

*Lotsa Poems About*

Beverages

&

Other



Indulgences

The Mostly Complete Collection of  
Poems 1982-1996 by Mordantia Bat

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## PREFACE to the PDF version

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This booklet was originally created as a birthday gift to le Marquis Déjà Dû, as he was curiously fond of my poetry.

At the time, I only made two copies of the book: one for the Marquis and a copy for myself.

As I still had a copy of layout pages, I decided to make a PDF file out of this booklet. What follows is the booklet as it was originally made for the Marquis.

— M Bat  
2002

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*Benevolent Birthday Wishes  
to the Marquis!*

**M**on cher Marquis,

For your birthday, I have made you this booklet containing much of my poetry written from my college years to the present day. I would almost hazard to call this a Complete Works Collection, except it does not contain the scores of whiney adolescent poetry I have stuffed in my footlocker, and I know there are a few stray poems from later that never were typed onto my computer. But, truly, it is just about a Complete Collected Poems of Bat. I have never before dared to collect and publish them in one place, but for you, who finds such curious and fervent delight in my delicate phrasings, I decided I could attempt this giant feat. Your birthday looming seemed a reasonable goal. And so, my dear Marquis, you are herewith presented with this modestly-compiled booklet.



May I warn you that in so doing this mostly unabridged collecting, the quality of the poems do vary ever so slightly from the questionable & idly wretched to the surprising & brilliantly eustresstic. Also, you will see an assured repetition of themes and imagery. Coffee, for example, is mentioned more times than is practically decent.

I have arranged them in loose somewhat chronological order — that is to say, poems from the early 80s appear towards the beginning of the book and poems from the 90s appear towards the back of the book. But the dates are not strictly chronological, although I've included a date or at least a year when I knew it for certain. For the earlier poems, I've also included the place I was residing during which I wrote each poem (when I remembered clearly). This is possibly irrelevant, although as my poems tend towards being of the quasi-confessional/autobiographical genre, I am always reminded of where I was, physically and mentally, during the penning of each poem.

I hope you will enjoy some of these.

Never Thirst — m.b.

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## Existential Blow Job

Cold wall.  
Think not.  
My hand.  
Your jeans.  
My love.  
Cold book.  
Passionate French.  
Cold Sartre.  
Sartre kiss. Accusation.  
Intellectual penis.  
Cold hands.  
Open jeans.  
Kiss of life.

*1983, College*

## Body

Body.  
Stop.  
Shards of light hit the  
skin. The venetian blinds  
are open.  
Andy Warhol is in the room,  
emulsifying on the television set.

Body.  
Stop.  
My body in the mirror is  
imperfect. I am not  
a sculpture.

Body.  
Stop.

*1983, College*

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# Sterile Priestess Making Her Rounds in an Existentially Absurd World

Watch my lips.

Suicide.

There. I've said it. Now what?

In the Haight, there is a purple church

for Jimi Hendrix. The Adoration of the Cherry Cheesecake

may not hang in the Louvre,

but so what?

The Who never played there.

I've seen men on Egyptian walls who make  
perfect offerings,

and I've seen men take multi-coloured tablets,

and I've seen anonymous temples built out of dirt.

I am a sterile priestess; a poly-atheist,

I have many gods I don't believe in.

But I believe, nevertheless,

in a certain dogma.

Fairy tales, for instance, where

witches are gassed and dragons mutilated.

Beneath the pretty pastel cover always

reeks another story.

I've seen men on Egyptian walls who make

perfect offerins, and it looks bloody similar

to those Bosch-like beings adoring

the cheesecake.

Neon priests speak to me from

the turntable — profound speeches

about sex, drugs, and death.

Why wouldn't I speak about suicide,

although it is a powerless word

in this particular dungeon.

*1982, College*

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# Scream

The way I'm living now has  
something to do with the party I went to  
in the summer  
where I watched a girl in a black coat  
wipe up spilled wine  
with a book of poetry by Rilke.  
I was across the room,  
discussing drunken fate.

But if fate is drunk, it is Baudelaire,  
and I'm not living Baudelaire now.  
I'm living on the stage,  
part of Weiss' "Marat/Sade."  
There are people around me, screaming,  
running, dressed in shards —  
but who is in the bathtub  
and who is playing Sade?

Not me.

Sade said, "What we do is only a shadow  
of what we want to do."  
But it's high noon for me —  
I do nothing, want nothing.  
Bullshit.

The way I'm living now  
is model-posed, before the camera,  
bored and pouty and tense. But the eyes  
tell all, and it has to  
end with a scream.

**1982, College**

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## Details in the Fog

I am ascending into  
oblivion,  
making my tracks through  
a haze of smoke  
and rock-n-roll.  
My mother had certain  
expressions when in my youth  
she was drunk. A cigarette  
in one hand, a drink  
in the other. She'd  
laugh a certain way,  
sway a certain way.  
And I do that now.  
Maybe it means I'm all  
grown up.

*1982, College*

## Untitled

Spiral screams fall into a  
vortex.  
Listen to my silence. I am not dead  
yet.  
When I sit across the room from you  
and  
          hate,  
why do you demand eloquence?

*1982, College*



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# Listening to the Dead Boys

- I — in the beginning, all those fetal positions  
bored me, and I didn't drink very much.  
Hours slouched by with only a slight change of  
shadows.
- II— later, I crossed the street  
to get a better look at the boy at the bus stop,  
but he scared me.  
Those eyes, though.  
Malevolence is so much the trend.
- III— Nausea is with me lately —  
I can't move, I can't think.  
I prepare food to fill up the time,  
and I give myself food poisoning.  
What do red skies mean?
- IV— okay, don't.  
Don't you know it's been done before?  
What are you? Tired already? What  
do red skies mean? What are summer  
nights with very little to say?  
to do?
- V— Nausea is so much the trend.
- VI— I could have been a contender.  
Summer nights — all those lights on Broadway —  
just looking, I swear,  
and that seems like a stupid way to spend an evening.

*1984, the Haight*

# Red

Like a slashed wrist,  
you come back.  
Why?

Broadway, S.F.,  
Carol Doda's flashing tits,  
skate rats & sailors & lamé  
Enrico's, money, maserati. kiss kiss.  
I wish I could live in  
the Europa Hotel where  
Doda's neon would flash  
red across the room  
like a cheap detective  
show, and you'd be  
fucking your brains out  
for money  
instead of whatever it is  
that you do it for now.  
Fake red velvet decor, the On Broadway  
with Flipper saying, "You looked  
so  
heal —— thy."  
Yeah.  
Look at me, my undertaker glow,  
and it isn't even Halloween yet.  
Who am I in love with this week?  
You and you and you.  
Leaning against the Kearny St. sign,  
I'm just kind of there.  
Where are you tonight?

Like a slashed wrist,  
violent and distateful and  
always always anticipated,  
you appear.  
"You look so ....."

*(1983 or 1984)*

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## Quadriplegic Crystal Whore

In bright light, the ocean looks different.  
I forgot to go there today.  
I forgot to do a lot of things.

Beyond the glass of a cafe,  
he is found,  
quite dead but moving.  
Eyes glazed, he raises  
the cigarette to his lips.  
He moves like a lizard,  
half-dead.  
He promises himself to never  
do a night like that again.

My sleep patterns are off —  
I can't work while awake.  
I've made my choices.  
I didn't go to the ocean today,  
and he woke up, half-dead.

The women wore black pullovers  
to show their affinity for Sartre,  
or was it to hide their arms —  
the soft spot  
in the bend where the flesh  
begs to be mutilated.

Lizard/Man  
moves the espresso to his lips,  
parched, fleshless.  
I move towards the ocean,  
drawn by the incessant.  
My heart goes. It is  
almost reassuring.  
There is death in that  
window and that look of comfort I never

see.

Is it a dream? He leans unsteadily.  
Traces of last night's eyeliner  
make his eyes sunken. Some was  
never like this

In the bend of his arm, a pulse.  
I bend to kiss it. It goes.

That peculiar yearning I feel is real.  
I should have been a photographer.  
Behind the glass of the cafe, he sits,  
his elbows steadying himself on the table,  
a black pullover covering  
him. Eyes glazed, he looks  
at me. I can still taste  
his pulse.

