learning these things, but I was becoming a writer without even being aware of it. Each day or as often as possible, I returned to the pages of the diary to write.

When I decided I wanted to be a writer, my relationship with the diary changed completely. The diary became a place to work, the place where I began to practice writing. There is attention to syntax, word choice, and language. The technique became as important as what I was writing about. This was the diary of a writer. I use the word "diary" as if it were the same book all along, and, in fact, it does seem that way, like one long book with endless pages, but the diary is not the actual object that one writes in. I'm actually writing in one blank book out of the many that make up the diary. The diary is always the same place no matter which actual book; it is the self's home, or the mind made tangible. The book is the vehicle used to access the diary. The diary is a state of mind.

On Keeping a Diary

_"Writing a diary implies that one has ceased to think of the future and has decided to live wholly in the present."_ George Sand

_"My diary is that of me which would else spill over and run to waste, gleanings from the field which in action I reap. I must not live for it, but in it for the gods. They are my correspondents to whom daily I send off this sheet._

Henry David Thoreau
Playing so many roles, dutiful daughter, devoted sister, mistress, protector, my father's new found illusion, Henry's needed, all purpose friend, I had to find one place of truth, one dialogue without falsity; this is the role of the diary.

Anais Nin

On Reading the Diaries of Others

I've always been interested in the “inner landscape,” what's going on inside people, the real self, the hidden self. When I read novels, that's what I'm really looking for: how the author thinks, sees the world, what goes on in his or her head, and it's all related. The fiction we create comes from this inner landscape.

When I started reading other people's diaries, I finally found what I had been looking for all along. Diaries are similar to novels in that they are involved with the subject on more of a day-to-day basis than the other forms. They take their time telling the story, and volumes of diaries are about the same length as novels. These were the kind of stories I was interested in, stories that weren't contrived or invented to tell a truth, but instead the writer is trying to tell the story of a life as it is, which is no easy task. The real stories are vague and ambiguous. It's hard to tell where they started or if they are even finished. Each diary has a different way of telling the story, a different set of events and characters, but they are all telling the same story of life. Of course some diaries don't interest me in the least, like novels that I can't stand, but the ones that do interest me are able to teach me so much about my self, about life. How things have changed, how they have remained the same. Diaries describe “the travels over the common ground which we all tread in the passages of our lives; yet such encounters are rarely found in print with their fresh
emotion intact" (Franklin xiv). Each diary has a distinctive and powerful voice, the
voice of each individual self making up all of humanity. It is at times the closest account
of actual experience. It’s the partially digested experience, the not yet shaped, or an
immediate in-the-moment account of what’s going on in our heads.

Diaries are the opposite of autobiographies or memoirs, [or even
fiction] which invariably gloss over or eliminate most of life’s
irregularities. A diary brings the reader much closer to the ebb and
flow of real life.... For this reason, reading diaries can be very
reassuring. Many of us have unrealistic expectations of ourselves
partly because the lives of people we admire, as we've read about
them, have had the wrinkles taken out. Those lives have often
appeared seamless, so much tidier than ours. We’ve tried to imitate
them and of course we couldn't and yet everyone's life holds
contradictions, inconsistencies, insecurities, messy stops and starts.
Diaries can teach us this . . . These private pages can give us, their
readers, permission to be human. (Franklin xxvii)
I Had No Idea I was Part of a Literary Tradition.

People have been writing diaries for at least 200 years, yet I never considered what I was doing as part of a literary tradition. From reading the published diaries of others and from talking to other diary writers like myself, I started to see that there was an ideal form that we are/were working toward. The diary needs to be well written, expressive, detailed, honest, and true to life. Writers I encountered said they wanted to throw out what they didn’t think was good enough, they had rewritten certain parts, they felt guilty for not writing enough or well enough. The writers in the publication *Private Pages* made comments like, “I’m not doing it right, I don’t write enough or every day, my entries are too emotional or unemotional, my writing isn’t descriptive enough or expressive enough, it’s too factual, too mundane, there’s too much detail or not enough. Again and again the feeling of a standard unmet” (Franklin xxiv). This leads me to believe that this tradition has become or needs to be looked at as a valid literary form, one that takes the same kinds of skills, discipline, and reworking as those of the other literary forms.

Anais Nin

Anais Nin was a great force in pushing the diary toward an art form.

Her diary is unique. There is nothing else like it in our literature. She clearly regarded her diary not as a notebook but as a self-justifying and self-sustaining work. It is a continuous account of a life, an account that cannot be assigned to a genre (as much modern writing cannot) but displays the qualities both of fiction in its heightened intensity, overall
When I read the first of her diaries, I felt as if I had entered into the world of the book, into her life, just like with a novel. It kept my interest in the same way, and I couldn’t find any definite reasons why it couldn’t be a novel except that it was from her actual life and didn’t really have a specific plot or definite ending. Also, the novel’s focus is, traditionally, the movement of the story, while the diary’s focus is the day-to-day or the moment—the story being almost a side effect. But many contemporary novels I’ve read would fit these categories also, and many novels are in fact autobiographical. It is the form that the diary takes which is the most noticeable difference. It is less artful, more true to life, organic, natural. In Diary IV, Nin writes, “There is no separation between my life and my craft, my work. The form of art is the form of my life, and my life is the form of the art. I refuse artificial patterns. Stories do not end. A point of view changes every moment. Reality changes. It is relative” (Spencer 1). But one has to be careful because it is not a reproduction of life, no more a reproduction than a realistic novel is one. She uses life just like a novelist, but transforms it with her writing, her perception, her skill for language, her immediacy, and what she chooses to put in—the heightened moments. To say it is not a novel because it isn’t fiction isn’t quite valid. To say it isn’t non-fiction because it’s been transformed or partially invented isn’t quite valid either. “Nin inadvertently presents a problem for traditionally oriented readers. They do not know what she is writing: poetry; prose; memoirs; autobiography? Unable to fit her
books into historical literary categories, too many readers and even critics dismiss them as inept” (Spencer 2). Nin’s diary is a continuous account of a life that cannot be assigned to a genre but displays both the qualities of fiction and autobiography. It is perhaps a new kind of literature.

I find that the more I read of Nin and about Nin, the more I learn about myself as a writer, especially as the writer of a diary. “I only regret that everyone wishes to deprive me of the diary,” she wrote in June 1933 (qtd. in Stuhlman’s introduction x). She is never allowed to be completely in the diary. Everyone tells her she needs to write novels, that she is wasting her time in the diary. The implication here is that a novel is worthwhile and a diary is not. Nin has often stated that the body of her published, artistic work, her novels, were merely outcroppings of the diary, and that her real life as a writer and a woman was contained in the pages of the diary. “I have a natural flow in the diary,” she wrote more than thirty years ago (Stuhlman v). She is constantly pulled back and forth between the diary and literary work. Others call it a malady, an outgrowth of loneliness, her drug. She wanted to write novels and did, but felt more at home in a diary that everyone was telling her was egotistical, wasteful, wrong. “I must learn to stand alone,” Nin writes. “Nobody can really follow me all the way, understand me completely.” In order to keep writing the diary, she had to rely only on herself. “Dear Diary, you have hampered me as an artist, but at the same time you have kept me alive as a human being. I created you because I needed a friend. And in talking to this friend, I have perhaps wasted my life” (Nin 215). Perhaps. But after the diaries had been published, she writes, “Having been told so often how wrong it was to write about one’s
self—I should take the self out of the diary, I never expected the consequences. Because I
gave of myself, many women felt I spoke for them, liberated them from secrecy and
reticence. I did not expect to get letters. Suddenly I was discovering a world. Perhaps the
ultimate reason of being for a diary is that it ceases to be a solitary occupation and
becomes a universal work, perhaps that’s the way it should end” (Spencer 174). The
diary that is written for the self is, in the end, given up to the public.

**Anais Nin’s Influence On My Work**

It was after I read Anais Nin’s diary that I saw what I could do with my own diary. I
wanted my diary to be as well-written and compelling as hers. I saw what I could be
doing, how much more attention I could pay to my writing. And so I began to put all my
skills as a writer into the diary. At first I was afraid that my writing would never measure
up, would never be even close to what Anais had accomplished. I was relieved to find out
that her diary had been extensively edited and partially rewritten. This was not the first
draft. Mine could be rewritten later too. I had seen what she had done with real life. She
had transformed it. I started to do the same.

The diary started to come alive for me; my life started to come alive for me too. I put
all the talent I had for writing into the pages of the diary into the events of my life. I
continued writing, filling up the pages of the diary with my life, my invention, with
everything I had. When I tried to write something outside of the diary, like a short story,
the writing was stilted and lifeless. I couldn’t bring the life of the diary into the short
story because the diary now had a life of its own. At this time I wasn’t thinking of ever
publishing my diary or of using it for anything like a thesis. I was just on a path, a path to be a writer, and I was working, practicing, traveling down that path.

Later when I reread older diaries I started to realize that I had been practicing fiction writing intensively, and that I was mastering it without even realizing I had been working on it. I realized it wasn't as chaotic and seamless as I had imagined. There were stories in here, stories that were growing and changing. There were themes, characters, ideas, language and intensity, and most interestingly of all, a persona of myself. In fact there were many aspects of myself in the diary. The I, the writer, and the she, all being used differently to describe and look at different aspects of myself. Each individual book of the diary had a form of its own, a story of its own, a different aspect of the self, different characters. Each part of the diary was comparable to a novel in a series of novels. I started to find this very interesting and wondered what it was I was doing, creating. Was it novels in progress, or a new form all together?

At the same time I wondered, as Anais often wondered, is my diary a crutch that keeps me from writing stories or novels? Is the diary holding me back? And my answers are, I don't know, this is where I feel comfortable, this is what I understand, this is how I communicate, this is where I am right now. Is this a stage, a process that I'm going through? Gail Godwin, a fiction writer and a diarist, said she had to write a diary for many years before she could even begin writing fiction. And I wonder if this is my predicament also. Godwin also talked about people trying to persuade her not to write in the diary. She decided that she needed to write a diary just as she needed to write fiction, but that the two needs came from very different sources. She writes fiction in order to
organize the clutter of too many details into some meaning; and the diary because it keeps her mind fresh and open (11). Susan Griffin, a writer who seems to be transcending genre right now, echoed some of my own feelings in an interview in *The Artist and Her Work.*

I wanted to write from my own point of view rather than from characters.

As a visual artist there had been no mask, no fictional filter through which to sift content. I felt a sense of fidelity to people I had known and things that actually happened. (Sternburg 107)

She stumbled upon the personal essay, perhaps I am stumbling upon the diary.

The only decision I have made is that I need to write, and I am writing. The diary is the place where I continue to be a writer, it is a place to think, to create and recreate, to remember. But always the nagging voice, the other voice saying, you're wasting your time, your life, write a story, a novel, why are you wasting your time here? Maybe you can't write, maybe you'll never write anything. The point being that no matter how well one writes in a diary, it doesn't count. And why not? I guess because they usually aren't published, but also because it's not considered in any way a justifiable art form, not part of the genre, or really talked about as a literary tradition. Perhaps it is viewed as something someone who cannot write does, the only thing they can do. If one cannot write a book, they write a diary. But a diary, the way I see it, is just as hard, or maybe even harder, to write than a book because one cannot invent the story, the diary has no beginning and no end, except maybe the death of the writer, the point of view is always changing. The form can only be found by writing it. The form develops through the
writing of it, and one of the major goals is to be honest, but being honest is difficult and painful especially if the writers have to claim this honesty as their own.

Lies and Disguises

What is it about diaries, I wonder? you can’t be honest in them--these pages are one long succession of poses of one kind or another and if you were honest I don’t know whether it would be much better.-- Yvonne Blue, 1931--

Once in a while I catch myself trying to fool myself the silliest thing one can do. Sometimes when things are not quite what I would like them to be I refuse to admit it in my diary and write as if they were.-- Marion Taylor, summer 1919--

One thing that is difficult about keeping a diary is honesty which for me is a major reason for writing-- to get to the truth, to be as honest to yourself, and eventually to others, as possible. Even without the fear that someone will read it, honesty is still difficult. What really happened? How do I really feel about this? If I admit that I feel this way, will it make it more real, more true? As long as no one knows, or it’s never uttered or written down, somehow it’s less real, less possible, less powerful. Sometimes, I go back into my diaries and realize that what I wrote wasn’t what I really felt, that I had left something out, glossed over something that bothered me. I hadn’t gotten to the heart of it. Or I had blatantly lied as if to write a different truth could make it real. This happened mainly with my diaries from high-school. But even now, I struggle with telling the truth. Another way to avoid telling the truth is to avoid writing about something. There’s no way to tell one way or another if the writer doesn’t even write about it. Sometimes I know I’m feeling and thinking about something that needs to be written down and I avoid it,
write about something completely different. When I do this, I miss the real emotion, the
real power that could be behind the writing.

When I was younger, people did read my diaries without my permission (my mother,
my sister, my best friend). Each infringement of my privacy and secrecy changed the way
I revealed things in writing. My diary was, in a sense, getting too much publicity, and I
found it extremely difficult to write the truth and began disguising it. Each intrusion made
me more aware of the repercussions of writing down the truth (or writing down lies).
Total honesty was almost impossible because I had become too aware of the public world
and what would result if someone read my diary again. Later I began to work toward
writing as honestly as possible and not caring if anyone read what I had written. I was
going to be honest to everyone, open myself up, but only if they happened to read it on
their own. I had to get beyond caring if anyone read what I wrote. But again there were
still times, especially with my boyfriend, that I discovered I had been editing with the
knowledge that he might read it. Truth and honesty are very slippery concepts. They often
work unconsciously, and fool even ourselves.

Writing something down is a record, a form of proof, that can even be used against
you. But what is it a record of? We change all the time. Who I was when I wrote the diary
from two years ago is not the same person as the me that is writing now. To use that as
proof of who I am or what I think now is false—but people find it hard to make the
distinction. If we write down things about ourselves on paper, if we write the truth, we
are leaving a record, we are leaving evidence. I don’t believe that the only reason we
write it down is so that someone else will read it because I find it easier to find truth or
inconsistency if I have a record of ideas and thoughts. This all helps me to understand, but writing down feelings about other people and the truth about ourselves makes us more vulnerable because it can be found and read. There is something about uttering or writing words that in our minds gives them more power as if we didn’t really think the thought until we write it down or tell someone--or we are not actually a certain way unless there is proof of it somewhere. Sometimes I feel a great relief when I finally write something down about myself that is as honest as I can be--as if I’ve been freed. It’s there on the page. I’ve actually admitted it. It’s real now somehow.

A diarist not only writes about themselves but about the people in his/her life. Each diarist, while of course trying to be objective, writes their own truth—the way they see it—the way they feel about it. This doesn’t mean this is actually how it is. So we mistake the diarist’s truth with the ultimate truth. I write about the people closest to me, my boyfriend, my friends, my parents. I write how they affect me, how I see them, how I feel about them at the moment I’m writing. But it’s all about me, not them. I’m not able to be objective. I’m not them. I haven’t lived their lives. I only know what I see or feel. But there are repercussions. Thomas Mallon echoes these feelings: “Keeping a diary is not a practice that universally endears one to one’s friends. Some would prefer that their friendship be off the record, even though they know that term rarely applies with the habitual diarist. I don’t blame them. The little reading of my own thirty books convinces me I’m a lousy judge of character” (11).

