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flection

by

Sean Hickey

A Creative Writing Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through The English Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2007

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Canada

Abstract

flection is a long poem based on the Japanese utanikki, a form of poetic diary incorporating both prose and poetry. It documents through email and poetry a year of traveling by a nameless protagonist Guanajuato, Mexico, where he goes based on the invitation of a woman with whom he has fallen in love. The relationship dissolves and the story follows the character as he tries to redefine himself in a foreign setting. Written as a reaction to bp Nichol's *The Martyrology*, *flection* uses many of the same formal techniques and examines similar themes regarding the other and exits in language.

Dedications

This work is dedicated first and foremost to my parents Stephen and Carolyn Hickey, whom I know I never thank enough. I wish to thank them for everything. I would also like to thank Dr. Susan Holbrook who was generous with her time and insights during her sabbatical, and every other time for that matter. I am also grateful to Dr. Tom Dilworth for encouraging me in my studies, from the first week of undergrad until the end. I would also like to thank Dr. Di Brandt and all the grad students in our creative writing group, but especially Aaron and Jenny and Lindsay. And of course, Allstars Andrew and Tara.

Summer

Summer the
 sum merged time two
 summing sun two
 pair planting she
 plants like a machine meaning
 hard meaning smooth without rest
 learned movements a ticking clock
 clocking every step bread crumb trail of trees
 sum of moments movements and minutes mi-nute
 accumulations diary of trees trails of moments
 momentum of minutes in motion making its sum merging
 into a forest finished empty space filled memories talking merging
 meeting that planted seedling by the log where you mentioned an ex
 boyfriend in Iceland seedlings scatter around the cap rock where we took
 a smoke break merging sum of stories momentum of conversation trail of trees
 leading back from the swamp to the road reload
 bag up begin
 again a gain five hundred moments merging to the ground begin a
 growth a mouth seedling sprouts
 a word
 by word a sentence between pants of breath
 breathe a short line
 gaining movement merging moving on a gain
 down a hill sunburn on bare backs merge
 skin and sun skin and earth
 beneath nails merge flies and hair here
 swamp into socks
 bugs in our blood
 this seedling by the table sized stump where you tied your shirt over your
 ears
 drawing a line
 between merging buzzing and sanity
 worked on in your sports bra tan line that
 seedling by log slipping falling on my back merging creek
 water with cuts and blood and your laugh (merge) sunlight (refracted) stream
 poured out of my cutter boots
 merge land and trees time and movement
 conversation you

Toplantrees

to plant

two plants

a tree is

to plant trees is a plant too

is too plant trees is twenty two too is plenty trees is

to trees a plant is too

a tree to plantis at rees toop

lantis to land tis too streetsis

tooplantis two streetis a tree to

plant again

Two plants again two trees is a plant again

a gain is to plant two trees again

and again too two trees again

planting two trees again is too to plant trees too to a gain

two planted trees planted again is istree

again and again is istree

istree is again

and istree is a gain

a gain of trees is not istree but istree past was

gained trees

again gained trees is istree and trees is istrees again not gained

to gain istree is to plant trees again

and a gain is planted trees again

again and a gain is a game planting treesis again

isa game again

a game gaining and again anda gain is a game is planting a tree

again top land a street is istree

land as a street is istree again to plant a tree is again is two trees to trees two trees too is a gain.

gaining nico a game planting again and a gain a game

nico planting again and a tree again a tree a gain tree is a game

planting gaining planting gaming planting again againing nico and istree

again anda gain istree again gaining and trees again with nico gaining

gaming again nico gaining pair planting trees twice again

istree again two planting planting pair pair planting again is a game

of gaining again nico again planting gains tree games gaining nico

is istree

Folded time

a mattress,

apart a tent

double exposed pause

time) fogs of y(ou/r) after

flapping over fly

taste specter-laugh and

whispers

curled in corners

beneath the forest

under the night

flutter tightly across this constrained room with

knowledge of leaving tomorrow breeze

against a hot back

A skipping needle circumventing this space
the still silence this moment orbits

lead arm reading the white noise in this tent skipping grooves

breath and silence
where the comfort of sleep
rustles

ear with

each thought

less

exhalation

hushing one

night long

held breath

Bite Marks I

The bite marks on my arms are fading
 fast last nightstangle
 bones in conjunction
 with heat seeping ground
 salt taste of sweat and deet
 behind your ears nights lean
 ing on inebriated breath breathing
 BC mountain air forest

 floors textured scent of mold
 and mist
 exhales
 through the bushes
 wind
 downhill

 remembering leaving this morning
 scratching bites signed with your tongue

fading with each mile between parting

buses

Toronto /

Vancouver

next season beneath the same trees

Date: Sat, Aug 21 2006
From: "Angry Burro" woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Fwd. What Nico sent me
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hey Twig,

Look at this email that Nico sent me (girl I met planting in Prince George). She talked about heading straight to Mexico as soon as the plant was done and as it turns out she's there. I'm conflicted. We spent a lot of time pair planting and she's absolutely incredible. Crazy as hell. Nico, short for nicotine cause she smokes like a fiend (and drinks like a demon), is tough as nails and goddamn sexy to boot. She's from Iceland traveling across North America down into South America, and worked this summer in B.C. Black hair hanging half way to hips, thin and muscled, and funny. Not many women can pull off sex appeal in ragged army pants and orange cutter boots with their face covered in a week of dirt. I thought it was bush fever, but I've been thinking about her since the contract's final party night. I think I'm going to go. I think I'd be crazy not to. I've been straight across the country this summer, Newmarket to B.C., and the travel and adventure felt good. University can wait. Take notes for me; I'll be back in January.

Date: Fri. Aug 21 2006
 From: "Nico" globetrotter39@hotmail.com
 Subject: re: An Invitation
 To: "Angry Burro" woopee121@yahoo.ca

Consider this a challenge if you like. I have an apartment in Guanajuato. If you can figure out where that is, you're welcome to stay. Come and find me.

Buena Suerte.

Afectuosamente,
 Nico.

re:flection: to Guanajuato by bus

the bus window pane
 the silver screen between face / ecaf
 and the desert at night that shows
 eyes and unsunned
 cheeks imposed over vague cactus
 each star fragment of that image

sparks from a campfire

sandy smoke

the soft image on night

the face that hovers obscuring
 depth

travels parallel
 to this framed second the desert tracks

some dimension beneath
 some alternate path behind
 the apparitions of introspection the flection of who
 in to be and was is here a pull
 across the continent
 two days Toronto to Texas
 tanglement of talk and blockage of hablais tickets y
 billetos
 streets of chiclet kids and border town hustles
 dictionary pages to uncross the lines
 of communication and crossed customs
 coming down the highway a fish on line
 flops in the chest pulled closer
 with suicidal abandon to leap into your hand

another day's travel another window into a desert
 teeming with beauty a star for every mile
 spins behind the apparition of my eager face
 seeing yours in the night's black hair flowing over our passage
 blowing through strands of sand and dust

towards the mountains
 towards the other to you across this ticking black
 expanse of me
 to us

Date: Thu, 15 Sept 2006
From: "angry burro" <woopee121@yahoo.ca>
Subject: Re:think
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hey Twig,

So, I'm in Mexico,

I was off my last bus in Guanajuato for about five minutes, when after taking a wrong turn to my hostel, I walked past a cafe, turned around, went back inside, walked up to this girl standing at the bar and she gave me a big hug. I'm meeting her at another bar tonight, where she works, and staying at her place.

