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Glory Girl Jr. jr.

Penelope Luksic

Senior Thesis in English

Prof. Michael Joyce

Spring 2015

Scrutinize the grammatical habits of your writing and decide for yourself whether they free or repress. Again, order(s). Shake syntax, smash the myths, and if you lose, slide on, *unearth* some new linguistic paths. Do you surprise? Do you shock? Do you have a choice?

—Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*

Nude #10. Green thorn of the world poking up

alive through the heart of a woman
who lies on her back on the ground.
The thorn is exploding

its green blood above her in the air.
Everything it is it has, the voice says.

—Anne Carson, *The Glass Essay*

Notes on the text

This is an experiment after the woman writers that have reworked, co-opted, stolen, and adapted hegemonic language to write their bodies.

The phallogentrism of academic and artistic discourse has attempted a process of separation, division, and colonization of the woman writer carried out by separating the woman writer from her body. The woman's brain is set opposite her body. The experience of *being* cannot be articulated through a lexical structure that continually marginalizes the expressions of those who do not benefit from its hegemony. To articulate their subjectivities, woman writers forge new language that resists this process and strains against such hegemony. To make audible that which has been silenced by hegemonic standards of language, woman writers legitimize the subjective body as integral, rather than antithetical to resistant art.

More so, in reclaiming the *personal*, woman writers push against the patriarchal *universal* as the dominant mode of expression in academic and artistic discourse. The personal project, it would seem, must be one in which the *I*, the writer/artist/creator, exists within the text rather than before or outside it. Otherwise, the writer/artist/creator is furthering the heteropatriarchal God/subject dichotomy already present in these hegemonies. As a white cis-woman, my own project in this moment is to decenter myself from those discourses in which my positionality further marginalizes others—to learn and seek understanding from my position in the personal, rather than the universal. The voices in this text are indeed subjective, though they are not contained in a unitary subject. The use of choral voice works to explore how the subjective exists in the interior and exterior, parallel and conjunctive to the self.

This text is an experiment in mapping the potential of my own subjectivity to resist hegemonic lexicons. I have written to embody language, to make language bodily from my own particularity, to write towards “nourriciture, a ‘linguistic flesh’,” through which I seek to construct a language that exposes and strains against phallogentric language (Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Women, Native, Other*). I have also attempted to resituate this language outside temporal and spatial frameworks in order to conceive alternative understandings of the body's lifecycle. Both formed and destroyed in its creation, the body's lifecycle is a process of alienation. The self can be understood through the concepts of knowledge, communication, ontological security—each a kind of subsequent development in the founding of the self vis-à-vis the other. To know, to speak, to be: these are the frameworks by which the body becomes the self. By deconstructing such frameworks, this text seeks to provide alternative ways of understanding developmental stages of the body's growth and decomposition and to resist patriarchal discourse that writes *of the body* rather than *writing the body*. To write the body, this text reworks language to alter the reader's oral, aural, and visual associations with lexical signifiers.

I have struggled with the decision about whether to describe this text as *narrative*. Things happen. Voices are submerged in the collective and emerge as individual, to whom events occur and by whom thoughts are expressed. However, the tension of telos by which the reader normally understands narrative is here redirected into the text's language. Perhaps questioning whether to consider this text as narrative is beside the point and in fact reproduces the dominant academic and artistic discourses I have attempted to resist. Here, I write the body from my positionality within artistic and political hegemonies. I write the body without articulating. I write the body to resist clarity, that tyrannical lexical confinement. I grapple for what it is to know, to speak, and to be while restricted to a language that does not provide adequate space for my subjectivities. To engage with anything is to participate in an intersubjective exercise through which one must grapple with the presence of a subjectivity that varies from one's own. If there is meaning in this text, I hope it is imparted by the reader's conversation with the particular and the personal. Regardless, read this and tongue-trip.

o o o

mother dearest hear this

*She Sr. and she jr. sit in
a waiting room.
A fish tank opposite.*

here She & he & she sit looking at each other with smile teeth under fluorescents

she and She are here for two fillings apiece

and xrays for She Sr.

do you think you'll can kiss me after? he says
(crooked smile with shiny teeth
clenched together)
into she jr's shoulder

she shrugs into the crooked mouth
laughs up to the ceiling

he says I think it's like kissing tits
(shiny smile
crooked teeth on the pink shoulder)
a little warm from the afternoon

Sr. She straightens, stiffens
mouth dry and it's almost four
will dr. have time to see us both?
She shouts!

