

ZONES OF SENSITIVITY, an Afternoon of Texts and Voices took place on August 6th, 2016 as part of the Transart Triennale in Berlin, Germany.

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The Process:

Writers were invited to submit original texts of up to three thousand words responding to the theme of the Imperceptible Self. From these submissions, five texts emerged in dialogue with each other addressing this theme. With the approval of the writers, excerpts from the full texts were chosen and merged together to devise the text for Zones of Sensitivity.

The Live Reading:

The Readers were seated on chairs in the center of the room on five back to back chairs in a circle, facing out. The Receivers were seated in the round five meters away, facing the Readers.

Following is the combined texts from the live reading that took place as well as the full texts versions from which the excerpts were taken and merged together.

Zones of Sensitivity

1.

In 1557 Tintoretto painted "Susanna and the Elders". Susanna is nude. Her earrings, hairstyle, and the bracelets around each wrist accentuate her nudity. Her legs are positioned as a double opening, horizontal and vertical. In front of her, together with toiletry articles, is a large rectangular mirror. Susanna could look towards the mirror and see her sex which, however, Tintoretto does not paint or even hint at. In the scene the two old men are hiding in positions that would have made it impossible for them to see Susanna. So the elders do not see Susanna, and Susanna sees neither the men nor herself. She looks at nothing and sees nothing and if, in the tension of the painting, seeing were possible for a moment, the men would manage to see only a smooth and closed body.

The Renaissance view, fertilized by Platonic thought, allows us to see a determined

and finished body: a closed body from which are eliminated protuberances and adjuncts and where, as Bachtin was to say, "all the orifices are closed . The eternal completeness of the body is dissimulated and kept secret." In *Phaedo* it was written that the task of philosophy is to "pry apart the soul from the body", and it was argued that a known subject is a subject that has no body, that has renounced the body. The body is "oppressive, heavy, earthy". It was possible to arrive at truth and goodness only by sacrificing "the barbaric slush" of our senses, of our desires, of our passions and our body.

2.

For a long time everything followed along that path without any apparent hesitations. The following decades, with the crisis of the Aristotelian and Ptolemaic system, were to be dominated by doubts about the value of any kind of cognitive relationship. Descartes countered this uncertainty with the certainty of reason. "Abducere mentum a sensi bus", tear reason from the senses, was to be his great gesture, because error is hidden in sensation and the experience of the body that derives from it. The subject was to be the field for this controversial battle, one in which the Ego of reason reduced each of sensation's cognitive claims to that "glassy and transparent" Self that Benjamin was to speak of.

3.

However, very soon thought was to stumble into an insidious trap. The new territories that reason by itself managed to discover were too vast, and the paths along which men followed reality were too agile and secure. As in *Heart of Darkness*, the world had been filled with "rivers, lakes, and names". It had ceased to be a swirling "white space" where mystery reigned and in which it was not only possible but also necessary to design "magnificent reveries". This had become the real place of darkness. A space where thought had drawn a boundary that excluded impenetrable territories, the gloomiest and darkest places; territories in which there lived only the forests and labyrinths of madness, illness, of irremediable otherness. Reason cannot guide us through those mists.

4.

In these worlds inhabited by the body, the senses and experience, there entered artists and poets who wrote detailed logbooks of their explorations. But these voyagers were attracted by two horizons. On the one hand, the wish to pervade those spaces with a harmony consisting of order and measure; on the other hand, the seduction of darkness, a seduction to the point where Conrad lost himself in darkness or Sade in madness. But on the line separating the two paths vertigo awaits us. On one side is the brink of the gloomy and unfathomable abyss, and on the other the mysterious face of possible but always ungraspable happiness. The two seem equivalent, equally terrible and frightening because words do not exist for either, everything seems mute and unrepresentable. This is the "seasickness on the land" of which Kafka spoke, the alienation of our usual intelligence, one that leads us out of the ancient house of language, out of the context in which we are used to reading our experiences. This is the knowledge of the precariousness that can make

us understand that other paths are possible with respect to those historically followed by humanity. It is possible to translate what seems mute and unrepresentable into a language and sense. Otherwise it is the thought of The Man Without Qualities. The movement of Musil's thought becomes a unique "figure" that for him was able to contain what stands "undecided between two worlds". In this figure, the fragments of the world that surrounds us do not recombine into a conciliatory and definitive image, but remain a portion, a part, by surpassing the limits of the concept and going beyond the fascination of the image. The subject that remains divided in Descartes' Self, and in the mystic Self of the feelings and passions of the body, takes on a complex, plural, and confrontational form that is the real battlefield on which is decided the relationship between the subject, the worlds, and history.

5.

On the horizon there reappears the confrontation between the "I think" concept and the "it thinks" of the body, which had already been enunciated by Zarathustra. A confrontation that becomes a contradiction, a confrontation that is the contradiction. But in that area the density of concreteness is also flanked by the possibility generated by pathos: what might have been and has not been, what could be and never will be. And so a new plan takes shape. A surface on which the possible and the impossible pushed to the extremes become equally real. This is the extreme image of reality. A reality of boundaries where there can live only a thought that has the possibility of being: a thought of boundaries.

Why spin?

To draw a line

To thread in between

To untangle

The entangled

In space

In time

So "here"

"there"

are/is

One

you are the one having a breakdown on a train, you are the father trying to protect his daughter, you are the daughter running with her father, you are the thread and you are the knife and you are the knot, you are the body that is missed, you are the body that trembles, you are the tremor, you are the angel and the fallen god, you are the one who turns the wheel, the one who is lost, the one who is wandering, you are the one who is distracted by the smell of cinnamon, you are the one who is afraid of love, you are the one who is afraid of being alone, you are the ocean and the land, the salt on the skin and the tears in

between the fingers, the one huddled on the floor crying, the one who can't breathe from laughing, the one who is not one, you are the illusion of separation and the mystery of connection and the breath of love that is all of this

Mear awakens in a daze. The transition was not pleasant this time around. However, it was necessary to switch sooner than planned or else the job would not get completed on time. It always comes down to work. Today Mear needed to present a strong authoritative persona to convince the others to join the call. Being persuasive was easy, but insuring the follow through of her target audience was more tricky. The corporation wanted 100 percent buy-in or the deal was off. Everyone's voice was required to move this thing forward.

When Mear rose and looked in the mirror to get ready, the face looking back reflected copper hair, copper hued skin and striking grey eyes. It was the eyes that would seal the deal.

Brendonvale was a small, self-organized satellite community. It began after the fall and kept itself running by refusing to take sides. The people of Brendonvale did not trust corporations and wanted no part in the recent turf wars free space were contending with. The town kept out of global and interstellar politics. However, the township survived by contracting out their services to several mutli-nationals and other unaligned towns scattered over what used to be New England. Brendonvale was a leader in DNA micro-programming, specializing in on/off switches. Their success rates with repeat conversions were better than anyone's and many corporations were out to steal their proprietary codes and patented non-degradable hardware.

Mear was a testament to the quality of their work. With over 40 conversions under the belt, there was no detectable wear-and-tear. The 9 different options programmed in allowed for a variety of selfpresentations, but for the most part there were only 3 that Mear chose often. Perhaps it was vanity, or outdated cultural biases, but Mear preferred to appear with a singular gender.

i wake up too early and the dog is already up, at my computer, with a bowl of popcorn. 'what are you doing?' i ask her. 'watching the movie of your life, it's so beautiful, especially lately,' she says. 'are you joking, i feel like i'm a hundred years old.' 'oh, no,' she says, 'that's not at all what's happening,' she says, 'you

bump into so many interesting people, and the main characters are so beautiful when they are waking up, and when you all lose the plot, that's just my favorite thing in the world.'

Why the number two? Mear thinks of doubles, twins, reflections and binaries of all kinds. She hates binary thinking, the world in pairs.

Another room with a couch, two seats, end table, bookshelves. On the table is a torn bit of paper with Don't imprinted on it. Alongside it: little wooden casket with more words: she/he/it. Small painting holds tight divider. A picture of a figure looking much like a young lady from the distant past, yet boyish—arms raised, mouth open.