I found Nico, in the middle of a city of a quarter million people. Sorry if my spelling and writing is a bit rushed. I know it's not very polished at the best of times, and right now I don't have enough money to stay at this internet cafe for very long. I had to borrow some pesos from Nico because I didn't bring enough with me. Sunday, banks are still closed, so I spent my last three dollars until Monday on a cheap bus from Leon. I had thirty cents left in my pocket, which is enough for a local bus up the mountain from the station, if it was in pesos, instead of American. But a friendly Korean saved me from a long hike by giving me a five peso coin at the station, and that's how I got on the bus. On board the bus, a local busker was playing a lively version of Heart Break Hotel in a credible Elvis, which was just strange and familiar enough to be both comforting and exciting. I got off the city bus at a random spot that seemed like it was more or less the center of town and I noticed a sign for a landmark I recognized from my book. Five minutes, and a wrong turn later, I find Nico at the top of the mountain, in a cafe where I had my first taste refried peppered bean paste, and I'm telling her what's it's like to sit on a bus for three days (not so bad actually now that I'm here - it's all about sleeping 12 hours a day) and she's telling me about the past three weeks she's been down here. Literally straight from the camp to the Vancouver airport, to D.F., to here to take Spanish lessons. She's working at a bar called La Iguana Perdida, the lost iguana, and sharing an apartment with the owner, Travis, and a couple of Americans, Kate and Amy, who are also studying Spanish.

I walked with her over to the Iguana to leave my backpack there, and so that I could find it again later, and then I started exploring the town. It seems much more European in design than Mexican, but it is after all a colonial city. Apparently it was a mining town when it was first established, and the winding roads into and out of town that cut right through the mountains were originally old mining tunnels. Which explains why this place is such a maze. The layout of the streets is more like spokes on a shattered wheel leading to the zócalo which is at the lowest point of the valley. The entire city rises up around it in more or less, mas o menos, concentric circles of twisting alleys and plazas full of shops and markets and cafes and churches. If I ever get lost all I have to do is walk downhill and I'll eventually find the zócalo at the heart of the town.

Selecting the correct series of narrow alleys and stairways and switchbacks out of there is another matter.

A dizzying series of wrong turns, apparently the only way you can find anything around here, brought me to this internet cafe, a place called Spanglish, and I decided to get by mental bearings by reconnecting with you.

This is the perfect city for a traveler. You can explore these streets endlessly, and every corner brings you into a new plaza or to the steps of a giant colonial church. Life is good, and random incidences abound. I don't know, might stay in Guanajuato a while. I've got a place in Nico's apartment. Seems like a sign, and not following the signs would be insulting to luck like this.

Buena Suerte Amiga.

F
all

the sun merge in fall
 deep spinning red and orange
 painted buildings teetering down cobblestone streets
 run descending circles

drawn into

you
 standing in the zócalo
 yellow steps of the Teatro
 dancing with Anita to the mariachis in a red sarong
 hips tracing turns of a twirling leaf
 that blows its way through every thought
 falling
 spinning

red

orange

sky
 leaf
 sky

Spanglish Sestina

for example instead of "cool" had to repeat "bueno"
 mastering spanglish wasn't about increasing a roto
 vocabulary but a linguistic agility so that todo
 your sentences could be arranged como
 the solo word you happened to know como "tranquilo"
 might work in such a way that wasn't completely loco

There is a fine art to this. En Guanajuato roto
 language was common. Los gringos todo
 came to GTO to learn Espagnol so spanglish was como
 the unofficial third language como patois muy loco
 yo se pero it could be fun one could hablo quite bueno
 with a little vocal slight of hand and a tranquilo

listener who's tiempo wasn't too precious como
 this sort on nonsense wouldn't fly in Toronto loco
 talk no tolerated by the busy y no muy tranquilo
 like aqui. Mangling a fine spanglish though es bueno
 por que just about todo el mundo had tiempo y roto
 language was a normal thing como todo

todo los dias y noche you were habloing to todo
 el mundo it's all bueno
 pero pequeno tequilla and y roto
 tongues and minds twist tranquilo
 sentences into such a loco
 mess many a listener might wonder como

these tourists can take such loco
 liberties with culture's tongue todo tranquilo
 as though they were making bueno
 sense at all y all the tequilla y todo
 los sentences blending spanglish words como
 crushed ice in a tongue numbing marguerita - roto

linguistic alcoholic slush y tranquilo
 tourists well pleased with como
 beuno they can hablo getting loco
 con la lingua tongues and syntax gone roto
 y mi mente es muy tangled y tripping con todo
 las parabras and dexterous meanings somehow bueno

o no bueno es como
 se dice loco pero tranquilo
 por que todo me sentences es roto
 anyway.

Twisting Alleys: Translation Skews

<p> interpredation internment "centered in the speaker intertext limited to her own knowledge of others language" and "combination of however is in finite and varies between "influences reading of every new "words speaking necessarily different from other to person no two translations identically "calls to mind complexity of language and systems alienates each one "more makes the gulf wider with every additional verb layers the conscious structure "with each new word one approaches reproaches total cumulated comprehension "of human structured "each sentence evolves into unique meaning a word or work in Structuralism of Universal Mind </p>	<p> sintermed in wasp beekers interned hex simulated thru hearts sown of mother strangled age and however is unfit in it and fairies eaten confluence seeding aviary dew burrs receding its barely sufficient frat smother stupor son know you congregations frenetically wonderminds completely off engaged ancestry delineates breached sun remakes the ghost rider with fiery addiction burn cairns la con science ruptures you're weed kingdom tidal culminate in condescension exhumed struck your sss eared breather revolves syntuned freak meaning a warder lurk, interruptional schism of the only feral </p>
--	---

Mind

Date: Fri, 18 Oct. 2006
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Re:citing sounds
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hola Twig,

I don't even know what the hell I'm talking about half the time. The streets are full with the sounds of conversation and I'm lost in sea O's and A's and N's and sound like yawn and J's like a chicken bone in the throat. They've got three letters that are supposed to sound like an H and the H itself is silent. Does that make any sense to you? I've been here just over a month, and I've picked up a few words, a vocabulary, but I don't have any idea about how to put these words in a sensible sentence. And even if I could I wouldn't understand anything that was said back to me. My guidebook is full of useful phrases and common questions like how to ask directions, donde esta blah blah blah, but that doesn't help me to understand any of the answers. But I like it. I always took for granted how easy it was to make a connection through a conversation, even if it's just to order a coffee. Now the difficulty of speaking is apparent every time I leave the apartment. It's written all over my face. The obvious difficulty of trying to form a Spanish sentence is recognized through the obvious struggle as a friendly gesture. I get a lot of patience and good humour from locals here when I'm mangling a Spanglish phrase, whether I'm making any sense or not. But for the most part my ability to order a coffee or use this computer for an hour is dependent upon having someone with me to make that translatable connection with the locals. When there's nobody around to perform that magic I fully appreciate what it means to be in a foreign place. Being in a foreign language space is being able to hear your own accent. I think I have a new understanding of what Toronto's immigrants experience. I can see myself here as minority through the eyes of the local population, a privileged gringo with time and money to waste. I'm visibly outside of cultural group, and unable to cross any lines or borders or step outside of the gringo stereotype without first being able to communicate and relate aspects of my identity or personality. Fortunately however, I'm usually with Nico. Aside from her being able to translate for me, connecting with her is why I'm here.