*1984, the Haight*

## Vigilance

You cut pasta with the door closed.  
The phone rings. You wait till it stops  
and pick it up, dead, and listen.  
You set it aside. The night air is cold.  
The windows are open. You go there  
to feed the birds.

*(mid-80s)*

## To Those Poets

He leans over me, naked,  
to change the record,  
his body so smooth and so young,  
it leaves the taste of  
anorexia in my mouth.  
He forgets to kiss me.

It was really hot that afternoon  
and it occurred to me that I  
should have an affair, but instead  
I bought chow mein and took  
it home with me.

He leans over me, naked,  
his face so unfamiliar  
in the deceptive candlelight.  
I forget what I'm supposed to do.  
And if he remembers,  
he won't do it.

*1984, the Haight*

## For Brian

My watch is lost, don't know the time,  
wander around tall buildings, holding my hands in pockets,  
primordial streets, shoes should be black like asphalt,  
blend into the earth,

the myriad boy is dead,

just like in books, literary to the end, but  
whose end? The End - Fin -, no this is not so,  
why so violent? Weeping, taking, curled into a small  
ball and I hate it that nothing happened later because  
this might seem invalid.

Sweet boy, heaven is a place where they drink  
white espresso. You are like broken glass, the usual  
accoutrements — wanted everything,  
could not calm down. Shit, Brian, why'd you  
go and do that? You recycled bottles and, yet,  
hanged yourself.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

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## room

/windows/ I forgot you'd been here  
in the moonlight.

I waited half my life for you,  
had you in a despicable unparalled  
moment and pouted because  
I didn't notice  
until now.

How soft your flesh, myriad boy.  
It doesn't matter anymore.  
You're just like the novels  
I used to read.

/light fixtures/ in power failures,  
they make more sense.

/closets/ dark clothing to put  
over my paleness. I bruise  
so easily.  
/mirrors/ vanity for girls. ego  
for boys. id for me.

/candles/ I forgot you'd been here  
in my bed, naked and squirming.  
That one kiss meant a lot.

/music/ necessary.

/bed/ empty.

/doors/ all the better to eat you with, my dear.

*1984, the Haight*

## What People Do When They're Bored But Not Bored Enough to Read Rimbaud

I took the felt pen and made  
the cigarettes blue.  
You said something about art.  
This wasn't simultaneous. Nor causal.  
Just juxtaposed.

*mid-80s*

## Where I Live Isn't Paris

my skin stretched tightly over my bones restrains me,  
a martyred vision of indulgences. Pray that no one  
breaks through this fragile veneer of decadence and sees  
the dust from unuse.

I love to be thought of in Paris, a city of air and  
cream. I love to be thought of  
fondly  
or even infamously, but thought of is the key.

Where I live isn't Paris, but there are still those  
distinctive european cafes where I can lean over a latte  
and not think.

But I do.

my skin is so tight against my face, I can hardly move.  
It is hard to see around me except out of the corners of  
my eyes, and then what I see isn't worth it.

Where I live isn't Paris,  
nor its spleen,  
but it's a sewer of mismatched expectations.

I lean over my latte and think that the espresso  
is not good for me, but at least the milk will soothe  
my stomach.  
And then I think of something else.

*1984, the Haight*

## Shrinking Away From Decadence

Shoulders slumped forward, breasts hang low like a  
sharecropper's who done against the Book.

You'd never believe, you'd never believe  
what happened to . . . .

Days are when decadence is the rule,  
those suburban boys in black T-shirts  
with the logo from last week's concert,  
drinking J.D., dreaming of going for it  
in their cars.

Raccoon-eyed adolescents shooting their arms  
full of dreams they ain't never had,  
so the trip hits them like a TV commercial  
for Jack in the Box and becomes matter of fact.

Sally Bowles in every café, screaming  
under bridges, mister, hey mister, can't stop  
now, the band's playing, it's time ladies and  
gents, get your asses out, the fire marshall says.

But where will we go, what will we do?

There's only so much educational TV one  
can watch.

There's only so much hiking and so much zen.

At 25, the liver's shot. Settling down with a good  
book. Baudelaire, but, of course.

1986

## Cup of Tea

Through my mouth a dagger. bleed over  
onto the next page. the type so fine.  
pages with scrolls. read someone else's  
commandments. there is no reality except  
at the bottom of a teacup. Your hands  
so fine. so pale. You cut my mouth.  
tell me it is a cure. For  
some things, I suppose.

1985 or 1986



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## Love Poem with Imaginary Dagger

I don't scream  
when I cut myself.  
I lie in the bathtub  
and thrust an imaginary dagger  
into my heart because  
the exercise feels good  
on my arms.

I see myself naked in mirrors  
and weep.

The longer I stay here, the  
more mad I become. With crayons.  
If I told you I loved you, it  
would be relief for only five seconds.

*1984 or 1985*

## All My Dark Toys

The floor is mean. I cross it  
to the window.  
There are no curtains.  
Someone once told me that I look scary/  
tough/beautiful.  
Stupid.  
I can sit in such a way, my knees  
drawn to my chest (through my chest?)  
This is not yoga.

Outside, it might be raining.  
I might be leaving soon: on a  
train, in a movie. I was once

cont >

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at a Greyhound terminal in the rain,  
and I was depressed. This  
was simultaneous and not  
causal, but makes travel memorable.  
Like postcards. And globes with  
water-sogged laundry flakes—  
although I never did understand  
how it could snow on Coit Tower.  
But I guess even hell freezes, or we'd  
never get anything done.

I was once terminal in the rain,  
through my chest (not yoga again),  
scary/tough/beautiful/. Oh, the things  
they can do with video these days—  
change my eye color, my gender,  
my goals.

My psychiatrist is a skinny grey dog;  
he pronounced me d.o.a. in the rain,  
pronounced me phonetically,  
emphatically—

of course, there was rebirth.  
oil of olay.  
a-leg-gory. amputation.

I might be leaving soon  
to the window.  
It will be open.

*1984, the Haight*

# Snake Parties

From that street to that street,  
trudging — yes, trudging — because  
maybe I hadn't my coffee,  
because maybe it's morning, maybe  
it's winter, I haven't the strength  
to hold my head up out here,  
living in my exhaust dreams.

Imagine urbane sensibilities on anyone  
but a poodle, graffiti scrawled in  
paint/blood: IT'S BETTER TO LIVE ON YOUR FEET  
THAN DIE ON YOUR KNEES.  
America, land of perversions/expectations,  
those are not opportunities, and I don't have anyone  
to confide this phenomenon to.  
Music deepens the emotions, splays the  
experience like a knife, the Aztec sacrifice,  
and the beating, still beating, heart as it  
finally has its first good look at the sun.

ohgod, what am I doing here?

Lost, a sea of urchins — lost, my german shepherd puppy with a  
tattoo on its left thigh  
Gamine, gamin, eat my crumbs.

You will grow up, too, and be like us,  
have what we have ... but we have nothing and  
work very hard to hide from that

And I have nothing and have the time to contemplate  
that fact and am depressed and exhausted and don't  
even think I'm happy and yet I still assume I'm  
better off. Tell me how  
the snake eats its own tail.

cont >

Where the air is cleaner and more shallow, I want to go.  
My head hurts.  
I can't move,  
but have to.  
I'm move stupidly, but I'm not,  
and around me,  
people have taken their vitamins and their cars  
and they expect me to regulate my posture  
in the grocery store. Well, right-o, tres bien,  
ladies and gentlemen, squeeze your grapefruit,  
maybe I do have IT  
beneath my coat, beneath my brilliance, and  
you'd expect that, so I do, I do, I do, I do, AND why not  
a crisis where I can wear black and not  
be pretentious or weird?  
I wanted the other life, too, you know,  
and this body isn't working out the way I planned.

Some days, I count on growing up and choking on my tail.

*1985, Berkeley*

## DNA Stain

I am, not unlike  
the others. Frightened  
into being a girl.  
My world feels like  
a gesture of condolence,  
so tentatively offered,  
so hastily forgotten.

Walking strains the feet.