She didn't agree much with routine methods for dividing up the world—dark/white, male/female, gay/straight, strange/typical—none of these limits persuaded her. These were burdens, characterizing classes that neglected to perceive the tangle that is us, us individuals.

It's Mear emerging from that space—prickly, part young lady/part kid little Mear-Meara. I realized that now. It's a self-portrait.

Tuesday:

Restlessness has visited more often than usual. Cradling, which once worked instantaneously, is now ineffective, even for long periods of time. Staring at rings. Using their existence to give lost thoughts an excuse. So we're staring at rings. It is not on purpose. Nail color stays on for weeks. It's been pale pink, almost white for a while now. Four weeks sounds believable. Checking for crooked movement caused by the postponement of the surgery is becoming infrequent, for it serves as a cruel reminder of the delay. More white hair is spotted. Itching increases. Perhaps Mumtaz was right: the scalp itches when the roots change color. Silence is familiar. Except when electricity runs through teeth. Layers fade in and push others back. Must we cling to what we knew before? Or let it go as the waves do? Hands get numb and heavy. There has been no fascinating piece of wax in over a month now. Those little scraps of outer skin will never suffice. If you begin at the right spot, you will be rewarded with a marvelous one-piece specimen. Let me look in your ear. Please.

Remembering Tuesday:

Worms always find a way to be there before anyone else. Walking in rain under the silence of the umbrella is cinematic. Knowing you'll remember it is tragic. Floor cushions needed a washing. But they complimented the pumpkin roll and kissed goodbye before room for any recommendations. They always got stuck to the soles of the boots. They were an expensive present. Thoughtful and

complimented her legs.

There were buttons and tubes coiling everywhere around him. The tubes penetrated Mear's body in numerous places and pulsed with liquids of various colors. The machines these tubes were connected to produced dizzying sounds if he concentrated on them. The repetition of the squeaks and squeals produced an overwhelming sense of monotony that Mear could not escape. Mear was fading in and out of consciousness, but realized he had no idea what to expect when fully awakening. Would open spaces and crimson skies still be desirable? Would there still be strong connections with people he knew and cared about? Would he recognize himself the first time he saw his reflection?

persephone is putting another pomegranate into the juicer. you get used to the dark, she says, but i still wake up to the sound of my own heart thundering in my chest, thinking the sound is you coming home.

When one word is enough

Only one word

Just a word

A word

Word

One

Saturday:

The Quiet begins to play games. It is safe to sit in the enclosed warmth of the cold-tiled room, and count your echoes as "yourselves" who are there to play with you. The vanity case that once held the dainty silk powder puff is now filled with stale ends of cigarettes. She lost her eyebrows, teeth and most of her memory, but spends all her strength describing the parties she threw with him.

Remembering Saturday:

It is difficult to eat when you know there are things to do. Visited by anxious spins before every miniscule errand leading up to the evening, forgetting that drinking with terrible company is far worse on an empty stomach. Watching bright-lipped holes spew out high-pitched ill-consequential conversation, added to the fury and the self-pity. Is this what we looked forward to? Moving towards the end, confined to the play of base actions as reward? Seems like a pathetic award for behaving so well; we all might as well repeatedly bash our heads against the wall- just as you do.

She once again found herself working for an organization she despised. This corporation had a bad reputation for ending one's career if things did not end up advantageous

for them. Mear was hoping the people of this enclave would not push back and for once would just accept the deal was already done and they really had no choice but to accept. Mear had chosen her form with the hope of softening their resistance. She needed every piece of leverage she could get.

after the Dead woke up again, you began by getting rid of all the Narrators again, the Narrators who were telling you that you were stuck in Repetition, that in Repetition nothing would change, but you learned, you're not so old, you're not that young, you learned that Repetition is where Transformation gets born, and the Midwife is named Attention. these stars and this moon and the atoms that fill this moment, all of it has been here forever, but never before has it lined up just like this, a clear promise on a cold morning, the likes of which the world has never seen before right now.

The last deal that had gone bad still left a sour taste in her mouth. She had barely had time to begin negotiations when the corporation sent in their acquisition forces. Something had spooked them and they believed the bio-ware they were after would be leaked to their competitor.

when i wake up, there are strange shapes everywhere. through the house, in the alley, out in the streets, these large, yellow, translucent exoskeletons attached to things. and every time there is a breeze, they crack and start to blow away. and there is singing, singing everywhere. i know this happens every seven years, but seven years is just enough time to forget.

in the background, there are mystics making secret signs, interpreting the events of the year, and they have conclusions and connections they want me to recognize, but i'm busy, the moon and me, we are talking, we have a thing, its mystery is gravity but my heart is light and my dreams are as blue as the ocean

Jensen called Mear over to the table.

"Look at this mess. These inbred freaks can't even account for their own inventory. How are we ever going to sift through all this and find the units that we need?"

"We haven't got a deal yet, so how did you get access to their files?"

Jensen just smirked and kept sifting through the database.

From what Mear had seen, Jensen only presented as a hybrid of the most formidable type. His demeanor was cold and calculating, but effused with just enough charm to put most off balance when dealing with him. He truly played up all the tropes of past generations, icons of power and greed. To Jensen these equaled success and the corporation settled for nothing less.

"It's time for the meeting. You promised me 3 uninterrupted hours to convince them to sign off on this deal. No interference from your side, right?"

"You have your 3 hours, but I don't know why we must go through with this charade. However, the corporation seems to think the appearance of collaboration between us will win us favor in the markets. Make sure you get their cooperation."

Jensen signaled for the transport and left.

Mear was now faced with the challenge of getting the enclave elders to agree to a deal where they would essentially give up their most valuable commodity. But they would live and that had to be enough.

Thursday:

Diagonally works best. Sharp corners are now making their appearance. Colored squares are sent back and forth and it is clear that inserting food is best when done with loved ones. Three mugs are quite prophetic so please place what you want closest to you.

Remembering Thursday:

Each night it returned as a misunderstood journey. No amount of feather pillows could comfort her.

Mear had given up this place, this way of life. Now he was back.

The last thing Mear had wanted was to negotiate with these pirates, especially since he knew many of them, or at least their families. But the job was thrust on him from too high up for him to get out of it. They must suspect his connections to this place and think it will work to their advantage. Mear was not so certain of that.

15 years ago Mear had walked away from his life entirely, his wife, his daughter, himself. There was more to him, another story, and it was eating away at him while he tried

to play house. One day he gave his wife a letter and packed up the few items he thought he could not bare to leave and then just walked out. That was so long ago now and much had changed.

The world is a forest and we are made of a swath of shadows and when our hearts are light our hearts are lights and sometimes we don't even recognize each other until we have left each other's sight.

The story of your destruction is well known. I'm a lot like you, practiced in stitching myself together, and usually unaware that I've been helped. We are beautiful awake or asleep, I suppose, but more beautiful when we are trying to avoid living in the wound that brings us back to life.

Thursday:

In twisted folds, it is easy to imagine how it was rolled down. Perhaps scent and stiffness are the only way to tell the difference. Rings of high-pitched metal are visiting again while ivories are clamped down and angles shifted to re-focus. Two can definitely be accounted for; three others are pretending to be busy doing other things.

Remembering Thursday:

From the height that was escaping life, they played silent smiles and tried to meet contentment in time. Over the fortress of large shapes of coppers and glass, she finally met her governing gut. Everything will always be okay and nothing will ever feel right. Nothing will ever feel right? Is that right?

you slipped through the cracks between one year and the next, feeling as though they couldn't find you when they were filming your academy-award winning scenes. the things that once made you so melancholic now remind you that things are unfinished, but still whole, themes are resolved but still likely to recur, and salt on skin from tears or from sweat is what this life tastes like. although you may not recognize how gracious this year has been to you, you can't deny that when you move with your breath that you are as graceful as anyone who every danced on the surface of the world, and your best moments happened off camera.

As Mear arrived at the facility, his partner for this job waved him over.

"Why this look? I thought you may have chosen something a little more seductive?" Raynor said slyly.

"I couldn't take another switch so soon, so this will have

to do. Plus, a little sternness couldn't hurt, right?"