When these people see what I’ve written, they are usually shocked or sometimes angered, in a few cases honored or surprised, but mostly it’s negative. They don’t like to
see another view of themselves, especially if they don't think it's in any way true. It's
dangerous to write truthfully about those you know. To them and to you. *I can't believe
you think this about me or you feel this way. Can't you see that I'm like that because of
this? You sure aren't very objective. Well, it's my diary; it's about me--not you.*

It's shocking to see an outside perspective, to see what someone else thinks of you or
how someone else sees you in the same way that it's strange to see photographs or film of
yourself. Because we have images of how we are and what we are like, we expect other
people to see us this way too, and when we realize they don't, we are shocked.

This get more complicated if a diary is going to be published. When my boyfriend
read some of what I wrote about him, he was angry and hurt and said he felt my portrayal
of him was one-dimensional, that I only wrote about bad things. He felt like he was being
exploited in my writing and that if it was published, people who read it would have a
different view of him, a negative view, because they would assume the truth in whatever
was written. He didn't think that this was fair or kind of me and felt as if what I had
created was untrue. I was able to admit that it wasn't all that objective, and that I didn't
write much about good things, but I wrote about what was bothering me. Still, what I had
written was true, to me. *(Is there an absolute truth? I don't know.)* I didn't know what to
do. I said I would change the name which doesn't really solve the problem because
anyone who reads it will assume that the male in the diary is my boyfriend. It was during
this discussion with him that I started to understand the use of lies and disguises in fiction
Because here were people telling me that I had no right to write about them, that I
couldn't include certain information about their lives that I knew, and that if I did I would have to deal with the repercussions. This was a completely new experience for me, and I began to see the safety and freedom of fiction as opposed to trying to write the truth directly from life. I came across a Jane Smiley essay entitled *Can Writers Have Friends?* Her focus is fiction, but even in fiction she has to be careful about offending people and she has already disguised them. People don't like to see themselves in ways that are different from how they believe themselves to be, and also, there is this slippery aspect of truth. So now I'm dealing with being careful about what I allow to remain in the diary when I use it for my thesis; I have to be sensitive to certain people and what they might not want revealed. I have to make a distinction between good writing and personal feelings: *I really like this piece, the writing is beautiful, but I can't use it because so and so wouldn't like that to be known.*

The other side of this is again my fear of revealing what I really feel and think about my friends to them and others. And the good things are harder for me: the strong feelings of love, the needs, the idolatry. Again, somehow putting all these feeling into writing somehow gives them more significance, more power, more seriousness. Sometimes it makes me want to give up on writing: how can I do it when I'm not allowed to use whatever I want, say whatever I really feel? Or it makes me want to turn to fiction and learn how to disguise and lie in order to try and tell the truth. If you can't write your own truth, what can you write? Again, this gets more complicated. Famous people can sue you, claim libel; one's own truth can be one of the hardest things to tell; it's a risk; it makes one vulnerable especially to attack. Can writers have friends? I don't know, perhaps only
friends that are also writers and who understand the dilemma. I have a friend who wrote a story about a retarded girl; she had seen the retarded girl somewhere and been reminded of me, so when she wrote the story, I’m the retarded girl. I try not to be insulted, but secretly I wonder if she really sees me this way, if she thinks my personality is similar to a retarded person’s. I like the concluding quote of the Smiley essay:

When a writer brings the friends of her everyday side into her work, she is introducing them to others, introducing what she deduces to be their “meaning” into the ongoing cultural investigation of what it means to be human. If any of my friends or family members ever writes about me with irony, detachment and those mixed feelings that seem to be and intrinsic part of our human baggage, I hope I can take my own advice and remember that. (55)

**Editing and Publication**

When I first read Anais Nin’s diary, I was amazed that she could have written so well, so completely, that nothing she wrote was trivial or unimportant, that the whole diary seemed to flow together so perfectly. I had assumed that her diaries had been copied in their original form and published, but this was not the first draft. She worked on her diaries the same way that a novelist works on novels: reorganizing, rewriting, deleting, and adding, until it became something else---perhaps a work of art equal to that of a novel, a book of stories, or poetry. The process was the same.

*Editing/revision isn’t necessarily for publishing, but is a continual process of getting*
closer to pure expression, to the process of understanding. Anais Nin typed a version of the diary concurrently with the handwritten pages; the language was refined, parts were edited (Spencer 124). I've noticed internal editing/revising going on in my diary. On one day I might have tried to write about something that happened to me, but not quite in the way I wanted to express it. Later on I would go back to the same incident and try it again, getting closer to what actually happened. The only thing that changes is the language, which reflects the skill of the writer, not what is being written about. This sort of editing is different than the editing required in order to get a diary ready for publication. This personal editing was part of the process of the diary, part of the process of my understanding. I wanted what was in my mind to represent as closely as possible what ended up on the page. An audience is not necessary to provoke this kind of revising. But publication is a different matter altogether.

Stuhlman discusses the difficult and "legally dangerous task" of publishing diaries and other non-fiction books:

For Anais Nin there were problems of personal privacy, legal hurdles, and there was the enormous bulk of the manuscript. In preparing for publication, Miss Nin, and the editor, still faced certain personal and legal considerations inherent in the nature of the diary. Several persons, when faced with the question of whether they wanted to remain in the diary as is--since Miss Nin did not want to change the essential nature of her presentation--chose to be deleted altogether from the manuscript (including her husband and some members of her family.) The names of
some incidental figures have been omitted or changed, since, as any reader will soon see, the factual identity of a person is basically unimportant within the context of the diary. The truth is psychological. Also Anais Nin has asked that the omitted material and the final diaries not be published until after the death of her husband. (x)

Even though I don't have the legal concerns Anais had, I encountered the problems of audience, and other personal concerns. Getting a diary ready for publication is almost completely concerned with audience, if only to make the diary easier to read. In the writing of my diary, I am not concerned with punctuation. Should this be corrected? How do I decide what passages to include or delete? How should I arrange this in order to make it readable? How do I keep from trying to make the diary too perfect, too organized? The editor of *Private Pages* gives this advice:

> It's true that a diary in the raw can be hard to read. Editing a diary is of necessity, creating something new—cleaner and somewhat clearer than the original document. Yet one must be careful to edit the diary without editing out the life itself. For if the framework of the diarist's life is somewhat askew, it's probably a fairly typical life; if the diarist is confused and uncertain at times, if she contradicts herself; if she breaks good resolutions or fails to carry out her worst threats—and if she details these things in her diary—it's all good. The diary will be a better one for all that and the reader will appreciate it. Such inconsistencies should not
be removed, for they are part of what makes a diary so valuable. (Franklin xxvi)

After reading the many edited diary selections, I began to have a stronger feel for what I was doing. The books that I was reading were collections of diaries—not the entire diaries. I was only reading tiny edited portions of much larger wholes—twice edited. But what I started to think about was why the editors choose the passages they did and how they organized the collections to form a whole. For Moffat and Painter “a gradual pattern emerged that led to the arrangement of their final selection under three broad headings: love, work, and power. What united these disparate lives for us was what we heard as an unconscious call by the women for a redefinition of these concepts into a less divisive, more organic pattern for existence” (Moffat 4). They found a pattern that made some sort of sense to the reader, that gave their book form. They more than likely chose a sampling from each diary that reflected in some way the whole diary. I realized that my task was to arrange the material in such a way as to make it interesting to a reader; I had to find out how the diary was connected, what story readers could read into it if they chose to. I began to get a sense of what to look for in my own work. I, too, noticed patterns, echoes, themes. I was distanced enough, now, from the diary to understand what I was unable to see while writing it. I noticed that the original order wouldn’t work, but there was another order that would. It was as if I had been writing in many different journals instead of only one.

I found four distinct sections, each independent of the other yet connected as a whole. Once I arranged the diary into these sections, the individual sections called for
rearranging. Each time I made a change I asked myself if I was manipulating the material too much. But I decided that this was actually bringing it closer to my original intention. Names were irrelevant to me when writing the diary, but I realized entire sections were about one particular person. I named the individual sections about people with the name of that person. Later on, I had to change some of the names because certain people didn’t want to be in the diary. It was bothersome and strange for me to have to make up names; it seemed as if I could start making up all the other details as well and end up with fiction instead. And I was, in one sense, with each change, moving away from the diary—getting a little closer to fiction each time I manipulated the text. The original journal will always be the truer one, and what I have edited more creative. What I have now looks completely different from the original: a different order, different groupings, clearer passages, punctuated passages when appropriate, and missing passages that I decided were unnecessary. What remains the same is the images, the ideas, the sense of it. The original intention is the same, the way of seeing.

The editing I was doing on the diary was the same type of work as editing a novel or other fiction work. It wasn’t just as simple as typing up the diary word for word. In fact I really had no idea how much work it was actually going to take. This is my largest and most difficult editing project so far.

How the Diary Differs From Other Genres

*Literary prose* (specifically) is commonly divided into two main categories: fiction and non-fiction. Fiction is commonly perceived as imaginative writing, not real, made
up, while non-fiction is based on facts, can be documented, and arises from life. Non-fiction writing would include autobiography, memoirs, and personal essay.

*Autobiographical* is a term used to refer to any writing that comes from one’s life. But isn’t fiction at times autobiographical? How can autobiographical fiction exist? Part is made up and part is from the author’s life. If I apply this definition to memoir, personal essay, or autobiographies, can’t I find the same thing to be true? Isn’t the act of telling a story, any story, imaginative? Can stories really be divided like this: one is true, from real life, and the other is only a product of the imagination? And what is the imagination? Isn’t there truth to be found in the imagination? The autobiographical non-fiction forms and the fiction forms are very similar in that they tell a story from beginning to end. They use the same devices such as plot, voice, and point of view. What separates them the most is the amount of truth the book claims to hold. If the author chooses to call his/her work fiction, this, in a sense, protects the author from people who don’t like what was said, who think the characters resemble them, or people who want to verify the facts. In choosing non-fiction, the author opens her/himself up to factual verification, the repercussions of writing truthfully about self or others, and being personally responsible for what is written. The fiction writer can separate very obviously from the text through the narrator, whereas the non-fiction writer finds it difficult to explain that the narrative voice is somehow different. The fiction writer may use true stories, but feel safer and freer calling it fiction, altering it a little to protect him/herself or others. Whereas the non-fiction writer may want to be given more leeway in the writing of the text and the telling of the story. A fiction writer’s writing style is more harshly judged than that of someone
writing down a true story. There are good reasons for hiding behind fiction. And even with fiction, if the author doesn’t do a good enough job of disguising a character, or a personal idea, there might still be repercussions. All of this lead up to my realization that there may not be much difference in the actual stories but more differences in the way the stories or the authors will be perceived. The form remains the same.

Whether fiction or non-fiction, the writer constructs a plot that undoubtedly did not exist as it was being lived or imagined. The act of writing is the act of leaving out. It is impossible to include everything. What the writer always ends up with is some sort of fiction. Language itself is inherently structured to leave things out because it is a translation, the expression of thought through the language of writing. [“At a certain level of discussion, language is itself fictive: something created by the human mind within a cultural system to serve certain social ends” (Oxford Guide to English Language 402).] Plot is the process of putting things together, giving significance to events, deciding what to include and what to leave out. Our lives only make sense in retrospect, so that any making sense is a process of making plot. Some plots are more contrived than others.

The diary’s form is what separates it the most from the other genres. Most obvious is the external form: the individual dates, the introspective “I”, which fiction writers have appropriated for their own use in order to convince readers of the truth of their works like Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* and Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*. But fiction writers have only appropriated the external form, they still continue to write the novel within the external boundary set up by the diary form. For the diary, it is the process of life that we are most interested in, the journey, the day-to-day,
moment to moment. The process, of writing, of living, of thinking, the way we come to conclusions, where our ideas about ourselves, others, and life come from and what they come out of. The novel has figured everything out; the novel is about the final product, the results, the order that has been created, the conclusions, the thoughts themselves, not how they came about. The diary leaves out less, pretends more than any other to be the truth, contains life's irregularities, wrinkles, and imperfections. The plot can only be recognized afterwards, upon reading. We create our own plots; we find the plot ourselves. The diary is living wholly in the present. The autobiography, or the memoir is the distilled story, what can be made of the day-to-day; whereas the diary is the day-to-day. In the autobiography the plot is found for us. Everything has been figured out already. The autobiography or memoir edits out life itself. Diaries leave it in. We need to read both fiction/autobiography and the diary in the same way that some of us need to write both. We read fiction to organize the chaos, the clutter of too many details, to make meaning, and we read diaries to keep our minds fresh, to remind ourselves of the clutter and the chaos of life.
Works Cited


I don't believe in stories; I believe in recollection of experience. I don't have a plot or a character, only me and the people I know. I want to tell you how things are at certain moments, what the pattern I have found is today, what I can remember of the past. I want to tell you what I say and how I feel about it. I want to give you words and I want you to hear them spoken in your head. I want to give you emotions; I want you to know that I too feel hopelessly alone that I am also in pain that sometimes I am happy and strong that I want to talk to you as honestly and openly as I can. I want to open up my world to you so we can experience something together. This is not autobiography, not fiction, not poetry, but poetic communication—mind words.

She said she never wanted the day to end, never wanted to have to see the sun again. It is hard to keep being alive. She sits and writes, sits and writes. His face haunted her, staring out, searching, always illuminated by strong light. He looked like an alien like he was the end of the world. And the people with three brains spoke quickly in darting clear voices. They spoke of rain, of crickets that covered the sides of buildings, of love, and oh yes, of death. Love and death inexplicably intertwined. They said, "That hurt, didn't it?" "Only a little," she answered. "I'd do it again."
I want to tell you about being trapped, about the ways in which we can bind ourselves without ropes or chains, without locked doors or brute strength. Without even trying.
The sky is cloudy, littered with fear and loneliness. It breaks open and sobs onto the earth looking for options. I have a hard time letting go. Don’t go. Don’t leave me. Go. Leave me. Stay. It’s a vast and lonely world without you: fear, is it only fear that holds me back? Only fear that numbs me? Answers to the questions do not exist.

We find ourselves between sheets between restaurants between barriers, walls between lines, the teapot’s whistle. Here is the answer: between you and between me, a white-lined space, nothing to be afraid of. I need this space, need to be between you and me.

Songs continuously playing, your songs and my songs. We sing of love, of death. We sing of fear. I walk in my own shadows— dark, quiet, without definition. I can’t remember color or mass, only the flatness of concrete, the size of summer. Your arms paw the ground, pealing at me, and I am saddened. I tend to shrink like evening light. My shadow hands touch your shadow hands, black forms meeting in cracks and puddles. I want to feel you. Both of us are just outlines. I want to feel the warmth of noon inside you. But my body is full of puritan guilt.

