

**On Pillow Talk, or,  
How I Dance Solo While Logos Watches  
from Our Bed, Smoking a Cigarette.**

## 1. A Viper Pit and Vipers

I read (present tense) a line from Susan Howe's Emily Dickinson:

Staking our entire Possession  
On a Hair's result—  
Then—Seesawing—coolly—on it  
Trying if it split—

My Emily Dickinson, Susan Howe tells me, “audaciously invested a new grammar grounded in humility and hesitation.” Hesitation is an admission that we don't know how to proceed. It is the the upper body extending, *as if to say something*—the lips parting drawing breath, the head and neck lifting—and all this movement being held in the air, as though by a thread, and then retracted, gently lowered back again.

“You look as though you were about to say something.”  
As though you might have something to say.

But hesitation is less wondering whether to say something or nothing, and more an admission that we care how we capture the world, and how it has captured us. That it has.

“Staking and seesawing” Susan says, leaning over the “precipice of falling into foolishness.”

Against Emily’s Staking and Seesawing, it’s Ruskin who says, “He may pause but he must not hesitate.” ~~Man~~ may. The ‘man of action’ is the ~~Man~~ of action, and by consequence, the Humanity of action. I am not satisfied with ~~Man~~ becoming Humanity if the action remains the same. Pausing implies linearity. Progress. The march towards the inevitable.

Hesitation does not march, and it is not linear. It balances delicately, says that maybe it does not know how the world is. And then it tells you how it is.

St Teresa d'Avila says the soul is like a castle.

Simone Weil says:

To see a landscape as it is when I am not there... When I am in any place, I disturb the silence of heaven and earth by my breathing and the beating of my heart.

All the things that I see, hear, breathe, touch, eat; all the beings I meet—I deprive the sum total of all that of contact with God.<sup>1</sup>

Hesitation, then, is related to a profound hubris. The mystic will say that It cannot be described. And then, But let me tell you what It is like. It is like a castle. It is like a landscape when I am not there.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of a project called ~~Godstrike, Manstrike~~ (2018-ongoing), in which I strike through the words ~~God, Man, Nature~~.

What Weil calls ~~God~~, and you might call ~~Nature~~, and I might call World. Are we asking the same question? How can the infinite language of metaphysical reality be translated into the finite languages of humankind?

It cannot. At least not definitively.

Each translation, a treason. The Italians have a saying, *traduttore, traditore*. Translator, traitor. To translate is to betray. And it only when we remember this betrayal that we can hesitate. And our hesitation leads to us seesawing upon a hair's breadth. Seeing if it splits.

The act itself cannot be described, but let me tell you what it is like.

If each name is a betrayal, then none can be said to have answered the question. When I hesitate, I say that I know that this is not the end. I have not said all there is to be said. Simone has not said it, we have not said it, and when we are dead and gone, there will exist young people who will decide to speak about the ways of things. We want them to know that we have not said all there is to be said. We want them to know that when they are dead and gone, they will not have said it either, and so—and still—they must keep saying it. Seesawing on the hair's breadth, staking their entire possession.

The shift in perspective that hesitation encodes is both demanded of us and chosen by us. The Nature that we are not separate from is a changeling,<sup>2</sup> so that even when we don't shift perspectives, the aspect has shifted, is shifting, shifts. We may try to keep a stable viewpoint, but our vision is modified by the relative dilation and contraction, and the severe expansion, of temporal and spatial scale. I mean relative to the human scale. Telescopic to microscopic (and that was in the 19th century). Now we work in webs. If verticality is vertiginous, virtuality is vorticose.

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<sup>2</sup> A changeling is a child substituted by a fairy, a fairy in place of a child. This quasi-demonic and fearful possibility makes quite a nice substitute for Nature, which we may imagine as our innocuous child, to be managed and protected. *Honey, our child is in fact a fairy and we didn't know!* Our egos suffer a double blow. Simultaneously less and more than human (- child + fairy), we have performed our surety with such a lack of vigilance that the past and future reveal themselves as opportunities for the changeling to (have) *manage(d) us*. The past becomes a site of shame (*Oh ~~god~~, that time we...*) and the future a site of paranoia (*Oh ~~god~~, what if while we sleep...*). The solution to this problem is simple, but will not be easy.

I don't have social media, and I'm ashamed to be so impressive that it's almost not worth mentioning it. I don't read the news much anymore. I miss everything. If no-one tells me, I miss events and parties and the latest high school shooting and the collapse of a government, elsewhere. I rely on my Israeli friend to tell me that there is no government in Israel. And my other Israeli friend to tell me about his mother, and their relationship, and to ask me about Aboriginal Australia, and to tell me about the Israeli Bedouins. I rely on my friends tell me about a marriage proposal gone wrong, where the guy drowned. Heteropatriarchy, I joked, but I'm also serious. I look up the story afterwards, and I believe the woman said something about a bucket list.