Mear actually did not want to transition for this job. This expression was how he had lived much of his life on this planet. Why did he chose it for this job? Was there some connection to his past he was afraid of, he needed to confront? Regardless, he had to remain focused on the goal. He was here to insure the data remained intact. There had been too many thefts originating from this settlement to be a coincidence. There was obviously a pirate ring operating here and he had to find them and broker a deal.

Saturday:

Speckled blue glass was doubted and studied under the sun, but of course no embedded gadget was found and no answers were sung. Plans for clever placement led to the wooden box, where conspiracies to hide were met with past secrets placed for safety. Despite being coded and black and white, her charming coal eyes drew you into a time where everything about life was celebrated.

Remembering Saturday:

Turns into stairways were met with a brief moment of apprehension, but quiet chants and the belief that no demon could be bigger than the sick parasite that was being hosted, always helped reach the bedroom. Passing through complete darkness, there was always a chance, but somehow it never happened. Bells were rung, objects spotted and maggots addressed, but none of them spoke of the truth that she heard in the future. Between the tone of cold wood and theory, their presence steered away from the eyes that did not want to provoke them.

you are in a medical school, standing exposed in front of a hundred students, and a doctor is talking about the heart, and it happens to be yours. your heart is raw, and the cold air reveals all the chaotic and terrible and wonderful things it has been through. you are the only one who sees it like that, though. the doctor says this heart is strong and slow and steady. she sees it as it is right now, you see it as it was back there out on the road on so many cold nights. if you could get here, in your own skin, right now, you might hear its strong and steady rhythms, but you don't know how to get here.

Is there more than one Line? Or is it only one?

Is it the same Line that comes and goes?

Or is it a different one each time?

A Line wandering through time

A wandering line

I need to go to sleep

To wake up again

Sleep and wake
Until the Line breaks
My Line
Not yours
Not his
Not hers
Not theirs
But mine
Just mine

on the day the chameleon god of music died, all the changeling artists felt a sliver of rainbow glass enter their hearts, and the anchor points for all their mystical selves got loosened. there is never a lack of persona. it was always a fine time to become something else. but on the day the chameleon god of music died, they tasted that sweet sadness of the in between things, how delightful and strange this is, oh, *you pretty things*.

Not too thick
Repeat
Not too thin
Repeat
Not too tight
Repeat
Not too loose
Repeat
Not too fast
Repeat
Not too slow
Repeat
Repeat
To repeat
To start all over again
To repeat the repetition
Repeat

While you are awake or waking up in the world, remember that most of the world is sleeping, people you meet are sleeping and still angry about something they think happened in their childhoods. If you remember this, you will be delighted when you meet others who are also waking up because you are so rare.

I remember sitting on the porch in Freetown in the chair
Jan made, watching the waves lap at the shore. The endless

blue of the sky overhead left me breathless. The chair I sit in now hurts my back. Jan would have built it better. The sky is the same shade of blue I remember, rendered on a glowing plasma-screen ceiling. Waves lap at the walls as though they're glass, and the floor has modified its density to feel like sand.

The air smells like antiseptic and oil, not a hint of salt.

After two days of diagnostics, the techs deliver the bad news. I've had another glitch. My memory is failing. Again. They offer to refresh it, but I send them away.

You keep going back, you are sure there's something in one of those rooms in one of those cities, something that holds the secret to unlock this, to make time behave, to make this speak in tongues you understand. But the secret was never really secret, just hidden right here. You didn't miss any grand finale, you didn't sleep through the big confession, you didn't lose anything that you really needed. You know how to walk through fire, to slow your heart during the cold, and you know a thing or two about magic. You haven't missed a trick. But if you keep going back looking for the key you might just miss it when it reveals itself in the forward fold of time.

Your heart just wants the broken things, it thinks it can fix the things that are fallen. Your heart wants to be the clock to turn things back to the moment you lost the one you lost a thousand lifetimes before. Your heart is a wild dog that no one will ever really know because you won't let anyone get close enough. Your heart is the rough slouching beast you came here for, not to catch but to tame just long enough so you could ride it.

My hands look ancient, skin thin and wrinkled as crepe. A tech shows me how to control the room's programming. There are presets for Freetown, and my past residences in Santa Barbara, and the MIT dorm where I first met Jan. I can turn any wall section reflective, but I grab the tech's wrist before he runs the command. I fear the changes a mirror might show me.

You Dreamt this: my breathing through the ice floes in my throat and chest, frozen but trying to put these small glittering birds into words, i was taken elsewhere, all through the night, and her tribe was writing over me in numbers and colors and geometries that they called maps. BEAT

My line is
vulnerable
It breaks in
between
My line is
weak
It breaks
My line is
Sensitive

i understand that none of this is new, that we have all done this a thousand times before and after, but when i let myself be written over, i get new eyes, and instead of being the old soul who can't stop repeating the same mistakes over and over, i get to be the young soul who opened a few pandora's boxes a little too soon.

Someone with a face I barely remember walks into the room. I struggle to pull recognition from my mind, but they speak first, "Mear?" and I stop.

"You're not Jan."

"It's En, Mear. Your son?"

I've never seen him before in my life.

The techs crowd around my chair in their sharp white coats and En tells me he's purchased an upgrade. (upgrade for who?)

My head throbs, and the spot on my temple feels like my thumb the time I tried to help Jan build a new kitchen table and she missed the nail and got me instead.

But I remember.

I remember sitting on the porch in Freetown, Jan's face pale as the moon. "The test results came," she said. "No improvement." She used to serenade me with show tunes, back in college. Her voice was so strong, but it shook as she told me she had three months, maybe. If we were lucky.

1. there is a man in my living room teaching me how to resuscitate someone when their heart stops beating. he explains that the heart is protected by skin and muscle and bone and cartilage, and very hard to get to, it's so deep. he looks

through me and says that he sees an extra layer of barbed wire. it is surprising to me. he says that everyone is surprised when they find out they have this. i ask him if it's common, and he tells me that yes everyone has it, but you only find out about it when someone else gets in there so deep they get cut, and they don't understand why they are bleeding.

2.when he closes his eyes, he pretends that the shower is a rainstorm, because it is starting to smell like spring. when he closes his eyes, he sees silhouettes of birds flying everywhere, and he understands that he has been given a blessing that is outside of human language.

3.they are reading several books at once, and still they are surprised that their lives are like complicated novels, that their lives are like small but elegant poems, that their lives are like transcriptions of creation stories from a lost oral tradition. they are surprised that the music of the spheres comes from convergence and dissonance, in patterns as complicated and unknowable as the histories of their hearts.

Friday:

Five voices are plugged into one ear but only the silent sixth that belongs to no one is being listened to. Safe notes are regularly muttered to encourage the game where we pretend to comprehend the flood of the rhythmic song. The terribly worn mouth carelessly throws around the meaty lips that are wet in spit. Little things can seem so much bigger when you don't look at them with your eyes.

Remembering Friday:

In the sublime light of perfect presence, they radiated colors to each other. Once it was confirmed that it was impermanent, she kissed him and let them both run free. But she never asked him if he was dying because she knew we all were.

I invite all of my questionable decisions over for a party. I am planning on sabotaging them with a list of grievances, with a powerpoint presentation to show them all the things that have gone wrong because of them. They all accept the invitation.

Imagine the party: When they show up, and I am looking them in the eye, I realize, "Wow, look at you, you're so beautiful, you're still just so beautiful. This never was about anything but love."

Some lines are
your fears
You spin

They remain suspended

Some lines are your wisdom
Moments of truth
Spun in a flash
And long forgotten
Before you even know it

Some lines are kind
They are with you
And it's all right

Some lines just dance
As early as at dawn
And you are grateful
For the morning gift

Some lines are your pains
Your present
Your future
Your past
Haunting you

Some lumps of some lines
are meant to stay
No matter how hard you try
You can't turn them into a line
So be it

Some lines break
But mend themselves
Others don't
So you move on

Some lines are generous
They just flow
No questions asked

Some lines are
your precious moments
Relief lines

Some lines are never
to be rolled backwards
Better leave them where they are

Some lines
You just have to let go
They don't work for you
They are not yours

Morning lines are the best ones
They are soft and kind
Even when they break
they are graceful

Evening lines are the harshest

By the time the fever had gone, and I came back into the body I remembered, there was a thin film covering everything, and everything was sharper and brighter but, if I looked close enough, things absorbed more light than they reflected, as if the world itself were famished. Something between me and the world and I felt so far away. Then I heard a sound like the heartbeat of the earth, just out of reach, and a whispering that sounded like a great grandmother, and she was saying, 'This is nothing unusual, you are always a hair's distance from things, you just don't usually notice. You're not far away, you're actually this close.'