And I’m so sick of trying to control everything around us. So tired of preparing and planning for disaster. Things always just happen. That’s how it is. We just lose things: hair, fingernails, teeth, eyelashes, dead skin. It’s nothing to be afraid of. Everything replaces itself. Somehow we make up for it. Do you still love me? Even if I have disappeared underground, retreated from you and the rest of the world. I am stuck lately feeling only the weight of gravity. I do not leap or spin, no dancing, no floating I am only flat... on the ground... suffocating. What I was thinking is that we should forget about
forever and think about today. A day is never wasteful.

* * * * * * *

I love you like a pink house like a yellow door like a portal in the sky... I love you like the silver handle of a butter knife like a brick wall like the plague... I love you like a conspiracy. I love I hate I love I hate I slither around you. You slither inside me. I can forget and I can remember. I can walk around the bedroom naked laughing and I can hate you for wanting I can mock your desire and love you for walking away... your shirt over your shoulder and your tight blue jeans... down the hot Texas asphalt. The hard thing about these feelings is the constant need for deep water so that I love and I hate turn into just I, and maybe then I'll remember you.

* * * * * * *

Breath

She felt like she was a Hollywood movie, a sitcom, a best-selling paperback. What does one do to live a life instead of watching one? Always watching never doing. To lift her leg would take all the energy she had. Soon she would be pushed so far down that nothing would lift, not even her heart.

One good breath could free them.......

* * * * * * *

The past pants against my neck. You pick up my hand and squeeze out all the blood. Do you want to love me or kill me? We need to see more beautiful things. I can’t even remember how sexy you are (were.) Maybe it’s trapped in the past that we’re trying to forget. Every thought, every moment I am thinking: thinking we, thinking you, thinking
to you, for you. Angel boy where are you? We need to see more flowers need to swim in water more than you think. Can’t you just love me on your own, love me as you would love something intangible, the pleasure in loving more than in being loved. So love then, love, love, love.

* * * * *

Stagnant

I am sitting and waiting for something to move: a brown leaf surrounded by green lily pads, a dead tree across the small creek. It’s gray and cracking and has been eaten away inside. He sits on a brown sandstone rock his face towards the sun and the water. He says, “I don’t want to argue. OK. So will you please shut up?” It is the “shut up” that agitates me, makes me unable to stop the words coming out of my mouth, “I’m not arguing— you’re the one who is arguing. I’m just talking.” The sky is so blue and bright. His eyes are a dull blue and I am angry. He says, “Do you want to stop this or should we go home?” His face is stiff; his cheeks are redder. I want to shut up. I want us to have a good time, but I am unable to let the feeling go, the feeling of irritation, humiliation, powerlessness, the feeling that if I shut up, he will win and I will lose. “I don’t have to go anywhere,” I say. I stand up and walk away not wanting him to follow me because I know this will make him the angriest.

I walk across the dead tree and into the woods crushing leaves following streams of light that are filtering in through the trees. I am paying attention to small details trying to calm the falling spinning feeling inside me. All I want to do is put my arms around him, watch the sun go down, but we seem to always end up like this, both wanting the same
thing but unable to allow it, unable to make everything all right. The problem is that there is no argument, that we don’t even know what we are arguing about. It’s this tension in the way that we relate to each other, a tension I can feel in my throat, a tension that moves in and surrounds us, blinds us. This is nothing new.

I am staring at a small skinny branch with five leaves. The leaves are orange because of the sun illuminating them from behind. I like this quality of light, the way the sun is enhancing these particular leaves. This is what I want: For it to be easy for us. I want to be in love. For nothing to matter.

I can see the rock he is sitting on. It’s orange now too. It’s on fire, and I realize that I had really wanted him to follow me and that I kept turning around expecting him to be walking toward me, but he didn’t, and I won’t go back, not yet. I am stubborn today and childish. I walk to another side of the lake and sit on my own rock, my knees up, my arms around them. The sun is going down, a big orange circle just above the water. I want it to be like it was when we first met, but it never was. It was always like this. We have not molded together. We keep resisting, even when we give in we are resisting. I want to say I love you, but the words aren’t inside me. I have forgotten what we are all about. I have gotten lost in our separateness.

The sun is separate right now, an orange ball of light, unlike before when it was just light in the sky. The sun resists, seems to hover above the edge as if wanting to stay the way it is right now, a gleaming orange circle separate from the sky and the horizon.

I stand up and start walking back through the woods towards him, and he is walking towards me. We stop and stare at each other through the trees. We walk slowly through
the leaves until we are standing in front of each other. I am standing in my own space staring into his eyes. Behind him is orange light, orange open space. This is the way we talk, afraid of touching each other, afraid of making everything OK. This is the way we are standing when the sun merges with the water. In the darkness we forget our tension. In the darkness he whispers, “Come here.” We embrace to find ourselves standing in a drug store on Tuesday. Same argument. Different place.

* * * *

Leaving

.....And we are walking and he is leaving, and we are stopping not walking and he is leaving and I am angry. “Why are you walking away,” leaves cracking ants biting soft skin. “I can’t stay here,” he says. “It’s painful. I can’t stand here, can’t stand it any longer.

* * * *

There is nothing to say. I am mute not even reacting to you. Everything happens outside myself. I sit in the chair watching you, listening to you, but I cannot speak nor alter the flow of your words. “It’s over. I’m leaving. It’s over. I’m leaving.” You wait for me to say something, anything. I know if I make any sound any action, you will turn around and come back, say you love me, but I am frozen. I am letting you go. In the end it will be my fault; I will have let you leave and that is a different thing altogether. Part of me wants you to walk out the door and disappear. You’re telling me you’re leaving and I’m thinking, what about me? You become two-dimensional. I watch you like an image on a screen like I would watch an ant perform its kamikaze actions. I am unaffected and
this is painful. I look over at the photographs on the table, the frozen images of you, and I ponder the difference between that image of you and the actual image of you in front of me. I begin to erase you from my life in my mind. I see myself getting an apartment, being alone. I see my idea of the future crumbling. I see everything falling down falling apart, and this too feels like pain in my chest. Now, I am confused. Is it you or the idea of our future that I hold? You want me to tell you I love you, but I am confused. Is it you that I love or my idea of you that you do not embody at the moment?

* * * * *

It is easier to love when the person you love does not reciprocate. When the person you love loves less than you do, you don’t have to give up anything. You don’t have to trust in anyone but yourself. It hurts me to say I love you, hurts me to feel. In our dark familiar bedroom I sometimes doubt my capacity to love. Maybe it is the smell of dirty underwear, sweat, or dried semen around our genitals like something soured or dirty, an unpleasant pungence that makes me want to run away from this room away from my body and my mind, or is it my heart? There are times when I catch a glimpse of his genitals in their normal state, limp and fleshy like a deflated balloon, all the excitement gone with the ability to rise and expand. I am shocked by my repulsion to this part of his body by my feelings that genitals are unnatural and meant to be hidden. All of this disappears when I am aroused and he is aroused. His penis is hard and filled with blood. It becomes not of the body, and I am delighted by its ability to create sensations just by moving along my skin, my arm, my breast. I want it in my mouth on my lips. And I forget. But even in this, possibly afterwards, my body starts to feel empty, the pictures in my head flashing
my desire, my moans, my pleasure, humiliate me like after a night of drinking, the
could morning visions of my abandonment. It is here that the humiliation must lie.

I think I have a selfish self. One that wants to give up nothing. Anytime someone
has threatened to spend every waking hour with me, I have felt my body harden and my
mind close off. Will he take away my life take away me? I like to keep everything
separate, deal with one person at a time. I am always keeping my friends separate, my
food separate, and possibly my heart. It is when someone loves me the most that I feel
cold and cruel, but when I love the most, I embody love and kindness. Sometimes even
the smell of oranges makes me sick, so sweet, so beautiful, that I am angry. I turn off and
am left with a barely perceptible rotten smell that I am beginning to suspect my mind has
created in order to not have to love anything. The martyr, oh, I love so much, give so
much of myself, and yet he does not respond. Now, his love expands wider than mine ever
was, and I feel numb. I feel suffocated. I long for what I do not feel.

*     *     *

Breath

Why do we live our lives forward instead of backward? Backwards would make so
much more sense. The musician sleeps and the house is quiet and empty. The night is
finally cool enough to breathe, listlessly if one chooses.

We have been set free....

One decision changed everything, and it had been a good decision. Yes, I will go with
you, and it had been monumental. She had known it wasn't a simple decision. "Do you
want to stay home or come with me?" It had changed everything. The cool breeze from
the lake from the setting sun had calmed her. The trees, grass, the water, the reflection of
the sunset on the lake, the children playing in the sand brought a light playful feeling into
her and she only felt like smiling. They walked out to the edge of the lake; she wanted to
kiss him in the moonlight. As simple as that, as simple as one decision and she wanted to
hold him and make love in the grass, ants or no ants.

* * * *

Today I’m bubbling over with love. Love that makes me ashamed, guilty because I
wasn’t feeling it before. Where did the feeling go, and why is it here now? Can I answer
those questions or are they part of the mystery. Because I can say I love you now, when I
couldn’t before?

* * * *

I put on old shorts and a t-shirt, stood in the rain, walked in wet gravel, stuck my feet
in puddles. Wet dirt jumped on cooled wet asphalt. Inside he’s playing the piano, playing
jazz. It’s good that we are here together. This piano-playing creates a space in my life, a
good thing. Nothing feels better than us working together, writing, drawing, painting,
playing, as if we were going to the same place. If my feelings are so fluid so changeable,
then how do I make decisions? How do I know what will stay and what will go? What do
I trust, or who?

* * * *

Fluidity

Times like now I am aware of the circular aspects of my emotions and actions.

Although I feel constant at the present moment, if I look at any period of time, I move
from strength to weakness from love to hate from knowing everything to knowing nothing. I'm always moving around and around, back and forth, seemingly desultory but actually a pattern of life. Today I am full of love. I desire closeness with him but to everyone else I feel distant and removed like a quiet ghost. I desire him fully with my body and my mind. He says this is just my hormones—my body trying to get pregnant. I know my body will rebuild and plan again and again this cycle.

At my strongest time when I need no one, when I am confident, life makes sense. There is a definite pattern. I'm working on something, and then the bottom falls out. What made sense turns specious, and I am lost working to rebuild again my reality of life. She is hiding from us, they say. They are right even though they think they are joking. I cannot enter the room because I am not fully present. I am drifting somewhere else where no other people are. I am alone and only half-present like a ghost in this world. Indistinct. Everything I was a month ago is leaving my body, and I'm not sure whether I will grieve the loss or not because life had opened up for me large and vast like space. I understood fluidity and the idea of being. Already I am beginning to feel restrained and contained losing the sense of boundrylessness I had found. I must not forget.

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Red, like blood, like fire trucks, like Roma apples, like fire. I stand in a pool of blood reaching out to you. Raw and open like our first wound: I love you. I stand slobbering, sobbing. I say I am in pain. My chest, the inside of my thighs, my abdomen. Fuck me in this pool of blood. Fuck me until we are both sticky and wet both bleeding and open. Don't worry, a little blood can't hurt you. It's worth it for you just to know
how open I am and how quickly I empty and fill, empty and fill. You look at me and see nothing that changes, but I change with every breath that you take. Each time you fill your lungs, I too am filling, and each time you exhale, I am letting go, letting it all go. 

Lick my wounds. Lay your open sore onto mine, and we'll heal ourselves together. Our scab will be a sign. I reach out for your hand in a circle of blood. I move and blood rushes with me down my leg over my foot between my toes. I allow it to drip to the floor so that I can continue to stand in my pool of blood. (A metaphor you told me, for a musician giving it all they've got to give, the rawest sound, the rawest emotion, giving it everything. Becoming all things at once.)

* * * *

Dream

One morning you wake up and realize that you can’t get out of bed. You can’t get out of bed because of the dream. The dream about the boy who tries to kill you, stab you with a switchblade. You can’t get up until you understand the dream but the dream is like a language you never learned and a scenery you’ve never seen before. The bed is hard, the sheets sweaty and sticky. They smell unfamiliar as if someone else had slept and sweated in them, and you long to throw them away. Washing can’t make the fear go away, the fear of decoding the dream. The dream about the silver sword. After the switchblade he pulls out a silver sword. Now you have the switchblade but you can’t use it. You can’t use it because you have imagined the blood and the feeling of the knife cutting through skin. You could not do this. The room is cold, the windows closed, blinds closed, curtains pulled together. If you could see the light outside, maybe you could get up, but
you can only stare at the curtains at the door at the floor. You think maybe the boy in the
dream is your boyfriend and maybe the stabbing has to do with sex. You remember that
the boy’s knife cut your skin, grazed it. This was ok. It was the fear of the knife going all
the way in--this is death. The boy is young fifteen or sixteen, and you are bigger and
stronger. You can get the knife from his fingers, take away his power but you cannot use
your power. You don’t want to. In the end you throw the boy into the ocean and he floats
away. You have heard that the water could symbolize your vagina or relationships. This is
confusing. These are very different concepts. Which did your dream intend? Maybe
neither, or maybe its avoidance. Instead of hurting him or attacking back, you threw him
away from you.

*    *    *    *    *

Sex

Today we are in bed and I am asking him to tell me out loud what he is thinking as he
is thinking it. I realized that one of the biggest problems I have is wondering what he’s
thinking when we are having sex, what he wants, how he feels. So he does this. He says,
“I want her to suck my dick. I want to put my dick inside her. I want her to dance on top
of me while I masturbate. I want to watch her touch herself.”

He asks me to do the same. It is hard for me to hear what I am thinking. Everything
gets fuzzy. He has his hand on my breast, rubbing it. I say, “I wonder why he’s touching
my breast. Is he enjoying it or is it a technique to turn me on?” He kisses me. I say, “I
wonder what he’s thinking, what I’m supposed to do?” I stop. He asks me to keep going
and I can’t. He gets upset. “I want you to fuck me,” he says, and I am confused. What I
get is me on him fast and hard the way that I don't feel anything. I think violent and fast quick movements. When he says he will fuck me, all I get are images of him on top of me pummeling into me. He says, "Tell me what you want me to do. Be vulgar." "But I don't feel vulgar," I say, and I don't. I say I want you to rub your wet dick all over me put it in my mouth rub it on my face, my breasts." Is that vulgar? He says, "I want you to come screaming and shitting all over the place. I want to cut into you and fuck the wound."

* * * *

The Story

My mouth opens and closes fish-like. I breathe loudly in moans that sound like my eyes have rolled back into my head. I am sweaty and slippery. I suck at his lips at his ears, and by now I feel nothing. Before I was kissing and loving his hands on my body, now I'm afraid to look at him afraid of finding nothing. My thoughts make me feel guilty. I would prefer to disappear. If I say I want to stop that I've lost whatever I was feeling, I ruin everything for him. I create a bad moment and it is worse for me, but where I am is worse too. I decide to let him finish, but each penetrating moment pulls me further and further out of myself, and I begin to feel humiliated, and I'm not sure why.

"You never write about the good times we have. You never write good things about me," he says.

"Yes I do," she says. "Remember the poem about the hands, your hands?"

"Ok, one poem and that was a long time ago."

"Well, what's so interesting about us having a good time? Besides, my characters
aren't you. They're aspects of you. It is our problems that interest me," she says and turns back to her writing.