Fish circle a red plastic bridge.

She hears she and he laugh in their throats and feels her hands stiff stiff | stiffen

She meets a winking eye below a pink she-shoulder

he blinks

She sucks teeth and her smile shudders

You know, Sr., we can be back in twenty minutes if you'll want to go on in,

(chin slides up shoulder)
he says it (like a tongue)

You know Sr. I take good care

he says it (like dripping)

she shushes, tripping tongues and placing a finger on chin, she says
let's first get this done with
let's first get my mouth nice

HA nice mouth?
HE WHOOPS
NICE MOUTH?!

the fattest kiss she's ever had | seen!

*he stands, kissing she. They kiss for a long time, stilly.
She kneels near the fish tank.*

She presses her hand to the glass

it's a thou pounds, She thinks
She thinks she'll can push it over with her old hands, that red bridge

She and she driving over a red bridge
hands on the wheel

prayer hands!
tomorrow
tomorrow's prayer hands!

*he and she stop kissing and return to sitting side by side. They
ride in a car, she in the driver's seat.
she | he becomes She | she
A daughter speaking in her mother's voice:*

we won't come back | we won't come back
he'll can't follow | heel palm heals
now don't cry | don't cry

he cries.

your sorry mouth | your sorrys mouthed my mouth
two fillings apiece | two fillings apiece
I told you'll can feel it after | I told you
kissing'll can't make it better | make it better
HA nice mouth | HA
or you'll be sorry | and I'll be sorry
now don't cry while I drive this bridge | when you drive this bye

he cries.

he says, you get your mouth nice, your red mouth

she says, You go on home, 'til tomorrow
and then he,
the fattest kiss!
and she,
the fattest wish dripping, 'til tomorrow

'til tomorrow, sharp hips shock soft stomach

o o o

o o o

*The chorus to the reader:
As if from inside a bell.*

You'll won't see anything from there
You'll can't see her palms pushing into the ground
heel | healed her palms pushing until
they tingle
to a tingle reverb
re-do | re-make

she is | I am Cleora and
my pinkies drag on the floor and
You'll here for me

They shout
at the sound of her voice
Grout Girl routes that sound so it slip-slides into ears before You'll have time to check the weather

(fyi
it'll is a yellow sunset
golden yellow filling in a red mouth
sun side up)

mother dearest | dearest mother

sshh soft, round girl
They'll won't see anything from here

The chorus to Cleora:

They'll can't see your tingle belly
whisper, sshh, Guttled Girl
push push push it all
goes slip sliding
and the slow squeeze toward home

it's out of here!
there's no use crying over spilt milk!
there's safety in numbers!

there's no tears for the wicked!
it's no rest

no,
rest?

yes

I am Cleora am I
my throat or my head, shoulders, knees?
to own my own is?

The chorus to the reader:

there'll be some crying on home plate tonight, yes sir
YES SIR

bossy bodies, yes sir
you're right, sir
(Sr.'s always right)
slip-sliding stilly
she she
sshh sshh hard, round

o o o

She testifies.

she is smaller than a breadbox, She shouts
when she flip flopped down and was lost between the floor tiles

Grout Girl
They said. A pink prune

I said, and I didn't know she was there
until she wasn't. I lost her
to the underneath space

she was named Cleora after the soaps for sale
she was scrubbed clean in my body
I worry to wash her in the sink
I'll can put uncooked chicken in the sink and she'll can
find it with those arms and legs that are
too soft to keep from spilling

and a push push push
you'll can push it all out and let it go, they shouted

I spread myself skin-thin for her
soft, round
belly up on top
of thin skinned paper

a skinned knee in seven years
just one
once a skinned knee always a skinny need
for blood is a trickle thing,
sometimes red sometimes redbrown
sometimes rushing | seizing | seeping

I think about heart attacks in my round
in the body in my hard, round
head aches'll be death, She says
for she for You You

he points.

hmm lady, watch her
sliver skin-thin
a mother thing
She'll can talk and the room
stiff | stiffens

She whispers.

you'll never could understand
the slip slide squeegee-feel
or open-bottomed operation,

I think I can, he says

you'll can't, She says
you'll can't
can't speak because you have no tongue for it

She looks at the fish tank.

I like it still, She says
still, I like the slip slip up the side,
the glass,
a babble-brook

A sound.

she'll can slip slide there, dr.?
she'll can be a babble-brook from the start
a soft, round floatie of a girl gone
from my throat?