En has lost patience with me. I cannot stop crying. Today he lasted ten minutes before he snapped, "It was twenty years ago, Mear," and stormed out.

The chip has made my recall near-instantaneous. It stores and remembers events with perfect clarity and detail.

Things I now know:

It's been twenty-five weeks and three days since En's last visit.

It's been twenty-four weeks and five days since he called. The techs make their rounds every fifteen minutes precisely. The room's Oglesby program is on a forty-eight minute loop. I've watched the same freighter sail over the horizon twenty-two times today, one hundred fifty-seven times this week, six hundred seventy-four times this month. And the most important: This isn't an upgrade. It's just a different way of going mad.

when the dog left london, he smelled like everything he saw and touched, sandalwood and curry and fish, sweet potatoes and all the root vegetables they

grow in window boxes in wartime, bunker cigars and fake french tobacco, aubergine and the subtle foam of flat whites, and that odd and wonderful perfume that comes to the air when the muscle in the tongue that makes it playful starts to stretch, and musty books and old canal water, the smell of musty people who cannot escape their own mental prisons, old dead playwright bones and scholars who dream about other places without ever leaving, and the subtle bloom of the ones who are about to do great things (the scarred ones, the ones without a royal lineage, beyond the pale, you can always spot them in the dark because their eyes glow), the dog lost something all right, something large, the dog always loses things, you always lose something when you are moving through the world.

I want a simple spring, a gradual thaw with butterflies and flowers, but when the weather changes, my grandfather comes out of the cracks in the shadows and tells me he found the last of his lost teeth. "Nothing ever gets lost really and no door is ever closed utterly. When the world seems to be trying to buck you off it like a wild horse, you're close to the hidden spring, the fountain that makes you remember. You don't remember what you were looking for, just that you were looking.

FULL TEXTS

TUESDAY - REMEMBERING TUESDAY by Zeerak Ahmed

This text practice navigates through pairs of the imperceptible self. The first attempts to collect what is known, while the second reconstructs the unvisited memory.

Pacing, hoping for clues

Pacing, hope I don't lose...

Tuesday:

Restlessness has visited more often than usual. Cradling, which once worked instantaneously, is now ineffective, even for long periods of time. Staring at rings. Using their existence to give lost thoughts an excuse. So we're staring at rings. It is not on purpose. Nail color stays on for weeks. It's been pale pink, almost white for a while now. Four weeks sounds believable. Checking for crooked movement caused by the postponement of the surgery is becoming infrequent, for it serves as a cruel reminder of the delay. More white hair is spotted. Itching increases. Perhaps Mumtaz was right: the scalp itches when the roots change color. Silence is familiar. Except when electricity runs through teeth. Layers fade in and push others back. Must we cling to what we knew before? Or let it go as the waves do? Hands get numb and heavy. There has been no fascinating piece of wax in over a month now. Those little scraps of outer skin will never suffice. If you begin at the right

spot, you will be rewarded with a marvelous one-piece specimen. Let me look in your ear. Please.

Remembering Tuesday:

Worms always find a way to be there before anyone else. Walking in rain under the silence of the umbrella is cinematic. Knowing you'll remember it is tragic. Floor cushions needed a washing. But they complimented the pumpkin roll and kissed goodbye before room for any recommendations. They always got stuck to the soles of the boots. They were an expensive present. Thoughtful and complimented her legs.

Wednesday:

Too many words lost meaning.

Remembering Wednesday:

Words were not shared for a few days. There were shadows of dogs sniffing under the door, or perhaps they were imagined. Repeated days spent blowing out of the bedroom window, are starting to trigger unpleasant thoughts. Plastic rectangles held money earned only to be spent and lost once more. Will we ever meet and share words again? The piercing sound of the dead night's silence and the growing cacophony of yelping characters from scripted reality shows, distort into an inescapable brown knot. Receiving paychecks triggered a sense of fulfillment and joy almost as splendid as the time when she knew nothing about it.

Thursday:

Restlessness grips tight until the bell halts and the voice is heard. Words, sometimes typed symbols, appear on objects in palms, triggering immense satisfaction. No tea was made but a wrapper was carefully torn to use a toothbrush, which could indeed serve very well to apply glue, but instead was used to comb and comfort the dog. Sleeping on the other side may counter the left-to-right displacement of the upper- jaw. Finding the little tear in the packet would have been very challenging for a person with larger hands, but now that the contents have been squeezed out, it can be thrown and forgotten about.

Remembering Thursday:

Everything is almost something else entirely.

Friday:

It scrapped the top each time the shutters came down. The eyelash probably fell inside again. Animal instincts seem to always prevail. Singular objective dominates and the rest is grey. Large sequences of numerals were exchanged; smaller in comparison, but large they appeared, and encouraged her to usher herself out. Everyone was forced to leave and no one except for a familiar piece of tomato skin survived.

Remembering Friday:

Wet Noise.

Saturday:

The Quiet begins to play games. It is safe to sit in the enclosed warmth of the cold-tiled room, and count your echoes as "yourselves" who are there to play with you. The vanity case that once held the dainty silk powder puff is now filled with stale ends of cigarettes. She lost her eyebrows, teeth and most of her memory, but spends all her strength describing the parties she threw with him.

Remembering Saturday:

It is difficult to eat when you know there are things to do. Visited by anxious spins before every miniscule errand leading up to the evening, forgetting that drinking with terrible company is far worse on an empty stomach. Watching bright-lipped holes spew out high-pitched ill-consequential conversation, added to the fury and the self-pity. Is this what we looked forward to? Moving towards the end, confined to the play of base actions as reward? Seems like a pathetic award for behaving so well; we all might as well repeatedly bash our heads against the wall- just as you do.

Sunday:

While staring at the yellow light through the sliver between the curtains, dead skin is cleaned out from under the nail. Stare at a screen, stare at the floor, stare at the ring or hands that swell up before. Hear the voice repeat words in melodies while prayers for peace and strength are called for. The almost-naked woman suspended from the metal clip, dances in delight. Doris is happy to be noticed again. Tightly held chest contraptions still need to be replaced. What was meant to be eaten, is still sitting sealed. It is time to hide our legs and go eat from the fridge.

Remembering Sunday:

Freshly cut grass greets the senses upon the Great return. Warm sounds of the motor and coffee kettle proceed. Patchwork blankets gently untangle the limbs as they begin to regain control.

Rematches were demanded between kneels and hymns, and then elders muttered "peace with be you as well". Her aged eyes believed in mine. Freckled and covered in webs of blue veins, her wrinkled body held on in a loving embrace. Only a few rusting toys testified while croissants were chewed until the butter was tasted.

Tuesday:

Clearing scratches, fighting phlegm, licking buzzing tones off them. The truck passes by and makes the bed vibrate. Cracked white is being visited these days and the pierce that was new and valued is not played with anymore. Circles have replaced triangles and diamonds, and the form of the yolk has become a daily question.

Remembering Tuesday:

Too much dark grey around the ochre vignette makes it terribly difficult to understand the true parameter. It is probably a rectangle. Gaze fixed at the seductive eyes, questioned the nature of the alien emotion but also marveled at the fearlessness. The deadly reptile was all she had. It isn't easy to hate the one who's standing by you. He wraps around her and further accentuates the curves. He sells her and holds her for you to watch and use. They say he is noble, for he is all that covers her and protects her from her own disgrace. Under grey clouds that suffocate the lungs and grip you in place, the white haired beast twirls the ice cubes in orange haste. As he reclines, the sound of his back rubbing against leather speaks out into the room. So shy and shameful, she stood still till she was steered away.