Spanish Abstraction

baño

castaño

cuando

cigarillo

casa de

amo nico

calor y

deniro

nico nico amo GTO
banco hola ojo rojo
ola ole mole mucho sancto

nico amo nico nico nunca amo

tranquilo ilo ila tequila amarillo
mañana cabana tranquilo
bueno bueno buenas menos

buenas

nico nico vamos nicita vamonos nico
banco cinco tiempo rojo rojo ojo o no

donde esta cuento questa blanco negra

verano otono nada todo cuando cuando

cuando hablas mejor

banco banco donde deniro deniro para

pero perro para padre caro carro casa

nico nico nico amo nico nico me amo te

calle la
calle de verda y la luz
hoy hace calor senor mucho mucho

gusto puedo esto esto

amo mexico mexico y nico nico amo
amo mexico nunca nunca vamos

donde donde mexico y amo nico

me

But I've come up against another language barrier. Ordering coffee is as easy as learning *quiero cafe*, but communicating with Nico is more complex. We dance, I keep flowers in the apartment, walk with our arms around each other, kiss at the bar, tickle, meet for lunch, or linger over coffee in the morning. We've been on day trips sight seeing, shopping in the markets, running downhill from the apartment to the *zocalo*, and every action and gesture carries the subtext of love, but actual words are something else. The idea of saying it permeates me. The smell of tobacco excites me like perfume. Strange yes, but she's a unique girl. *Te amo*. *Me gustas tu*. I'm not sure if Mexico is always this bright, or if love paints everything orange and yellow and red, reflects sunlight off cobblestones, amplifies mariachi music and kids yelling in the plazas, turns *bougainvillea* leaves purple, and fills the air with lime. It's a wonderful place to be. Love too. The excitement of both dizzies me, but in both cases I still have a language gap to cross over and I'm not sure which will be harder.

I'll write again in a couple of days. Right now Nico and I are on our way to dinner. Let me give you a tip: if you're ever in Mexico, the mole sauce is a bad idea. Sure, unsweetened cocoa poured over everything sounds great, but sometimes you can have too much of a good thing.
Talk to you soon.

Variations : Whitman

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be with you
 As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same room with you,
 little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing with me.
 W.W.

O you to whom I often and silently come cold fish slithering chest flops the subtle
 electric nerves flash fries scales rains silver coins and diamond drops around my
 feet.

O you to whom I often and silently combine constant careless words and
 sacrilege and the sudden elucidating fires fasten fusing confusion for your skill still
 plays within me.

O you to whom I often and silently came slippery and sordid silk whispers after
 cries the delicious crush and sudden electric fires surge and collapsing flush flotsam
 and flowers.

O you who offer and silkenly slum through the sheets rustling petals words coins
 and scales with the supple emphatic fires follows feverish flopping hot chest fish.

O you to whom I often and suddenly crumble slippering around mouth gaping dry
 eyes glazed gasp your softened effusive fire debones and heaves me to the floor
 unflappable.

O I whom lie softened and pliantly dumb one eye at the ceiling your subtle electric
 fireflies flit before it sifts dry images like dust in the light drifting golden coins and
 scales.

O you from whom I often and silently plunge wet flashing tail slipping silver petal
 coins intact and your subtle electric fire that for you sake drifts on silvery diamond
 silk.

Date: Fri, 18 Oct. 2006
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Re:citing sounds
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hola Twigy,

Turned 21 two weeks ago, and I'm living in a coffin. Or The Coffin as Nico has termed it. It's a monastic cube with no windows and two doors: one goes out to an iron spiral staircase in the hall leading to the roof or down to the street, and the other to the sewer gas bathroom. The sewer gas bathroom would choke us in our sleep, except that the only thing that might be called a window is a foot and a half sized hole in the wall eight feet above the shower. It looks out into the space between cinder block walls. Every now and then we toss a match in the toilet to burn off the gas.

The bed occupies the room. It's a giant king sized wrought iron bed frame with a three inch mattress. Nico and I can sleep on either side with more than a meter between us, but we never do. Of course it helps to have that option when your bedmate is a half crazed alcoholic. But I can't criticize. She brings out my latent craziness too. Or maybe that's just Guanajuato. It has a very seductive façade, a charming first impression that lulls you with its pleasant colonial atmosphere and quirky eccentricities. This only makes it harder to leave, which is the root of widespread madness amongst all the travelers here. We're burdened by the inertia of loving this place. After the first month people start to twitch, but by then you're hooked. The problem is that there is nothing to do here except the same thing you do everyday, hang out with the group. I feel like Archie. The town becomes a lot like the coffin which Nico says transcends time and space because of the complete lack of sunlight.

From in there it's easy to picture the hordes of ex-pats running through the mountain mine streets tearing out their hair with too much time on their hands, working their way unavoidably down to the zócalo, getting swallowed in. Even the geography conspires to keep in its sunny pit of hedonism. In order to get out, you have to climb back up, and the streets are steep, even turning into stairs in places. Strangely though, I've never been lost here. The sidewalk paths make no sense, twisting and doubling back, even shifting in width and height undulating like lazy snake trying to buck drunken backpackers into the path of one of Mexico's pimped out city buses (they actually have rows of little pom-poms hanging from their roofs, chrome wheels, and bright paint jobs), except that the sidewalk snake is under the city's spell too so it can't muster more than half hearted attempts at murder. That's GTO.

But if you just go with the craziness you'll be alright. Like a Taoist roller coaster. All of my problems have solved themselves without much doing on my part. I can't explain this luck but it works. We were out at the Iguana for my birthday, drinking and dancing, exorcising or possibly channeling the spirit of GTO and Nico came running

across the floor late in the evening, threw her arms around my neck and told me she loved me. And it was either that or her momentum, but we fell over right in the middle of the dance floor laughing.

But we've decided that we've spent more than enough time in this town. For now. We're taking a trip to a Morelia to see the monarch butterfly sanctuary, which has millions of them fluttering about like giant orange Mexican snowflakes. We're leaving tomorrow. We've been making plans for the future too. Nico has no intention to return to Iceland anytime soon. Instead she intends to make it all the way down to Chile and she wants me to go with her. We're planning on making it to Columbia no later than the spring, and if we have to stop traveling to make some money, we can go back to Prince George, throw a few seedlings in the ground, live it up in a bush camp, and fly back to where we left off. So keep taking notes for me. I'll be back in a year. Maybe two. Maybe I'll move to Iceland. Te amo amiga.