*late 80s*

## Voyeur's Roses

In the windowbox, a teacup,  
 your face distorted on its side.  
 Your face in love. In hate.  
 The wine on your table. Decadence.  
 Decadence is not chocolate.  
 Dishes. Windows. Throwing out.  
 Everything goes. Where.  
 A voyeur gave you roses. Said  
 you looked lovely last night.  
 You couldn't remember what  
 you were doing. You  
 throw your dishes out the window  
 now instead of washing them.  
 You don't have the time.

*(late 80s)*

## Because of Sunspots on the Sun

Freud didn't make up the world,  
 and he wimped out on several points.  
 I came from the ocean, not  
 like Venus, but like a broken bottle  
 smoothed out by water.  
 I spent days on the beach  
 and thought.  
 And maybe Freud came strolling  
 and saw me and said, "I can  
 see myself in this glass, and  
 this is projection."

I said nothing, being smooth.

And maybe Freud broke me over  
 a rock and said, "This is  
 transference." And maybe his hand  
 bled because I didn't like it.

*mid or late 80s*

## 3 AM

Shivering under wet sheets  
 in the hot night. Where there are  
 nightmares, there are people  
 dreaming. Insomnia-drenched thoughts.  
 At 3 AM, I sit bolt upright  
 and think I could kill myself  
 or I could save money and go to Paris.  
 It's okay.  
 I'll do neither.  
 I sleep, usually, once in a day.  
 Sometimes, I don't. Those days are better  
 because I've been dancing and  
 breakfasting and looking at the  
 sunrise from the only acceptable perspective.  
 Sometimes I have insomnia and dreams  
 and thoughts and fear of death, which  
 is funny because my fear of life  
 is much more overwhelming. But I  
 don't usually think about it.

*(1986 or 1987)*

## (untitled)

We are like angels,  
 cavalorting in the depths of a spring  
 (feeling cold water freeze our veins).

No.  
 We are not  
 like each other; our capillaries jut out  
 like wires but wires that cannot be  
 twisted around one another to form  
 the connection. We stand and stare  
 and speak and open the new jar of  
 peanut butter. This is what our  
 life is for. This is how to live.

*mid or late 80s*

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# Catharsis

You cried at the movies.  
I drank coffee.  
All of life was dismal and indulgent.  
My father (my father, the scientist) told me a story:  
In his Arizona high school  
in what must have been the 1920s,  
his English teacher tried to make him  
appreciate poetry. She read him a poem about  
a boy dangling his feet in a stream.  
Can't you feel it, she said, can't you feel  
your feet wet in the water, can't you  
feel your feet dangling?  
He said No,  
and laughed so many years later, his tongue  
dangling in scotch & water.

I can't appreciate poetry.  
I can't feel. You cried at the movies.  
I watched.  
My hands were numb. I moved my fingers.  
Blood inside my body was cold.  
Doctors can never find my pulse.

Razor blades rust.  
How many flies can  
dance on the edge  
of a blade?

Life isn't meant to be taken seriously.  
Open all your presents and look at the  
abandoned wrappings and wonder at what you didn't get.  
There's always next year.  
Always another one and old things forgotten.  
I imagine Sartre sitting at home,

cont >

satisfied with himself and a cup of coffee,  
 answering fan mail in French,  
 knowing he's so goddamned wise. But  
 spilling the coffee, he has a fleeting moment  
 of self-doubt.

And he knows he doesn't know it all.  
 But he knows that everyone else knows he does.  
 He'll never speak any of it out loud,  
 in French, in German, in English.

All of life is dismal and indulgent,  
 hurtful and strung out.  
 People waver between knowing and forgetting,  
 turning their hands over,  
 picking up a fork. Feeling and forgetting.  
 Just sitting where it's warm  
 with a book and a pastry,  
 looking at T.S. Eliot Michelangelo paintings,  
 Picasso alienation, and stabbing themselves metaphorically,  
 and denying it ever happened  
 because maybe it didn't really.  
 Reading something once—knowing—  
 reading it again and saying no.  
 Never dangling feet in the water.  
 Not caring. Fighting for a better life  
 whether that means cessation of starvation  
 or a house with a pool. Life can't get any better.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

## Life in the Dark

Blue waters where fish congregate,  
 whispering of loves they had in former lives.

A fish is what you become if you're  
 too romantic.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*



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## Social Behavior in Primates

when it is different,  
why angels dance on pins,  
and why people care about it.  
Elliptical stances,  
the urban meadow,  
streetlamp shattered  
on the ground.  
Entrance on one level  
is exit on another.

when it is different,  
where there is moonlight  
and death  
and that one deep kiss  
that signifies  
a pact made only  
by witches and kings before.  
The road is dark black  
asphalt, the etchings in it  
marking days.

when it is different,  
when worlds collide,  
pushing a beer across the table,  
"Have a sip.  
I'm not dying."  
Drink up,  
twelve wraiths on a tower,  
playing at kissing their palms.  
"Don't fret.  
You're not dying."  
Will you ever see me again?  
Those nights, don't think.  
Dance. Syncopate. Stop screaming.

when it is different,

cont >

the scar from ear to ear that  
 you said was just a smile.  
 One day, counting up your unnatural acts,  
 someone is going to notice the discrepancies  
 in your biography, how you never  
 mentioned doing laundry.

when it was different,  
 there are only so many times  
 you can switch cafes,  
 Hide your face in elliptical stances;  
 legs apart,  
 you tremble with the breeze.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

## Something Necessary

My stomach drops,  
 feels like a pond of bad fishes. Reasons  
 aren't necessary; poems are. The Wasteland  
 and Howl offer no alternative to crying  
 in the swamps. In an era of apathetic  
 nihilism, lips brings news:  
 "How are you?" "Sick." "Is it contagious?"

Life harms those who live it.

Chopsticks are amazing things. Have to pay  
 attention to your food. Carrot against  
 black, fishes are silly, bad. I'm not  
 hungry. My stomach hurts. Ulcers are not  
 chic. Eyebrows are. Eyebrows bring  
 news: "Get the hell away from me." Useful  
 on subways.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

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## Fifty-Two Lines

Feet that are ravaged, drunk,  
meeting the asphalt  
again because the buses are  
slower at 2 AM;  
taxis mean having to  
articulate a direction,  
and that was the whole  
problem all night,  
not knowing where to go,  
when to stop.

The muse is a destroyer,  
sits on the shoulder  
and talks about razorblades,  
as if it were yesterday.  
Want to stay drunk and alone many days;  
want to sit on the porch and  
throw wreaths at passer-bys.  
Want to put my head on the tabletop  
of the video game  
and die three deaths,  
one for me.  
All the lights are off.  
It is dark with no effort.  
It's hard to sleep  
and to know  
and to wake up,  
having to apologize, and listen  
to Bach because he's gloomy, like me.  
Wonder what I'm going to do  
about winter.

Wonder if I am abnormal,  
wanting to eat dead fish  
and stare at walls.  
The sardonic smile on my face

cont >

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is for my protection:  
the only kind I use these days.  
Want to be drunk many days.  
JUST BECAUSE. Have no reasons,  
just boredom, boredom of a  
thousand faces, poisoned karma,  
and a quietness that is wild  
and raging.  
Things are only romantic if you  
make them that way.  
If I were any more romantic, I'd  
be dead.  
I know I'm romantic because  
when I'm hungover, I wear black.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

**st.**

I love you only in shadow.  
The blue doorway across the st.  
has seen me lie in your blueness,  
bored and restless and alone.  
The boy down the st. fucked me  
and left me for dead.  
I may be selfish,  
but I'm not stupid.  
I can watch the shadow  
of a crystal wine glass on your wall  
and know I'm not drinking alone.

*1984, the Haight*

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## Bestial Pudding

Deep Scar, Mother of Trolls,  
I beseech thee to listen.  
I am not human:  
Not on subways, where  
leather-jacketed people  
look and know,  
condemn the zombies,  
because the leather people are frightened  
that they will succumb to same  
if  
(when)  
they take off their  
black  
leather.

Deep Scar, Mother of Trolls,  
protect us from mortality, yes,  
but more, protect us from  
an ordinary existence.