She whispers.

The chorus shouts.

I didn't know | say
she was there until
she wasn't | said

explain yourself!

EXPLAIN YOURSELF!?

head, toes, shoulders, ears hang
low and my feet push until the back of
my palms are wet goose-brooks on
the gut-grout ground
smaller than a bread break-off
from the tippy top of his lips

and let it go
I did did I?
and hold little pinkies like a bouquet
fresh-picked, freckled
she glowed fresh
hearts beat together

always, dr.?

You'll find me still | still I'll find you
I'll find you by
the sound of a little thumping
in-between my ribs and my thin skin
hands held together
over chest
beat beat
repeat. Mine

o o o

o o o

he is alone.
A noise. From
afar.

rise and falling voices
he
listening
cries

he cries.

pressing his ear to the wall
he
listening to words he'll never heard like

You
and it sounded like a pushed out whisper
You You You

like hands grabbing hold to
something not quite

You You
when She looks at she

You You
a heart walks a certain way

he heard a walk away
up the stairs
feet sighing on the floorboards

he listened

they speak in a voice
(not his, certainly)
a voice that trickles down a roof
pinging over the edges of a gutter
metallic movement

fast!
over the edge!
until it squeeeees down the side of a window
squeaky love
making squeaky sounding love with each other

not his voice, definitely not
but not that voice
not again
not the squeaky squeaking lovemaking
(not without me) definitely

o o o

o o o

An atmosphere of glass.

we'll have to leave here, She says
while those beats still twin
before the
the glass walls hear, Cleora
they see and squeak, Cleora

we've all been lowered into this box of seeing, I saw You see

and I'll could push it, She thinks
a thou pounds not much, She thinks
I have these old hands but they'll can be strong for a soft girl

She to the reader:

we'll not be here for You
to watch this here, no
soft girls with spilly arms aren't for the milli-eyed or
that quick fingertripping paper turner no no
definitely not this something inside

but You can still see it can't you?
child o mine you'll be nothing if not crystal clear

a swimming circle
remember, Cleora?
a swimming circle in that green swim outfit with the pink pink bow?

a glass of water, jr.?
glassy water on the hillside, no no definitely not that's
running down
or here where it'll be lapping up the sides of the tank

*she traces the red bridge
on the outside of the glass. A mother's voice.*

here we'll go from here
hands on the wheel tomorrow

we won't come back | You'll can't follow
now don't cry while I drive
bye this bridge

there's a some something coming she says
dr. says sure, something maybe. Mind her
jr. sounds like something

in the morning when she'll can double you over
your knees and come up in belly bile,
here all can see you doubled

this some something happens away from here, or

She shouts.

At the reader.

little floatie girls aren't made like glass dolls
where they can be crinch crunch lunch & dinner for
You. And You
all pressed against
tank walls, blowing
cheeks puffed up
hot spots, breath
and eyes bulging
You'll can burst like that, dr.?
You'll can burst those cheeks, pop those teeth
from all that smiling
swimming circles and You can stand there watching
but not mine. Can't
watch her, no no definitely not

this'll all be under red-bridge byways, She prays
prayer hands over heart
beat twice
fold in
cover, comfort
simmer, soothe
feeds twelve, dr.?
soft-spill like yolk
feeds eight if you're hungry

watch it now, jr.

watch those fish swim circles around that bridge
there they go over, under
around, around
dizzy
is it?

tomorrow
we'll go over, out
forward, toward
some something where
something comes inside walls that can't see, don't
listen

o o o

o o o

she works. he watches.

can I stop trying now?

her arms are tired
she's tried for how long?
hours | days

you'll can stop trying when you feel better

*he stands at the fish tank, one hand on either side of the glass.
he looks into the fish tank with an expression on his face.
It is an obvious expression.
We know what he is thinking.*

I'll try
again she stands | sits
lets her arms down by her side
pink shoulder shrugging into place

she feels warm
she opens her eyes and closes them
quickly!

*she opens her eyes and closes them in slow motion.
Several times, as if underwater.
she looks like a fish.*

her teeth hurt
want to see the dr. | must see the dr.
she shouts!

