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PERSONISM: A MANIFESTO

A person has to show identification when opening a bank account or when traveling by public transport even with a valid ticket

A person on a bus has to keep a distance from another person on a bus

A person has to ask to have an obstruction removed if space is not accessible

Unless another person decides he or she wants it filled for aesthetic reasons

A person doesn’t have to care if anyone gets it, or gets what it means, or if it improves them

The only thing a person has to do to ride a horse is reserve a horse

A person cannot draw a space-filling curve — and so a person must choose between “nostalgia of the infinite” and “nostalgia for the infinite”

A person creates a body, biography being only as it seems

A person has to borrow a line and say it to another person

And a person has to say it without inflection: “I like to see it lap the Miles” or “I had come to the house, in a cave of trees”

Or even “Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea”

Or if a person whispers it to another person who acknowledges it with one of five responses, then there is, indeed, some positive recognition of isolated “influences”

Though it is also true that one of the persons might be a Scientologist

A person has to wait five to ten years to erase student loans in a bankruptcy otherwise

A person might fish one rupee coin from a tub full of macaroni in 15 seconds

A person has to be drugged heavily so as not to experience the pain of a particular way of dying
And this is true even if a person previously said she’d be willing to die in that way

A person has to write the code, test it to make sure it spreads properly, and then release the virus

A person has to see Hopkins’ use of “blue-bleak embers” as imaginative and not to wince at “fall, gall”

A person has to breathe the same air for a long time in order to catch it — it’s unlikely, for example, that you can catch it on the subway even if a person coughing next to you has it

A person has to swim under your legs to free you once you’re tagged

A person has to report back to work

A person presents itself as a series of spectacles in societies where modern conditions of production prevail

A person has to edit the stuff into an accessible format

A person might dislike the content and require a retraction from the writer

A person has to answer so many questions that go unanswered by so many or by the questions themselves

A person has a day job; no one makes a living as a person
PERSONAL POEM

I am beginning to alter, I hate my verses, every line, every word, I am kind to my neighbors, I am not anyone in particular, I am not a painter, I am a poet, I am sorry that Che Guevara is dead, I asked for something to eat, I asked if I should pray, I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You, I can’t live blossoming drunk, I dream of nude policemen investigating, I’d swish though the door, I dwell in possibility, I keep my diamond necklace in a pond of sparkling water, I myself like the climate of New York, I celebrate myself (I pray you’ve finished) I celebrate myself and sing myself, I look back to you, and cherish what I wanted, I said: “The flowers in this light are beautiful,” I know the colour rose, and it is lovely, I know I change, I see the winter turned around, I shout: “I shall return,” I lost you to water, summer, I wanted to be sure to reach you, I will sleep, I will die in Miami in the sun, I will grieve alone, I have not ever seen my father’s grave, I learned to be honest, I will teach you my townspeople, I, the poet, I wake up in your bed, I know I have been dreaming, you, you also, Gaius Valerius Catullus, You, Andrew Marvell, you blame me that I do not write, you love me, you are sure, you send me your poems, you sit in a chair touched by nothing, feeling, you’ve gotten in through the transom, you come to fetch me from my work tonight, you approach me carrying a book, you who desired so much — in vain to ask, we talked to each other about each other, we resolve to think of ourselves, we take place in what we believe, we make our meek
adjustments, we must see, we must know, we live on the third world
from the sun, number three, nobody tells us what to do,
we shall have everything we want and there’ll be no more dying
READING MACHINE

My mission is to make you
the ultimate reading machine,

whoever you are holding me in hand,
with two governing commands,

start and stop, easy-to-remember text navigation
controls, a wealth of recall options,

a reading machine as simple to operate
as an instamatic: press the button

and presto! (or pronto!, you pick) it goes.
I come with good will to make you a reading machine:

when you think of punctuation, you’ll think of waiting inside
punctuation, when Quince mispunctuates the prologue

you’ll wallow in the comma’s strange glow, in the taint
of points gone bad, of overexclamed Italian, of couplets,

all that! Simplicity and impressive performance
combined, yes, a reading machine to take all

your loves, love, all of them, yes, all, to eliminate all
the complex settings necessary on comparable reading machines.

I’ll design it for the widest possible user base: busy people like you
who want a no-nonsense reading machine for the summer,

students, people who like to read on the bus,
or on the beach, or in private libraries

where strange men might peek up your skirt
(another reading machine in the next cubicle

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taking his break), other comparable people, morning commuters, passengers, patriots,

you pick, and those who are perverse in the way you are perverse will like you.
LOVE LETTERS

I cohere because you cohere
and I am terrified
of what my body wants
when left to its own care.

*

I thought of you all last week
until the world grew rounder and I broke
several dishes. These 
beloved accidents—

*

I am a drunk girl, a very drunk girl,
a quiet drunk girl. No girl is broken
and mended—that is to say, a platitude
is broken, and mending does the choosing.