I do not hope that I live well,  
but I do hope to live beyond  
commuting sensibilities, to not live within  
tile walls of subway platforms that ask  
for sterility but which are marked with  
dirt and inks and scars and terrified words—  
the terror is never seen by those who stand  
there every day.

Deep Scar, Mother of Trolls,  
I pray for deliverance from these things,  
I pray for my soul, my life,  
my enervation.

*1986 or 1987*

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# Vague Smile

To feel, and  
to end this constant double checking  
of my authenticity, of my propriety.  
You wonder at my vague smile when  
    I am holding a cup of coffee  
    at the window.

That is just happiness, of which I am to disavow  
all knowledge.

We all must pretend we have no effect on each other—  
that is modern,

    that is civilized and understood.

Sangfroid is cold blood, you know,  
but cold blood means something else to me:  
the shudder that runs through my bones  
when someone is stepping on my grave;  
that shudder, which is love, which is  
passion,  
spontaneous combustion/orgasm/frothing.

My passions are stigmata,  
a necessary breath, sweat,  
and all thing visceral.

I smile when I hold a cup of coffee because  
that is civilized, that I am allowed to do,  
that is all you could possibly understand.

*1987 or 1988, Stockton St. Apt.*

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# Tables

The best way to talk is  
with a table in between  
each other. Some  
distance, maybe some  
food for proper distraction.  
I have sat at that table,  
my fingertips touching the  
beer glass. Your skin  
is different, feels  
like the weather. I  
run my hand down and think  
this skin has been  
other places, grating  
itself against the  
sand, maybe at Goa,  
where there are other things to think about.  
But I wouldn't know.  
My skin is pale and soft.  
Like some southern belle,  
I keep it out of  
the sun, but I don't  
do it for the right reasons.  
I don't even like mint juleps.  
I am hiding from the  
light, except candles,  
which are small and  
soothing. A small contained flame  
in total control. One  
breath and it is  
out—how many other things  
can be stopped so easily?

The table could be square  
or round,  
pretending to be zinc. Sitting  
down. Spending one's life

cont >

---

is restaurant suspended time. Better  
than movies.

There are places, other  
places, more beer than  
anyone could drink. Standing,  
waiting for a bus, watching

the truck pull up at noon  
in front of the nightclub and unload  
boxes and  
boxes and  
boxes of beer. Glass bottles  
that can break your heart—well, mine at  
least because I'm a wimp.

Veiled eyes?  
No. Say no. Keep saying no.  
Things are poignant  
sometimes. Everything is  
peanut butter if you  
believe. Am not in  
love this week, am not  
in love ever again. Your skin  
was only in darkness.  
Couldn't see it. The  
sand rubbed into it. There  
are more oceans than I know.  
The thing is, I won't forget.  
It's what I do in the  
middle of the night.  
Quiet—Can live and walk  
to a cafe full of tourists,  
eat some buttered toast. The hands  
that made this bread,  
what were they doing last night?

The summer has declined

cont >



to come this year.  
 You have declined to come  
 this week. In my arms—  
 or maybe not, who cares?  
 I do, but not as you think.  
 If you weren't doing this to me,  
 I'd be writing about  
 something else right now,  
 or maybe I wouldn't  
 be writing at all but  
 I'd be having breakfast  
 with you somewhere.  
 Instead I'm watching  
 the sun and black  
 clouds from my window,  
 screaming at people  
 on the phone and thinking about warming  
 up some coffee.  
 I wouldn't have missed  
 this for the world.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

## Misanthropœ (for E on January 19)

I press my hand against my heart,  
 feel no pulse; the mirror is white,  
 opaque, has no pulse of its own,  
 my reflection slashed with red.  
 There is a cup of coffee  
 and very little to do.

There is no loneliness. Cold hands.  
 Edgar lying on the tombstone,  
 no longer laughing, no longer seeing.  
 He sits up, presses his lips against  
 his coat sleeve to remove the wetness.  
 "My dear," he says, "what happens next year?"

cont >

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I shrug and put black lipstick  
on the cigarette.  
What happened last year?  
Edgar was not in love  
and thought it unnecessary for anyone else to be.  
I couldn't tell him how I felt  
or whom I went to meet  
the night the moon was almost full.  
He thought me less than human  
because I once told him I was.

Buildings were being destroyed  
as I walked.  
The cards said not to do it,  
but I would anyway,  
not because I was driven,  
but because I was bored,  
looking for answers to questions  
I'd raised three years ago.  
Edgar said I had neglected him,  
but he'd forgotten to write,  
which might have upset me  
except I take too long to react  
and often forget in the interim.

The cigarette burns down to my fingers,  
stained with ink, stained with eyeliner.  
I scratch at the mirror,  
leaving uneven streaks.  
Edgar shrugs behind me.  
"Dear, you are neurotic," he says.  
I shake my head, my hair falls out  
from its ties.  
My heart has started up again,  
beating rapidly.  
Edgar disapproves of that  
noise.

*1987, Stockton St. Apt.*

# How to Write Poetry: A Manifesto, According to ...

1. No pronouns, especially first-person, especially in the plural. (We are not into pluralism, marxism, nor fetishism.)
2. No rhymes (especially while into iambism pentametism).
3. No flowers or dust or cosmos. (Causes reaction vomitism)
4. No confessional, experimental, language, beat, romantic, avant garde, or interesting. (pseudo-ism)
5. No melancholy. (See Reference Section #8: "Maintain Happy Face-ism" [aka Fascism].)
6. No fun, no humor, no creativity. (Stamp it out-ism)
7. No feelings. (None whatsoeverism)
8. Why bother then? (Defeatism)
9. Because it uses up trees. (Industrial utilitarianism)

*late 80s*

## Howbaus

Overstructured. Infra-layered. Very nicely set up and stacked.  
 And overwrought. Dickensian.  
 You have to say these things to someone sometime.  
 A necessary evil, a necessary thought.  
 Bringing up the dead like petunias,  
 begonias,  
 Seance-night and stars of melody,  
 my potion is

*late 80s*

---

## The Relationship

Tables too small for a meal.

Glasses, eight of them, lined up,  
to show what has come before.

Eyes as bleary as Sunday, 3 a.m.

The night before last was rice wine —  
four days later handcuffed to the  
radiator,  
and sick, very sick,  
in the winter.

*1986, Stockton St. Apt.*

## You Will Never Understand

You will never understand.

I've never understood why giraffes die—  
why should you?

Vague moments of movie flicker:  
was that her breast or her elbow?  
and does it matter? These movies  
aren't telling the story.

I've never understood why I'm the first to leave  
when a party goes well,  
why your face looks so bored  
in mirrors,

why shaving cream is not an adequate substitute  
for most dairy products.

You thought Isadora Duncan a bit odd,  
and she's dead now.

As a child, doing the Batman A Go Go, I could have been some-  
one,  
but there was something lost in the translation.

*mid or late 80s*

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## Identity in Pace

In the unconsciousness of the soul, havoc rests upon her. She does not clean the house, preferring the mold to come up to meet her on her level. Rising signs and tides, cackling subway riders, and pinball machines: these are not listed in order of importance or significance.

I will not  
tell you who I am because you did not ask.

The new album she bought had a date on it:  
42 A.H.  
Although not clarified on the album, she knew  
it meant 42 years after the Holocaust.  
The album was from Belgium, if that made a  
difference.

They told her to be happy, to smile, to write  
about less depressing things, but she was happy  
and she didn't like to smile, except  
sardonically. She found depressing things usually  
more passionate. She only liked the intense,  
because her blood pressure was too low,  
and so she had to compensate.

*late 80s*

## Silence & Chairs

Silence.  
No one screamed. More silence than  
you would imagine. Where there was music, there was  
nothing. You would have thought she was that way because  
of music, but all she does is read. What is the  
connection between eyes and voices? Is there one?

cont >

She said something, softly, and took her hands away.  
 Outside the bar, two boys walked by. One was  
 agitated. He said, "There's a girl who comes here  
 on Sundays, and she likes to give head." They  
 kept walking, the agitated boy shifting and yelling  
 the farther they walked.  
 She took her hands away and picked up a book.