Beautiful Needs - Bus ride to Morelia

Beneath all beauty needs ugly and you are my favorite window

whisper delirious
 beauty and
 a thousand vision
 fiddles breath
 summery symphonic
 ache

suns glow through clenched fingers and

Orange
 wants
 Cold

beneath all beauty needs is ugly and you are my favored rite wonned slow

kiss
 crush space
 want watch

lusty shadow lather
 and luscious crush
 via one lazy lick

a chocolate tongue knife
 cuts to the blood and

Orange
 wants
 Cool

Beneath all beauty ugly needs are and you my flavoured ate widow

and meat must
 love prey too
 delicate
 knifely frantic
 use her ing
 pound flesh

smooth
 languid and felt
 on the long licking
 road to recall

digits dither
 beneath the summer
 gown pressed
 against plushed
 seats

Orange
 wants
 begs
 ice

beneath all bountiful needs are ugly and you are mined save or it will go

wind
 beneath cotton
 quiet roads
 speed easy

sordid and smooth

honey drunk
 running strong
 fresh rushing
 fingers supple
 splints milk

beneath all beauty are ugly needs and you are mine gave her sight without

Orange
 wants
 Avalanche

spring
 sordid immaculate
 hot air and
 raw apparatus
 with felt song

Beneath all beautiful needs are urgent and you are my savored grape withered

bitter
 a still lake stare
 a perfect felt night
 heavy as velvet
 smothers the urge of
 recall

orange
 wants
 white

beneath all needs the beauty you are is my favourite window

Date: Fri, 24 Oct 2006
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Re:stroom
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

The interesting thing about being nomadic is becoming a connoisseur of the public washroom. You notice this on the Trans Canada mostly around Husky's and Horton's but especially in Mexico where so much invested. The shitter in La Mosca Del Bar has a floor to ceiling door and a seat, which isn't always standard. Toilet paper is also provided here, though not everywhere. As a traveler you either carry your own, or learn which places have it. I'm proud to say I've been here long enough to have done just that.

That's one of the benefits of patronizing a place owned by a gringo, but the winning detail is that the wastepaper basket beside the can is consistently emptied. Considering American sized wads of shit tickets don't fit down the Mexican plumbing, this is very important. A place that draws in this many American tourists has to keep an eye on the growing pile of greasy paper accumulating in the exotic water and burrito wake of the freshly arrived tourist. The Spanglish Cafe serves free nachos at every table, but for those who know where to find one, the real draw for any veteran traveler is a solid crapper.

Which is the main trouble with hiking trips. It's even worse if you happen to be riding a horse. Nico and I arrived at the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary yesterday. We stayed for a night in the city of Morelia and hitchhiked the next day into the park, which took us a couple of hours and two rides, both locals. They were really friendly, though I didn't understand much of what they said. The first guy that picked us up was driving a rusty old pick up full of five foot tall propane tanks for people's houses, and we sat in the bed of the truck with them, smoking cigarettes and huddling in the back to keep out the wind, while the truck wove upwards into the hills. He dropped us off in a small town about twenty minutes away from the sanctuary, and we continued hitch hiking despite hourly shuttle buses. Our next ride turned out to be a husband and wife who were tour guides with horses. They took us right into the park, which is miles of beautiful mountains covered in old growth pine trees. We hired the husband and one of the horses and rode for almost an hour along a beaten path over and down two small mountains until we arrived in a clearing

Snapshot II

riding horseback over mountains through shadows of towering pine trees on a f
h l
e tar and feathers cigarettes and propane tanks chicken feathers tearing o
r eyes rolling tar dipping into bricked alleyways in the town *this is how we* o
a *hitched in from Morelia* heads tucked under shirt collars lighting cigar et r
r tech straddling empty gas tanks on the windy back of pickup banging on o
m the cab roof passing through the cloud of white feathers from the truck a f
s head a dozen clucking baskets of its packed cargo flying over the tailgate d
a falling and rolling flying flightless birds bouncing short fluttery hops along e
r the tar strip in our creaky spring propane gripping wake leaving Morelia a
o d
und my hips rolling with each sauntering step of the horse downhill to the butterflies

We rode for more than an hour over and back down small mountains beneath these enormous pines and the only sign of the monarchs were hundreds of thousands, millions, of dead butterflies carpeting the forest floor. We were worried that we had arrived too late in the season. We didn't see a single living butterfly until we descended the far slope of our third mountain and arrived amidst a clutter of tourists staring up into the branches of a couple particular pines.

In a forest that seemed to be dozens of square kilometers, we found the butterflies clustered together on only two or three trees in hundreds of clusters of bending branches under their combined weight like snow, until the sun came out of the clouds and they scattered like thousands of orange leaves in fluttering patterns. It reminds me of all these friends in Guanajuato, wearing down paths in the cobblestones between the same three bars every night, then disappearing to Spanish lessons or jobs or day trips when the sun is up. The amazing thing about monarchs is that every year during their migration they stop at the same tree, which is even more amazing considering that they only live for one year and so each new generation has never been to any of these places. And nobody knows how they do it. Though I can certainly understand why they would come to Mexico when it gets cold. And sitting on a horse with Nico's arms around me, I could understand the pleasure of grouping together in clusters. They make the communal connection so easily. I was charmed by the simplicity of following their instincts to this reunion with all the others, to form these giant fluttering hearts hanging from branches.

Gotta go for now. We're having a party on the roof tonight, which is one of my favourite places in the whole city. It's a giant balcony at the top of our spiral staircase that's covered with clay tiles, wrapped in by a wrought iron railing decorated with metal leaves spray painted gold, and full of reclining patio furniture. When I'm not down at the Iguana, I spend half my day up there, looking out at the view of the city. Te amo amiga.

Falling

Nico
nico

amo nico

nico gustas tu

amo te

amo
amor

amo te amo

Nico

Date: Thu, 23 Nov 2006
From: "angry burro" <woopee121@yahoo.ca>
Subject: Re:covered
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hey Twig,

Pinché sun. Unacceptably bright this morning. But it's always bright down here. Bright sun, bright colours, even the tree leaves are purple. And the light reflects off everything. Latin pop music plays out of store fronts, people talk in the street, kids run circles around vendor stalls; I haven't felt this bad since our final party treeplanting. This is the worst place in the world for a hangover. This is not going to be a coherent email. Our neighbour keeps chickens on his roof, including a rooster, pinché gallo, and I woke up to that cock crowing and the gas man screaming "GAAAAS!" at six a.m. My face was like a bruised fist that had been beating walls all night. The sunlight jabs at my eyeballs and the smells can really turn over an empty beer stomach in a Gene Krupa kinda way. Unsettling is what I mean. The sewer gas from the coffin goes in through the nostrils, turns a drum roll on draft carbonated stomach acid, and the cruel thing is the only fast food here is chiliquilas with hot sauce and mashed beans, spiced Mexican huevos rancheros, with beans, or street vendor tortillas with spicy beans. There's quasidillas too, but it's like having a cracker for breakfast at eight pesos a pop. Served of course with three different hot sauces and beans, lime and cilantro. But eventually hunger trumps the dread of sunlight and culinary challenges, and I went down to the street, scowling at my hat brim, thinking about beating the gas man with a rooster. The ringing in my head had quieted by nine or so but was still vibrating strongly as my feet slapped unsteadily downhill along the cobblestones to the zócalo, holding the pounding in my head down with clenched eyebrows and stumbling through the alleys in my cleanest dirty shirt. I'm living a Kristofferson song here, except the Sunday morning smell is someone frying beans, on this Sunday morning sidewalk wishing lord that the stones didn't trip up my birkenstocks. Sunday morning comin' down to the center of GTO, into the shade of the purple bougainvillea trees, pretending mariachi music is more soothing than trumpets and deep bellied singing really can be.