I lie on the bed on my stomach. He gets up immediately to wash himself off in the bathroom, and I am getting further and further away from my body. He comes back in with a towel and wipes me off. He sits down next to me. I am crying, feeling hysterical thinking, why does this have to be so difficult? Why can't we ever just do it?

I say, "I don't feel any closer. I just feel further away."

"From me?" he asks. I nod my head. "Do you want me to leave you alone?"

"No, I want you to help me." He puts his arms around me. "Tell me about sex," I say, "why you like it--you know."

"I don't know where to start."

"Just pitch it to me like an advertisement. Sell me the idea of sex."

"How would you feel if he read your diary?" her friend asks; "John read mine. I can't believe he read it. When he told me, I didn't say anything. I just walked into my room shut the door and started crying. I mean, he read stuff I've never told anyone, stuff I would never tell anyone. He found out all the lies I told him too.

"Doesn't he need to know those things?" she asks.

"Well, yeah, but I have to tell him in my own way, and I don't need to go into all the painful details like what he read in my journal--you know what I mean."

Don't you want him to know who you really are, she thinks. She isn't being
supportive enough; she knows this, but can’t seem to say anything comforting. She has just realized that she avoids writing certain things she doesn’t want her boyfriend to read. She is editing for him and this scares her.

“No, I don’t want to. Really I don’t. I feel sick. I don’t feel like being touched.” I pull away from him.

“What’s wrong with you? he asks; “you always feel sick.”

“That’s not true, not true at all.”

“And you never want to have sex.”

“What about the other day? I wanted to have sex twice in one day.”

“Well, that was a week ago.”

“No it wasn’t, was it?”

“What do you mean you stopped taking the pill?” her mother asks.

“I mean I stopped taking it. I don’t want all those chemicals in my body. It’s depleting all my vitamins. Besides, I want to feel myself ovulate.”

“So what are you using for protection?”

“I’m not,” she says.

“What are you going to do if you get pregnant?”

“I’m not going to get pregnant. Just leave me alone.”

“Well I don’t think you’re being very smart about it.”

She sighs into the phone. She doesn’t feel like telling her mother she’s not having sex,
that she hasn’t had sex in months, or that if she did have sex he wouldn’t come inside her. These weren’t things she wanted to discuss, so she allowed her mother to think she was being stupid or careless. What did it matter?

“Humans have sex,” he says, “that’s what they do. It’s a natural thing.”

“How do you know? What’s so natural about it?”

“I don’t understand you; What’s your problem? Are you homosexual?”

I think about all the experiences I’ve had with other guys.

“I don’t know. I don’t know what it feels like to be homosexual.”

“Well don’t you think you should find out?”

“But I’ve had good sex,” I say; “we’ve had some really good times, haven’t we?”

They are staying the night in a hotel room. Her best friend is reading a book next to her in the bed. She is staring at her friend feeling nervous and anxious. She wants to kiss her, just kiss her to see what it would feel like, but this action would alter reality would change everything. One way or another. She feels guilty for having these feelings as if it were devaluing their friendship, but when the lights go out and they are sleeping side by side, she longs more than anything to reach out and hold her hand. Holding her hand would be enough, or maybe it would be too much.
I wonder what it would take for me to be able to let go completely, to lose my body while he is inside me, to forget everything. This is what he wants. This is what everyone wants. If I could just understand what I’m supposed to be doing or what I should be feeling, maybe I could. I have a feeling that concentrating on reaching my orgasm is not what I should be doing. I’m supposed to be feeling pleasure, aren’t I? So much time has passed since the first time we kissed the first time we made love. So much has happened. Inside our bodies is the time he told me I was boring in bed, the time he pulled out of my body rolled over and ignored me, the times I cried after he was finished and told him he could never satisfy me. “It would be so easy,” he said, “to go out and have fulfilling sex with a stranger, a new body, new smell, new everything—maybe too easy. Maybe this is why we are still together.”

* * * * *

**Changing**

The trees change quietly; the leaves blow off the trees like birds leaving their nest flapping, flapping in yellow and red and orange. I cannot catch the trees in their actual process of changing. I can only, all of a sudden, notice the difference in them. Possibly in the same way I am unable to know at the time that I am changing that I am different in some way, but others notice the effects, the actual difference in me. *When did you change? You’re so different now*, and yet it’s still me, still the tree.

We are always in a process of change; we cannot start the changing nor stop the changing; we are merely witnesses, acknowledgers. Each day the same place, same house, same pacing across floors, same people possibly noticing each other and yet not noticing.
What is pure for him is crude; his sexual nature is toward that, and mine is not. I want beauty, and neither should change, yet we cannot come together either. We circle each other, embrace, yet we do not touch. There is warmth and love, comfort and closeness but nothing sexual, nothing moving inside our bodies, nothing sensual (maybe that is the beautiful?) Am I looking for passion? One part of me still cries, still needs that touching that kind of love, the love of bodies, and the answer to this need is not simple; it's not carnal, not crude, not easily fulfilled. Reconciliation of our desires seems impossible, and yet I love, I long, I need this presence in my life. Bring me to life again. Show me that other world that place where I am beautiful, glowing, excited, crazy, afraid, longing, where I am ready to sacrifice anything. A whisper, lips that move, that kiss, that promise me all I've ever wanted. I could die right now, I can't live without you.

* * * *

Magic

There was a boy once with white blond hair, cheeks full of life; he laughed; he was afraid; he wanted to kiss me; he wanted to talk to me all night; he wanted to make me his, wanted to love me.

There were big grassy fields, the heat of summer, kissing in cars, hiding in dark places. There was a beach, long and wide, a cold night, conversations that lasted all night long, long drives down dark roads. There was discovery, playfulness, a world we were creating that was all our own. There was a happily ever after. I remember desire, fantasy, music that created us, and magic; even the air was different around us. The future was huge, and we could conquer it. Days passed slow and long. Most of all, I remember laughter.
Encounters, adventures, nights we never slept, sunrises we watched, cigarettes we smoked sitting on our porch, writing music, writing words, nights under sheets giggling, touching, jumping in and out of bed. Coffee and jazz, crazy mornings, LSD and marijuana, where everything we said was important. Mystery, hope, we were making plans, preparing for the ultimate moment. We were afraid and grasped every moment with soft fingers; with soft wet mouths we breathed in all the air we could. We floated on our backs down rivers across lakes; he stood in the sand in the sunshine and I lost my breath. Everything I ever wanted, he possessed.

* * * *

Now, there is silence; we are invisible, at times separate and unable to connect. Yesterday we were together, close, sharing some part of ourselves, talking laughing, and I was suddenly sad because we couldn’t get as close as I would like to be. We can’t cross that boundary, but still, we are together. Suddenly it’s been so long, and I’m not quite sure what to do, what to long for, what I feel—feel me, feel who I am, remember me, remember us. Can I whisper softly enough for you to hear me transform. Know me, want me, love me, accept me, worship me, feel me, want to be me. I remember wanting us to merge together to be one person. The fact that we couldn’t was a lonely feeling.

You ask me questions I cannot answer. We have been together for moments longer than I have known with anyone. I am more attached to you than anyone. I don’t want to be without you, yet we are obviously missing something important; are we making each other sick? You’re not sexually attracted to me or anyone. I understand that; I can
empathize; I’ve felt the same way, and I know now that it’s unhealthy and depressing. So maybe you should find someone else to love.

* * * *

Kissing

I get into his lap facing him while he plays the piano, kiss his neck, his ear. I imagine that he is attracted to me that he will feel passion. He laughs. I can hear the anxiety and fear in his laugh. I laugh too. I kiss his chest. I kiss his lips; he doesn’t want to kiss me. He makes a joke, insinuates that I am attacking him. I look down and start to cry. I think, how far away from you I feel. I cannot open my mouth. “Why are you crying?” I can only look at him. He says, “It will pass; it will pass.” Maybe so. “Don’t be sad.” I can’t stop crying. I can feel the space in my chest emptying out as I cry over his shoulders, and he plays all the sad notes on the piano which makes me cry even harder. I say, “I’ve been sending out the signals. I’ve felt myself doing it. I want to be kissed. I want people to be attracted to me. I want love.” I’ve been paying more attention to guys looking them directly in the eye and smiling; I can feel the difference. I want passion.” “I have faith in our relationship,” he says, “Do you?”

* * * *

I want to kiss strangers. I’ve never been single in this town, never paid much attention to these guys before, but lately I’ve been imagining what they look like naked. Only for a few seconds, and then I smile; no one would guess, least of all, them. I’ve wanted to say kiss me. I just want to know what it would feel like. All of a sudden, I’m expressing interest in their private life: where do you live, by yourself? I look straight into their eyes;
I'm working it, giving it all I've got. But I'm only playing. I just want to be your fantasy. I want to dance naked in front of you, but don't touch me. I want to kiss strangers. I'm starting to notice lips and how different they are, how inviting, how appealing. Lips that are rounder, lips that curl at the edges, full lips, soft pink lips. When's the last time I was kissed?

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I want to kiss a girl. Not just any girl, a special girl. Someone I know or would meet somewhere. Somewhere that people kiss. Yesterday, this couple stood outside Mr. Chopsticks next to a car, face to face; they didn't want to stop kissing, their mouths moving against each other, his head moving forwards wanting to push into hers, their hair falling into each other's faces. They kept kissing. I couldn't look away. I just kept staring through the window feeling empty. They're probably saying good bye for a couple of hours. She's going to her class. They never want to be parted again. Two hours is much too long. I imagined that their lips ached whenever they were apart as mine ache now.

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It's not so much a kiss that I want; hey you, kiss me. I could force my boy friend to at least kiss me on the lips. But I want someone to want more than anything just to kiss me. I want the feeling of attraction, of forward motion. Something has to happen or I will go crazy. I want that slowing down of time, two people sitting next to each to other talking; one person licks their lips, and this action overflows with sexual innuendo. Nothing could be more exciting than watching that tongue move across those lips. I'm looking this guy straight in the eye thinking wouldn't you like to kiss me. You've never kissed me before.
People kiss at parties in the dark; they kiss in dorm rooms, inside their houses, at clubs. They kiss in the woods, on their porches, in their beds. Where do I go to get kissed by a stranger?

Never

When you get old your heart dies. All the emotions freeze up and dry out. A slow death. That will never happen to me, she thinks, never.

Early in the morning, the sun is just starting to rise up along the blinds in her room. She’s lying in her bed as comfortable as she never remembers being before, completely satisfied. Beautiful sex in her dreams, feels as if she’s just had an orgasm. He’s playing the piano, she realizes. She is lying in the bed listening to warm notes imagining his fingers pressing the keys, playing her body. She closes her eyes and realizes she’s falling asleep again, soft, warm sleep.

When she finally wakes up, the house is silent, and she is alone. She fumbles down the hallway to the kitchen and makes English Breakfast tea, puts on a blue fleece sweatshirt and blue jeans, and sits outside on the porch drinking tea, breathing deeply. Sunday sun, Sunday air. Everything’s bright and cool, leaves slipping off branches....

I have something to say, she thinks, something to tell you. But the leaves they keep falling, keep allowing me to forget my thoughts. They slip off, fall down into piles that get raked away while I sleep. It was Sunday. I know it was Sunday because we went out for breakfast and we ate leisurely. I sipped tea listening to conversations all around
me. It was Sunday, and you played the piano all day. After that there was nothing we had to do, nowhere we had to go.

I remember thinking of other Sundays when we would stay in bed all day and make love under the sleeping bag never stepping out of the bed until the sun had warmed the wood floors. And the bed was our world. We live in a different world now. I knew that whatever I did, you would not stop playing the piano that we were never going to get back into that bed. Our whispers had become bitter voices, our kisses like poison, our bodies only bodies full of fear of consuming the other, and I wonder why it matters that we've become separate planets in separate universes. I wonder why just being together isn't enough. Something about atoms and attraction about revolving and circles.

He says, "Come lie down with me," and I do. "Cold," I say, and he pulls the blankets over me; his hands are cold on my back and I shiver. I know that we must lie here just like this that. I know that to try to remember what it feels like to have him inside me would only be painful because it will not happen, not the way I want it to. I want us to be strangers meeting each other for the first time thrilled by our bodies wanting only to put them closer together. The problem is that we can never be strangers, that we have always known, will always know each other. This is the place we are never in—this bed. I can only ask for comfort and for warmth. "It will pass," he says.

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I am ovulating in your presence. Don't be frightened; just close your eyes and hold out your hand. I will let you touch my ovaries; they are swollen and painful; they ache to
be touched by soft hands, ache to be caressed, noticed. Yes, yes keep touching me, yes, that soft kiss will make all the difference.

* * * *

Leaving

And I am instantly melancholy. My love is yours. Where is that feeling inside of me? I am learning to forget, learning to weep. Where is the beauty of the sleeping one? The smile that makes my heart turn that stifled sob of beauty. Did you miss me last night? Why would you? What would be the difference? But I know the feeling of the absence of your presence, the way I wait for you in the empty house. Once I gave everything to you. Once I believed every word you said. Now I say maybe you need to get laid. You'd be surprised at how it can change everything. Won't touch me, touch someone else. My heart, the part of me that longs for touch and for laughter hurts, and so does yours. Where is your head these days? I can't feel where you go, where you stay these days. That is true and yet I cannot fathom this as real. I don't know who you are, who we are. I see you stumbling, running into walls, kicking yourself, but I do not see. I cannot understand. I ask you to help me, let me feel, let me know, but you sleep solidly, smelling of beer or whisky. I move away from you, your breath, and your body. I am more alone each day. Everyone is leaving me.

* * * *

Waiting

We are waiting silently and alone in places with little light. I wash your feet with warm water that smells like peppermint. I wash between your toes kissing your feet.
I whip you grudgingly as if it wasn't what you wanted or maybe I don't like the idea that you need it. I bring the belt down trying to maintain some kind of rhythm. Maybe it was me who needed to be beaten. Wasn't I the one who couldn't feel anything?

Cold if the wind blends in and dark when light is set free. Cold when my body never warms to yours. Dark when our words strangle each other. I don't care either way. Come or don't come. Sleep with me or don't; none of that matters anymore.

He is suddenly close to her putting his head on her shoulders. It is cold outside and this warmth is pleasant but this closeness is confusing. Lately they had become so separate. What is the difference between touching out of love and touching out of passion? The difference exists; they are not the same.

Now at night his body is in the bed next to her. Each touch reminds her of what she wants a touch to be. She is waiting. She can feel herself counting. The sky had been so blue lately, but she had not been able to share it with him. The coloring of the leaves described her, pleased her. Parts of her were coloring, losing life, getting ready to leave her to float away forever. This she had not been able to share with him either.

* * * *

Remembering

And here I am in this room in this trailer in this town, still here, still waiting. The man sleeps all day quietly, slowly. I never forget he is there. I can never pretend I am alone. I
wonder if I would feel less alone or more alone if the man didn’t exist. I am in the blue room, my place in this house, the space I created for myself. Inside this room I can make anything happen. I open the windows and let the autumn wind move everything in the room back and forth, back and forth, up and down until the breaths I take start to move with the room and I too rise and fall into oblivion. The music comes from somewhere else far away and it plays over and over again until I cannot tell who I am or what world I live in. I am having a hard time keeping certain thoughts out of my mind like my lips searching his face not being able to find his mouth. It’s gone! It’s gone! I wanted to scream, to open my eyes, turn on the lights.