Wednesday:

Tender pinks promise the arrival but the impatience has started creeping its way into the most unnecessary circumstances. The sickly smell of stale talcum powder is an ambivalent space between the unloved child and the forgotten elderly. It is no surprise that Sakina holds her head and cries. There is no "other woman". We were always in this

house. He has left you. This was not your mistake.

Remembering Wednesday:

Devil's child is perhaps the closest translation of the word she used. Standing at the bottom of the staircase, with animated gestures she yelled violently, only taking breaks to grind her teeth and think of more adjectives. Visits to her friend's mother-in-law were quite different. It was teatime and "Aunty" sat in a huge garden at old Clifton. Aunty's grey eyes remarkably retained the glint of a twenty year old. She wanted her to feel the thrill and honor that she felt when she once met the Queen. While they played along the maid poured tea, and I was told that I was allowed to eat some plain cake.

Thursday:

Diagonally works best. Sharp corners are now making their appearance. Colored squares are sent back and forth and it is clear that inserting food is best when done with loved ones. Three mugs are quite prophetic so please place what you want closest to you.

Remembering Thursday:

Each night it returned as a misunderstood journey. No amount of feather pillows could comfort her.

Remembering Friday:

Five voices are plugged into one ear but only the silent sixth that belongs to none is being listened to. Safe notes are regularly muttered to encourage the game where we pretend to comprehend the flood of the rhythmic song. The terribly worn mouth carelessly throws around the meaty lips that are wet in spit. Little things can seem so much bigger when you don't look at them with your eyes.

Remembering Friday:

In the sublime light of perfect presence, they radiated colors to each other. Once it was confirmed that it was impermanent, she kissed him and let them both run free. But she never asked him if he was dying because she knew we all were.

Saturday:

Speckled blue glass was doubted and studied under the sun, but of course no embedded gadget was found and no answers were sung. Plans for clever placement led to the wooden box, where conspiracies to hide were met with past secrets placed for safety. Despite being coded and black and white, her charming coal eyes drew you into a time where everything about life was celebrated.

Remembering Saturday:

Turns into stairways were met with a brief moment of apprehension, but quiet chants and the belief that no demon could be bigger than the sick parasite that was being hosted, always helped reach the bedroom. Passing through complete darkness, there was always a chance, but somehow it never happened. Bells were rung, objects spotted and maggots addressed, but none of them spoke of the truth that she heard in the future. Between the tone of cold wood and theory, their presence steered away from the eyes that did not want to provoke them.

Sunday:

The lack of hardened sugar and requests for wiping glass are enough to make the heat

rise. The sagging bulges with dents that testify the inactivity are held up and further studied on tippy-toes. It is of use to no one above five-feet. Hands drawing parallels are held above the head to imagine the distance between him and her.

Remembering Sunday:

Taking turns to exercise joints on each other's structures, they sank and accepted that there was no escape. Locked in the hypnosis of silent pleasure, they knew that the other beasts were closely examining them. Legs tightened and pulled her into place, in stark contrast to the time when this wasn't the case.

Tuesday:

If squeezed and held, the white slivers of rubbery fat can keep fingers busy, only until they are found by the eyes that feel repulsed and afraid of future's time. Dead whites plucked here, stale yellow pushed out there. Red networks pleading to be seen, but contents of old vanity boxes layer over all proof of activity. So much is swept away but the dust that is left behind is probably so much more. So much more invisible than the new, raised, pulsating red river bed that has climbed over the bend and tickles when you take notice.

Remembering Tuesday:

Like bright neon plastic straws, they sound artificial when long varnished nails scratch over them. The phone was brought close to record samples of his and hers. They giggled in morning's silence, mouth's full and shut with slumber's secret waters.

Wednesday:

A thousand intricate pleats run over the hollow dead, and accuse the unique kiss of time as deformity. There is always perverted satisfaction in the scent of old greens and grey. The crooked seem less hurt and back on track, but the lump aches and the black circles solemnly wonder how many unknown places it'll take to erase the trace.

Remembering Wednesday:

Inhaling another's breath never felt this uncomfortable before. Metals were given up and hands were used to rip the leg apart. Attempts were made to ignore. Attempts were failing against the gore. As time went on, the red's reduced and the green glass became apparent, but by then it was clear that the rock held in the lower cavity between the rib cage was worth trusting. Faint flamenco and stale jazz runs took turns to fill in for everything that would never be said.

Thursday:

In twisted folds, it is easy to imagine how it was rolled down. Perhaps scent and stiffness are the only way to tell the difference. Rings of high-pitched metal are visiting again while ivories are clamped down and angles shifted to re-focus. Two can definitely be accounted for; three others are pretending to be busy doing other things.

Remembering Thursday:

From the height that was escaping life, they played silent smiles and tried to meet contentment in time. Over the fortress of large shapes of coppers and glass, she finally met her governing gut. Everything will always be okay and nothing will ever feel right. Nothing will ever feel right? Is that right?

Friday:

Once worn under the majestic sun, they now rest against lifeless hardened powder, barely allowed to shift, unless the steel arms are controlled. So still, aching for an excuse to move. Each time it unfurls, it takes longer to reconnect. It is getting difficult to catch it before it trickles and freezes. A million cycles ago it was compared to a thousand trees but it is now being hidden. In solidified forms, we all lay still, pretending to know function, waiting to be victims of the first movement.

Remembering Friday:

As checkered squares ran under the feet, they sang back in familiar songs. Long vowel notes were held till barriers introduced themselves. Turpentine and cold marble married and led to the secret spirals that ended up with loving embraces and talcum powder. There was always a chance. Chords were used to belt out chants for plastic pin downs. Fear was played with and tears were laughed at, even when arms were swung out of sockets or tiny trees broken before they were lit up and played with. His presence was always sitting by the stack on the outdoor stairs, hers hovering above in tall ceilings.

Saturday:

Tiny hairs stuck to thin molecular curls fall out for their funeral. Troops are sent in to excavate the others while the lot keeps piling up on dry marble. The accumulation of sweet potions has increased. Foreign glass is collected for declarations of femininity. Let it be seen, let it be smelt, let it be known. Messages from electric rectangles start wrapping around the bed again. Tightened grips send sirens through the newly hollow caves but there still is a sense of urgency to resuscitate the piece, each time it dies.

Remembering Saturday:

Coarse tufts of burnt sienna were slowly brushed over again and again. Her glossy eyes observed the metal passage that was buzzing with past and future movements. Heels searched for the hollow spots that sounded truer than the sealed lips that pretended to know nothing. Two windows, a screen door and a metal passage shared four perspectives for one moment. She still lives with the ageing green board behind her, wondering what will survive after they interrupt her again.

Sunday:

Guilt was mitigated with stale flour disks from printed blue foil. Freshly cut nails introduced a new face for the deceased, demanding to be re-loved, re-touched. There is no logical interval. They caw like uncivilized beasts, overshadowing the bed of harmony that is blind to noise. The four from the back are usually left behind, told to wait for the next because there wasn't enough time. It is difficult to count the in-betweens. Please make yourself known as one or the other. In unsteady loops of reverie's waters, patties are swallowed before they're tasted and sunset's cacti are waved at from pointless faces.

Remembering Sunday:

Of nicotine and shampoo, the interaction always smelt like home. A few bitter phrases really sealed the deal. The ecstasy from the smoke lived on through the other night too, but the women in the cube were of the Sun. Plucking lines they spilt pearls, serenating lovers on carpet-covered benches. As the walls came together, the outsiders rushed in; sacrificing fingers, foregoing water for light, they were craving to attain what the other eyes wore. In harmonic swells the colors rose then lay to rest. It was as if they were returning everything that was once stolen by the night.

Tuesday:

The satisfaction of picking out coal lines from follicles is strange to share with others. It can't possibly be about feeling the miniscule sensation (or none at all), thus making it clear that the eyes are the key players. Ejecting and rejecting are indeed the highest forms of pleasure- any body can verify that. Bags hanging and skin free, no cotton will be pulled over until all pleasure is rightly received.

Remembering Tuesday:

When electricity leaked out of wires and crept into ears, there was no escape. No amount of fingers or wool could stop the deafening concerto. You had to accept that the ending point was caught- it had been eaten by the climax.

