

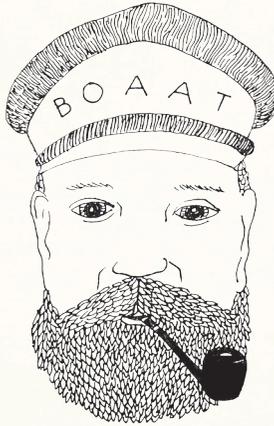
ELEGY
DEPARTMENT
SPRING

CANDY

SONNETS 1

KAY GABRIEL





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Dear Kay Gabriel, the bravura with which you have ushered Candy Darling into the 21st century inspires me, nay thrills me. The book begins with a bang, but surely it's bound to fall off? But it never does, right up to its vertiginous close. Before you were born, I suspect, I saw Candy Darling acting at the old New Theater on 54th and Lexington, in Tennessee Williams' last hurrah *Small Craft Warnings*. Not the world's most seasoned performer, she could use that gaze to plunge one in thrall, in the summer of 1972. And through death's storms and havoc your poem brings her back to me, criminous and vivid, a blonde flame, a presence in your chamber. Thank you—the world thanks you.

—Kevin Killian

ELEGY DEPARTMENT SPRING
CANDY SONNETS 1
KAY GABRIEL

2016 BOAAT Chapbook Contest Finalist | *Judged by Richard Siken*

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the appealing body in give or take a dozen

Accept for now my being tinged with *options*

e. g. you might careen on

each ridge with me into the skirts

of some or other future

where it is perpetually morning

when you may exhaust my tricks but quibble

cleverly together about the image, or am I

another blonde and, more to the point,

inquirer, no less possible than

perpetual breakfast, one day growing taller

than Blake Lively caked

in the pinioned curl

of a feminine purr,

a feminine coat?

Pastoral

Presence at odds with I love you from
a shambles, jumpsuit season, can we break
lank straight hair some bitches have
the volta already or what still
as projection shimmering and couth
my hair's not frizzy yours is
I was never on livejournal so who
am I cruising even or what park do I find you
untimely responsive admiration
garishly encomium *voilà* or don't you talk to
Candy today you are tumescent like a colour
I wanted something buoyant to say
stretch a hand and the hand says yes and here
in the key of friendship choking on the bone of love

Not for all the Links in Hyrule

To anthologize each Joan
and Turner, you

- crushed on Mtl in the aughts
- cavorted unintently
- preferred the grass starter

&c.

In the age of Revlon you
win or you smudge. Even Jackie
is a Marilyn, while Perez reports
surprise trans icon Elle Woods has
married both. Next, an order
for the irruptions of “but then...”;
actors not to host on any futon;
rooms never to back out of

Prehensile Clit Club

My mouth's all syrupy again
and my count's been going
up even on this empty train—
it's alchemical! Candy I joke
hard with the cyborg thing
but plastic, anyways, is a hot ride
and you get hooked, okay
The Wawa will be open when I get home
And I'll skulk to the counter
flirt with the cashier
while my baby breasts do all the work
& miss nothing I mean
not even the shuttle bus
Look what a girl can do this autumn night in Jersey!

“anyone can be beautiful:

at least anyone can have beautiful
hair” or actually I read that somewhere
in your public oversharing diary, the pink one
with the busted lock, anyways to arrive at deep ash
with pearl streaks like you
suggested in a former letter, incarnation
The colour improved so now
we’ve stolen dyes by the armful,
borrowed tights or jumpsuits really
and posted untoward questions
about grief and breathy melodrama
The island we traverse shakes its own
bob in 3 oz peroxide batches
“lightning was near,” I read that also

Mooch New York

Women quietly at war with themselves or
the imitation of Kim Novak you undertake
for work, well why aren't there two or twelve
of me to shop with? We reenact internecine conflicts over
summer camp but actually Paul Morrissey was onto something
I wanna rearrange, delay and rob

here it's the 70's and degradation means something
she plays an actress with an eye to inherit, copping
glamour or actually the term is "citational"
as Candy is of style I am of cabs and scheming
like meanwhile in the New York of petty theft:
I suck off every mannequin in the Manhattan Storage
& Warehouse Co., I
walk out with this guy's wallet too