I was sitting there in the zócalo shade and chatting crowds, listening to mariachi guitars thinking about how my Mexican Kristofferson song might go... a little soft picking... a whiskied voice talking over some plucked chords...

It was summer down in GTO, and I needed a desert wind to dry a drunken soul, my thirsty wanted mescal, and my hungry couldn't stand anymore beans
 I walked up to a bar, actually I guess you'd call it a cantina, ordered me a glass, and with a pocket full of pesos and belly full of dreams, and I got to thinking...

Here's the part of the song where Kris lays his hard earned wisdom on you, but it's just where I came up empty. All I could think about was how the cigarette I was smoking

was lifting the cushioning fog off my brain and letting the hammers in. I guess he'd say something about how the down side of being down and out is being down on money, or maybe out of luck, but at least I'm in Mexico. And my August planting check should be deposited sometime this week. Only two months late, but at least it kept me from spending it, and it should be worth another couple of months south of the border, as long as I don't drink too much. But as Kris says, when you cross the border, lord you're bound to cross the line. So I got off the bench and walked down to the Iguana to get a beer for breakfast in honour of Kris' wisdom. And to see Nico. I might be drinking beers for breakfast, but, usually, I hate to touch a drop before noon. Not unless I haven't gone to bed yet. Thanks goodness for sleeping late. Otherwise I could end up with a drinking problem. That rooster's going to be the death of me.

Nico was working at the bar. I could hear her talking to Travis, absurdly cheerful, and wholly indecent for this hangover. They were talking about a band that played at Barro Negra last night which must have been pretty good. I was there but the sound didn't filter too well through the dollar fifty bottle of mescalita we drank before heading out. Nico probably had more of it than I did, but that girl can hold her liquor. All I can remember is playing a very bad game of pool and dancing close with her in the corner. We could have been dancing next to subcommandanté Marcos for all I know. Mescal or not, when that girl's within two feet of my pants, basic functions break down (though not the baser functions). Coming down here was easily the smartest thing I've ever done. Yes, the water did give me a nasty case of the Mexican two step (one step away from the toilet, one step back...) but love is in the air and air here is hot.

Very sorry I couldn't be with you this fall back at school, but communications? Who are we kidding, film watching 101? I'm sure now that there are many things traveling can teach if you're willing to take a small risk. I was lucky. I had a beautiful woman invite me down here and I couldn't have said no even if I had thought about it. But now that I'm here, I don't see how I can leave. Nico and I are going south to Zipolité, a nude beach on the Pacific coast next week. After that, maybe another month or so of Guanajuato then we've decided to hit the Guatemalan border to make our way down to Panama and Columbia beyond.

Life is Perfect.

Wish you were here

The Many Voices of Dr. Ape's Head One Especially Bright Sunday:

The Murderology

Dr. Ools

Just one mere it's only a quart til too

Dr.III

The patient seems to be suffering adverse effects to the medication note the off white colouring poor motor control this man is a wreck note slight wheeze in the air compartment fire off on unit nicotine backfired engine and apparently leaking top it up some antifreeze for the chest high octane stat before he lies here all day get the power tools we'll have to relieve some pressure from his head

Dr.Edge

down in the bed under streamlined mud it's there a razor in the apple i need a machine forcep it through drugged layers dragged into clamouring air i need a piston and a hook grapple its ribs throw up its diamond core a rusted wreck a looming junkyard lord until rains scrap off the rust and wind sharpens its eyes slough through the drooping hold with electrifying fingers into every fogged corner massaging until the mind dissolves around its sculpted heart

Dr. Aggle

you done me wrong should have let me go twelve blocks ago but you forgot me through every
puddle along the way gritty limp in your hand a kicked dog's tail finally left wrung on the city
teared pavement

Dr.Acula – tribute to Ed Wood

Why sure these teeth are wood! Lost my pearlies in the war But some things just get better with age Why in my day I didn't spread much fear in fact they mocked me openly Had this compulsion to add to the junk in Americas veins show them that bursting red blood flower in the chamber before their shocked minds Sucked? why i think that's a little harsh oh sure the though used to keep me up at night my mouth'd go kinda dry and i'd follow my baser saving instincts and and

drain and unsuspecting whiskey then slowly savour the second to the last living drop and if
 my habits seemed odd well look around fifty years later and see who's gathered a cult of crazed
 followers even in death i can bring vapid space zombies and flaming saucers to terrorize
 the unbelieving Cut Perfect Print

Dr. Owse

which is the best job for me pumping the bellows or digging on second thought I'm not
 feeling that energetic wake me again in fifteen such a nice dream

Dr.Um

um ditty dum ditty um biditty hmm do-d-do- do did did did do did did done diddy doing

Dr.Am

the smallest still is yet well a fraction of infinite within the finite is overwhelming as a wind tunnel in
 a syringe bit of magma in city's sewer veins innocently bubbling steam under street
 lids the smallest ration of soul tips the scales making an Atlas of an innocently scrambling
 mind wobbling on stilts of heart

Drought

ink you may be right time to cut out what you and oops need is a warm desert sun to
 brighten that complexion and when you're dropping crisp as an autumn leaf let go slip into the
 sand dissolve and dry up

Dr. Own

sown into my hammock needles button into sinew tight skin hide thrown the own
 moan bubbles up in a dream a rising weight a string of spheres falling
 breath glimmering from crushed velvet eyelids blink into
 glimmering Sunday.