A THOUGHT OF BOUNDARIES by Michele Manzini

1.

In 1557 Tintoretto painted "Susanna and the Elders".

Susanna is nude. Her earrings, hairstyle, and the bracelets around each wrist accentuate her nudity. Her legs are positioned as a double opening, horizontal and vertical. In front of her, together with toiletry articles, is a large rectangular mirror. Susanna could look towards the mirror and see her sex which, however, Tintoretto does not paint or even hint at. In the scene the two old men are hiding in positions that would have made it impossible for them to see Susanna. So the elders do not see Susanna, and Susanna sees neither the men nor herself. She looks at nothing and sees nothing and if, in the tension of the painting, seeing were possible for a moment, the men would manage to see only a smooth and closed body.

The Renaissance view, fertilized by Platonic thought, allows us to see a determined and finished body: a closed body from which are eliminated protuberances and adjuncts and where, as Bachtin was to say, "all the orifices are closed . The eternal completeness of the body is dissimulated and kept secret." In Phaedo it was written that the task of philosophy is to "pry apart the soul from the body", and it was argued that a known subject is a subject that has no body, that has renounced the body. The body is "oppressive, heavy, earthy". It was possible to arrive at truth and goodness only by sacrificing "the barbaric slush" of our senses, of our desires, of our passions and our body.

2.

For a long time everything followed along that path without any apparent hesitations. The following decades, with the crisis of the Aristotelian and Ptolemaic system, were to be dominated by doubts about the value of any kind of cognitive relationship. Descartes countered this uncertainty with the certainty of reason. "Abducere mentum a sensi bus", tear reason from the senses, was to be his great gesture, because error is hidden in sensation and the experience of the body that derives from it. The subject was to be the field for this controversial battle, one in which the Ego of reason reduced each of sensation's cognitive claims to that "glassy and transparent" Self that Benjamin was to speak of.

3.

However, very soon thought was to stumble into an insidious trap.

The new territories that reason by itself managed to discover were too vast, and the paths along which men followed reality were too agile and secure. As in Heart of Darkness, the world had been filled with "rivers, lakes, and names". It had ceased to be a swirling "white

space" where mystery reigned and in which it was not only possible but also necessary to design "magnificent reveries". This had become the real place of darkness. A space where thought had drawn a boundary that excluded impenetrable territories, the gloomiest and darkest places; territories in which there lived only the forests and labyrinths of madness, illness, of irremediable otherness. Reason cannot guide us through those mists.

4.

In these worlds inhabited by the body, the senses and experience, there entered artists and poets who wrote detailed logbooks of their explorations. But these voyagers were attracted by two horizons. On the one hand, the wish to pervade those spaces with a harmony consisting of order and measure; on the other hand, the seduction of darkness, a seduction to the point where Conrad lost himself in darkness or Sade in madness. But on the line separating the two paths vertigo awaits us. On one side is the brink of the gloomy and unfathomable abyss, and on the other the mysterious face of possible but always ungraspable happiness. The two seem equivalent, equally terrible and frightening because words do not exist for either, everything seems mute and unrepresentable. This is the "seasickness on the land" of which Kafka spoke, the alienation of our usual intelligence, one that leads us out of the ancient house of language, out of the context in which we are used to reading our experiences. This is the knowledge of the precariousness that can make us understand that other paths are possible with respect to those historically followed by humanity. It is possible to translate what seems mute and unrepresentable into a language and sense. Otherwise it is the thought of *The Man Without Qualities*. The movement of Musil's thought becomes a unique "figure" that for him was able to contain what stands "undecided between two worlds". In this figure, the fragments of the world that surrounds us do not recombine into a conciliatory and definitive image, but remain a portion, a part, by surpassing the limits of the concept and going beyond the fascination of the image. The subject that remains divided in Descartes' Self, and in the mystic Self of the feelings and passions of the body, takes on a complex, plural, and confrontational form that is the real battlefield on which is decided the relationship between the subject, the worlds, and history.

5.

On the horizon there reappears the confrontation between the "I think" concept and the "it thinks" of the body, which had already been enunciated by Zarathustra. A confrontation that becomes a contradiction, a confrontation that is the contradiction. But in that area the density of concreteness is also flanked by the possibility generated by pathos: what might have been and has not been, what could be and never will be. And so a new plan takes shape. A surface on which the possible and the impossible pushed to the extremes become equally real. This is the extreme image of reality. A reality of boundaries where there can live only a thought that has the possibility of being: a thought of boundaries.

"Untitled" by Margaret Hart

Mear awakens in a daze. The transition was not pleasant this time around. However, it was necessary to switch sooner than planned or else the job would not get completed on time. It always comes down to work. Today Mear needed to present a strong authoritative persona to convince the others to join the call. Being persuasive was easy, but insuring the follow through of her target audience was more tricky. The corporation wanted 100 percent buy-in or the

deal was off. Everyone's voice was required to move this thing forward.

When Mear rose and looked in the mirror to get ready, the face looking back reflected copper hair, copper hued skin and striking grey eyes. It was the eyes that would seal the deal.

Brendonvale was a small, self-organized satellite community. It began after the fall and kept itself running by refusing to take sides. The people of Brendonvale did not trust corporations and wanted no part in the recent turf wars free space were contending with. The town kept out of global and interstellar politics. However, the township survived by contracting out their services to several mutli-nationals and other unaligned towns scattered over what used to be New England. Brendonvale was a leader in DNA micro-programming, specializing in on/off switches. Their success rates with repeat conversions were better than anyone's and many corporations were out to steal their proprietary codes and patented non-degradable hardware.

Mear was a testament to the quality of their work. With over 40 conversions under the belt, there was no detectable wear-and-tear. The 9 different options programmed in allowed for a variety of selfpresentations, but for the most part there were only 3 that Mear chose often. Perhaps it was vanity, or outdated cultural biases, but Mear preferred to appear with a singular gender.

Why the number two? Mear thinks of doubles, twins, reflections and binaries of all kinds. She hates binary thinking, the world in pairs.

Another room with a couch, two seats, end table, bookshelves. On the table is a torn bit of paper with Don't imprinted on it. Alongside it: little wooden casket with more words: she/he/it. Small painting holds tight divider. A picture of a figure looking much like a young lady from the distant past, yet boyish—arms raised, mouth open.

She didn't agree much with routine methods for dividing up the world—dark/white, male/female, gay/straight, strange/typical—none of these limits persuaded her. These were burdens, characterizing classes that neglected to perceive the tangle that is us, us individuals.

It's Mear emerging from that space—prickly, part young lady/part kid little Mear-Meara. I realized that now. It's a self-portrait.

There were buttons and tubes coiling everywhere around him. The tubes penetrated Mear's body in numerous places and pulsed with

liquids of various colors. The machines these tubes were connected to produced dizzying sounds if he concentrated on them. The repetition of the squeaks and squeals produced an overwhelming sense of monotony that Mear could not escape. Mear was fading in and out of consciousness, but realized he had no idea what to expect when fully awakening. Would open spaces and crimson skies still be desirable? Would there still be strong connections with people he knew and cared about? Would he recognize himself the first time he saw his reflection?

She once again found herself working for an organization she despised. This corporation had a bad reputation for ending one's career if things did not end up advantageous for them. Mear was hoping the people of this enclave would not push back and for once would just accept the deal was already done and they really had no choice but to accept. Mear had chosen her form with the hope of softening their resistance. She needed every piece of leverage she could get.

The last deal that had gone bad still left a sour taste in her mouth. She had barely had time to begin negotiations when the corporation sent in their acquisition forces. Something had spooked them and they believed the bio-ware they were after would be leaked to their competitor.

Jensen called Mear over to the table, "Look at this mess. These inbred freaks can't even account for their own inventory. How are we ever going to sift through all this and find the units that we need?"

"We haven't got a deal yet, so how did you get access to their files?"

Jensen just smirked and kept sifting through the database.

From what Mear had seen, Jensen only presented as a hybrid of the most formidable type. His demeanor was cold and calculating, but effused with just enough charm to put most off balance when dealing with him. He truly played up all the tropes of past generations, icons of power and greed. To Jensen these equaled success and the corporation settled for nothing less.