“Your breath smells,” he tells me. I don’t care; it’s no excuse for not having a mouth. This isn’t meant to be a joke. He could talk and eat, but the real mouth, the orifice of his face was gone--metal cold. I remembered he used to kiss like the wind.

Outside rain drips through holes; the whole god damn house is falling apart with me in it. I am falling apart. No, I am completely put together. Solid. Unbreakable. So you have no mouth; big fucking deal; you fall apart. I am sitting in the blue room rising and falling not holding on to anything not remembering. I was born in this room. I have always been here. I will never leave. My eyes are closed. My body is warm; it wants to feel hands, mouths, skin; the body wants everything. I want nothing. I have control; I can do what I want. I have secrets that keep me alive, secrets that hold me, that whisper, you’re beautiful, your ankles, your shoulders, never any more perfect than yours. My secrets whisper loudest when I am the most quiet the most removed. Remember that girl
who used to lie on hard wood floors sobbing at the weight, remember it was she how forgot who she was. You are the one who will never forget. You are the one who sees everything. You can move through both worlds. Look out the window; see the flash of lightning. Tell me what you just saw illuminated there for a split second of white clear vision. Are you tired? Sleep then sleep through the wet lonely night, sleep in your room touch yourself. Think of the vision, think of all you've known, all you want to know; feel the warmth in your body. Remember that. Whisper, whisper with your tongue, touch your breast, wet your finger, see the lightening flash, kiss your fingers, trace your own skin. Remember. Remember.

* * * *

Breath

Sky, sky, sky. Blue, blue, blue. Still failing every day, will we ever stop being strangers? Today, one more time, I lean on your chest and try to breathe with you. I count to ten using your breaths, and when I realize you feel nothing, I am anxious. I say I don't need you, but we are still here. How long can I retrace the same patterns, the same movements, before I start to desire breathing elsewhere and seeing elsewhere and touching elsewhere. Today... I am the blue... of the flame... of the gas burner... of the sky.

* * * *

Changing

Admit. Release. Tell. Share. Release. Can you be who you really are? The sky is white horses stomping into dust. Nothing. I feel nothing and want to want nothing. Free me of my worldly wants and desires. Blue. She moves blue to real smooth grooves. She sings
white while words remove. I cannot answer with the right answer. I don’t know if we should do everything we think we want to. I have noticed that with time we change our minds. We lose what we do not have, get what we already gave away, and want what we already possess. The truth is difficult. I waver, ignore, run from, repress. I love you too.

We change so much. We are two people moving in and out of doors that do not exist and allowing those same doors to close on our faces. Unremembered dreams, forgotten food. We move towards each other to set each other free, really free because we are together.

Newness fades, but something remains. Some things are never new; we do what we have.
I am envious of whoever is out there writing with ease, writing something important, something that will touch the core of me while I sit here doodling and scribbling. This isn't working. Inside of this moment must be a million moments, but I can only feel the one moment, the external one that has its grip over me.

Does this day mean nothing if I am doing all these things that I care nothing about? If I try to describe this day, I will bore you to death, and this is my life. Today I exist in bullshit, so this is why I must create a story to express to you that I am actually living, that I have emotions, feelings and ideas to express.
Loneliness
We Perish Alone
Breath

She is moving awkwardly along sidewalks. The air is a breeze, the newness of September in the wet of fall. Walking quickly as if she had somewhere to be, something to be. She has neither and will walk in circles. She is trying not to think. Somewhere there is a moment; she forgets, realizes she is in the middle of thinking long thoughts; must try not to think. Don’t think. Breathe. Be. Be. Be. Her lips. She presses her teeth together against them; they are trembling possibly, maybe not, but what she feels is definitely in her lips not her eyes. In this she is lucky. The word lucky displeases her; fortunate is much better. Isn’t luck more vulgar than fortune? She tunnels her way home. Her energy repels others’ energy. People move away from her. She knows it’s nothing personal, but this knowledge doesn’t change the way she feels.

* * *

Stagnant

Before now, this exact moment, everything had been different. Her entire idea of life. One day she had friends, plenty of them. Something was happening every day. Life was moving, and then the next day she had no one and life was feeling stagnant. No one to talk to, no one to call or visit or laugh with. Everyone had disappeared. She was becoming weak and small again. In bright sunlight she had walked down the street maybe gone into the cafe. There had been people smiling, laughing, calling her name, including her in everything; now they said hello and that was that. Her best friend was distant and
hard to get in touch with. Funny how the bottom just falls out and you start floating in space reaching and grasping for something to hold on to.

There had been the trip to Europe: the beginning of her life, and the return, her maturity, and now nothing. Empty, empty static time. Hot depressing light, uneventful days getting nothing done. How is life supposed to move now? Every poetic bone in her body disappearing, hard to get, hard to find. Need more experiences. Please refill.

She is lying with her friend on the floor in darkness. Music is playing but she can’t really hear it. They are talking but she can’t remember what about. What she remembers is wanting to run out of the house, wanting to be at home alone. Something is missing and she doesn’t know how to find it. What to say, what to ask for. How to get back to where she was.

* * * *

Alone

I want to go around asking people I know, "What do you think of me as a friend? Is there something you need or that you’d like me to do? Something that I’m not doing? How can I be a better friend, or do you even consider me a friend at all?" What is it that I want from people? Do I want what no one will ever be able to give? Do I want what I cannot give? Why was I feeling so content so part of something? What happened to change all that?
Back! Back to the corner, I say. Crack the whip. She has gone too far. Back to your loneliness, your pain. Back. There is no escape. You will always be caught and captured in corners in darkness behind masks.

An empty room. Only interior monologues. Only your imagination. And your friend? It’s hard. She doesn’t even know nor would she understand that I am hurt. I feel abandoned, forgotten, unimportant. I feel like a child. I think I’ll tell her how I feel just to see what it sounds like. Who is she? Who are people? Will I ever know? Veiled, masked, disguised, pretending, hiding, projecting, afraid, lost people? My god, all around you constantly moving, talking, laughing. How can you possible feel lonely?

* * * *

Disconnection

What is this horrible feeling of alienation and loneliness? I know that even if I were sitting with a friend and we were talking, this feeling would still persist because the problem is somewhere inside of me. Something I need that I don’t feel able to express. I don’t know what this is. But deep inside of me something is begging for attention for love and acceptance. I am feeling hostile toward everyone because they are not giving me what I need. I have no one to give any of myself to. No one allows me to care enough or to give enough. I thought things were changing and maybe they did for awhile. I felt acceptance like I was part of something, but now everything is the same, and I feel left
out, superfluous. Who would notice if I died? Who would care? Who are your friends?

Where are they now?

* * * *

"We perish alone." I feel silly today out walking down the old railroad tracks as the sun rises listening to William Carlos Williams and picking flowers. I feel as if I were disillusioned as if everything before me was a mirage: the green green field shimmering gold in the sunlight, hay stacks like Monet's, a rosy peach color, the dark green pasture, and beyond that hazy and foggy cows beautiful in rosy light. The sun was pink today. I was walking trying to be happy with the scenery trying not to think about cars, trailers, RV's, construction, highways. I suppose I won't be content until I stop trying to create the perfect environment. William's voice is pleasing, soothing; it moves up and down slowly, carefully, then quickly, intelligently. He speaks of loneliness as if he understood.

* * * *

The people walk right through me every day. I am a ghost to them, a passing phantom with no needs, no emotions. They walk right over me. I start to feel and be superficial to them. What did you do this weekend; did you have a good time; oh, that's wonderful. Fuck you all. What have I done wrong? Why do you walk right by me like I don't exist? I wander like a lost dog waiting for someone to pay attention to me, my nose at their heels.

* * * *
Empty

Good. She thought and smiled. It was good. I am dead. Nothing enters. Nothing leaves. Silent. Barren. Vacant. “Good,” she said and smiled. The sky was dull, was cloudy. The sky grey, the light thin. Nothing to regret walking down Hickory under trees past endless cars, alone. Walking, no sun to inspire a real smile or any kind of desire---the weather aligned with her mood. Dark, dank, cool, numb, empty. “I’m fine,” she said, “and how are you, you, you?” People walking by never taking their eyes off the ground. They look lost, she thought, lost and empty. I am alone. Faces are all familiar. I see them all the time, but I’ve never met any of them. Where are my friends? Up ahead--Recycled Books and Records, a shoddy looking sanctuary, but it was only with these books that she could find companionship, a voice trying to communicate. Upstairs with Anais Nin, Virginia Woolf, Dorris Lessing, she could hear the interiors of someone else. The interior she longed herself to give to the world, to those who wanted to go there who longed to know. It wasn’t so much a longing though, more like a need, a desperate need to know what people think, how they think. Their bodies, their faces were a fortress, an illusion, the outer life and the inner life diametrically opposed.

* * *

Shame

Jazz, the word sounded romantic to her. The names rolled off her tongue like magic like love: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock. She didn’t know enough about music to talk about them to anyone, but the sounds they made were like
light: sunrises, sunsets. Something about Jazz had the beauty of nature in it. Today she was sitting outside at the blue table drinking tea. The air was cool. The light particular and enlightening. It knew what to illuminate, how to make everything appear beautiful. She had put Wayne Shorter on and left the front door open so she could hear the music. She was also waiting for the phone to ring, halfheartedly. After sitting around for an hour thinking about calling someone she knew to hang out with, she had finally done it and was waiting to be rejected. She knew it would just feel that way. Sometimes it was better to just think about these things and never act on them and sometimes it just made her feel even more alone. She knew people didn’t think of her as being lonely; maybe she acted too much like she didn’t need people, so they didn’t feel obligated to help her out. She was friendly, likable, she must have tons of friends, or maybe she enjoys being alone (who knows)? She was waiting for the phone call. Her best friend or the friend she felt the closest to wasn’t home, hadn’t been home for days. This was the one person she didn’t feel like she had to run into by accident. The person she didn’t feel humiliated calling (was that it?) She felt humiliated asking for friends?

It wasn’t rejection. She knew that so why did she feel a sinking feeling inside her. Why did she feel shaky and anxious, like crying. She felt like moving some place where she didn’t know anyone; then she would feel justified in her loneliness. Of course there were people she rejected, that she called in desperation, people she didn’t really want to be around, but would use. This made her feel even more lonely.
Need

There is something about this loneliness that is strange that has more to do with me than with anyone else, something I fear, or I’m afraid of. There is something I need but am not getting. It feels like this: I am at home writing or listening to music. I feel like being with someone. I go through a list of people I know. Suddenly I feel small and unimportant like who would notice if I died, who would care? At times I think I am afraid of being needed of being responsible for someone else which is exactly what I want. Maybe to be needed by somebody.

Nobody needs me. Nobody cares about my suffering. Something beneath this need is not at all friendly, something that cannot be fixed by a hello. I need something deeper or more solid, some inner understanding so that I don’t always call when someone’s not home or look for people when they aren’t around. I’m still not getting at what I’m feeling. I start to name all the people I know. See you have friends. I start to feel frantic. No! They aren’t my friends. I see them in my mind and they are closed entities; they have closed ears, closed eyes; they have their own lives and not enough time for a me that is unsure of what I have to offer or what will keep their interest. That’s still not it. I need to be close to the people I know. No boundaries. I want to be one with everyone. I want what can not exist.

*   *   *   *   *


Today I walked out of my house into a hostile and unforgiving world of loud highways and architecture that humiliated me in front of nature and made me feel powerless. Perhaps it was only the quality of light, but looking made me want to cry, to commit suicide, to hide knowing nowhere exists where I can hide. Everywhere construction, building. I drove down what used to be an empty street to find more and more neighborhoods, strip malls, and less and less fields of green grass, brown dirt, and yellow sunflowers. Each day they bulldoze thousands of those beautiful wild flowers. A hawk flies overhead. Soon he will lose everything, all the land he lived on. He is the lone hawk overhead, circling and circling. Each day he finds a new home and each day they destroy it. My insides scream desolation; they scream stop, that one word for fighting a losing battle. I mean who can compete with huge bulldozers and cranes, asphalt and concrete trucks, the man with the big plans. It won’t stop until there is nowhere left to build. This has something to do with how lonely I am. It’s maybe not loneliness but something else. I want to be included, wanted. I want to be needed, and I don’t want that at the same time. It’s always being left out, feeling separate. No one sees me; they don’t call; maybe they do care, but I can’t feel close. I feel uncared for, untended, forgotten. I don’t know how to involve myself in places I’m not sure I belong. I ache. I burn. I cry for companionship, for tenderness. My head pulls, my heart strains itself. Love me. Love me. My heart, or that part of me, feels suffocated and stifled like it’s dying, no, not dying, but being buried in pesticide soil. I reach out to you and you say nothing. I can’t get close to
anyone, and I can't stand being so far away.
My narrative is self-reflexive, self-contained.

Writing is admitting, and I’m having a hard time writing. I want to censor my thoughts so that they will not hurt anyone who reads them. I’m subversive, even in my writing.

When does life become a story? Story become life? When does me sitting outside in sunlight in cool weather on a beautiful day, content in being alone, become anything to write about? And if life can be so boring, what’s going on in my head all the time? That bright orange butterfly-- is that life? Can you tell me the answers? I would do anything to know. In a story people do things, but what they’re doing isn’t always the story, so if I go bike riding down these empty streets chasing sunlight and hawks, staring across other people’s fields, I am doing something, but it’s not a story. What’s on the mind, my mind while I’m riding the bike? My relationship with Michael, with Jess, fear of the future, fear of writing too much of the truth. Now it’s the bright orange butterfly.
I Know A Girl
I know a girl. She makes me feel kinda funny. Have you seen her lately have you heard her lately. She is quiet when she's alone. I know a girl and she is just like me, just unlike me. I want to kiss this girl. I want to study her hands know her palm. She's the kinda girl who'd have one of those hard to read palms. I wouldn't dare. I wouldn't take that kinda chance. This girl really isn't a girl she's something else. She is alone at every corner, but she can be just as happy as the rest of us.

I know another girl; she laughs at every corner. She would surprise you, shock you. She knows things you might never know, and she keeps them secret. She has a voice like crickets, hums inside in a special place you've never been to. You'd think she was crazy; I think she's just like me and you don't even know who I am, and it doesn't matter much. We're all gonna be real quiet and pretend like nothing's happening. We can disappear like nothing you've ever seen before. You'd be surprised. One of us could be a stripper, another could be a kisser, and the last one could be crazy. She could kill you and you'd never know the difference.

She pushes the button I take the picture. We document everything, take notes on what you say. We make you responsible, remind you of your words of your place, and we never make mistakes. One of us has sex; the other is sex, and the third will pretend to be anything you want: a little girl, a prostitute, a killer, a queen; just close your eyes; play the same games we play; maybe you'll be surprised; maybe you'll make it out alive. One of us has seen things you wouldn't live to tell about. Listen carefully; don't make sense of anything. We aren't about that we aren't about that at all.
Cinnamon

Smells like cinnamon in here and bread, smells like warm flannel shirt and corduroy jeans sitting-on-the-couch kind of warm catching the cool, fresh air blowing into the house and sunlight. Music is playing, Bill Evans, and you say, "This day is so familiar. We’ve been here before." "First cold day of the year. What can you remember?" I ask. "Us. I remember drinking wine, not knowing anything about each other, not knowing what to say. And you saying, I’ve felt that way too. I’ve felt that way before. Oh, this is so familiar."