Nature is thrilling, I agree, and everything about this concerns me.



The stable viewpoint is the kind of conservatism that is not about conservation in the ecological sense. It is about property. The world can burn, as long as my house is fireproof. It's hard, though, to accept living in fireproof house in a burned-out world. Then our conservatism changes the equation. It's a bit backhanded, it's a bit duplicitous, and it wants to be granted some wishes. The burned-out world should be prevented from coming to my door, from speaking to my children, from playing them music and turning them queer, or, ~~god~~ forbid, into trash. Rave trash, hippie trash, artist trash, welfare trash. It's not my fault the world burned.

For various reasons, it is.

I think.

I don't want to say it like that

but I did.

What in naming implies such great hesitation? The act itself cannot be described, but let me tell you what it is like. Naming is not simply linguistic. It is something else. It is a binding and a bounding—a name is a boundary. It is what hovers over the dense mass of information and coincides with the shape of the thing. I say ‘shell,’ I say ‘cup.’ But the atoms of clay, which form the ceramic of the cup—a kind of alumina silicate  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ —they do not know what whole they form. But they know, in some energetic sense, what edges they touch. The atomic veil between surface and air. There is real tension there. Real repulsions and attractions.

Wet cup, i.e. a veil between surface and flow (+  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ), and one between flow and volatility (+  $\text{N}_2$ ,  $\text{O}_2$  et al.). Or, cup [ $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ] (+  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$ ,  $\text{O}_2$ , et al.) (+ hand [epidermis, blood, DNA, et al.]) ( $\pm$  place of and technique of acquiring, place and technique of production, et al.) ( $\neq$  emotions [unquantified and unqualified neuronal connections, gut feelings, outward moving inward feeling, et al.]).

Histories of atoms and events. Becoming is a virtuality, concepts are virtualities; not-unreal. The embodying of the shimmer of a possibility that the real has produced as possibility.

I have embodied this. I know it from within.

Am embodying it. I know it as threshold.

I embody. I know it from without.

Through these three aspects my relationship to the virtual brings me from the inside to the outside, via the osmosis of the threshold.

“There on the window sill was the cup from the day before. As she rinsed out the last mouthful of coffee, and sponged away the oily fingerprints, the room went white and became sudden—sudden in its quiet capacity to blind her, as the shimmer of bared fangs suddenly strikes, from the head of Medusa—so that what was incontestable became also contestable, and final, and the water dripping from her hand was perhaps a lie, or several webbed hydrations, pearling across her fingers, and they themselves as fingers understood that perhaps there was a body, at some stage yes a body      perhaps underneath these fingers

and yes, a caress —

and brushed against it   body      a viper pit and vipers  
soft though and stinging      a whiteness yes  
very subtle      like shadows at night  
and this too      contestable      (like blindness?)

at some stage yes the body      I saw it

I’m sure of it      I’m sure I touched

and even tasted it at some stage

I forgot

I had a tongue at some stage      and maybe I never had a body

but I’m sure there was a body at some stage      and now it is gone and I am crying.

As the cup lay drying in the air, and the room regained its colour,  
the children playing in the street were yelling “Over the line!”  
“Doesn’t count!” Or was it that they all were singing “Glory, glory,  
Love—is anterior to Life—Posterior—to Death—Initial of Creation,  
and The Exponent of Earth—” as all children *do*, in some way, sing  
Emily Dickinson.”

Hesitation is changing aspect, changing scale, and then changing how we name what is, and how we name how we know it, how it works, why we care, and what we should do with it (once called ontology, epistemology, metaphysics, physics, theology maybe or ideology, and politics). (These are insufficient and it makes me ashamed to be all like “you know, blah blah blah, etc., et al., comme vous le savez très bien.”)

Shame, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick tells me, is not where identity is most securely attached to essences, but where the *question* of identity arises most originarily and most relationally. Shame is where I might build me. The country of my origin.

I hesitate to say ‘cup’ (because everything is attached to it). The whole feral shaking of the world is in parentheses at the end of the line, in the jaws of the dog that won’t let go. It is a battle with entropy that both the dog and I will lose.

Naming may not be about language. It is that the thing calls out to us that it is separate, and it shows us its edges. Our edges are its edges, so we never know who is calling who. Hesitation. And naming is the gentle call and response between us and the thing—sometimes so gentle that it splits us in two.