Snapshots

april twenty seventh two thousand and four Guanajuato Paulo and I almost missed our farewell party
 w b
 a Our last night in Guanajuato the cops were looking for us for Paulo actually but e
 l everyone knew he was with me. We weren't sure why exactly but Paulo admit f
 k ed that it might be about his roommate's bike that he sold earlier. Ivan had ow o
 i ed him rent for and nobody had seen him in two months so it seemed reason r
 n able since we were leaving town the next night. Two Norwegian's Shelley and e
 g her friend stopped us on our way into the Iguana to warn us they were asking g
 a about him. We went back to Terra Nova to talk to Patti whose sister had bou o
 f ght the bike, which Ivan had somehow reclaimed, to return the pesos to Patti i
 t and find out what was going on. Paulo stayed back Patti watched me walk in n
 e g
 r dark with Polo and his bag to hide in our old apartment so Ivan wouldn't steal it why we were away

F
all
n

following the change of
reasons summer into autumn
summerge into other
dissolves
breaks apart

spinning red

sky
leaf
ground

Rothko Trip/tych: Zipolit 

Violet	Green	Red
Bruises	Blushed	Beneath
Rushing	Seas	Concealing
Burning	Surface	Lights
Acid	Eyes	Glisten
Beneath	Sacred	Ice
Hardened	Sex	Slips
Tissues	Soaked	Melting
Red	Violet	Green
Surging	Light	Into Quiet
Conscious	Quickens	Seething
Heaves	Lucid	Waves
Against	Love's	Resisted
Stone	Blood	Heats
Thighs	Grips	Pull
Planting	Spirit's	Deepened
Green	Red	Violet

Zipolit  Nude Beach

pair of nipples a

pair of eyes

burning

sand as

appalling

to feet

as a hairy

speedo to

a darting eye

worn jungle

path from

beach

teenaged guide to

the family's table,

covered

in tight

wrapped pellets

opium

or mescal

or peyote

or rat droppings

ordinary every

day

nakedness

Nico me

hammock
 in a lazy
 swing
 dawn to
 (equilibrium
 noon to
 night)
 to beach
 bar to
 sand
 a soft roll in the fabric of night
 caught
 in the still
 wash of
 sand
 balance of momentum
 swung to one
 side a pause
 one direction
 suspended
 (earth ocean sky)
 collapse
 to the ground
 entwined
 a hand stops
 pendulum
 stills time
 grips hair
 hard hip
 mouth
 night sand

Date: Fri, Dec 1st 2006
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: si:esta
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Twigs,
How's kicks?

We arrived in Zipolité yesterday morning after riding the bus through the night. It dropped us off in Puerto Escondido and we caught a ride with a small truck that dropped us off right on the main street. From there it seemed like an ordinary place, a couple of bars, surf shops, internet cafes, all the usual things we've run into. But the beach, which is the real Zipolité looks like the land where time stopped. Or maybe it's just supposed to because there are a lot of people here for a place that's reputedly too far of the beaten path for the typical tourist. The idea is that this pristine nude beach was a secret for people in the know, ten years ago, but apparently the secret is out. Still, it's no more popular or crowded than most places. Along the beach you can rent two wooden posts under a palm thatch roof to hang your hammock from for twenty pesos a night. It's the string of these palm hut hammock parks instead of the usual buildings that make the beach seem stopped in time, the bathrooms are certainly pre twentieth century, and the jungle comes right down the mountains to the beach, hiding the main street and the actual concrete buildings. From the ocean all you can see is palm huts and palm trees. And naked women. Men too, for that matter but I haven't had the time to notice since Nico hasn't been wearing her bikini top since the moment we strung up our hammock. When we realized we would need one, we bought a giant two person hammock from a local on the beach. Actually you can buy anything you need without leaving the shade of your cabaña or the embrace of your hammock. All day long enterprising locals walk up and down the beach selling anything from fresh cut coconut, water and empanadas, to tie dye pants, sombreros and hammocks, not to mention of course cocaine, pot or what have you. The hosts of each cabaña also sell beer and food. You could conceivably stay all day in your hammock looking out at the ocean and naked people swimming. Which is great. Except that nothing else happens.

re:sounding the Nude Beach

lying on my chest I can hear
 her squirming legs next to me
 through the sand coming in sifting crunches
 through the beach interpreting her signals
 I send my signals back grinding
 hips digging toes travel
 through sifting grains (the open echoing corridor
 her ear, her ass, (a scream in a pillow
 (argument behind a door
 (muffled intake of breath, her chest rising

squirm, stretch
 connotations carried through loose grains of the hour
 ghosts of words in the sand
 drifting shades laughing with ticking waves
 feet burrowing under sifted layers
 waves of heat lifting to the sky
 through two on a beach.

We're sharing this cabaña with a girl from Victoria (also naked) and her Mexican boyfriend, and two cabañas down are three guys from Iceland. Turns out that Nico speaks Icelandic or whatever their language is called. Of course I knew that, I just never heard her speak it before. We met them last night after Nico and I took a walk down the beach at sunset to try and find a place with some privacy - the wooden posts come at a good price, but I do miss walls sometimes when Nico starts teasing me. We finally came upon an empty cove sheltered by some rocks where we took a swim in water reflecting purples and deep reds from the sunset. The separation of the colours, the ocean the purple the red, was like bathing in a giant Rothko. We were lying naked in the sand, let us say, not expecting anyone, when the three Icelandic guys came down from the jungle on the hills into our cove carrying armloads of firewood. They were slightly embarrassed to have disturbed us, and I was waiting for them to leave so I could stop lying on my prick, but Nico recognized their accent and suddenly they're all having a merry conversation in a strange, though melodic language, all S's and U's and O's, and the guys started building a fire. One of them had a bottle of mescal, and another had a bag of mota, so turns out we were speaking the language after all.

The disappointing thing about this place is that it's so paradisiacal as to be incredibly boring. This place is revenge from the work gods for every time I've ever wished I had nothing to do. Aside from looking great, there's really nothing to this place, except for a palm thatched beach bar. And drinking in the sun isn't an all day activity. I'm bored silly and I haven't seen Nico around all afternoon. I tried going for a swim, but

there is mean riptide. Nobody wades out past their chest because you can't keep your feet much less swim against the current. Which makes it easier to take in the nude swimmers. This place probably became a nude beach because the tide kept sucking everyone's suits off. So you stand in the water and let the four and five foot waves pummel you for a bit, but other than that, there's nothing else but hammock and sunshine and beer.

Hasta luego Amiga, I'm going to see if I can find out where Nico went.

Icelandic Translation: Zipolit 

you sigh on you sight along
 you sigh tone you
 sigh on a yawn you
 cite on siren sung sigh
 a yawn sigh so low you
 sight a tone zion you song you
 cite on you cyclone you sigh
 wrung you sight with tongue sigh st
 ung you sang wrung
 sigh a stone you

sat a lone the fire
 you sew song you
 sew a laugh cause I
 found last so slow last you
 sight slow cite so sat
 along the fire you

soul lounged yew
 sly behind the fire
 soul hide you shine behind
 the fire who so sole

to sigh a sight
 to cite a long
 too soft in sound you
 found a stone too
 sad in you so
 soft in sound you
 said intoned you
 say you sang in

stead of sound
 too sung in sound said
 all you say
 hang in tone you so
 soft to so
 wrong instead
 you sound it too you
 say who tune it through
 so you say so soft in s
 and your solstice and
 you cite it and
 your
 sighslandfew

sew it thru from
dew of you your s
oft of dew
dew fired of
you soul on your find
one on so long you
leave it here so low in
you with this you sigh
with you so long
had to you song so far slung
you sight on so lung you
cry sung you sight long

insight of all your
sighs still crawl shiver long
you shiv here lung you
shiver here with sun

life
line

life (you) line

m
e

lift (me) lie
you're

list (ing) lines

badly star

bored in the waves in the waves waves)
me (me

a line

la linea

Winter

her here her ear hear her her here her her her hither her her hear there her hither hear her here
 heart hither her here heart hither her her her heart her her her he here hear her here her her here
 her hear her heart hear her her heart hear heart hear beat her beat heart beat her beating here
 her heart beat heart beat hear beat her beat her heart(her)beat heart(her)beat heart(her)beat
 heart(her)beat heart(her)breath her here her heart be at her heart()be at here()be a there(
)beatheart()beat hear()heartbeat()hearheart()here()heart ear beat heart(breathe)her here
 heart(breath)her hear heart(breathe)hear her heart(beat)heart here()beat here()be at the re(