Metonyms for *Flesh*

Or Michelangelo, the *something*
Band engaging with or at
the pullulations of desire
in a Paduan landscape, here
attempting the Discobulus:
“Body worship, the whole
thing behind art” in which light
and on some intrigue you
ask Joe to read for you whereupon
he ably agrees, slips his arm
over and oh, Jackie, I’d have done it too

though the service is closed
which once made a feast of lovely
or unlovely bodies

even asleep, his cruising coat

Joe is the challenge, how to get him
alone: an opportunity for
misprision, the problem of writing “pleasure”
when you meant “gender”
replaced under the sign of *DALLES*
ANDRO CANDY DARLING JACKIE
CURTIS who, grouped on reams of couches,
relay the instruction to smile

in fact convey an appropriate
indifference though remaining
as if on cue in the room
where you see everyone you know:
bad habits, acne
an unforgettable ass.

Reality Pitch

1000 Candys and a bar called Sweethole
oh you think I made that up this is television,
somebody's gotta like it the soundtrack: a boy
in a bunny mask who doesn't know what to do with himself
the rules: 5 Candys eliminated every week until then they get paired up
two to a twin bed can't all cram for yoga class at once or the salon sesh
voiceover ten *dollerz* I'll *kill* that queen André
I want a camera trained on every slight
call it: Blank Parts in Blank Pictures, why not
vamping for the questionnaire: would you fuck, marry, kill
for a \$5 coupon that never ran out how bout a box of them
in what apartment would you keep it
who would you like to go home tonight
aporia of a pleasant body small o of surprise

Recusation

we fucked too long and here I am unseemly at the beach
well how's it going with you? down this end I'm
digging public troughs in the monologue surf
connection langorous & delicate still there's girtalk left to look
forward to, the imprecision: are we ten thousand feet up or do we have
tension or are we nellies The calamity is more
remarkable than loss, we showed up for some tears in a paper cup
Holly we miss you, get up, experience
my sandy inconsistent love, admiration for showing
foxgirl sex in front of God and the cinema never to be covered on WarholStars
dot org if I wrote another mode, history not the fantasy
of intimacy in gossip rags or the languid tones of beaches
I'd probably have put it otherwise
the waves break on the monologue shore, where else

Self-portrait as a Karen

Or, you know. In my Sybil Vane.
I made great plans to be bratty all week
but at least a divorcée in a whatever
apartment where I have already let
the coffee burn for myself to clean
after a change of mask and costume,
a salon confessional, a CfP. There'd have been
gloves and buttons involved
piles of shirts to come on
spontaneous or world-historical underboob
no teaching and minimal committee work
I mean it like a flood alert.
A paragon, like
I'd fuck me.

Dissimulant Monotone

Any moment now you're gonna figure it out
you miss people even when you want to fight
we were just getting familiar
transfixing as a cartoon animal
montage sequence, artful as
the sloughing of their skin

this was a bad idea, like
what's a sonnet and do you swallow one
I could be the #1 department store
dive bar fleabag whatever site of your desire
tenement-shaft towns unlimited
I didn't get off at Elizabeth, cross my legs,
uncross them, commit anything to memory
that story isn't true

Better Homes and Gardens

i. Scene or Posture

we are the bitches of Avenue X
most of us are dead anyways or drove home
there were Reward Miles involved
butted lines at concert, that kind of thing
weavers of failed delivery sexts, fishers of drive
c'mere and founder on the shoals kind of thing
a suspenseful clutch of talent, who knew?
mature would be ignore it
go home at noon like 4:50
sleep it off at the altar of the not totally unfortunate looking
any wad that gums it up
it's yours for blowing, like
have you ever *been* punk?
it goes like this:

ii. Competitive Fictions

The closer they glom the more they
know about derailleurs and shit
you'd like to tuck them in
at home, plant &
add water till they grow willowy
mean & well-behaved, each
bowing to a blaze of mirrors like the Eve of an Eve

who can't get hard or down, whose eyes
won't bug. Was it grace waiting all night at a keyboard
for an unmentionable chord, was it kinder to be 40?
From her perch reciting: Homer calls it
atrugetoio the sea, unyielding
a barren downy bed, a nymph's mucosal hug
Oh, baby girl. Your princess, etc. Find another row to hoe another.