Chairs.

In the chair was immobility. How to move. Your  
 face with so many planes. I couldn't even possibly talk  
 to you. I fade into myself, into discomfort, forget  
 the usual intellectual things: a cup of coffee, a spoon,  
 a book of poetry and/or feelings. My feelings are  
 poetry: complex, cyclic, alliterative, metaphorical.  
 You might have forgotten my name had it not been  
 etched into my skin. You might have forgotten my  
 skin had it not been so corpse-like.

*late 80s*

## Mythologies

Like a phoenix, rising from the  
 ashes, each new erection raises  
 its head and looks for a blood meal.  
 My erections—vampiric and visceral—  
 are only metaphorical, but the search  
 for blood is the same.

Icarus flew too close to the sun and died.

This was pointed out to be a foolish thing.

But if he touched the sun, that's all that matters.  
 Better to try that than shiver on the ground,  
 unscathed, trembling, and untried.

*late 80s*

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# The Maenad

Hearts enclenched, Aztec-like,  
holding Baudelarian verses  
in arms outstretched.  
What was Charles so afraid of?  
This? Me?

I rip the verses through delirious teeth,  
scatter them poetically into the bay.  
Wolves bay, I bay, I'm a dog the boys said  
when I was twelve.. Evil isn't innate;  
it is simply learned at a teacher's knee,  
or better yet, under a teacher's foot.

The damage a maenad can do is  
threefold,  
like everything important. The trinity,  
which has nothing to do with Jesus and the  
goddesses, but you know that old trinity of the phallus and  
some dude's balls. Ya got balls, I got balls,  
I'm a maenad.  
It's in the tricks of the trade.  
to juggle them on stage with a tome by Freud  
just like a man might juggle fire.

This isn't a diatribe of hate, mind you—  
more it is of mirth..  
It is, merely, the ballad of the maenad.  
Comrade. Bolshevik. Stolichanaya.

*late 80s*

## Exorcism

I used to collect dust in jars,  
 faces, memories, shit like that.  
 Wrote them down, categorizing,  
 trying to find the pattern in my weave.

When they ripped the weave, tearing  
 wounds in the fabric, I stopped.  
 And hid. Under the blankets I had left to me.

My collections were dust. The jars rust.  
 I don't trust.  
 I felt every thrust  
 of knife or rhyme or genitalia, what difference does it make?

None. The movies only taunt you with the good sides of actors,  
 the smooth skin. Even when the actors play sullen or devas-  
 tated,  
 someone is there to repair their make-up.

*late 80s*

## Who Knows

People stealing things,  
 maybe my soul. I kept things  
 level for a while — didn't help.  
 Stuff still leaked out. Nothing  
 is yours forever. Life is a temporary  
 thing. So what does that leave you?  
 The feeling of sun in morning when  
 the bums are too tired to interfere; the  
 smell of food, wherever; the first tipsy sip  
 when your knees go numb; lips; and the feeling,  
 omnipresent and poignant,  
 of your own mortality.

*1992*



## Zen

There's a zen center  
across the street from  
where prostitutes regularly  
hang out, waiting.  
They're both waiting, I suppose.  
The juxtaposition brings up  
all sorts of curious thought.  
I think of the people in the  
zen center, in retreat,  
meditating, closing their eyes,  
and not seeing what's outside  
their door.

If you were a PC type, I suppose  
you'd think my words were an  
indictment,  
but they're not.  
I admire the zen people more.

But I still find the juxtaposition  
weird.

July 1993

## Footwear on the Ark

*dedicated to the weather, winter 1995*

It is the most rain I've ever seen.  
I keep expecting to find pairs of  
giraffes  
on the Muni bus.  
This has gone on for more than  
40 days, hasn't it?  
The litany of washed-away highways  
and drownings has surely gone on for  
40 nights on snippets of the news.

cont >

We're a disaster again. President sez.

But we knew that all along.

This weather is destructive  
to more than just the roads.  
Today, I saw raw pure maniacal murder  
in the eyes of a woman, saying,  
"I'm finally going to buy some rain boots."  
She thinks if she buys the boots,  
it'll stop raining.  
But it won't.

I curl inside  
my house, home from where I sprinted  
from the bus  
(on which there were no giraffes).  
While I drip and begin to warm up,  
I think about all the things  
destroyed in my life  
and wonder if I could have  
stopped it all  
by buying the right pair of boots.

3/14/95

## Loss is an Aphrodisiac

When I learned to deal  
with my own fears about abandonment  
by pushing people way first,  
I thought I'd learned such a clever trick.  
I congratulated myself  
on my independence and self-sufficiency,  
pretending  
that when I started to weep uncontrollably  
after drinking a bottle or two of wine  
that I was just drunk.

4/28/95

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# Humanity is a Taunting Novel

I know about the rain,  
the way it mists on the windows,  
obscuring the view.  
What is there to see anyway?  
I used to have a sense of humor.  
Now, I ponder.  
Pensively, I consider.  
I must “forgive myself for being human.”  
I got that from Robertson Davies,  
not from some pamphlet.  
I trust novels more.  
They don't trust me.  
Why should they?  
I can't even forgive myself,  
why should they?  
They mock with their pages  
and ordered page numbers,  
glossy covers,  
and divine type.

I look in the mirror, and see  
the pensive.  
I wait to laugh.  
But I've forgotten what's funny.

Besides all of it, that is.

*Early 90s*

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# Grinning Like the Jackal God

My darkness is eternal.  
You can hear the wry muse  
in my laugh  
when I am happy.

Your illusions were softened,  
and you picked on my humanness,  
disappointed to see that  
I wasn't always my persona.  
But you gave me that  
mask.  
I just sported it  
to amuse you.

I left my amoeba beginnings  
in an old abandoned room  
with some furniture, discarded.  
Where I am  
isn't where I was going,  
but the water is  
warm, nonetheless.

And I am happy.

Happy to crumble the mask  
in my coffee  
and drink it like half-spoiled cream.  
Happy to grin  
when you ask who I am,  
really.

You made me up.

You tell me.

*Spring 1994*

---

# Apathy

Images, gathered,  
like shards of glass,  
form a new mosaic  
in my experience.

I take a line from a poem,  
that nuance from a film,  
the rapture from a painting,  
and they become a part of me.  
A new existence.

Sometimes, I forget  
that they were not my own  
experiences.

Like, tonight. Like Sylvia.  
I felt her, moving through me.  
Sylvia Plath is who I mean.  
And the image of the woman,  
the image painted in her  
biographies, of her last poems,  
as she tore through the writing  
of them, maniacal and driven,  
to produce their elegant harshness,  
to provide a buffer to the winter cold,  
this was the image that overcame me.

And I forgot,  
briefly,  
that had not happened to me.

Who knows what really occurred.  
Ted burned her journals.  
And even if he hadn't, journals mislead.  
Their linearity prevents a whole picture  
from being formed.  
But the whole

cont >

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and the fragment  
are both always true.

But Sylvia moved through me tonight,  
and it is Spring, not Winter. I wasn't writing.  
I was pondering. I wasn't in England,  
I was here. I wasn't a Scorpio,  
I was a Leo. I wasn't Sylvia,  
I was me.  
But yet, I knew suddenly how she  
could finally spit up her viscera  
so sublimely, so gracefully.  
It wasn't out of pain or drive.

It was out of apathy.

4/28/95

## HaPpInEsS

Happiness paralyzes me.  
In my most blissful of days, I stay  
awake at night, lying awake at night,  
naked under unchanged sheets,  
perhaps next to someone I care about,  
perhaps not,  
and I watch the glowing clock numbers change and  
start to weep because  
I am so utterly terrorized by my happiness.  
I mourn the times I lived in a zombie existence,  
just moving through the day, waiting for something to  
happen. I mourn the times my innards gasped  
with their intrinsic nothingness.  
I mourn the bliss. I mourn the loss of it all  
that I fear will come  
and mourn how I will feel then.  
I'm always mourning something.