"It's time for the meeting. You promised me 3 uninterrupted hours to convince them to sign off on this deal. No interference from your side, right?"

"You have your 3 hours, but I don't know why we must go through with this charade. However, the corporation seems to think the appearance of collaboration between us will win us favor in the markets. Make sure you get their cooperation."

Jensen signaled for the transport and left. Mear was now faced with the challenge of getting the enclave elders to agree to a deal where they would essentially give up their most valuable commodity. But they would live and that had to be enough.

Mear had given up this place, this way of life. Now he was back.

The last thing Mear had wanted was to negotiate with these pirates, especially since he knew many of them, or at least their families. But the job was thrust on him from too high up for him to get out of it. They must suspect his connections to this place and think it will work to their advantage. Mear was not so certain of that.

15 years ago Mear had walked away from his life entirely, his wife, his daughter, himself. There was more to him, another story, and it was eating away at him while he tried to play house. One day he gave his wife a letter and packed up the few items he thought he could not bare to leave and then just walked out. That was so long ago now and much had changed.

As Mear arrived at the facility, his partner for this job waved him over.

"Why this look? I thought you may have chosen something a little more seductive?" Raynor said slyly.

"I couldn't take another switch so soon, so this will have to do. Plus, a little sternness couldn't hurt, right?"

Mear actually did not want to transition for this job. This expression was how he had lived much of his life on this planet. Why did he chose it for this job? Was there some connection to his past he was afraid of, he needed to confront? Regardless, he had to remain focused on the goal. He was here to insure the data remained intact. There had been too many thefts originating from this settlement to be a coincidence. There was obviously a pirate ring operating here and he had to find them and broker a deal.

I remember sitting on the porch in Freetown in the chair Jan made, watching the waves lap at the shore. The endless blue of the sky overhead left me breathless.

The chair I sit in now hurts my back. Jan would have built it better. The sky is the same shade of blue I remember, rendered on a glowing plasma-screen ceiling. Waves lap at the walls as though they're glass, and the floor has modified its density to feel like sand. The air smells like antiseptic and oil, not a hint of salt.

After two days of diagnostics, the techs deliver the bad news. I've had another glitch. My memory is failing. Again. They offer to refresh it, but I send them away.

My hands look ancient, skin thin and wrinkled as crepe. A tech shows me how to control the room's programming. There are presets for Freetown, and my past residences in Santa Barbara, and the MIT dorm where I first met Jan. I can turn any wall section reflective, but I grab the tech's wrist before he runs the command. I fear the changes a mirror might show me.

Someone with a face I barely remember walks into the room. I struggle to pull recognition from my mind, but they speak first, "Mear?" and I stop.

"You're not Jan."

"It's En, Mear. Your son?"

I've never seen him before in my life.

The techs crowd around my chair in their sharp white coats and En tells me he's purchased an upgrade.

My head throbs, and the spot on my temple feels like my thumb the time I tried to help Jan build a new kitchen table and she missed the nail and got me instead. But I remember.

I remember sitting on the porch in Freetown, Jan's face pale as the moon. "The test results came," she said. "No improvement."

She used to serenade me with show tunes, back in college. Her voice was so strong, but it shook as she told me he had three months, maybe. If we were lucky.

En has lost patience with me. I cannot stop crying. Today he lasted ten minutes before he snapped, "It was twenty years ago, Mear," and stormed out.

The chip has made my recall near-instantaneous. It stores and remembers events with perfect clarity and detail.

Things I now know:

It's been twenty-five weeks and three days since En's last visit.

It's been twenty-four weeks and five days since he called.

The techs make their rounds every fifteen minutes precisely.

The room's Oglesby program is on a forty-eight minute loop. I've watched the same freighter sail over the horizon twenty-two times today, one hundred fifty-seven times this week, six hundred seventy-four times this month.

And the most important: This isn't an upgrade. It's just a different way of going mad.

Between Trains by Christopher Danowski

you are the one having a breakdown on a train, you are the father trying to protect his daughter, you are the daughter running with her father, you are the thread and you are the knife and you are the knot, you are the body that is missed, you are the body that trembles, you are the tremor, you are the angel and the fallen god, you are the one who turns the wheel, the one who is lost, the one who is wandering, you are the one who is distracted by the smell of cinnamon, you are the one who is afraid of love, you are the one who is afraid of being alone, you are the ocean and the land, the salt on the skin and the tears in between the fingers, the one huddled on the floor crying, the one who can't breathe from laughing, the one who is not one, you are the illusion of separation and the mystery of connection and the breath of love that is all of this

i wake up too early and the dog is already up, at my computer, with a bowl of popcorn. 'what are you doing?' i ask her. 'watching the movie of your life, it's so beautiful, especially lately,' she says. 'are you joking, i feel like i'm a hundred years old.' 'oh, no,' she says, 'that's not at all what's happening,' she says, 'you bump into so many interesting people, and the main characters are so beautiful when they are waking up, and when you all lose the plot, that's just my favorite thing in the world.'

persephone is putting another pomegranate into the juicer. you get used to the dark, she says, but i still wake up to the sound of my own heart thundering in my chest, thinking the sound is you coming home.

after the Dead woke up again, you began by getting rid of all the Narrators again, the Narrators who were telling you that you were stuck in Repetition, that in Repetition nothing would change, but you learned, you're not so old, you're not that young, you learned that Repetition is where Transformation gets born, and the Midwife is named Attention. these stars and this moon and the atoms that fill this moment, all of it has been here forever, but never before has it lined up just like this, a clear promise on a cold morning, the likes of which the world has never seen before right now.

i go to a strange city, and in a second-hand shop, i find clothes left from a future version of myself. it's comforting, because they are already broken in, and i know that all the things i worry about right now don't really matter.

when i wake up, there are strange shapes everywhere. through the house, in the alley, out in the streets, these large, yellow, translucent exoskeletons attached to things. and every time there is a breeze, they crack and start to blow away. and there is singing, singing everywhere. i know this happens every seven years, but seven years is just enough time to forget.

in the background, there are mystics making secret signs, interpreting the events of the year, and they have conclusions and connections they want me to recognize, but i'm busy, the moon and me, we are talking, we have a thing, its mystery is gravity but my heart is light and my dreams are as blue as the ocean

it always works this way and i forget every time, i shake off the dust and try not to wake up too fast, try not to open my eyes too quickly in case the light is too bright, and when i finally start to see, i see that these things i see are new, that this is new, that against my better judgement i kept my heart light and kept moving toward the sounds of laughter, and the day i had been waiting for turns out to be this one

The world is a forest and we are made of a swath of shadows and when our hearts are light our hearts are lights and sometimes we don't even recognize each other until we have left each other's sight.

The story of your destruction is well known. I'm a lot like you, practiced in stitching myself together, and usually unaware that I've been helped. We are beautiful awake or asleep, I suppose, but more beautiful when we are trying to avoid living in the wound that brings us back to life.

The morning grows anxious and the dog stares at me with her nervous eyes and by afternoon when I have given in to the river that is the flow of the day, her eyes are soft and there is a spark in there that looks like joy. She is playing the role of the world today, reflecting me back to me, and if I can learn something, then tomorrow I will wake up and see myself reflected as having woken up ravenous for this life

you slipped through the cracks between one year and the next, feeling as though they couldn't find you when they were filming your academy-award winning scenes. the things that once made you so melancholic now remind you that things are unfinished, but still whole, themes are resolved but still likely to recur, and salt on skin from tears or from sweat is what this life tastes like. although you may not recognize how gracious this year has been to you, you can't deny that when you move with your breath that you are as graceful as anyone who ever danced on the surface of the world, and your best moments happened off camera.

you are in a medical school, standing exposed in front of a hundred students, and a doctor is talking about the heart, and it happens to be yours. your heart is raw, and the cold air reveals all the chaotic and terrible and wonderful things it has been through. you are the only one who sees it like that, though. the doctor says this heart is strong and slow and steady. she sees it as it is right now, you see it as it was back there out on the road on so many cold nights. if you could get here, in your own skin, right now, you might hear its strong and steady rhythms, but you don't know how to get here.

on the day the chameleon god of music died, all the changeling artists felt a sliver of rainbow glass enter their hearts, and the anchor points for all their mystical selves got loosened. there is never a lack of persona. it was always a fine time to become something else. but on the day the chameleon god of music died (tschüssi, thin white duke xxx), they tasted that sweet sadness of the in between things, how delightful and strange this is, oh, you pretty things.