* * * *

Infinity

I remember being scared, being afraid, as if the universe would come tumbling down as we spoke, honestly, as honest as we could. I suppose we were going so far, tearing down so many boundaries I felt like we were really getting somewhere, and I looked into her eyes and I realized that we could go deeper and deeper and we would always be in black space and that was what made me afraid. Infinite because we are part of the universe, every molecule in our body composed of all the molecules in the world. Looking into someone is like looking out into space all the way to Pluto and realizing it’s only one universe out of millions and beyond. Feels like being let go in space. I should have fallen further and longer, but I was afraid of her infinity.
The Moment

I will continue to capture these moments of connection, wonderment, magic, pain, sorrow, loneliness, life, the magic of another human being--infinity. We touched the surface of that other world and now it seems like everything around me has been constructed to hide, conceal, camouflage the other world. But I know it is there. I moved inside of it, breathed new air, saw what I had never seen, felt what I had never known. It took traveling, movement, getting rid of time, organization, home, patterns, familiarity. I saw how large life could be, how it would be possible for us to fly or swim. The boundaries started disappearing. Human beings were reachable. No one around us could tell us their truth; no one could make us see their reality. We created our own and it was as real as any other. What would we have become if we had never returned? Ourselves? We would have just been. Being endlessly. Someday I will be able to tell this story. The world did not appear immediately when we arrived in London. We did not understand what people meant when they told us that once we left, we'd never be able to come back home. We had to move around for awhile, begin to connect to each other, and slowly begin to float.

Water

Swimming naked in the Mediterranean, my clothes dropped at the edge where dry sand meets wet sand then water. I am imagining birth. I am innocent, clean, small. Salt
washes into me and out of me. My skin responds in jelly-like motions. I am no longer in control, no longer solid. Did I used to live here like this before I decided to walk and breathe on land? Did my body used to feel like this? How queer. I could imagine gills, could imagine finding my way in this water and never going out or back, leaving my clothes behind, leaving everything behind.

My friend is swimming near me. I cannot see her body, only her face going in and out of the waves. She slides by me moving backwards towards the shore her head floating, floating. I see her shoulders... her back... her buttocks... then her legs appear out of a wave and she is no longer swimming she is walking. I can see her feet walking through wet sand. The boy wraps a towel around her newly formed body, dries her off, and helps her to dry sand. I can see her lying in the sand taking light, gaining strength. She is my friend, my voice. I cry out but make no sound.

* * * * *

The Moment

"Girl From Ipanema" played today somewhere, and I was immediately taken back to Europe to the two of us dancing to this song, gin and tonics in hand, the dinners, the beach, the forest, the adventure. I was reminded of that morning after staying up all night—looking out the window to find out that the entire postal system was outside the window—the yellow, red, and black trucks chaotically picking up big bags of mail moving oddly as if there had never been such a thing as order. And the guy humming the song; wow, that's amazing, that's my favorite song, me refusing his kiss. I'd prefer to be a
friend. Can we be friends? The cafe, the coffee. I like you. “The heightened moments,” she said, “can’t last forever. That’s why they’re heightened.” The world was a huge place. Anything could happen.

* * * *

Infinity

And we are making tea in the kitchen. I am standing near the window breathing thinking of what to say, and she is standing near the stove thinking of how to reply. We hold invisible hands and pray silently to each other holding round cups of tea. We turn our cups around in our hands, take a sip, swallow, put them down. “I am afraid,” she says “of living alone. I’m afraid of not being able to sleep.” “I’m afraid too. We are both afraid.” In my mind I am thinking, I love you, but I can’t tell you because you know, and if I look too far into your eyes I’ll lose myself. Only you know who I am because we have spent weeks in silence, walking, riding on trains, sleeping in bunk beds, never speaking, only looking, and you know me because we have the same hearts and we are both good. At one time I thought I wouldn’t meet anyone ever again, that the one friendship I had would be the only one I would ever have, and then everything changed. Everything I have right now is so much more.

* * * *

Magic

Last night, chocolate, wine, cigarettes, wine, chocolate, cigarettes, Billy Holliday singing in our ears, laughing at us as we danced around the room. “Everything that I
possess, the sun, the stars, the moon, I would give it all to you.” Is there a boy who would
dance with us like this? “Come with me,” she says, “We could make it all happen again.”
We were great together; intuitively we knew what to do to give each other space and
freedom. “Where did it all go?” She asks. I don’t know but it’s gone, gone, gone. We
have learned to be singular again, slender and sleeping. Drunk cheeks, soft evening air,
my toes are beautiful, her face looms in front of me like the moon—glowing, a fuzzy
glow all around her. Oh god. I want more. I want to fall at her feet and make it happen
again; let me in; make it happen again; let me in.

* * * *

Secrets

I was flirting wasn’t I? Allowing myself to get drunk glowing with wine and chocolate
spinning around the room wondering what I looked like. The kiss on my cheek moist and
semisweet, the lips meeting mine blowing in smoke, my surprise at the closeness of your
face. I want to tell you a secret; the secret lies on the soft grooves of my lips. You tell me
everything I want to hear, but not with words; your words confuse me. Unexpectedly, the
moon is full but hides behind clouds and only at certain moments of clarity am I amazed
by the tug of a glance, the slight waver in the sky, but I cannot fly; I cannot slip through
these thoughts. We can do whatever we want, but I am walking in a neighborhood I have
never lived in, skipping rocks that I have never rubbed shiny. Can you see the places my
fingers have touched? I feel as if I betray you with every step I take backwards, every
street I walk down that your house isn’t on. When I crossed through that field, I betrayed
you with every move of my shoulder, every twist of my ankle. When I say I will go with
you, I am lying; when I say I want to go with you, I am wishing I could. Soon you will be
the only one who moves, the only one with the potential to grow wings.

What am I talking about? Even you wouldn't understand. I am hiding behind words
while at the same time trying to tell the truth, disguising what I am trying to say. I meant
to be so incredibly honest, but I fail each time I do not write my first thought, my true
thought. I am still hiding because I still have not written what I mean. I have not written
your name. I have not written what I am really speaking about. I allow a number of
interpretations. I am subversive with every bit of ink left in this pen. Language allows
this.

* * * *

The daisies are still alive, bright white, a soft yellow. My hair is long and white
from the beach and the sun. She takes me out for a drink, a gin and tonic. I am wearing a
daisy chain on my head. I made it myself from the daisies she gave me early this morning.
I am 24 today. I know I look beautiful. She has brushed my hair, put a touch of eyeliner
on my eyelids, a little mascara, a trace of shiny lipstick she rubbed across my lips. She has
made me this way. I asked her to, feeling silly and small. “Close your eyes,” she says,
drawing on my eyelid; “Now open them;” her face is so close to mine I feel her breath;
she is looking only at the line she has drawn. She rubs my eyes gently with her finger.
“Does this hurt?” I want to say yes, it does; it hurts me for you to touch me.

The air is cool and smooth. We sit at a table outside. I am squeezing my lemon
into the gin; then I pour the tonic. Soon we will listen to jazz. By this time I will be getting a little drunk in the darkness, the singer’s voice round and warm filling my body with longing. But then the jazz club turns into a dance club and suddenly people are everywhere crowding around us. I turn to look at her. I see her, but then she is gone. She is someone I do not know dancing in a way that attracts only male attention. They crowd into us, split us apart. One guy gets close to her dancing behind her, getting closer.

Another guy stands in front of me getting closer and closer to my face until I can smell his breath. I ignore him; he doesn’t give up easily. He gets too close, too vulgar, but she doesn’t seem to be bothered by this, the guy behind her doing the same, and I am disgusted by him, by her, by this feeling of hatred of longing, but mostly I feel pain. In the center of my body in my heart, in my head. I can’t really tell.

Then we are outside standing next to a fountain staring up at the sky. The daisy chain is gone, dropped from my head long ago. I will make another one, connect each flower one by one, end to end.

Earlier she was lying on the floor in the dark. I was sitting next to her placing individual unconnected, never to be connected, daisies on her body. On her ankle, her stomach, her chest. I place one on her forehead, in her hair, one behind her ear. I wedge one into the edge of her shorts, between her toes, in her mouth. She doesn’t ask me what I’m doing, and if she had, maybe I wouldn’t have been able to answer. I thought it was beautiful, innocent, and pure, but maybe I was only marking territory, possessing those places on her body. I told her she couldn’t move, that if she moved she’d mess up
everything. And in those moments that she laid there I wanted something to happen, but I didn’t know how or what or why. If she would stay there long enough, maybe I would know what to do, but then she sat up, daisies falling to the floor.

This was our final moment, our last time together. She married not long afterwards, married a man much more possessive than me and my daisies that only lasted one day later before turning brown, rotten at the ends dripping a liquid that smelled as rotten as it looked. He took her away somewhere else and asked her to be still. And I guess for him she stayed that way.

* * * *

Poem

I. Your laughter colored the trees like sunrise.

We moved inside the laughter and touched
our hands together. Our fingers shivered
and I saw the patterns of your skin in the room
with the sea-blue carpet and the thin white
curtains that moved in the wind; ears ringing
we drank tea in the room and remembered
our childhoods, shared secrets, some facts,
some fictions. I can still find strands of your hair.
II. He told you about my hands, the way they reminded him of yours, holding flowers, throwing rice, the day I lost my friends to circles and to other friends I wanted to say “Don’t leave me here alone. I want to go with you,” but the union was for two. You never told me you were happier without me but I knew. I waited for hours and for days but the circle was completed and rain fell to cover all the tracks.

III. I trace images around every woman’s face looking for you. Down rivers, down slides, down stairs.

* * * *

Secrets

Yesterday I know her. Today I knew her once. The dancing, the strands of her hair I put into a poem, all a lie, I made it up, doesn’t mean I’m not in love with her. I don’t feel like I’m allowed to be, save for subtly, secretly. I can’t ask her to fuck me that’s not what I meant at all. Translation is impossible, but I will do my best.

Underneath her bed I masturbated imagining something vague about her. I felt ashamed. Moments escaped me. Everything silent-frozen for a second. The time to do it
to touch her, tell her, her lips against mine in darkness passing smoke, not kissing. I let all moments pass, aware, holding on to what already existed, unable to risk. I wanted to bite into her flesh, wanted to swallow her. I touched a man instead.

I cross out her name in all the places I have written it. I remove her face every time I start to imagine it. I want to get inside her, inside her skin, feel her heart beating around me flattened and silent. I don't speak to her in my head and only when our presences overlapped did I lie at the foot of her bed. Our final moments together; they didn't want to wake us. We were like twins, symbiotic; we didn't have a need for words, only glances.

We parted just as completely, separated instinctively to preserve ourselves. Does she know that the poems are about her or is that my secret too? All the secrets I keep from her.

* * * * *

Shame

Her mouth, her entire expression is in her mouth. There is something about this woman, the way people are attracted to her, something simple and innocent emanating from her breath. All the things she could not control like the perfectness of her body, mainly the largeness of her breasts and the slimness of her torso. Her face reminds me of women in movies on billboards on magazine covers. It is the face that she has. Her motivations at times confuse me. Her ignorance about her sexuality confounds me, but do I denigrate her for her naturalness. I am convinced she does everything without thinking about it, without a voice in her head. It is my own insecurity, my own self doubt that
allows me to hate and resent her. What allows me to love her at the same time? Our similarities, our likenesses, the rhythms of our thoughts? It confuses me and scares me to think these thoughts, to feel inferior and ugly, to lack the natural ability of being beautiful. Am I ugly in comparison to her?

Scare me to think that I would hate her disregard her because she was more beautiful and evoking than me. That I could not stand to be endlessly compared and placed second, after, unworthy, lesser, secondary.

I try endlessly to stop my compulsions to be the external beauty to grow my hair long, wear make-up, the beautiful clothes, all the aspects of beauty, and then I resent not being noticed in the "beauty pageant."

I feel shameful even having these thoughts. I hate you because you are beautiful. It is this goal— the most beautiful girl contest— that makes women enemies, and yet I haven't fully escaped it. The judges of this contest are not her or I, only males, and they have nothing to do with our relationship.

* * * *

Leaving

You are preparing to leave me, packing cardboard boxes full of memories of what we have seen together. The time gets closer; days pass; already I am losing you. Find me, please find me. Each time I round a corner I feel your presence. I see your face, a face I can never forget. Where did you get a face like this? Who loved you enough to give it to you? Soon I will disappear, become what I was before you. I suppose it's time to retreat
again, collect and create in solitude, tell the story of you. I will walk streets alone, fade into walls, into hallways, move back into myself, create the void and become my mind. I will dance with you in my sleep, dream of your hand holding mine under sheets. I was made to dream this other world.

* * * *

And she continues to leave me again and again, and I fail to connect, fail to connect. She sings songs to me in my dreams, hypnotic melodies in a softer deeper voice than her own and her face is someone else’s, her body is mine, small like mine, but skinnier. She remembers who I am like no one else can, I was more real than I’ve been before or will be again.

I say she, and I know who I mean, but I don’t make it clear because I feel safer. What is it that I really want to say? Something so simple, so sweet, yet I avoid, stay shallow, surfacy, still avoiding. Avoiding what? Something so simple, so sweet, that to say it would be to betray it. That’s my excuse.
I Am A Woman
Red dirt glowing in molten Texas air. My eyes not crying but sweating. Every day that I
gave myself to the soil, I realized that nothing else could exist, that I could go nowhere
until I had fertilized it. Hair grows out of flesh like grass out of the earth.
I am a Woman

I am not allowed to exist in a vacuum. I have been conditioned since birth, and trying to put myself together as a person is the most difficult task. I deal with it every day. Constantly I am at war in my head with everything around me and inside me. I have a closet full of clothes that I have chosen over the past five years, clothes that are part of every phase and stage I've gone through. Every day when I get dressed, I am standing in front of a long rack of clothes trying to figure out why I own a particular article of clothing and why I want to wear it. Because it is short and sexy, because it’s shiny? I want to look good want people to look at me? Because it’s feminine, pretty? Because I want to be beautiful, because I want to look androgynous? But this skirt is comfortable, isn’t that why I bought it? No, you bought it because it makes guys look at you, makes you sexy. Why do you want this attention? I don’t. And? OK, wear a potato sack. I don’t care. So I wear a potato sack and I feel ugly, separate, and unnoticed. I run into a friend of mine who’s wearing a sexy dress, and I feel like nothing next to her. I feel competitive like she’s upstaging me. I feel hostile. So, wear a dress like hers.

It never ends, this constant agitation about what I want to look like and how I want to be reacted to. I do everything to avoid looking sexy, and then I look in the mirror and decide to put on lipstick. I’m just trying to look good, I say to myself, but I know it’s part of the sex thing. Having people look at you, having people want you.