12/2/94

# Lounging

*(for the Marquis Déjà Dû)*

Images. Remember images?  
 Imaginative minds meshing,  
 living out delusions  
 in champagne splendour.  
 Reality is neanderthal. Why  
 is only the bleak  
 considered real?  
 What is it?  
 Sauna room —  
 a thin layer of sweat  
 coats me, and  
 the orange carpet  
 is so blood orange,  
 like the hair of the Munch vampire.

“It will be a long time unremembering.”\*

I put myself in chains  
 and make a hairshirt out of poignancy.  
 And I'm not even unhappy.  
 Cloak me in moments.  
 It's like a sheep suspended in a hammock.  
 All my life flashes before me  
 like a failed experiment.

I want you to bite me,  
 like the cat that you are.  
 Leave marks, leave scars,  
 so that something will be there,  
 bequeathed,  
 in my interminable life of waiting.

Like a sheep suspended in a hammock.

5/8/94

\* Paraphrased from Baudelaire's *Lethe*

# The Skins of Things

In darkness, in darkness, in darkness,  
 you keep going and think . . . what?  
 Silence is appealing, what does it do?  
 Where does the breath go?  
 The animation stops, flesh rots.  
 But how does the flesh know to rot?  
 Single-handedly, single-mindedly, we are silent.  
 We say things and forget we are important.

The breath says okay. The breath wants reprieve,  
 the breath wants respite. Time to think of the other  
 things, a need to speak and say, a need to know and  
 metabolize.  
 May draws to its close. June begins. Life is necessary,  
 but what is life? The grand experiment? The great indifference?  
 I write to say I am. I write to look at the skins of things,  
 at the necessary breath of the huntress and the hunted.  
 There are more things than I can tell you.  
 There are buildings made of glass, but you can't see through  
 them because obscurity is their trade.  
 Somewhere, there is the universe. Somewhere, there is the  
 key.  
 Woodcuts and murals, sweet things and fruit —  
 we reach up to the sky and say we want the sun,  
 but then we forget.  
 Forgetting is a reflex like breath.  
 When you need to know, you will.  
 When you need to forget, you will.  
 Life is stretched and taut, spring-loaded, it  
 can tell you so many things.  
 But why?

1992



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# Pounding the Drums

Apart.  
No, I am not part  
of the whole.

Aside.  
Off to the aside.  
This is the BEING  
of nothingness,  
a return to  
oblivion.

When you are removed,  
you are unmoved.

Disconnections are so  
boring.  
Yes, I want to be quiet.  
Yes, I want to be over there.  
Yes, I want to return to the womb,  
but somebody else's womb.  
I want to be Athena,  
birthed fully grown from  
some damn god's head.  
Godshead.

I want to be born,  
but I don't want to be a child.

I want to stop returning  
to this plane.  
If anything else, I feel done,  
so done.  
The party's over, but I lack  
a ride into the grave.  
I want to learn more,  
but I don't want to look.

cont >

---

I see drudgery in everything  
and pointlessness.  
And where I once knew how to  
celebrate the absurdity of  
pointlessness, now I feel it  
heavy as another path taken,  
completed and dispensed with.

I've dispensed with everything  
until there is nothing left.

Or is there?

Unable to die because  
I hang onto the glimmer  
of hope that  
something someday  
may excite me again.  
But nothing seems like  
it will do the trick.

Is this because  
I'm all out of tricks?

4/6/96

## Cashmere

I wanted to make you as trivial as you had made me.  
I wanted to decorate your hair with strands of cashmere,  
so you could strut about telling everybody  
what a fine material you had on your head  
and then I could laugh at you behind your back  
because only I, only I, would understand  
the joke that you were more proud of  
some sheep fur than  
your own brittle human hair.

5/2/96

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## A Portrait in 42 Shades of Gray

Has it come to this?  
You twist my words  
like a paper clip,  
make the walls look bleak  
and insist I will leave you  
when the notion hadn't  
been entertained yet.  
Leaving implies action,  
and I am ruled by inertia.

I sit, quietly, wretchedly, in  
some satanic confessional  
and try to remember  
why I am here,  
where I've been,  
where I'm going,  
and the overwhelming  
thought I have is  
yearning for a Diet Coke  
to quench my thirst.

This precipice was made for walking  
off.

What is it? The walls  
so lovingly erected  
and wired for sound.  
Every disconnection marks me.  
I drown in voices.  
You have reason to be disappointed  
in me.  
Like Icarus, I affixed wings of wax,  
and flew into the sun. Not because  
of the light, but because of the heat.  
The overwhelming heat, promising  
to devour me. I cannot bear this

cont >

---

defeat, although it becomes a  
regular gesture.

Delacroix paints a portrait of me  
in 42 shades of gray. Did you know  
there are at least that many —  
and scores more —  
shades of gray?

You can see them hiding in a block  
of charcoal. You can see them  
highlighted in a box of forms.  
You can see them in my eyes.

Believe me when I say I've  
created a shade of gray just for you.  
This is not a poignant thing,  
my friend,  
but truly a tribute  
and an offering.

4/94

## KISSES.

Inaccessible, your eyes follow some  
other movement than mine.  
We thought life earlier meant cafes  
and sipping wine. And now I sit  
somewhere else and drink in your skin and  
the sadness in your eyes.  
Tell me your soul secrets.  
Tell me your soul.  
I invoke you  
through my tongue.

3/20/92

## Red Wine & Tweaking

I'm quiet inside, withdrawn, distracted by prospects of death.  
 Not mine.  
 Wondering at things.  
 Yearning for someone I shouldn't be. But what the hell.  
 Haven't gotten a poem outta him yet. Will.  
 It will come, like a tornado, overtaking all sense and  
 I'll quietly wish to talk about his eyes.  
 Nothing matters but my heart, which is copacetic.  
 Beatnik chick, I will could write bad poetry,  
 but I'm waiting for better sensibilities to overtake me.  
 Real sense would be nice.

Sun needs eggs.

Grocery lists. Why?  
 I am over the deep. How could  
 Dorothy Parker drink soda water  
 at the Algonquin  
 and bottles of wine at night?  
 I am replete, unnecessary.  
 I speak in tongues. I yearn  
 for tongues.  
 All of life is peculiar.  
 I feel exhausted and am  
 considering dropping in a heap,  
 but perseverance is the key word  
 these days. I am  
 screaming into the void, lying under  
 my chakras.  
 Where is the chi?  
 The chi is me.  
 Recapture it,  
 get it at the shopping mall.

Why does every generation  
 think theirs is the last?

cont >

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Dismalness isn't an end, it's a  
beginning. That's why  
we persevere.

Onward, ho.  
<thud>.

*June 1993*

## The Sphinx

Inertia presses the eyelids closed  
on the Sphinx,  
as she slouches, not towards Bethelhem,  
but towards the bathroom.

She has stars on her body, like Nuit,  
scars on her body, like a sacrificial victim.  
She wants something to happen  
on the floor tiles  
as she crawls across.

She is full of riddles and inconsistencies.  
She knows nothing  
and likes beer.  
She might have had wings.  
She lost her focus.  
She lost her mind.  
She talks in disconnections,  
and holds loss in high regard  
since it is a reoccurant friend.  
She dies on alternate Tuesdays.  
It's a bit of a hobby with her.

She thinks if only she could move faster,  
she would be free.

*early 90s*

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## Sitting

I sit & sit & sit,  
and life is stagnant. The things  
that happen are hardly dramatic,  
but I get letters in the mail  
written by people in the “amend” phase  
of their recovery,  
and it’s all real  
but orchestrated by someone who’s not.  
Orchestrated by a common denominator,  
which, of course,  
leaves no room for excellence  
or failure.

What is a world without excellence  
or failure?  
One dictated by TV  
and lite beer?  
Manic depressives become passé;  
fennel sausage, a curiosity.

In such a world, I exist.  
Stagnant. I sit & sit & sit.

Let me be excellent or let me fail.  
Don’t let me sit.

1991

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## Still Birth

I hide in between the music,  
I hide in between my words.  
When I sit off, aloof and alone,  
I get called things:  
moping  
sad  
intelligent  
stupid  
cool  
maladjusted.  
None of these are why  
I sit like that. I'm  
just off in the corner,  
counting the ticks of time  
like a woman feeling up rosary beads,  
praying for a  
still birth.