A sound.

mother dearest
bad mouth bad mouth
bad mouth-thing and mother dearest | dearest mother gets her teeth looked at

he embraces the fish tank.

what do whales eat?
WHAT DO WHALES EAT?!

whales eat to fill up inside
whales sure are full
they'll have mouths that can empty oceans

what do whales drink?
WHAT DO WHALES DRINK?!

not saltwater | seawater | soda pop
of course not soda pop

she hums.

he touches pink stomach | shoulder
hey I like it cool, he says
I like it cool and still, he says
still cool, her pink cheeks warm
a rose re-verbs in her cheeks
it blooms, quivers, fades

pinch it! quickly!
she forgot how
it is to be pruned!

The chorus to Cleora:

hmmming is not for ladies!
hmmming is for people at work!
people by the roadside!
people walking alone on the sidewalks at night!
in the rain!
wearing dark overcoats!

hey I like it still

ssshh
still this buzz

I like that
re-verbs move

you'll can stay here, still
still, she says, I'll know where I'll can find you after we'll get back

A sound.
he smiles.

nice mouth!
HE WHOOPS
nice mouth!
crab apple mouth | lies, he shouts

she laughs with her eyes closed
to the ceiling
pink cheeks warm
pink shoulder shaking

o o o

o o o

she lost her voice today
and her belly pushed outward like a whisper

slowly at first and then
fast!
over the edge!
gut gut gut it all and let it go

I am magnificently young, she says
I am magnificently young and the way my hair falls to my shoulders makes everyone wonder
how I do it

I swim in pools instead of lakes
because pools are warmer. There
are fish in lakes and I hate that
slip sliding feeling of fish
between my toes. In a field
in a spot tamped down by snow
I dug my heels into icy mud so
my toes stuck pointing up. My
knees bent and my back soaked
so I had goosebumps. Goosebumps
down my legs but not on my feet
because they were double blue and
my toes stuck pointing up. Instead
of little bumps, my feet froze pushing,
my toes, blue blue too, but I could bend
them all together and the bridge of my foot
stretched for muddy moving.

I am Cleora and my hands are smaller than my cheeks | I am small
I am the daughter of a mother and I was born with two bellies
I was pulled from my mother by my pinky fingers
I remember the twist of pinkies from my mother's pink mouth

there are reasons for eating, for sleeping, for
groaning in the middle of the night

dr., you'll can see her coming now?

dr. you'll can put her against my chest?
dr. you'll can give her here | dr. you'll can touch her skin is it soft?
dr. she'll can flip flop onto the floor in time?

I cried when I hit the floor (I remember
this). I was called Cleora before I had a chance

I must explain! | I shouted!
I must explain!
SHE WHOOPED

she covers her eyes.

o o o

take that off
 now, She says
 to the girl with
 the handkerchief on her forehead so that
 a pursed lip comes out from under it
 a veil and veils are
 for the mourning
 She says, take that off, won't you'll please
 She shouts!
 (not saying please no
 no definitely not
 begging is for people by the roadside!
 wearing dark overcoats!)
 but thank you, mother dearest, She instructs
 holding a cloth drip-wet over
 her eyes
 a whirling stream bridges her nose and slides
 along her cheek
 a fat drop in the corner of her mouth

The chorus in conversation:

mmm does she lick it?
 She wouldn't have to stick her tongue out far, just a small shifting,
 hey Sr., you'll can look like smiling
 hmm you'll can smile can't you?
 move your tongue a little, just a little closer
 inch a little inch

We've caught you.

Look away.

She licked it we missed it!
 just a drip
 rain on her mouth is the same as tearing
 little whirling streams from sky or eye
 not so calm no
 they tear they do, they tear straight through a cheek
 except for those lolling drops, they rrolllllll

across the plains of her face

craggy withered, like weathered
wouldn't you say?

coming to rest in a spot in a field of bristles
tamped down by some tawny paint
O She's got that look like She'll can make teeth turn to cliffsides

o o o

o o o

She & he & she sit in the waiting room.

xrays won't hurt mother?
no no definitely not
I'll have heard the dr. yelling at some
sshing some

she says, looking at the slide up her shoulder
(he slides and
he's got a bristle chin
too) bad for her
though, I'll think
bad for that little kick she
she likes to give in the morning
when the light through those thin curtains

it shrieks in my head, doesn't it?
is that her, mother?

it's that we're so close to the middle,
and the light can't get much brighter than
here, he says
take me,
my skin is so hot in the morning that I can steam

*A noise. From
reception.*

o mine
is for half-past, She
needs two fillings too, she
stands and follows
mother dearest from the waiting room

but you said
whales are filled by
filling up always
little things make bigger things
I'll can fill myself with

teensy thin-limbs
can't I?

but two fillings

A piece.

is two too many
you'll kiss me after.
you think it's like tits, but I think
it'll could be
like when some something is growing on the back of your teeth
from biting
or sleeping with your mouth open
dry sponge ready to soak

wetter, she waited
mine is for 1 o'clock,

she sits alone.