One thing I did was stop shaving my legs. I thought about it and thought about it. Why do I shave my legs? What does it mean? Why don’t men shave? Why is it feminine? And
since I couldn’t come up with any answer besides that it’s what women do; it makes them sexy. I stopped shaving them. At first, I was completely aware of it and of everyone looking at my legs. I didn’t feel sexy. I felt masculine and ugly, but I stuck with my decision. Now it’s part of me, but at times, especially after seeing a Cosmo cover or a sexy movie, I want to shave them or when I notice a girlfriend of mine has decided to shave hers again. I feel stabbed in the back. *She’s so sexy now, and I’m not.*

I stopped wearing make-up too. At times, I can’t stop myself from applying lipstick because I feel so out of place amongst eye lined- lipsticked- mascara -powdered women.

I shaved my head--just to see what it would look like. Then I found myself overcompensating by wearing sexier dresses, etc, to make up for everything else--just to make sure everyone still knew I was a woman. And I wonder if I will ever feel like myself, like a person, or whether I will fight with this forever. Myself verses the rest of society.

It’s not just what I look like either. So much is involved. Sex underlies every interaction, and I wonder what it is I’m trying to get away from. It’s so hard to tell what’s really me, what I really feel. What I’m running from or running to. So hard to get to the core of this, but I will try. I will keep thinking about it. Men are still dictating my reactions toward or away from something. My mother says I’m trying to differentiate myself form ordinary girls. I disagree. It’s me as woman versus herself, versus society, versus men. And it goes on and on and on. I am a woman. I am not allowed to exist in a vacuum...
Becoming

The girls in the photograph are standing in the kitchen and they are young. I feel old just looking at them. The kitchen is timeworn, the floors wooden and unpolished. They are each standing with one foot off the ground, a foot on a knee on a chair against the wall. One girl peels an apple, the long kitchen knife in her hand; the other girl eats an apple, eats the skin. They are beautiful because they are young and healthy because they eat apples; they are beautiful because they have not yet reached puberty. I say they are pure; they are part of an otherness that I can never go back to, a place that is so different from where I am that I find myself wishing they would remain this way forever, that they'd never have to change like I did, change into sexual beings. They can exist in a space that is sunlit and seasonal, stand like tiny roses pink and yellow growing in an old woman's garden. They can stand in this kitchen in the country in this sunlit-giggling and whispering world while the rest of the world spins on.

Magic

The pain comes between my legs somewhere making me conscious of what I am and what I can and cannot do. I don't like the pain, but I try to go with it. I try to follow it and find out what it means. What should I do, feel, be, not be. I'm waiting for the blood to come, waiting for the sign. The sickness is only just beginning. The irritation only mild now, only a dull ache. I feel anger and resentment as if my body is betraying me, my dull
illusion, my refusal to accept. I wish the blood were deep deep red and pouring like real blood as if from a wound. This is blood that makes sense, blood that causes no need for alarm. The pain blocks everything; nothing functions as I will it. I have no control, no part to play. The body will find you. No doubt about that. The blood doesn’t bother me, only the pain, only the way it affects my body and my mind. If I were brave, if I were strong, I could listen to secrets hundreds of years old. I could learn magic. I could listen for the answers to all my questions. I could hear truth in its rawest sense.

* * * *

Release

Lately, I am looking at my body and not enjoying it, feeling fat, ugly, deformed; other times it is perfect. I don’t like the idea of needing to be told what I look like because everyone sees differently. I have lost all sense of my body, my appearance. I can’t see myself at all. Of course, it’s my time of the month to feel huge, bloated. My period: the release of blood. I feel like someone is scraping away slowly at my insides with a dull spoon, jabbing and scraping out my skin. It hurts; it makes me feel sick, so does the blood.

* * * *

Poem

The sky folds like clean white sheets hanging on trees. I am spread out on a blue table cold and thin, the air wide and pungent forcing its way into my lungs, and up above I see
white birds, white clouds, white drapes blowing ever so softly. I see the distorted
reflection of my naked body, bubbly and unfinished, the fragile folds of skin that I call
my tummy. I see my helplessness in white feathers, bright wings, flashes of light. I see
my mother's smell in the curve of her blond hair as she leans over me. I am remembering
being a baby tiny, small, helpless; the positions always feel the same, even now. I want to
cry as the cold piece of metal is thrust up inside of me, purely more cold than you ever
imagined your rapist would be.

* * * *

In the middle of my body there is a hole. If I move even an inch from where I stand, my
body will dissolve as if acid were eating my flesh. Here I balance everything. I am the
center of my universe, and nobody, not even the universe, can show me any different.

* * * *

Growing

Inside of me is a little girl who cannot find her way out. She beats at my heart, blocks
my throat, kicks against my stomach. I can hear her crying inside me in the dark, lost and
lonely; her reality echoes mine. I study my body, all the orifices, looking for exits and
entrances. Let me in. Let her out. Let her play in the wildflower fields; let her into the
sunshine and clear blue lake water. At times she lies still and pretends she is dead
pretends to stop breathing. When she does this, I can no longer see with her eyes. I can
only see destruction and apathy, a desolate horizon where the clouds hide the rising and
setting of the sun. There is no relief.
The first time this happened I thought she was dead, and I couldn’t stand the idea of having a dead child rotting away inside of me. I cried. I cut at my skin with my fingernails. I screamed. Now I know she is pretending, so I try to get her interested. I try to see things as she would see them, and this usually keeps her heart beating. I’m still trying to think of a way to let her out and let her grow somewhere else. Possibly I could give birth to her, possibly not. My only hope is to keep her alive.

* * * *

Revolving

I am counting out days that lose all definition, days in which encounters cannot exist. I am invisible inside wishing I didn’t have to exist if only for a day. All emotion is an effort. People breathe around me silencing my breath. All movement is an effort, heavy and weighted. The atmosphere is empty; gravity works overtime. I am on the ground, pushed to the ground; I’m never going to jump, leap, levitate. None of that will ever go on here. The light is leaving, leaving this place, this moment, this day, and I have done nothing. Today would not be the day to die. Days like these I know I am controlled endlessly by outside forces or inside forces. This has nothing to do with me but more to do with the planets revolving in my body, the way they line up the color of their moons.

* * * *

Silence please, silence. My mind is so full of what I want, what I think I have to do. Still, oh still, slow down. Forget this: here, now, cry, scream, bang your fists. Let everything out. I will come to know you soon. She bates under hot water washing off
dirt that has not yet accumulated. She massages her toes, ankles, the pads of her feet, her legs, arm, stomach. She touches all of herself until she is still. This changes her consciousness, allows her to move from one place to another.

* * * *

Listening

I am beginning to be able to hear what my body is saying, what it asks for and desires, how it manipulates me, how it works. It is not me. In realizing this I can allow it to control me. I can trust what I feel, what I truly desire. For the longest time I really thought that I was in control, that it was my job to control the body. The body will reject what it does not need. I only have to listen.

* * * *

Transforming

Changing in a room of my own grabbing my chance, developing my own visions, my own dreams, my own human family. My own temptations are transforming under my skin, my own autobiography decoded using the pattern of moles on my skin. One crescent moon—one wave—one Orion—one Venus.
She laughed the birds out of the trees. We stood still our faces towards the sky, eyes closed. I shivered at the sound of all their wings flapping inside us. When I opened my eyes, she was staring straight at me. "I thought it might be you," she said, "but I wasn't sure." And it was as easy as that.
In the beginning she and I were separate. Neither of us existed. Then I became aware of her existence; something she had created began to haunt me. First, it was only her voice, later her words; her ideas changed my reality; the grass was greener, the sky bluer and beginning to expand. The first time I saw her, that night in the classroom, twenty desks spread out, I stared at her and the vision occurred. I saw myself running away, never reaching out, staying lonely, longing for something. I saw myself failing to connect and failing to connect until I was old and dying, completely alone in an old house.

* * * * *

She made it so easy.

* * * * *

We were sitting on the porch. It wasn’t really cold at all, but I was shivering and smoking. This getting to know someone, these conversations with strangers that feel like long lost friends demand cigarettes and the churning of my insides, but everything is alive and the world is a different place. We are talking and the night can go on forever. I am telling her who I am and she is creating me; we are creating each other, and this will go on and on into morning, on and on as long as the moment lasts. Don’t break the spell; the moment leaves you and you can never get it back. Usually I don’t have to tell anyone who I am or where I’ve been; no one asks; possibly no one cares. But I wanted to tell her. I wanted to be a whole person with a past with feelings with experiences, and I wanted to know everything about her.

I’m not sure how this works or why it happens, but everything opens up and the
possibilities are endless. There is communion, a flow, a wave that keeps washing over everything. I can feel infinity. We could sit here and talk and discover and share ourselves forever and never find out who we really are, and it is the moment that makes all the difference.

* * * *

Infinity

One minute reality is firmly in place and the next minute everything starts expanding. We become the universe. It starts with going further, giving more than what is required, divulging honest emotion, but you don't just divulge some secret and open a door in the sky, all the elements have to be in place. Both people have to be involved in the interchange. There has to be tolerance and empathy, a sense of identification. I feel what you feel, know what you know; I'm not alone; I'm not crazy; maybe we can help each other.

* * * *

Her voice is what I think of when I think of her: the chords vibrate like far away crickets, I want to touch the inside of her throat. I want her to speak my entire body to life.

* * * *

You make it so easy, so easy to like you. You take my hand and we run hard and fast, chase dragonflies; we spin in circles in wide wheat fields, hawks circling around us.
waiting for our sharp sprinting motions. Our legs are strong and fast. We'll never stop running, never slow down.

* * * * *

Changing

Something happened last night that changed me. It had something to do with her. I know that we were meant to meet or that I was meant to meet her. Last night, her house, the record player playing old jazzy sounds, we were on the porch talking. I stepped back in my mind. I felt something wonderful, something beautiful. I wanted more than anything to see her and her boyfriend dancing the way she described it. "We're so happy it's scary." When I got home that night I wanted to have sex. Michael didn't think it was a good idea. I was crying when I left the room. I was no longer the same. I had changed. I wanted seduction. I wanted a lover. I wanted to be so happy it would be scary.

* * * *

Dancing

I could imagine them dancing across the wooden floors, their feet slipping. She would be barefoot wearing cut off shorts and a crazy t-shirt. She'd look beautiful. He'd be staring right into her eyes, his arm touching her back softly, the music coming from the big old record player something old, something jazzy. She'd laugh. He'd spin her around. They would kiss. In my mind the stars are out, the moon full, the front door open, cool September air blowing, blowing her hair. The lights would be rosy-dim. And in this
place, nothing would go wrong, in this space I have created they would dance, always, and nothing would ever change.

* * * *

I wanted to move in with her and live in her house with her boyfriend, her child, her worshipful dog. I wanted to be the dog so I could love her and follow her anywhere.

* * * *

Sex

Last night, I'm so relieved, so thankful when she forces me to speak. "So why aren't you having sex?" And she gives me permission to tell her this side of myself, the side I can never share with anyone. I envy her sexuality. I sometimes think that she will be the one that makes everything ok.

* * * *

My Story

"Why am I afraid to tell you who I really am?" Because I'm afraid of wanting to know you for the rest of my life. I want to be with you forever. I know we all need our solitude, but I can't ever leave this table, this moment, this hurtling train ride into darkness, into the cold cold evening air through imaginary countries, people with special powers, places we are all afraid to know about, and I'm starting to feel anxious; I might faint or start to cry. I've been wanting to tell my story for so long to someone, to you, but the time has never been right and I've been too afraid that I wouldn't be able to do it. But when I
finally tell you, when I open my mouth, everything starts flowing out sounding exactly like it should, and I create the images, the emotions. I create the world around us and you can see it, and you believe it exactly like I need you to, exactly like I swear it exists. I am on the verge of a breakdown on the verge of losing everything I know, and you are listening. I can’t stop now, I can’t fail.

In here, in this space we have created, something inside of us has connected, and it will be painful to disconnect.

* * * * *

Connection

I call your name in my head; my chest shivers, my shoulders quiver, I whisper soft under my breath. I am awkward and newly born. I envy your expertise, the movements your feet make across dirty wood floors. You tell me about your friend who moved away, started dating women. You said someone told you that it was you she loved and how you doubted that. I thought I could understand how she could love you. How could someone not love you? How could anyone walk away from you and not be amazed?

* * * * *

Laughter

For me, it is as if we are children in a world we create each time we are together, but we are not always children; sometimes we are something I’ve never known. Time doesn’t exist, nor place, nor anything except our voices which waver and make me dizzy. We
create a world of foggy days, light that turns strange colors, moons that rise round and red. We walk in fuzzy air, watch children dance, stare in windows at paintings. Our voices waver, they move lopsided and stretched out. Our laughter travels awkwardly and little by little as if it were being stretched so that only part of the laughter moves away.

* * * *

Transforming

My living began to take on a new shape, a rounder, wetter form, one that rolled and ran and shrank and grew, a shape that continues to change. I walk inside layers of clouds and light. There are no boundaries; the sky pulses, pulses larger and bigger. Birds follow me from tree to tree screeching, crying, cackling. Black birds, brown birds fill trees that are near me. We follow the train; it comes right down the street interrupting everything, and sounds like magic emanate from my mouth, my nose. My tears come out whispers, whispers of bells, chirps, chimes, falling leaves. My laughter like a xylophone, like wings fluttering. I can’t stop being her, being me, being her.

* * * *

Something inside of me knows you, belongs with you. I’ve known you before. I want to know you again. Put your finger to your nose; make something new happen; I believe in anything you do. I change often now, much more than I used to and with unbelievable accuracy. I am becoming if not your friend, then someone else. I would tell you anything. You are curious and I admire that. Always you, can you feel me writing to you, can you feel the words in your head?
Take me with you when you leave. There is way too much transience, and I am selfish.

* * * *

_Cha_\_\_\_\_\_\_ng_

People are not replaceable. I pick up certain stones when I am walking, stones that speak a certain language, that give off a tone. I find them and hold them in my hands, rubbing them, feeling every bend, every protrusion. I decide whether to let go or not. The stones lie ignored on the ground so often. We walk over them oblivious to their voices. There is no way for me to touch you to pull out of you what I want to keep with me. How am I to express what we have no words for? I allow the sky to change colors, the house to grow wings. I allow myself to hear the thousands of tiny voices laughing. When you ask me to speak, I try to let birds fly out of my mouth. I try to create circus tents. It’s all so difficult to explain, and time drops out of the sky minute by minute. Some days I am silent. I stay hidden and try not to talk to you in my head because I am afraid. I wonder about the voices inside your head, what voice I speak inside of you.