‘I’ is an edge of myself. That’s what Rimbaud said, right?

*Je est un autre. I is an other.*

## 2. Logos is not Enya

Politics is the space of Logos. Rational speech. Politics must name the problem, and bind it, and decide upon how to change it. Politics requires that we keep naming as we did before. So that we can agree on what is, and what is wrong, and what it would be to change it. Politics cannot say that reality cannot be described. It must stick to its translation. It must decide.

Logos cannot say *je est un autre*. It cannot take its case to the courts, turn to the judge and say, “Your Honour, I must confess, I don’t know where I end and you begin.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Let it be known that outside of America Your Honor is not the norm. But I have heard that due to the international proliferation of American crime and court dramas, in France, people use the dubbed translation, *Votre Honneur*, in the court room. And they plead the 5th, an amendment to the constitution that they do not have.



Politics is the apocryphal saying of Martin Luther that Even if I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today. It is the very means against the end.

Logos is not cacophony, not whispers or pillow talk, it is not Enya, or angels, or the death metal growl. It is a single coherent voice, speaking in public, expecting that we must agree upon our definitions. It is not mutiny.

To mutiny is to be in open rebellion against the institution to which we belong. Sailors against their officers, soldiers against their commanders, poetry against language, citizens against the police. If the Crown is metonymy for the Queen and the Queen is metonymy for the Monarchy, it is probably the Feet that mutiny. Susan Howe says:

Is Death a soothing mother or a mastiff-father? Is Awe  
Nature; and destruction the beginning of every Foundation?  
Do words flee their meaning? Define definition.

The mutiny of *poiesis* is hesitation in translation, from the unnamable to the nameable. From the world to ‘the World.’ But also from the unnamable to the unsayable—to music, dance, pottery—and the unspeakable. Horror may be unspeakable, but it is nameable. Ditto joy.

When we split the hair a gap opens up and new edges appear—new boundaries and new borders. We risk not being understood.

*Poiesis* means creation, someone points out to me. I think (that) they think (that) I think it means poetry. What is the institution to which *poiesis* belongs, against which it might mutiny? Diotima in the Symposium says it is immortality. *Poiesis*, then, might be the Foot of Immortality.

Is immortality a mountain? It is on your bucket list?

### **3. Pussyfooting around and**

**other feline vacillations**

Saint Teresa d'Avila went unshod, shoeless, with bare feet. She said the arrow was plunged into her heart several times so deep it pierced her entrails, and caused a pain so sweet that it made her moan, and she did not wish it to cease. It is bodily, she says, and spiritual; and I would like to focus on the bareness of her feet.

Saint Teresa is seesawing on the hair's breadth of ecstasy. Eros, Sappho says, is bittersweet.

I read that loosing the foot, keeping it unshod and unbound, when encountering battle, danger, or engaging in magic, is an act of faith. Unbind your hair, unbind your feet, unbind your heart, go to the Capitoline hill and pray for rain.

“They came home wet as drowned rats,” the old man tells me, “in the those days. Now no one believes the ~~gods~~ are ~~gods~~, and our fields lie baking.”<sup>4</sup> Hey Daddy, I don’t wanna pry, but tell me *what else* happened between ‘those pious days’ and ‘now,’ and where did it happen and to whom did it happen to? *What scale are we talking, Daddy and why did that man on telly say the chickens are coming home to roost?*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This is a paraphrase of a scene from Petronius’ *Satyricon*. Actually, if I understand it correctly, it is the baby boomer speaking, whose house is standing in a burned-out field. Is it possible that even though they got it wrong this old timer is right? That when nothing is sacred, the world suffers.

<sup>5</sup> This is a reference to Malcom X causing outrage with a similar comment. It is the kind of outrage that I like to think the changeling provokes in the parents (see fn.2). My parents, baby boomers, tend to say things like ‘we did nothing wrong, we lived how we were supposed to, we worked hard, earned what’s ours, we were good people.’ Which is true. Being told you’re wrong, that you caused this mess, provokes an armour of defensiveness that prevents the work of shame from developing a sense of self from which to think. But, ‘we did what we were supposed to’ is not enough. Daddy, you know it’s not enough. I love my parents, and they are my support, my safety net. I don’t get through this world without them. If this is a criticism of them, which it is, it is also a criticism of myself. I have my own excuses: personal, generational. They too are not enough. I want us to admit this together, but I’m not relying on it.