She must
be frightened of the
dr. can I'll see her soon?

yes yes absolutely you'll can
see her wake
like She'll was pulled from the corners
or toward the slumber that
keeps me

she moves to the fish tank.

o o o

o o o

I am Cleora and You watch me wetter

she to the reader:

I am Cleora and the slowly seizing has wrung me wetter

better to call out to you, dr.
I'll can go whenever I need, dr.?

no no definitely no bluer than that lazy swimming
circle-round and,
can you'll come touch this, mother?

feel it trickle down
outward, homeward
pinky finger | finger tripping
forge a babble brook | finger bridge

you can wade in higher, mother!
you can wade to your knuckles and it still feels
cool as
icy muddled mouthing,
rainbow soapy oil spill
you'll can make a whirlpool, mother!
twirl your finger in the underneath, yes
yes definitely. Lake or pool?
she asks,

quietly
minnow slip slides and a pinky-sized

where did all those flowers come from?
baby's breath chrysanthemums?

open-bottomed
next!

Gutted Girl remembers the open-bottomed next times
when longhaired shoulder shaking to the ceiling meant

she felt warm
and pink cheeks were electric shocks instead
of petaled puff powder blushkins

he says she is

o o o

o o o

Daughter Dearest to her mother:

that squeaky squeaking, you remember?
you remember heartbeats, both
at the same time, beating
with your small fists? I remember
She says and the cloth on daughter dearest's
sweaty pink. Small fists tamping down
my belly, she says
and she
she'll need cooling

daughter dearest, this'll can cool you
down dear down
there you push toes up
pushing let

she shouts.

remember when we played wedding?
WEDDING?!

remember the mourning veil?
remember the way you never said anything but

I'd do

I'll do anything. Remember

too
that morning when the veil was in washing
with my socks and sweaters?
blue blue too from the lacy white

it's a scene of twisted
wrists, pulled from mothers
and mother's calloused fingertips
patting baby's bones

To her daughter:

you sleep
every night and each night I am
struck by the soft fuzz on the edges of your ears

speak | listen
trickle sounds that
hold me close | tell
how it'll can be tomorrow
and prayer hands
every night and each night I am
struck by the way your voice sounds from the soft canyons
of my pillowed head far away
from me but close to the source of

can you hear it in-between your ears?
rushing | thumping

I imagine your ears are a desert floor,
sunbaked. Stretched
thin where voices trip

can I'll hear it tomorrow? Far
away tomorrow it fades

but little darling tomorrow
You You You
will be far away from you and
she she'll can be
all knobby bits and pieces
count them one, two,
twenty and every night
and each night
I am struck
by twenty pink tallies, little
darling yesterdays are impressed upon desert
ears, palms,
long hair from the first moment

it is dark outside, she said then | it is dark inside, she said always.

bear me, she spoke

before She lost her

o o o

o o o

tomorrow's prayer hands
they'll can be held together
like little houses or
the church steeple, under
she wrings her hands
held together sweaty sweaty
underneath is empty, nothing
if not empty ended

how can she'll say it, Sr.?

she'll say
no definitely no way
to make the mouth-thing go its way
okay?

what do cats drink?

milk

what do cows drink?

milk

HA

The chorus to the reader:

we've caught You! look away!
in shame | embarrassment
close your mouth, Cleora
you look like a fish
below the surface trying
to slide-swallow flies into your belly

pink-bellied bass
is that it, Cleora?
pink belly-under the bridge
red bridge bye its
the way it goes

okay?