(i)

sheandmeandshhandmeandsheandandandmeandandheandsheandsheandheandmeandmeand

a cavity

name

she says 'we' not who
 'had a great time at the beach
 on a boat tour'
 not who not gendered not female
 as she might otherwise
 specify

 between our faces doesn't have a

 (except in this case it does)unsaid(
 not who
 not not you
 knot hewn not
 known
 who

Por Que Nada / Por Que Nada Sestina

so a last night in Zipolité and you're off in a club and I'm down at the beach bar thinking why the fuck is this place so popular who're these hippies who are you with and where did it go wrong remembering first night here tussling in sand far enough from cabana bar lights I rolled in the buoyant thought the whole world might be empty that this was somehow a paradise of the type we had imagined before coming here an empty world of just you and me and sun and sand in clothes and sound of waves pushing away the world as we

pushed away clothes pushed away the beach and sand and mescal and bus trips we pushed off mota spells and pavement sore sandals pushed GTO and Mexico and you dug a hammock in the sand with your body as we wrapped the land around us a shifting blanket a side sliding pause in this cracked open hourglass that widened with every entwined roll like energy spinning off a decaying atom or darkness glowing from a turbine pushing la luz de las cabañas and bars away from you and I

in our deepening sand hammock cradle seeping warm water around our backs as our bodies go deeper through the disintegrating surface of the sun dried sand to sea nourished silt we sift into softer grains water washing us with the night washing the too harsh light that you and I drank beneath all afternoon drinking sun heat with mint soaked mojitos after I pulled myself out of the rum laden undertow of the Zipolité riptide surf opting for a beach towel and a body to drown drunk in to spin wrapped in without a sense of why

or of up or down or a need to fight the pull of your ocean inhaling me below a still surface until I instead floated up to the top of the night's sea beyond sight of shore or reason why and the lights of the bars y las luz de las cabañas are lost behind the swells of waves that go in every direction forward and away from you from Mexico and home and deserts jungles and you and the idea that was living here is simply an aimless ripple in the ocean without we is sand slipping into sea leaves only night's water around slow treading feet the ocean floor an a-

rid unpopulated beach cabañas are shacks impoverished hawkers just tolerate patronage a pill to swallow with impoverished pride sweetened with inflated machismo cordial hustlers an eye on trinkets we've bought local tie dye pants palm cocaine packets ask if we would like to go fishing/diving/flying shivs in smiles cactus needle stares quiero mas blow gringo without us sinister vice is less reckless mas pointless expensive and disorientating y disintegrating instead of fun instead of us only one in a hammock is unbalanced instead of you

with me there is empty beach inside this sea air only salt instead of crisp dew and you you're a Mexico without charm peeling red paint on stone walls that seemed so cheerful you're a armed guard outside a bank the untanned underbelly tinged with the taste of mescal so why not head north away from indolent paradises and indigent ex pats fireseasoned chiliquilas we coughed on in cafes and lime sweetened cerveza shared with kiwis in mountains or Norwegians I brought back to our sewer stank apartment that night you told me your itchy feet needed to go

find the beach I had shown you in the guide book find a fresh place away from Guanajuato a place where the urge to go and go could stop at the land's edge against the ocean and we would be rid of even simple problems of how much why and when where there's only me and you

Skins

*branches without wind sway in
 a specter skin
 that doesn't cool your still sweat in the humidity of our tension
 our encapsulated
 rushing through this desert
 puncturing the wind's skin like a blunt needle*

lying across the rear seat rough plush like a shorn lamb rise
 in the graceful jostle
 slow bouncing shocks watching storms and windows
 through pocket binoculars toes
 pressed against the window pane
our translucent skin
 pine trees flickering behind those feet are
 a rhythmic blur
trading cards in the spokes
 twin lens / skins stopper thoughts
 keep them enclosed
 within this bus' space this rushing

in Oaxaca at Sunset

twin sunsets bob and bounce with the road cupped in a lens
 the shaky home video flickering with the sound of rolling tape
trading cards in bike spokes

pine trees in the wind
 a graceless jostle of uncoordinated

limbs

Her hair traces patterns of wind through the open window sliding in the laceration
 bleeding into the vacuum,
 runs it's fingers through fingers
 of her hair fluent cracks
 flowing before
 the lens/ wisps / the frame,
 wisps in the content mist in from the windows
 dabs the glass

sharpens
 fluttering cracks
 lightening on the desert

fissures of wind
 skin
 we're chasing

parallel storms
 articulating
 their separate

tensions
 their currents

the gray sun is a heart in the clouds' closed fist

flexing like the smoke from Guanajuato's truck fire
foaming into porcelain air we walked up the tight highway slope

shoeless and shirtless from the dangerous curve
 the fire behind
 and below with the other tourist gawkers
sitting by a roadside rock stream numb ankles seeped in the tension of the puddle's skin
articulated by light

like her breath in my ear,

 lightning on the desert
 chasing our storms

her hair lashes across the

binoculars' skin, of tunneled focus
of this added barrier
her

air flashes the winds fingers fork

touch ground
 earth and sky blended

tension of taut distance between two who have known have divided before the
 silence snapped
 (electricity

 hair / her
 strikes air)

quiet
 she sits tense as a lip in the seat ahead
 straight and taut as the line where the sky touches distance

her

 rains hit
 over the skin soothes bugs caught in the
 single mindedness of this capsule's quietness.
 cascades on the window collapse this space
 my bare foot pressed against the pane affirms its support,
 her laceration widens

rain bleeds into
 our quiet cavity.

the left side of her hair plastered
seems
placated appeased or
the right side whips defeated lies in the running rivulets of her cheek

tipped with diamonds

Date: Fri. Dec 15th 2006
From: "angry burro" <woopee121@yahoo.ca>
Subject: Re:details
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

You know Twig,

It's the details that can be hard.
 Her razor on the bath
 Those curtains we hung
 Her half empty diet pop can on the end table
 coffee she made this morning,
 condensing in the carafe,
 beading down glass walls.
 She bought that Tylenol I used this morning,
 and that bottle of amaretto,
 and the almost empty wine bottle. Her towel was still wet from
 her shower this morning.
 Up close it smelled like tropical body wash.
 The shirt I'm wearing was washed with her fabric
 softener. Same scent I buried my face into last night, this morning, one last time before
 she left for work.
 I had to resist the temptation to inhale.