Daddy, che uomo, ciao! I will go to Rome, to the Santa Maria della Vittoria, where Gian Lorenzo Bernini sculpted Saint Teresa in marble. She lies back, after the first prick of the arrow, or the second, or was it the third? She exhales, and her breathlessness—we can see it in the flesh of the stone.





I imagine, with unshod feet, touching my lips to those lips. I wonder, Daddy, would I feel ashamed? To touch the lips of that stone is not like touching a raw piece of marble. But what would it be like to touch a raw piece of marble as though it might moan? Teresa's bare feet are dangling, exposed. I imagine washing and kissing those feet. I imagine my lips and my tongue. I taste the toe of that stone, and I travel along certain veins and slender sinews.

Teresa's erotic speech, piggybacked on transcendence, is morally acceptable, but it is not logos. Weil's politics, alloyed to the severity of her mysticism, are rendered ineffectual, because unrepeatable.

To pussyfoot is to be non-committal. It speaks to cautiousness, but also to evasion and prevarication, as though it might be a passive form of cunning. As it comes from the light tread of cats, it is also feminised, as all pussies tend to be. Pussyfooting is doubly differentiated from logos, as both unstable and quiet. Logos is a *broad* cast: it aims to cast a wide net and it speaks loudly (but not too loudly). The quietness of pussyfooting renders it stealthy, and so suspicious; and its vacillating, rather than being understood as a kind of existential 'swaying,' faces the more serious charge of moral spinelessness, susceptible to manipulation from any old quack who happens to come along.

Audre Lorde tells me, We have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge. Anne Carson tells me that women were considered wetly antithetical to the dry airiness that the soul ideally possessed. Wetness is erotic, and emotional, and also leaks everywhere.

Intimate speech is often a narrow cast—into the restricted space of the ear, as I whisper to you in bed, as I coo and murmur with the children, as I natter and prattle with my friends, as I sigh with pleasure or pain—or it explodes and leaks everywhere, as when I moan, or scream, or howl, whence it casts its net so broadly as to be amorphous, obscure, and once again impractical.

The broad(but not too broad)cast is best.



But dry logos is also impractical. Kathy Acker tells me that knowing much information and not feeling anything doesn't get you anywhere. We fight about this, Kathy and I, but we essentially agree that there is no balance, and no harmony, and no easy Marie Kondo sparking of joy, when it comes to knowledge and feeling.

Wages for housework, Silvia Federici demanded (one of our original so-called bitches, vipers, witches). Who's gonna take care of the worker when the worker gets home? The worker needs reproductive labour to be pushed out the door daily anew and ready for wages. We want money for our labour, SiFe says, and she is smiling. Logos is freaking the fuck out. Logos wants to broadcast in public and come home to a warm meal and warm words and a warm mouth, a body who will not meet Logos with information, information, information.

But the point, we reckon, is not to *fait entrer* Logos into the intimate sphere: not for Sadie Plant to whisper into Daddy's ear that women and machines have become disloyal, however erotic this might be for Daddy. The point is that feeling is knowledge, and it builds difference into reason.

Shame, for example, although unpleasant, is valuable. Eve Kosofsky tells me that when a basic circuit between us is broken in a failure of mutual recognition, our faces literally ‘fall’ in shame. This geometry, the first of many more or less abstract call and response failures, is an oscillation of the interior movement and the exterior movement; the bridge over *la ravine dite face-à-face* is swaying dangerously. Our inability to cross or repair this estrangement brings us by variable oscillation to a more complex circuit. Wobbly, irregular, mutable.

Face to face: you and I?

Facet to face: the thing and I?

Facet to facet: an aspect to an aspect. My feet, for example, and the ground they touch.

My feet are rooted, they do not wish to touch the sky. They are the full embodiment of my partial body. *They* see the landscape as it is when I am not there...when 'I' am up here. *Un autre*. A translator, and a traitor. Saying 'I,' saying 'World.' Saying how it is, and what is wrong, and what it would be to change it.

The paradox is real. It is not to be resolved—paradoxes rarely are. Classical logic (and Logos) have failed us, and what the ancient alchemists knew, and what quantum physics began to understand at the limits of classical physics (edges, edges: seesawing coolly on them—trying if they split), is that the operator and the work are not separate, that the spiritual and the physical are not separate. The paradox is real. Don't try and synthesise your way out of this. Let's talk the law of the included middle. Let's talk scales and systems.

#### **4. “Oh, Simone, I don’t think Logos really loves me.”**

I unbind my feet and I take a step. A path opens up to me and I begin, fleet-footed, to run. Flying through the wordless air, I am suddenly struck in the back with an arrow.