She to the chorus:

after all this time I can
wring hands together
without sweaty palms to touch
I'll won't prune anymore
too dry

she to She:

I'll won't sidle up this time
shiny teeth crooked
smile, she says
tomorrow I'll can feed it?

yes, yes definitely yes. Tomorrow
you'll can feed it, She says

she she sshh, she whispers
those pinkies drip drape along
her round belly-underneath
got to get this done with
can I'll come in now, dr.?

she shouts across the room
he laughs and finger-trips
up her pink arm, up
to follow his teeth
crinch crunching on jr.

he to she:

I promise no crinching, he says
I'll can take it, she says
soft, round, who cares

who cares?
WHO CARES?!
HE WHOOPS

you'll can take it any way you like,
Sr. Except away, Sr., except
way back when | when way back
and she was just unrisen, unripened
when you did the pushing, Sr.
you'll can't go pre-tongue like
you're all teeth
and nothing else

an empty mouth, she thinks
some kind of mouth-thing without
that'll be the smoothest kiss she's ever had | seen

dr., take it all out, can't you?
cut cut cut it out and let's go!

or better yet, store it someplace
mmm cool thinking,
real cool, he says

o o o

o o o

like glass between my teeth
I'll can get my teeth fixed, dr.?

no there's no stopping it
rests between my teeth
these big ones, here, dr.?
and it feels like clear, clean sliding, but

o

that red bridge is the one, dr.
that red bridge is the one, dr. I push
my toes towards
let it all go, She says
he said | she said
my back on the muddy icy
table top, belly up
it's a slowly circle

is it a drain, dear? | am I a drain, dearest mother?

two hearts beat together
now and always
said the sky to the ground and the grounded
down inside

A choral heartbeat.

in that story (I red
bridge) once
upon a storybrook,
babbling, she says,
is a heart slap,
slap-sliding down
underneath where Grout Girl becomes

dearest madonna darling,
in this city waiting room
some something was pulled unfurling

would you crash again?
She asks,
would you'll think it'll hold?

The fish tank.

only a thou pounds, perhaps, but little
soft girl with floatie eyes and mouth-thing that spills babbling into underneath

The choral heart beats.

out out and let it out, little darling

A flood.

dress soaked
and

Stop stop it up.

throat red

is that babbling, dr.?
you'll can find it, dr.? maybe
it's hiding underneath where
she she is gone. In the mean time

dr. Touch her arm is it spilly soft?
soft enough to rest my finger tips?
is this mothering?

mouth-thing, sshh now
baby's own bowing to thrones
on knees (She said) this little city
waiting with its bright lights
for a golden glowing, soft spilling something

o mine, you'll can feel that warmth
belly bile and pink cheek

watch up to the ceiling, now
let it go
trickle down
spin 'round gutter sounds

o o o

she she'll
explode from the heart
growing up up
as tall as you'll can imagine
a small white shoot into the sky, she
she'll can come here, dr.?
well can't you see, dr.?
she she will be something, dr. Some something!
a glowing golden something!

joy like a somersault through open windows

she shouts!
she shouts and laughs to the ceiling!
o mine!

sun-bright, small crepuscular beetles are heavy at noon
their mirrored armor shines purple-green
the open windows murmur at her bedroom door
they say, stay still, let it all go through
here. Sun-bright
hands held fluttering
to the ceiling, she calls out by name
that child, she says

some something she'll be, dr.
I'll feel her coming up yellow bright and
she she saving my

her shoulders warm and joy colors her like
speckled affectionators—routine engines
which daily brush and
deepen into small, brown spots across
shoulders, knees, and nose

her voice goes now

slowly

unfurls

doesn't trip trip out in bits
it slops and hushes outward, downward,
homeward, it travels

there'll be crying on throat plate tonight, yes sir
a little wetter, jr. Just once
more,
again,
shout!

Some last words.

mmm holy holy she,
she and me, holy holy
for you, mother dearest

dearest child o
mine all mine and

the underneath thing
overhead starlight follows
to the waiting room
inside She holds a warm cloth
icefull against forehead, sweat-pink

a sometime, but wholly golden glow
she she'll be,
says madonna-mother to that some something
inside she

o o o

o o o

dr. you'll can touch her skin is it soft?

dr. she'll can flip flop out in time?

A long hand in a long glove.