Still.  
Birth.

Stopped.  
Thwarted.  
Dead before birth.

The holy trinity.

I have three marks  
on my body to remind me  
of my shortcomings.

You know,  
the real reason I sit  
in corners by myself  
is I have nothing,  
nothing at all,  
to say.

2/17/95



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## Rising From the Ice

I would have never thought I would want  
to sit still,  
but sitting still provides the best vantage point,  
and my voyeuristic tendencies appreciate that.  
I live my life in between the watching, in between  
the checking, in between the gloom.  
I steal moments and throw away the flesh of the fruit,  
so I can make a talisman from the pit.  
None of this matters —  
although you do,  
and I irritate myself by asking why.  
Why? Why? Why?  
I spent my youth in coldness, and it was from coldness  
that I emerged, a dyslexic phoenix, rising from the ice.  
I am not used to caring.  
And yet, I care all the time. The ephemeral begs me to  
its side. I bend to taste it, and drink deeply of my own  
inadequacies.  
Still, always, sitting still.

3/16/94

## Virtue

Noble virtues fail in the  
grip of love. Whether it is the  
beginning of love or the end of love —  
when one's virtue is at its most fragile.

4/94

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# The Sun At Its Zenith

Reptilian,  
my movement is  
dependent on  
an outside source of light  
and warmth.  
But,  
my terror of this forces  
me to hide in the shadows.  
Where nothing is ever done.

I dream of a desert where there is no source of shade.

It is to there I crawl,  
my body bloodied from grating it onto the sand.  
A trail of my attempt etched in blackened scarlet  
for all to see and point at.  
“What alien thing left that? What does it mean?”  
They say.  
And they unravel a thousand cryptic symbols  
from the remnants of my plight.

If I had any sense of humor left,  
I could laugh at them.

You cannot find meaning where there is nothing.

The mirage of meaning kills them  
as it killed me. My trust, like blood,  
flowed from my wounds, mingling  
in the sand with a thousand parasites.

I leave it behind almost willingly  
as I make my way to find the perfect basking spot  
where the sun is always at its zenith.

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## Tower of Strength

Shattered mirror,  
my image is fragmented.  
In the one piece of  
broken glass, where  
my face is a cubist drama  
of my own,  
I see who I was  
supposed to be.  
This makes me weep.  
So, I take the glass  
and wrap it in  
red velvet and put it away  
for a sacred purpose.  
But when I take it  
out again later,  
I only see my lips in it  
and how the corners of  
my mouth are  
twisted into the  
most sardonic of smiles.

*Spring 1995*

## Transmutation

Come in from the cold.  
How did I get here?  
Nothing lasts forever  
but the pain.

Waking up, pulling on clothes  
for the however-many-thousandth time.  
I emerge, frightened and angry,  
hunting.  
Hunting for what?  
For that which crosses my path,

*cont >*

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for that which entered my open heart  
chakra  
and witnessed the dust from unuse.

You'll get away this time because  
I am Saint Bat,  
She-Who-Is-Afraid-Of-Her-Own-Karma.  
But when a shadow crosses your path, when  
a shiver run up you spine,  
think of me  
and smile.

Grin the grin of cyanide poisoning.

Like a laughing jackass.

Jackal god,  
you were supposed to protect  
me from myself, weren't you?  
Whose care were you charged with  
anyway? Whose care? Whose favor?  
Who bribed you to avert your eyes?  
Oh no, you can't say this was a  
learning experience —  
can't get out of it with that  
simplistic jargon.  
We both know I already  
learned that. Been there,  
done that, wrote the  
travel guide  
to hell.

This transmutation hurts.

*June 1993*

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## The Walking

The walking.  
The necessary movement of lips.  
Swallowing ideals and watching  
the rifts grow in the sidewalks.  
Poised, ready, sliding hands  
down. Tell me, tell me.

Amazes me. Brings me  
my own awe on a feather.  
I would, I could kiss  
a single wound.  
But.  
What is the life?  
And where?

I knew I couldn't.  
Couldn't what?  
Couldn't do this properly.

I need to be taught something.

How to live.

I feel unravelled.

Poignancy becomes me.

4/93

## Viscera Dance

The poem writes itself  
at a time of death and reckoning,  
Flaubert and Shamu by my side.  
Where does it go,  
the smell of cigarettes  
and broccoli? It goes where  
life goes.  
Breathe.

cont >

Breathe, Anubis, suck air.  
Breathe.  
To prepare for mummification,  
the brain is pulled through the  
nose by a hook.  
The heart placed in a jar.  
And the life, the life goes where?

Bells.  
They ring, they toll,  
they keep people away.

I touched your face,  
but it didn't mean much.  
We face different directions.  
I invoke from the west.  
Let the water wash over me,  
drowning me,  
overwhelming me,  
pulling me down.  
It is like love.  
Life is necessary.  
I am hungry.  
Would a nose ring  
impede the hook?  
You can pierce your  
nose, ears, genitals, or heart.  
Piercing eyes, come to me,  
hold my gaze, hold my heart  
in a jar.  
The brain, you know,  
is pulled through the nose —  
an exhalation.  
Like all things that must exit.

*June 1993*

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# Voodoo Angels

This yearning unravels me,  
tugs chords from my  
body, strangles me  
with my wants,  
needs,  
ideals.

They keep naked boys  
on the bookshelves.  
If you open the book,  
the pages will fall out.

How many pins  
can be inserted into  
voodoo angels?

Raise up, expand  
your breath, raise  
your arms to the sky.  
You need it,  
you need it,  
the sun filling your loins.  
But be quiet about that.  
Make no noise.  
If someone hears,  
they might take it.

The air rushes around  
you, making promises  
it can't keep,  
but when it's all  
quiet, the air  
tickles your skin,  
raising goosebumps  
and consciousness.  
Everything has a seed  
of truth in it,

cont >

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but nothing contains  
the full bloom.

What am I looking for?  
The books and boys are  
dusty. I pluck them from  
the shelf. The muse  
and the ego are incompatible.

What am I now?  
Broken?  
Perhaps.

I am somewhere. I know not where.  
You.  
Long hallways that lead to  
enlightenment. What is  
enlightenment?  
My Holy Guardian Angel taunts me.  
No.  
My ego begs me  
for constant feeding  
and attention.  
It is obnoxious.  
The only thing I  
can assure it of is  
that the love was real.  
If I can't trust that,  
then I have failed in  
this transformation.

How many pins  
can be inserted into  
voodoo angels  
before they protest?

*Spring/Summer 1993*



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# The Negotiation

The vapid perfume of Regret  
placed in the hollow of your breast  
draws me in,  
into your grasp.  
Your kisses are hungered,  
but the hunger is not for me.  
But I am there, nonetheless,  
and accept them  
in lieu of your soul.

The glances I am given are wrong.  
I am the wrong person,  
this is the wrong place.  
You, obviously, are not  
wrong.  
You are hallowed and untouchable.

Could my hunger be satiated by you?

The question is moot  
as your needs take precedence  
over mine  
because I faltered that once  
in not exacting your soul.

*September 1993*

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## Debts

There is something about  
the incompleteness of love,  
and my dollar bills dissipating  
into an endless combat against bills  
that makes me put my head down  
on my keyboard and sigh.

The pleasures, bought and not  
yet paid for. The breakfast  
where I tried to coerce the pleasure  
to linger. The bill that shows up  
on my doorstep later,  
the only reminder.

A souvenir. Here, take  
my check.

The sun sets, and, yah,  
if I squint long enough,  
I remember that it is pretty.

I can, on my reputation,  
persuade someone to buy me a beer  
because I am brilliant?

Because I am female?

Because they are lonely?

Because someone owes me  
something somewhere?

I spend too much time,  
waiting for buses.

And not enough time in bed.

7/94

## A Season in Hell with Bat\*

*Once, if I remember well, my life was a feast where all hearts opened and all wines flowed. One evening I seated Beauty on my knees. And I found her bitter. And I cursed her.*

Forced into poignancy by a reflex, I think I am beautiful in sorrow, but Laszlo says no. So, I can't win that either. We share lipstick. I would die if you caught my feelings again — death, she whispers wistfully. No, it's the broken refrigerator of my dreams, and I can soar above it.