On the hair’s breadth of Logos, I lie down and I wait. I say what hurts me, and what lifts me up. I wrap my limbs around the hair’s breadth of Logos, and receive a kiss. I whisper, I murmur, I sigh and I scream. I have fallen in love with Logos. It is spiritual, I say, and bodily.

A poet once said of Eros, “For they love him and they hate him and they long to possess him.” Logos, I say, let me love you. Eros, I say, let Logos love me too. Eros draws his arrow and lets it loose. But Logos does not love me. It is Catullus who says,

I hate and I love. Why? you might ask.

I don’t know. But I feel it happening and I hurt.

Logos and I are lying in bed. Torso and face staring up at the ceiling, Logos is smoking a cigarette, having fucked me once again. I am wrapped into torso and groin and limb. My body is warm and my breath is warm and I can feel the beating of my heart. I want to kiss you all over, I whisper. Logos grins, You'll be the death of me. I laugh a little and entwine myself further. Logos, do you love me? Legs curled around legs, body pressed; Logos smoking a cigarette. Sometimes after being fucked, I cry. It's so much emotion. I'm overcome by the world. Sometimes it's awful. It's Iago saying, "Get money in thy purse," and the bombs and the reverse salvation. "If I were the earth it would disgust me, all this vermin on my back, I'd shake it off." Simone de Beauvoir, I quietly say. Logos raises eyebrows and sighs. Oh, honey, stop being so dramatic. Logos, this hurts me. You deny my right to politics, I whisper. In bed, Logos turns to me and kisses me on the forehead. Shhh, baby, go to sleep, we can talk about it in the morning. But we don't. Logos is always too busy in the mornings and too hungry in the evenings and too tired after we fuck. Sometimes I dance naked as the moon streams through our windows, and Logos lies there, bemused, before drifting off to sleep. And then I am alone. "I was made for another planet altogether. I mistook the way." Simone de Beauvoir, I quietly say, before falling asleep. And when instead of dancing or kissing or whispering, I shout and scream, Logos hisses at me, Baby, please, don't make a scene, you're embarrassing me.

Logos, I say, you may be embarrassed, but I am being erased.

And in the silence that follows, I realise something about ~~G~~od. And I call Simone, the other one—My Simone Weil.

Simone, I think you're wrong. I *want* to disturb the silence of Logos by my breathing and the beating of my heart. I am that breathing, and that heart beating, it is mine. This is my minimum condition.

Simone listens patiently, and says, I once wrote that we must become incarnate. We must perform our incarnation, for we are disembodied by our imagination.

*S'incarner. Nous devons faire l'acte de s'incarner, car nous sommes désincarnées par l'imagination.* Hey, did you hear what Luce said?

Your Luce Irigaray? I joke. Simone laughs. I love her laugh. She doesn't laugh often, but when she does, it is full of fire and quick, like a slap. Her faces flushes, and I see that shame has built in her the deepest conditions of her being: what she is willing to fight for, and how far she will go.

Luce, Simone tells me, had this thought the other day, she described it beautifully, I wish you were there to hear it. She said that an image of the body cannot express all there is to know about incarnation. And that gestures generate volume better than a mirror, gestures as they relate to space and to other people. We must take responsibility for that.

Oh, Simone, I say, I don't think Logos really loves me.

Later she sends me two emoji and a youtube link. My Simone Weil.

It's Sinead O'Connor and it's called This is a Rebel Song. I would like to play it to you. It's a love song to England from Ireland. I think we can imagine this Englishman as the humanist subject that Rosi Braidotti lovingly rips to shreds. The subject of universalism, a subject that is white, male, heterosexual, speaking a dominant language.

I am two of those things. Some of you are none of those things.

The Englishman might be science. Because I am heartbroken, I know it is a song about Logos and I.



How to love and love in such a way that we split the hair?  
Seesawing and staking it all. How to hesitate, and whisper and  
scream? How to take off our shoes and put on our gloves and plant  
the apple tree? I have dirt on my feet and I whisper: *translator*,  
*traitor*, while I suck the toe of Saint Teresa in Rome. It is bodily, she  
moans, and spiritual.

And I say what is, I say what is a problem, and I say it must change.

I hesitate, and then I choose a path.

I cannot march, and then I march.

I hesitate, and then I choose a path.

I cannot march, and then I march.

I hesitate, and then I choose a path.

I cannot march, and then I march.

*Poiesis*, mutiny.

## **5. Words, then, are basalt**

The cold volcanic makes sense to me now. It is frozen fire.

Words, then, are basalt.

Black and iron-rich, they are the haemoglobin of the world,

Carrying its oxygen. They are that breath of life.

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