I am Cleora and she

she is small

like a bread box like

soft, round

she, she is needed

she she was here

until she wasn't

dr. you'll can put her against my chest?

tamped down

she

knees bent and

she

back soaked by hot

mud-red brown

her feet froze

her toes stuck pointing up

blue, too blue

no no, definitely not

she & she double blue

over the bridge of her feet and knees and red mouth-thing

red mouthing now?

she'll can mouth things now?

dr. put her here against my breast

I am Cleora

and she she

a miniature slip sliding

small fish smell

between my toes

the underneath space is smaller than a bread box

dr. she'll could be hiding there?

scrubbed clean by the soaps for rent
and hot water bluer

fast! fast!
over the edge!

o o o

Hearts beat.

there's a little kick to it
I imagine
that I will be happier than ever
I imagine
that I will from morning 'til night
when she she who smoothed herself against me
my body is warm and purple
jelly-like belly, like the inside of someone's cheek

do you know what I mean by cheek? When You bite
Your cheek and it grows in
to a little bump,
that's what
like a pearl the way an oyster
itch scratches at the grain
until it grows into a smooth
shiny white bell-of-a-ball
it kicks out later or
is scraped by the fisherman's knife, mother

dearest told me so
she said
pearl earrings aren't for girls!
they're for prostitutes!
and people who go the opera!
in red yellow velvet wraps!

The chorus:

wrapped inside the belly inside the body inside her body
a pink cheek made soft, flushed out

I imagine
she will be smaller than a breadbox with fists like pebbles
pruned by the flushed slush inside
my belly is a boulder
and little pebble-pinkies will be born from

chipped away quarry treasure
held up to the light by the salesman
who says
grandly
finely-grained
mighty expensive, now

chalk that up and put it in town square
a statue of my prize
possession. she'll can be
the knick-knack princess for
all I care, he says

and a little clot is taken up and out
clot-me for all I care!

she shouts at the ceiling

she is on her back. Lying.

hmmm a nice light touch is all you need,
the world it'll can be your pearl and
you'll can be mine
o mine is an oyster and I could
itch you all day,

for all you care, I will

A dream.

climbing over fence posts,
I imagine bruises in yellow-blue
the hue of parking lot lamps
under which you'll can kiss for the first time
only!
if you promise to talk talk for as long as you'll want to
talk all night
for all I care
only talk!
about the things you'll like, like
spiral shoelaces

smashed fruit

o o o

Influential Texts

Alison Tara Walker, *The Boundless Book: A Conversation between the Pre-modern and Posthuman*, 2013

This work on digital humanities and medieval studies examines the development of reading technologies from the time of the handwritten manuscript to the phenomenon of digital hypertexts. Using texts like Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* and the medieval "Vein Man" as examples, Walker analyzes the ways reading is challenged by medium. She writes that, "reading a medieval manuscript is an embodied process...Like a palimpsest, each reader leaves a mark on the manuscript, whether it is a marginal notation, emendation to the textual unit, or a new binding...It would be easy to assume that the reading interface in new media would be one that eschews bodies altogether for a completely virtual reading experience. Rather, many electronically mediated texts revisit a medieval practice and create a multi-sensory reading experience." Reading is, thus, always a bodily experience. The embodied subjectivities of the reader are engaged and, in cases like Jackson's work, "navigation [through the text] becomes a process that challenges our conceptions of linear reading and invites the reader to view reading as an embodied process."

While *Glory Girl Jr. jr.* is a work-in-progress and has yet to wholly engage with the embodied experience for the reader, I hope that the language I've constructed re-associates the reader with the body and the way the body exists in time/space/hegemonic frameworks. The goal of this text is to require readers to "negotiate the body—and most importantly, its viscera—in order to progress through the narrative."

Kristen Kosmos, *This From Cloudland*, 2009

A text with shouting. With voices. With new worlds.

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, 1989

Though dated, Minh-ha's writing on the postcolonial woman writer is an intensely poetic theoretical text. She explores the process of writing and the implications of writing the body. Discussing the consequences of the hegemonic language with which we are forced to reckon, Minh-ha explains that the postcolonial woman writer is subjected to a "double mischief;" she is "unspoken and unable to speak, woman in exile with herself." The hegemony of language confines the woman writer in her body, while also restricting her from expressing the embodied. Writing *about the body* is inherently colonizing, given that the media of such writing is based in a phallogocentric lexicon. The woman writer's only response is a process of rewriting and remaking parts of the body that are neither exalted nor degraded.

This response threatens hegemonic frameworks that contribute to the woman writer's marginalized position in language and society. Minh-ha describes this threat: "To abolish [hegemonic language] is to remove the basis, the prop, the overture, or the finale—giving thereby free rein to indeterminacy: the result, forefeared, is either an anarchic succession of climaxes or a de(inex)pressive, uninterrupted monotony—and to enter into the limitless

process of interactions and changes that nothing will stop, not even death. In other words, things may be said to be what they are, not exclusively in relation to what was and what will be (they should not solely be seen as clusters chained together by the temporal sequence of cause and effect), but also in relation to each other's immediate presences and to themselves as non/presences.” This description has inspired my treatment of formal structures for language and writing.