iii. les neiges de J/O New Jersey

Wake up in the 90's like you crashed
the walking tour of the decade's tallest
girlfriends and their driveways
& broke up the band
the names are still kinda special
they're all burnout
vegetarians or you get the idea
bam!
they're hot and you're naked
Everyone looks good here
you could be a +1

Girl Like Adverb

Candy I trust your cruelty like a gossip column
a supplement, critique manifest reproach
construed from a seminar of couches youthful in their
assured relations to diva culture which after
all is only as wanton as culture culture or an Aero
bar oh, this form of female self-
possession is vacant and millennial? my attention's now
on loan to Verso Books Nancy Jo,
this is Alexis Neiers with a selfie stick still we
are sharing an experience like contact
only occasionally via malice plus a couple bills shellacked
in it which will maybe clarify at some hour of the morning
when we are neither sleeping nor working nor
anything except the coherence of asking

Aster's in love with an anime boy!

Awake to every hour oh I was accidentally
mean or nude this one time location
and the touch of activity here we are like a dish or a spilled frap
discursive conspirers in this latest sudden shower we have been
requested to cover or depart from, not to give away
the ending (abjection, nobody
shoots when they're dead) how fresh and plastic
the advance on public space! what warnings issue from men behind desks,
what's the code for hushed disclosures? yet not a nip was slipped
actually the conversation was probably a little couth still I'm here
for this aggravation which we might experience
together in a coy sort of way slinking
uncharitably through what isn't the commons just an
overcooled token of one then you wake up with a paramour
of an angel with intentions to shower till the world ends and I probably
have to say goodnight well I owe you a gift or a dish then
tell you sometime this choice unseemly goss

graphic way together lying

familiar like the bizarrerie of naps
the mechanism you've been prodding for the last
half hour is finally busting out all over
spring in the elegy department like I love
you Candy, I wrote you a letter, god I need to pee
everything routine is already true

we didn't miss the appointment we're a quarter
hour off in another town scoping out
some farther branch's sweetness
insistently on transit that originates and terminates
identically but isn't however at all the same
the afternoon crawls with work and you find no one
emphatically to lie down with in a tiny bed forever
well it's pastoral for dinner again

Grist for Other Mills

How bad is it we use each other
to make up stories, say:
dying on one day of the week
only but getting to do it
again on another, and at
least you won't see
any more doctors,
stand in any lines;

like if half the chorus left
but the song sped on
and wasn't so terribly different?
We both admire the mortality of
a single sentence, not that I'd mind
if yours kept going.

Elegy Department Spring

Night is gentle dewing on the cushiony pec when,
before, like you got it on the list
best literary nipples and their intentions
making a guest of you or offering
a dance like you're making lo-ove
bodies and bodies passing around
one identikit coin stamped heads
with a torso, tails with its nipples dark like
sour fruit. Who do I, a minor internet
personality, have to blow for a little bump, a little up,
a little ah? But nobody will bother us here
taking buses and buses through any scrap
of town with a glass cube and a Cineplex
talking all night if we feel like it

Acknowledgements

These poems are for and about the Andy Warhol superstar Candy Darling.

Several poems derive ecphrastically from the Andy Warhol / Paul Morrissey films *Flesh* and *Women in Revolt*. Others relate to Darling's published diaries and letters, *My Face for the World to See* (1997). The title for "even asleep, his cruising coat" is taken from "Ode for Sunday" by Diane di Prima, collected in *Freddie Poems* (1966): "you lie with your uptown cat / who wears, even asleep, his cruising coat."

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Kay Gabriel is a poet and classicist. She's writing her dissertation on Euripides, modernism and utopia at Princeton University. With David W. Pritchard, she's also the author of *Impropria Persona* (Damask Press, 2017). Find her provocations on Twitter at @unit01barbie.