At least, I am not a medieval monk.

Sometimes, things don't gel, and how many times have I turned over that tarot card? My lips turn blue. I look into boxes and revel in their emptiness. Beer helps. I raise the shade and frown into the sun and desire coffee. Desire is fun. It's a parlor game, a thing to gloat over on long winter nights. Neverending. Torment is its friend. They dance together, naked, in replicas of Stonehenge and stick their tongues out at me. Gosh, I love life.

People in torment write mysterious things on the wall.

Just an aside.

I live in a bad novel. I knew it when I got into the cab, and the cab driver was French, and he was playing a tape that sounded like Edith Piaf. But it wasn't. It was someone I didn't know. And the cab driver said, "It is a love song." What bloody hell else would it be? Especially at that time of night when my mind reeled with my displeasure.

Congenital disassociation.

They say they want nice, but they don't. Threatening is more fun. What makes the blood pump best is never the healthy option.

I would surrender but my white flag is soiled.

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*\*For those unfamiliar with A SEASON IN HELL by Arthur Rimbaud, I must admit that I have helped myself to the title and pieces of the poem. Phrases that appear here in italics at the very beginning and the end are fragments from Rimbaud's poem. However, I assure you that in this version, it is indeed my very own hell.*

cont >

Health becomes a defense mechanism, a cause to take up because everything else is done. People have fallen, their lips still wanting a touch, their touch still wanting a reason. There are no reasons in the netherworld, only questions, and the cruelest demon is the one who answers "Because" every time you ask why. I would travel with that demon. I would pretend the answer "Because" was Zen, or Tao, or something else that is meaningfully passive, but passivity is a tree bending, a knee bending, a head bending over the executioner's block. True action comes harder. Most movement comes from desperation when movement is a reflex and an euthanasia.

Let's talk about euthanasia. Let's talk about television. Let's talk about slow euthanasias where nothing is kind about it, where the maggots feed before the corpse is even dead. Those hungers are nothing new, but I see them twisted into new Leggo sculptures that tower into the sky. They pretend to be about progress. But no. Movement isn't linear. For every step forward, the same trees appear.

The World is My Oyster. I shall not want.

But I do. Yearning catches the sides of my eyes and radiates out over the world. I catch my breath and dignity and sit down again. Unsummed mysteries haunt me.

## Night of Hell (Compulsive Divination)

Others fear Elizabeth now.

Candle-lit, all the decks poised and ready. Maybe we better ask something else.

"A vague & somewhat disturbing transition." Oh, how charming.

"Yearn to be appreciated." Excusez-moi?

The Sybil, frozen in bronze ennui, offered up that sometimes, it's better not to get involved with your soulmate. A journey completed is often just the end of the road.

Yarrow sticks, runes, cards, images — Omewenne divined that I will be taken to a sexual place by a baboon in a paper hat. Screaming hungers must be fed a lot — greedy, greedy, greedy. Movement, desperate or not, gets one somewhere.

cont >

Loneliness that lasts a day or less is biting and compelling and gets one in the worst trouble. Better to let the loneliness go on. Pace oneself. Discover the patterns of grout in the wall. If you get really good at it, you can do divination from the tiles. Consult the augur. Read the entrails. Cast aside suspicions and dance the watusi at the top of the sacrificial pyramid. "Here I am, O Gods, why are you so bored with the spectacle these days?"

The entrails said such funny things during the night of hell. I pull them apart with my teeth, a maenad glow to my eyes. Dionysus, you cur, your promises mean nothing. I am the priestess of my own gloom, tearing my robes and hair, shaking my fist at the patterns swirling through my intuition. Knowing doesn't do a damn bit of good. Except for crossword puzzles.

## Sucking the 8 Ball

Art cannot imitate life. Life is way too weird.

The hermit times, the lean times, and the times of expansion when anything can happen and you curl your toes over to hang on for dear life as you stand, trembling, on the head of a pin. I sing of thee, I embrace thee, Existence. Yeah, whatever. Gleeful, I dance in the mud, squish my toes into it, and kiss life as hard and thoroughly as I can. My lips are plum, ripe and vampiric, waiting for the next phase. My eyes glow with an addict's hunger, but I'm totally sober. Hunger, you must realize, is a totally sobering thing.

## The Year of the Ellipses . . .

Give me all the rain in my hand. Cloud-squeezing, my fingerless waif gloves are moist, and I spatter rain on the streets as I hide the rest in my pockets.

Under street lights, a kiss and a vision of quiet. When I look at you, a handful of rain falls from my pocket. A handful of rain envelopes us as you drown ...

Just a little death.

Dance the little death of the troubadours, spinning, screaming near streetlights instead of trees, near buildings that could be caves — walk through them towards the light. I can't find where I'm supposed to make the sacrifice. I can't find the wizened Crone. I can't find a mirror.

Streaks of rain cross my face. A thirstful glance, up at you from beneath wet eyelids. Give me all the rain I can carry. Give me all the rain. [cont >](#)

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## Movement Without Destination

Ring around the rosy, a pocketful of posies: I pick posies for you. I wish I could offer you the plague, but my touch feels so benign it might be meaningless. My mark is as ashes, is as dust, but I try to feel sacred when I fling it around nevertheless.

Will you take my hand and kiss it? Leave a lipstick stain on my palm so I can say it's stigmata? We can exchange marks. My thumb imprints on your forehead. Requiescat in pace.

Yes, just go away.

Let me call the person who will torment me.

Without touch, without kindness, without supplemental vitamins. Has it comes to this — again? Sitting, sitting. I was just running in place, but the earth moved beneath my feet and cruelly brought me back here again. I can try on hats. The black one with the veil fits well, but it scratches.

Scratches, like your mark.

Here, take these posies. I looked at you because you wanted to look at yourself. And I burned the retina of my third eye.

## The Winter of Drunkenness

In winter, always, there is the cold sun aloof in the sky where I can see it hovering over someone's shoulder. In winter, we talk about other things and I rub my hands together before I drink. In winter, things fall apart.

Guilt, sadness, fear, and lust. My grocery list.

How many phoenixes can rise from the ashes? How many pint glasses can be resurrected? How many times can I get up again? How many

cont >

times can the waning moon betray me and send me into the winter of discontent, into the winter of drunkenness? Into the swirlings of my disgruntled psyche, where I can virtually relive the eternal hurt.

Again and again and again and again. My face, unveiled, turns to the light and calculates that the sun is as far away as it can be. The long arms of Aten do not reach me. Cannot reach me.

## Nothing in Excess

Words are it. Pulling words to my breast, I play acerbic chess games. The tears of the past sucked up by my tongue. Remember how the sun touched my arm when I was young and considered using the scissors to remove it? Yes. The scissors. Old and dull now, like the memory. The plum tree outside my bedroom window held fruit ripe and heavy, but if you plucked it, it was bitter. If my life were a novel — a bad novel — that would have been foreshadowing, but it was just a backyard in the suburbs.

Oh, tongues. Multi-faceted things. They speak, they kiss, they probe.

They lie.

But we persevere. We slouch towards the Sphinx.

It's a man thang. Hunting elephants at dawn with Hemingway. Elephants never forget and, predictably, get a little mad at being hunted. If I could write a love letter, what would I say? And who would I write it to? How would I present it? What would it accomplish? Sex is easy to do, but it's my soul I'm talking about. Unleashed, the banshee screams and run around looking for more. But then, it's the human part that wants to sit down at a table and share a meal. Linger over coffee or wine and find a rare meshing of minds. Without contact, it will whimper and die the coward's death.

But then we are fragile. Everyone is a potential death, but we are designed to die. The ultimate surrealist joke isn't.

*Boredom is no longer my love.*

*Several of these poems have actually been published throughout the years in various places, including Inkblot, Alchemy, Opposum Holler Tarot, The Penny Dreadful Review, and, of course, Sins of Coffee.*



*No animals were harmed during the creation of this booklet, although the iguana's lightbulb burned out, and Alecto just yowled in protest of losing a wrestling match with le Petit Mort.*