Anne Carson, *The Glass Essay*, 1994

Poetic visions of pain, of remarkable embodied experience. *Nude #1* stands alone, “an exposed column of nerve and blood and muscle.” The speaker’s soul is manifested in the vision of a body. And more specifically, a body that suffers. Carson’s poem resonates in its treatment of the wound, the wounded, the body’s depth of experience. This is the language of the woman writer.

Carson’s thirteenth *Nude* arrives as “utterly different.” The pain is gone, though the winds blowing it back are terrible. The thirteenth *Nude* does not have “[the speaker’s] body, not a woman’s body, it was the body of us all.” The body has been translated from the particular to the collective. Pain, whatever type of pain this is, becomes universalized. This moment begs a difficult question: can the woman writer write her pain without resorting to language that perpetuates that pain? Empathy requires intersubjectivity, but it only functions if there is a foundational understanding that the personal is legitimate. For woman writers, the personal is never legitimate. Carson’s final four stanzas read to me as a statement of optimism for woman’s elevation to the status of the universal subject. *Glory Girl Jr. jr.* instead finds optimism in the subversion of the hegemonic universal. However, I am consistently struck by the concept of bones being luminous, everlasting.

Harry Berger Jr., *Bodies and Texts*, 1987

I am inspired by Berger to consider the ways in which the “graphic media” of written text can function equally to oral, aural, or live text as an extension of the body. Berger distinguishes “between two hypothetical orders of communication and semiosis—one centered on speaker and hearer, the other on reader and writer. In the first, all messages—nonverbal as well as verbal—are transmitted through the channel of the body and its extensions, while in the second, all messages are abstracted from the body and reconstructed in graphic media so they can pass through written channels...Communication [of the first kind] is restricted to interaction contexts whose senders and receivers are present to each other.”

Berger’s idea that messages which are “transmitted through the channel of the body,” is contingent on his understanding of live performance as the only means by which a text can breathe. While it is true that writing the body necessitates the graphic medium of the signifier, this does not limit texts that write the body to the category of abstractions. In Berger’s first order of communication, the body is written and again expressed by/for tangible bodies. In this process, the body palpates outside the lexical signifiers which

Berger's second order necessitate. However, what Berger fails to explore is the potential for deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed language to also exist (and thrive and palpitate) outside lexical hegemonies. Language that writes the body must deviate from that language which writes *about the body*, the language of phallogocentric lexicons. Therefore, I believe that there is potential for this language in experiment to function like Berger's first order of communication.

The writers that experiment with this potential are responding to a problem Berger himself notes: "We are the beneficiaries and victims of a grammatocentric culture," and those elites who achieve their position "based on the mastery of a corpus of texts," are part of "a problem of control...a struggle to confine the free play of meaning," and one which, "involves the productions and distribution of 'power-knowledge'." *Glory Girl Jr. jr.* attempts to release the free play of meaning. This release both subverts the lexical hegemony constituted by power-knowledge and allows for subjectivities marginalized by the power-knowledge framework to work as Berger's first order of communication.

Shelley Jackson, *my body—a Wunderkammer*, 1997

A hypertext Cabinet of Curiosities, *my body* writes Jackson's own body onto the non-tangible skin of the screen. From the beginning we hear breathing. We sense that the body lives within and on top of the digital pages that we, as readers and implicated voyeurs, must navigate. There are teeth behind fingernails on top of ankles within layers and layers of hair.

Leslie Jamison, *Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain*, 2014

"Keep bleeding. Just write toward something beyond blood."

Jamison's essay on the cliché of female pain in contemporary texts and media, as well as contemporary females, has some smart things to say about the ways readers and pop-culture consumers both degrade and fetishize female pain. In many ways, this essay doesn't quite reach the level of analysis I want it to, though Jamison is adamant that woman writers must work from their subjectivities. There is a line between elevating and fetishizing those bodies that are non-normative or threatening to the hegemony. Jamison warns that most contemporary woman writers, or even more flagrantly, men writers too often cross this line. I have attempted to write the body with all its pain, without exalting solely those pains that treat the body as an object for the male gaze. I have attempted to write a text that does not distinguish scars from skin.

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