*

I am in the habit of finches
and a little peacock in me
which says

inquire no further

*

I dare not say naughty without dear.
Actually, I say as little as ever I can.

*
Probing clicks—
a cave swiftlet finds its way through dark corridors.

I am thinking of my stomach and its adjuncts as part of being placed.

* 

What hovers half an inch above your body

* 

What hovers in the interval

* 

It looked like goosebumps It was only screen shadow It became abstract The body and its props We want things
(from) THE LIFE OF SLEEP

BECKETT SLEEP

Unanswerable clamour.
A question of audience.
Everyday objects translate
into texture. A pebble
in my mouth. Testicle &
testify. Naughty parrot.
The fiction of fiction
is that I am writing this. I
struck — not hard —
no, I pushed — no, not
pushing. Describe objects,
replace the dog, the body’s
long madness, rubbish.

ROUTINE SLEEP

monkey follows funky
monkey snarls, so cheeky
monkey cannot master remote control
monkey knows nothing of Tony Danza
monkey is bored by Tony Danza
monkey whistles, jumping on plush
monkey feels, perhaps, a martial arts flick?
monkey describes precise backrub
monkey submits for inspection
monkey retracts “having a bad day”
COLLABORATIVE SLEEP

Slide here, your leg there, or differently
when undercover or in doubt of the king’s counsel, his red collared dog, his arm stapled thighwise. Scotch on the desk, you detective, you otter, you slide it over, there.

SCAPULA, COPULA, SLEEP

A body whose curves I have memorized, flanked by ands where the neck seems joined. The back logically stacked up on an A.
DREAM SLEEP

There are secrets
when you leave
a bounded region.
Cracking. Foot
in the door. Frame.
Incompatible forms.
Swoon. Flower-
enamored swain.

SLEEP IN DOG YEARS

It started Early -- took it --
but can’t teach it

new tricks -- Awakened by its own
voice, cat mew, crow-
bark. I am I because,
etc. -- Guard my head, Cur --

PREDATORY SLEEP

anxious about dirt, anxious
about sheep, anxious about
counting, anxious about germ
warfare, anxious about mistakes,
anxious about mistaking, anxious
about breathing, anxious to
hear you breathing, anxious
about washing, is it
washed, is it, anxious
about consequence, about counting
it, are you breathing,
anxious about arrangement, anxious
about system, anxious about
it, anxious about counting
DESCARTES SLEEP

Preserving me in secrecy,
fast and secure, securely
attached, pouring
into my coarser parts

SCREEN SLEEP

The future is here.
I want to do the stuff police labs do.
I watch CSI: Las Vegas.
I know where my bread is buttered.

VULGAR INSOMNIAC

corolla  corona
lark   larkspur
ligature  lighthouse
labiate  blame
vulva  larva
auk  Aukema
calyx  Catullus
sepal  steeple
whorl  world
double you  of course you do
common  cormorant

STEIN SLEEP

Spreading is difference.
The resembling not in unordered.
Not in unordinary, not.
And this all pointing to system.
A in arrangement: an and.
Color hurt single: a strange nothing and spectacle, a cousin.
An and, glass in kind.
A glass, blind.
UTENSIL SLEEP

Spoons in a travel context: how the same spoon

might appear in two places. Spoons parted by a repetition

DICKINSON SLEEP

(“I am ill”)
(“Oh — did I offend it?”)
(“If you saw a bullet”)
WALK HOME

Closure is important
to form, not dark or

intense, just “we lit out
at once for home,” and then

the accent of feet
on pavement, the clear,

soft quality of stress, a privately owned
airplane, the snow rimmed

feeder, one pigmy nepticulid
moth,

until it’s done. At any rate,
this business of couplets, lighthouse, beacon,

traffic light, some other signal, so a poet
might by careful exploitation
determine the relation between things.
Between things. The glow

outside is more like lamplight
than moonlight, as if such things matter.

In relentless observation
the injection of the I

is superfluous, it’s not dark or intense,
just “say what you think you think,” or

“the upper reaches of my beehives in summer
are filled with humid air,” or
a teacher, pointing to a wooden object hanging in a museum, says

“that’s sculpture”
until it’s done.
I AM A DEIST

I have arrived in the present
by chance. By and large, physical
objects like buildings
tend to stay in place.

I am here quite alone
and at last I will devote myself
sincerely to the general
demolition of my opinions.

I slip out, tidying
a corpse for the waking.

The face speaks of nothing
and glares at me. Big, I
squeeze my way out
of the house, disposing of

neither anger nor sorrow.
The disposition of human

remains still glares
at us, each in turn.

Some believe the sun
not to be a body

of fire but a property
which when burned

produces presence.

Some believe the sun
not to be a body at all.
I feel quite bold & cheerful—

there is no God. The remainder

of this page and all of the following
in the mouth of the canon.