* * * *

_Stay here. I want to laugh and breathe and scream at the sun. Stay here like this for me. I need you. Don’t ever leave me. I promise to write neatly, promise to say things that tickle your eardrums. Can you stand to look at my face; sometimes I can’t. Do you think I’m beautiful? I think you are beautiful like spring, like early summer, like the first snow._
Becoming

Sitting outside, you read me poetry, "Isn't that beautiful? I wish I could do that." And I sit beside you laughing yes, yes it is. I don’t want you to leave. I could stay here always. I could make you more beautiful than you could ever imagine. At times you are clean and pure, your white skin vibrating, your eyes green and copper and gold. Other times you are the dark beauty, snow white, lying in grass reading a book. You become the little girl, laughing, skipping; the mother, the grown up, the adult, the strong one, the one who needs to be taken care of, the crazy one on the verge of losing it, losing everything. The writer, the poet with the pen that records everything, the storyteller, the seer, the dreamer, the one in pain, the one who has seen death and destruction; the young wife, the single mother, the angry one, the questioning one, the one to trust and not to trust; the perfect one. I cannot begin to describe you in these kinds of sentences. Beware. I will write you, use you, be you. I can’t stop myself from becoming you, from stealing you, keeping you, loving you.

* * * * *

The birds came when I met you, and now they will never leave my head. They are trapped there fluttering, pecking, flapping; wings against my eardrums, tickling me, whispering, feeding me worms, teaching me to fly, and finally pushing me constantly out of the nest. I dread the day you will leave me, and it approaches quickly; only weeks left and I have not learned all I need to learn, have not turned this into dreams, into me.
Don’t leave me; I will scream inside my mind, but not to you. I know my screaming will change nothing. You will leave to be with him. What can I bargain with in order to become you, in order to stay with you? (You have moved into my mind, and I wonder if your voice will ever leave.) I cannot let go, not now, not yet, but it’s not the end right? Only the beginning, but it will be the end of these days; you and I alone waiting for the weekend when he will come to you, make love to you. You and I alone in the house thinking whatever we want. You will leave with him, be with him, and we will reverse, and I will be the one waiting.

* * * *

Yesterday I looked at her and saw what she will be when she is old, her face white and wrinkled; she will be beautiful then too. I wanted to know this older person.

* * * *

Bleeding

I’m bleeding. I started bleeding last night, and not twenty minutes later she began to bleed also, our bodies identifying with the rhythms we have created in our minds. I cannot begin to understand how this works. We are connected in ways that we have no control over. We bleed together feeling similar feelings, similar pains.

* * * *

The Moment

The other night was amazing. Walking home after drinking latte, the strong winds
before the big storm started blowing right in front of us. It was dark outside and we were
the only people on the streets, and the wind came from behind the tree in front of us
blowing the leaves everywhere, crackling, scraping. They moved down the streets and I
wanted to go with them, to let myself go, and I almost started to blow away. Imagine
yourself light and small tumbling allowing the wind to control you. Wind brushes our
faces almost a slap but softer; the leaves are given life and motion. I know they are happy
and alive. She picks up a great tree branch and holds it above her head finding out what it
feels like to be a tree trunk. Blowing her side to side almost picking her up off the street.
We find a bag of leaves trapped leaves and we want to set them free, and in this moment I
feel so sorry for a bag of leaves. We are screaming in the wind and laughing as something
is starting to happen. Trash cans fall clanking along the sidewalk. It is a moment, one of
those moments when I feel most alive; these don’t happen when I’m shopping or cleaning
or at a party; these moments are silent and still; they are the earth around me. I am aware
of everything, smelling the wind, listening not talking. It is nature that astounds me. It is
infinitely more than I will ever be.

* * * *

Leaving

Sometimes people just leave. Sometimes you meet people that you want to know
forever; you want to see them when they are old. She left today, left Denton for good. I
am staying here alone. Magical photographs explode in my head: The wind in the trees,
the deep blue sky, and the moon with a green circle around it. I look at the sky; I look at
your face. Will I ever be this lucky again? The closest friend I’ve had. I put my arms around her and say goodbye.

* * * *

She was all dressed up with everywhere to go, came inside my house and everything changed like sunlight, illuminating what was good what was beautiful. She smiled, closed her eyes, and created the air I breathed. It’s time to go, time to disappear: the black cape, the black hat disappear into boxes. I’m home again, alone again.

* * * *

She’s gone. If you’d known her, I could tell you everything, and you’d understand. She still sees, still screams smooth and clean, walking everywhere asking for someone to help the bird in her throat. Her sound warbles out and wanders around inside my head. When I follow the birds, I follow her, and when I chase sunsets, I chase them for her because she still sees, still gets excited, still skips to songs in her head. She knows I love him even if I can’t tell her why.

* * * *

Today tunnels dig themselves and the rotting rats remind me of places I don’t want to be. Did she know any of this before she met me? She turned to me and whispered, it’s almost 5:00. Are you ready? She is so close moving over me around me and out the window as the train passes.
I whisper blue I whisper rain I set the leaves free in the stormy wind. Inside your throat I bleed; you haven’t seen me cry. Your finger touches the back of my throat; I laugh pictures of you. Inside you the painters weep, inside you they bind their hands together. I listen with every part of my voice; your sounds move effortlessly through me. I can only speak through you because part of you is inside my head. Part of my mind has become you; part of my molecules used to be yours; I can never separate us now. Tangled up inside, intermingled. I speak to you, quietly, in my head, always.

* * * * *

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* * * * *

Dream

"I have to look into your eyes," I say. "There’s something there I need."

"My eyes have nothing that you need. I am an alien. I’ve been on Mars before. You don’t want to go there. When the time comes they will all leave. They will make a deal, and you will have to decide, but be careful because you will have to give up the part of you that is here now writing this neverending story. Would you withstand torture in order to keep this?"

"I understand you, and I am afraid. In this place there are two words, and I cannot tell you what they are. I can only let you feel them. Our job is to translate them. We will spend the rest of our lives trying to get it right, and we may never do it, but that is our work. There is only one question and one answer, and that’s the way the story goes. Once you answer, you can pass through from this plane to the next, but first you must learn to travel through..."
time. It’s so obvious that we overlook it always, but once you see it, you can never lose it again. Your job is to listen to the birds to understand what they are saying. I must leave you now, but I won’t be far away, and when the time is right we will be together as close as you have always imagined. Don’t be afraid, don’t cry. I am with you always and you can write about me all you want.”

"But I want to give you something. I ache to give you something of me, but I don’t know how. I don’t want to scare you. I want to give you my heart. I want to love you but I don’t know how. You are smiling. This is so important. I am so happy and I don’t know how to express it to you. Why are you smiling?"

"Don’t you know? Can’t you tell? You give me something all the time. I know everything you feel. You cannot give me what you want to; it’s impossible right now, right here. This is the physical world. What you want to give exists in another world, the one you are traveling to, and when you get there you’ll understand. You are trapped now between these worlds and I am too. What you want to give is impossible, but what can I say, you must have been to this other place. I pity you. Yours is a hard journey; you know what you cannot say and you feel what you cannot express."

"But can’t I get there from here? Why am I here?"

"You are here to show me what you see, to tell me everything you see. This is the physical world and you see it differently. You feel it and others only see it. You are the translator. That’s your job; I’ve told you that before. You must hold without touching; you must embrace with your eyes because they are the soul and that’s what you want to
give me. I understand; I truly do, but here you can only give me your body and that means nothing to us. If I hold you like you want to be held or kiss you like you imagine being kissed, it will not be me and it will not be you because those are not really what we want to do. We don’t have words to express it. Oh don’t you see. It’s part of what you’re supposed to do; define these things that don’t exist that have no words no physical truth; they are not facts of science they are the words in between; they are the fuzziness, the vague world we live in but cannot realize."

"But I saw the birds, they came flying out of your throat. Don’t you remember? I felt it."

"This is not a world of feelings. Don’t confuse them you can only say what you saw which was nothing."

"I remember so much. What about the wind blowing out of the trees mouth and the leaves escaping set free with our screams?"

"It was only an approaching storm. You exaggerate, invent. Just a storm, nothing special."

"But you felt it; I know you did. Your face was all lit up. Your face was as big as the sky and just as beautiful. We were in the presence of magic."

"There is no such thing as magic only science; everything is explainable."

"But what are you talking about? Why are you doing this? I know you feel the same things I do."

"Look, just remember. This is the physical world; somehow you’ve gotten caught
somewhere in between. It will be difficult for you, but maybe that is your path. I must be going."

"No, Don’t leave me. I need you more than anyone."

"You need no one but yourself."
Every day I have to keep living and thinking, being. I have to respond to the world which is always so difficult, so confusing: thinking one way and living another, trying to be one way and being something else altogether. Unable to separate, unable to be part of everything. Always having to react and be reacted to. One cannot control the reactions of other people, so one's ideas of life have to allow for how other people view life. I cannot exist in a vacuum no matter how much I think I want to. How do people live everyday? Why does everything have to continue and persist so exhaustively? Why? How can I write anything in a world that changes so persistently and remains the same endlessly, only capturing moments of change, moments of constancy? No matter how much I believe in myself and think I am somewhere, I am nowhere and no body. I am everywhere and every body. No one is more important than anyone else, no matter how much I delude myself. The world slaps me in my face everyday. It stings and burns, especially if I have been feeling good or strong; there is nothing like humility. I see other people everyday and feel separate and different from them. I'm so wrong, so wrong, I'm sorry I tried to make you see any other way besides your own because there are no correct answers. No one should force anything on anyone else. That in itself is an irrelevant opinion.

Life closes the doors on me all the time. I cannot tell if they were really there or if I only imagined them. Sometimes life locks up and holds tight suffocating me pinning me on a peg board, staring at me unmercifully. No freedom. None. And still I am not bored. I feel unimportant, pointless and like nothing, and still I want to persist, enjoy, love, be. Dancing still exists and can make life joyous even if it shouldn't be in poems anymore. Do I do horrible things or do I just do things? So hard not to judge. If we are walking in this world, both talking, both listening, how can I see the soles of our feet? How can I feel the rhythm of your breath? If one becomes enlightened, do they stop asking questions or have they found the answers to all the why's of the world? I want to admit to everything. I want to be free and I want to be imprisoned. I want to be close, and I want to be far away. I want to write the story of my mind and I want to leave my mind behind. I want you to know how I feel and then I don't want to feel anything. I want to feel numb, want to forget fiction, forget poetry, forget everything.
Once there was just one mind, one swirling mass of fluid, and we imagined ourselves and the world. We imagined one island, one person, one thing after another. We imagined consciousness.
I search through old books through pages that fall apart in my hands for the answers to my endless uncomfortableness with the way things are. My endless why? You will tell me to stop asking, that there are no answers that it’s pointless, but to tell me this is to tell me that I am pointless, that I should not be. And maybe this is the answer. This is the reason people stop asking why. I don’t want to ever be afraid of being pointless.

As my reality began to make less and less sense, I began to change. I stopped going to school, stopped working, stopped buying what I did not need. People who had known me knew me no longer; they disappeared like condensation on glass. I could see better now without their realities obstructing mine. I had no one now to instruct me on how to be or how to feel. I had money in the bank stored there for nothing but a future that might never exist. I bought a bus ticket, took the bus to Sante Fe, to San Francisco; I took another bus. I only rode through them one after another until I had seen all the cities the busses would go to.

* * * *

Living is so much more difficult than I ever imagined. Each climax creating the need for another. There’s no prince, no castle in clouds to wait for. Only in the hoping does it exist, not the getting. The prince would soon change into an ordinary human being. No actual utopia, no vastness. Where is infinity? Things feel smaller all the time. No limitlessness, only boundaries, barriers, gates.

* * * *

Sometimes I walk with my breaths slow and trance-like listening to birds, crickets,
cars on the freeway, gravel crunching under my feet. Sometimes I swim with my eyes
closed bumping into pool walls into the bottom into someone else. I sleep deeply always.
I follow people, mimic the way they walk. I sit in the woods by a tree and close my eyes
listening to my breathing. I walk out to the field and lie in tall grass listening as much as I
can to the grass blowing, a sound that evokes memories, dreams, visions. In this field, for
a second, I am completely free, completely part of the cosmos just lying in grass, tall, tall
grass, whispering to the hawk, come down here; look at me. I want to be you. My wings
my vehicle, the wind my fuel. But I am still grounded, still wanting, still learning, still
hoping that the sky is just a big piece of blue.

* * * * *

Days of the week distract me, make me less of what I am; they shorten my life. I say
it is Monday; tomorrow is Tuesday. I must go to bed, so I can wake up early. Day after
day after day. It never ends. And then the days are divided into eating, sleeping, and the
bathroom, the evil bowels that lately I am trying to come to terms with. I stare at my shit
and try not to be repulsed, try not to fear someone seeing it. I try not to be embarrassed so
as not to scream, it’s not me; it’s not. But all I really want to do is flush it away and
pretend I never did it or do it. How can I be a full human being if I cannot accept my own
shit?

At times I am disgusted that another day has come, and I must eat, disgusted that I
live in a house that I am domestic that I have a relationship that I love that I want that I do
nothing but eat, shit, and sleep. The house traps me, holds me, confines me. I don’t want
days of the week to exist. They limit me. I should not be allowed to count any amount of
time, only the rising and setting of the sun.

* * * *

All things were together. Then mind came and arranged them. A is for apple which is
different than B for boat. C is for cat which is completely different than D for dog and so
on. E is for English which is separate from French, German and definitely not History.
Irony is not the same as Joking and Laughing is not Maudlin. No is not Ok. Please be
Quiet. Reading not Smoking. Talking not Umbrellas. Violins are not Wheels nor XYZ
chromosomes. The mind arranged them into alphabetical letters, gave them unequal
amounts of space, contained them and took away their freedom. Mind tamed them. We
are left struggling to put everything back together. All things can be described of all
things. There are no divisions.

* * * *

I move. I speak. I dance. My thoughts are mine to think. I created a space large
and wide, perhaps white, where I could do such things. Slowly, over time, events began to
fall into place. The outside became a place to maneuver, a place to get away from; inside
became the only safe place to be. I sit here in this room which is bright light sunshine or
oddly serene. I move in paths that are never the same. One way doesn’t exist. I move in
fog, in rain, in haze; nothing stops me from being new each time. I slip into innocence
easily now. I escape disbelief and imagine outer space. I can inhabit these worlds.
Tiny steps backwards, a leap down stairs, sliding down a banister (I want to say "of life"). Everything lives. Everything is conscious: trees, rocks, chairs, light. The world around me gets bigger or wider. It pulses with energy. I move my hand through the air creating motion. I'm forcing things to move. Tracers exist. How close is reality to an acid trip, so much I'm learning resembles what I felt to be true. The fact that time does not exist, the life in everything around me, the acknowledgment of structures that aren't the truth. In the beginning everything made so much sense. Where did the me that I am come from? Whose memories do I have? What part of history do I contain? What are the patterns on my hands, my thumb print?

Yesterday, like science fiction, I walked around alone with my bike through red grass like Mars, red grass like a strange dream. Dead trees silvered in sun-snow in the changing of seasons, in time. I can see no one. I am alone always out here, and I can believe whatever I want to; I forget time and place and I am exploring the unknown. It's as if only I existed, as if time had disappeared, as if earth didn't exist, only red tall grass and spikes, thorns, yellow flowers, and giant bones.

And here I am and here I stay. The world goes round or so I'm told, and I move without knowing I move, change without knowing I change, and here I am and here I stay. Do I rise and set like the sun, or do I fill with clouds like the sky? I was born in
America. I have no home. I am going far away from everyone who has ever known me. I am growing. I am growing out and away from the arms of my mother from the arms of America.