Seven trains just crossed tracks in thirty seconds, intersections of relations and geographies and world views, and no one is orchestrating. This was once a story written by Borges, this is a video from the last album by a pop singer no one has heard yet, this is the secret sign that points north on a map that no one uses yet.

While you are awake or waking up in the world, remember that most of the world is sleeping, people you meet are sleeping and still angry about something they think happened in their childhoods. If you remember this, you will be delighted when you meet others who are also waking up because you are so rare.

By the time the fever had gone, and I came back into the body I remembered, there was a thin film covering everything, and everything was sharper and brighter but, if I looked close enough, things absorbed more light than they reflected, as if the world itself were famished. Something between me and the world and I felt so far away. Then I heard a sound like the heartbeat of the earth, just out of reach, and a whispering that sounded like a great grandmother, and she was saying, 'This is nothing unusual, you are always a hair's distance from things, you just don't usually notice. You're not far away, you're actually this close.'

when winter came back, i was like a shadow, hardly seen, holding things that were as small as moments, like precious stones, in my shivering hands, in love with a world that i would never understand

my breathing through the ice floes in my throat and chest, frozen but trying to put these small glittering birds into words, i was taken elsewhere, all through the night, and her tribe was writing over me in numbers and colors and geometries that they called maps. i understand that none of this is new, that we have all done this a thousand times before and after, but when i let myself be written over, i get new eyes, and instead of being the old soul who can't stop repeating the same mistakes over and over, i get to be the young soul who opened a few pandora's boxes a little too soon.

You keep going back, you are sure there's something in one of those rooms in one of those cities, something that holds the secret to unlock this, to make time behave, to make this speak in tongues you understand. But the secret was never really secret, just hidden right here. You didn't miss any grand finale, you didn't sleep through the big confession, you didn't lose anything that you really needed. You know how to walk

through fire, to slow your heart during the cold, and you know a thing or two about magic. You haven't missed a trick. But if you keep going back looking for the key you might just miss it when it reveals itself in the forward fold of time.

Your heart just wants the broken things, it thinks it can fix the things that are fallen. Your heart wants to be the clock to turn things back to the moment you lost the one you lost a thousand lifetimes before. Your heart is a wild dog that no one will ever really know because you won't let anyone get close enough. Your heart is the rough slouching beast you came here for, not to catch but to tame just long enough so you could ride it.

1. there is a man in my living room teaching me how to resuscitate someone when their heart stops beating. he explains that the heart is protected by skin and muscle and bone and cartilage, and very hard to get to, it's so deep. he looks through me and says that he sees an extra layer of barbed wire. it is surprising to me. he says that everyone is surprised when they find out they have this. i ask him if it's common, and he tells me that yes everyone has it, but you only find out about it when someone else gets in there so deep they get cut, and they don't understand why they are bleeding.

2. when he closes his eyes, he pretends that the shower is a rainstorm, because it is starting to smell like spring. when he closes his eyes, he sees silhouettes of birds flying everywhere, and he understands that he has been given a blessing that is outside of human language.

3. they are reading several books at once, and still they are surprised that their lives are like complicated novels, that their lives are like small but elegant poems, that their lives are like transcriptions of creation stories from a lost oral tradition. they are surprised that the music of the spheres comes from convergence and dissonance, in patterns as complicated and unknowable as the histories of their hearts.

I invite all of my questionable decisions over for a party. I am planning on sabotaging them with a list of grievances, with a powerpoint presentation to show them all the things that have gone wrong because of them. They all accept the invitation. When they show up, and I am looking them in the eye, I realize, "Wow, look at you, you're so beautiful, you're still just so beautiful. This never was about anything but love."

the dog came into london to lose his sense of smell, and everything smelled like the queen's roses, that is to say, paint, because of the fear of beheading, and that was shocking but not surprising, he is not naive, this dog, but likes to give the benefit of the doubt despite all of that, and somewhere in a maze in a place called angel, a sign that says 'be at one' and a bar named chameleon, he started to acquire the new layers, taking on the smells of this place, not realizing he had just been scraped to the bone (who does notice at the time, there's too many things to see when you are in a new place). when the dog left london, he smelled like everything he saw and touched, sandalwood and curry and fish, sweet potatoes and all the root vegetables they grow in window

boxes in wartime, bunker cigars and fake french tobacco, aubergine and the subtle foam of flat whites, and that odd and wonderful perfume that comes to the air when the muscle in the tongue that makes it playful starts to stretch, and musty books and old canal water, the smell of musty people who cannot escape their own mental prisons, old dead playwright bones and scholars who dream about other places without ever leaving, and the subtle bloom of the ones who are about to do great things (the scarred ones, the ones without a royal lineage, beyond the pale, you can always spot them in the dark because their eyes glow), the dog lost something all right, something large, the dog always loses things, you always lose something when you are moving through the world.

I want a simple spring, a gradual thaw with butterflies and flowers, but when the weather changes, my grandfather comes out of the cracks in the shadows and tells me he found the last of his lost teeth. "Nothing ever gets lost really and no door is ever closed utterly When the world seems to be trying to buck you off it like a wild horse, you're close to the hidden spring, the fountain that makes you remember. You don't remember what you were looking for, just that you were looking. "

LINE poems by Konjit Seyoum

I want to make a book

I want to make a book and	write in it.
I want to make a book and	draw in it.
I want to make a book and	sew in it.
I want to make a book and	live in it

with the floors, walls and ceilings
made up of the *gabi* you left
with a thousand tales
inscribed between its warps and wefts.

The eternal line

I sit and spin seeking the eternal straight line that they must have told me once existed in real life.

But where is it?
Where is the line that they made me believe could be straight?

I keep chasing it..
Or am I fooled? Could it be the other way round?

The line
itself.....
.....
.....chasing.....
.....me.....
.....
.....away.....
.....
.....instead

A LINE

*Is there more than one Line? Or is it only one?
Is it the same Line that comes and goes?
Or is it a different one each time?
A Line wandering through time
A wandering line*

*I need to go to sleep
To wake up again
Sleep and wake
Until the Line breaks*

My Line

*Not yours
Not his
Not hers
Not theirs*

But mine

Just mine

Why spin?

Why spin?
To draw a line
To thread in between
To untangle
The entangled
In space
In time
So “here”
“there”
are/is
One

Repeat the repetition

Not too thick
Repeat
Not too thin
Repeat
Not too tight
Repeat
Not too loose
Repeat
Not too fast
Repeat
Not too slow
Repeat
Repeat
To repeat
To start all over again
To repeat the repetition
Repeat

Vulnerable line

My line is
vulnerable
It breaks in
between
My line is
weak
It breaks
My line is
sensitive

SOME LINES

Some lines are
your fears
You spin
They remain suspended

Some lines are your wisdom
Moments of truth
Spun in a flash
And long forgotten
Before you even know it

Some lines are kind
They are with you
And it's all right

Some lines just dance
As early as at dawn
And you are grateful
For the morning gift

Some lines are your pains
Your present
Your future
Your past
Haunting you

Some lumps of some lines
are meant to stay
No matter how hard you try
You can't turn them into a line
So be it

Some lines break
But mend themselves
Others don't
So you move on

Some lines are generous
They just flow
No questions asked

Some lines are
your precious moments
Relief lines

Some lines are never
to be rolled backwards
Better leave them where they are

Some lines
You just have to let go
They don't work for you
They are not yours

Morning lines are the best ones
They are soft and kind
Even when they break
they are graceful

Evening lines are the harshest

*When one word is enough
Only one word
Just a word*

*A word
Word
One*

You 've got to know when to stop your line

I don't know how far my line will take me

Deadline
Timeline
Down the line

Reject is a strong word
Because it killed me
Before
I was even conceived
Let alone
born