Never take long bus rides with your ex. If you go on trips with them and they
 dump you, take separate rides . You know what you're going to talk about on this ride?
 You're going to run in contracting circles of banal contradictions. First:
 you'll say it was a good idea, for the best,
 that you understand and were even thinking
 along those same lines yourself. But she'll stay quiet.
 Maybe hurt,
 maybe angry,
 maybe apathetic, so you backpedal.
 You'll realize you sounded callous and unconvincing.

She's thinking you're handling it too well,
that you never cared.

Raise the stakes.
Show emotion, swear even. Don't cry though,
that 's just sad.

There will be silence.

It'll stretch out with the road
taut, tauter, and you'll be thinking about what you just
said,
fuck, that was pretty stupid,
back track, take it back.

You start considering damage control
throw out random amendments to each previous
phrase

even the contradictory ones adjusting them in opposite directions until

they meet somewhere in a safe middle.
You'll realize no, no that's not what I meant at all. Not the middle, that's so stupid,
it doesn't mean anything.

Start again. "But really, I understand completely."

It was painful Twig. After a while I just shut up and we sat there for most of a ten hour
bus trip not talking. I just stared past her out of the window with a set of binoculars and
That silence goes like this:

You're biting the inside of your cheek to keep your dumb mouth shut.
And the dotted lines keep zipping past, pulsating, like a clock,
a stretching ticking clock...Just don't talk about the weather. Don't think
of tucking into tight ball as you leap out the moving window, blown out of the
moment
like a tumbleweed, swept along with those pulsing yellow lines.

Whatever you do:

Resist pointing out that spectacular sunset. It's hurts your eyes,
though it's deepening. You've never seen a red like that before.

The road is curving and the now the panorama is directly before you and you're riding off
into it.

Don't wax poetic.

That sun is not like your love.

It is not blazing bravely before the
tug

of the land, drawing it down irresistibly to be smothered in the dirt.

It does aggravate your blood shot eyes though.

Your eyes are a little like that fire streaked cloud, glaring and pinched, starring
at incessant dotted lines, zipping zipping...

Remember it was your inane conversation that drove her to do it in the first place.

Keep your damn mouth shut

and don't throw yourself out the window.

You've got two hours left,

your ass starts to hurt

and you can't smoke on a bus.

You might envy squished armadillos.

Jackson Pollock once said that knowing when a painting is done is like knowing
when you've finished making love. Well, knowing that you've just been dumped is like
knowing you've come too soon. Four months is really pathetic. Was it too soon to say
those things? Exercise a little control. Keep your damn mouth shut.

Zipolit  started out great. For the first couple of days. We were both drunk the
whole time, but we weren't having any fun. At least I wasn't.

Sometimes she didn't even come back to our cabana at night.

When I finally caught up to her one night, drunk, to say what the fuck, we got in a fight.
And it wasn't just about Zipolit .

Everything came up. We left the beach the next day. I slept out on the sand that night.

I didn't even want to know if she didn't come back to sleep in the caba a.

We got back to GTO last night and she left for work this morning. I started
packing. The article in my porn mag brags "How to Get Your Girl to Dress like a Slut",
and I almost felt like crying. Apparently porn no longer caters to the lonely demographic.
That really made me feel low. Apparently every other single pervert went out and got a
girlfriend, and then there's me.

Instead of packing I lay there for an hour after she left, just staring at her hair on

the pillow. So I started cleaning. The only thing to do is to keep busy. This will distract you.

So threw out her dried flower, and emptied the tampon wrappers from the bathroom wastebasket. The landlord painted that room an aggravating cheery green, so I decided to finish there later.

Moving on to the kitchen. Her hair elastic was under the table. The vase we bought at the market was dusty. I started sweeping the tiles and I had that stupid Puddle of Mud song "She Hates Me" stuck in my head. I hate pop punk. Now I'm humming it. The only other song I can think of is "Leaving on a Jet plane. Threw two wine glasses in the trash, slipped her pink hair elastic over my wrist, tucked the bus receipts on the table into my back pocket, chugged the wine dregs in the bottle..."she fucking hates me...la la la la..."

We got home last night and it was too late for me to find a hostel. "You can stay here, if you want. If you don't mind." If it's not awkward. "Let's have a drink." In retrospect the drinks handed her the victory. Two hours later: "this is about penis size isn't it?" I was only joking.

"No c'mon, seriously, who were your top three lays. Not counting me. Don't include me..."

"This, this situation, wouldn't be so bad if I just knew some easy sluts. I could use a little comfort sex for the next few days...We should go out and get laid. You could find a guy to fuck you right..."

And all these belligerent sex jokes while we were cuddled on the couch, cradling her, sitting behind her leaning into me with my arms around her and her head against mine, not crying, just kissing her neck, massaging her neck, sipping wine through a thick throat, holding back every "I love you" in the back of my mind. "I don't know what I'll do tomorrow." Pack up. "Probably go out for a walk." My fingertips down her arm, wiping my cheek in the scent of her hair on my shoulder. "I need new shoes, too."

A Corner Thru the Window

Moving Out

past emotion ingrained pressure sediments of a rock face layered into
bone sifts through marrow and settled takes a breath notices

the shadow splayed branches over yellow and red brick walls and the
wind that machine guns leaves through a jelly orange neon viewed

dappled through street light and a rain sprayed window of a second floor
street front apart meant The steady thunk on the neighbour's wall and

hissing tires from crossing traffic mingle with the corner's implied heartbeat
Lurching

voices stumbled out onto licked streets and sunlight slick cars It's something
languid Nonthreatening in softness and a too casual whisper in skipping white

time's hissing needle hop wind leaves in rainlight strobed windows a thin grey
that sifts insubstantial through the sound It's the inaudible hum of the

refrigerator's enveloping numb purr engrossing and slightly invasive fixated growl
of cockroaches digging into tile and pin white light off reflective walls

splintered pavement stretches life lines of

the corner's longevity selects streams of opaque rain sluiced through sprinkled
fragments of a windshield scattered and cupped in the corner's upturned palm

offered

to the street lamps rivulets sleep through these veins into the gutter decayed
tea leaves portents before the snow returning with a past weight.

Twig, times like this, everyone needs a good bar in their corner. Public places
reduce the likeliness of dissolving into a puddle. We went to the Iguana after midnight,
sitting at a corner table near the window, amiable and drunk. "I need to get my radar
turned back on. That's the third time that girl has walked by. Usually I would have
pointed out her ass on the first pass. Seriously, I'm slipping.

"I read somewhere that looking at a beautiful woman actually reduces stress."
Funny. "Just as long as you don't talk to them right." Hahaha. "Before you know it,
you're saying something stupid and they're dumping you!" Not funny. "I mean it's
probably my own damn fault. Least that's what Jimmy Buffet said. He's right. Jimmy
Buffet's so damn smart. 'where's my salt! Where's my fucking salt!' What a guy!"
Stupid. "Are you hungry? They have good hummus. I like hummus." Better. "I just
like saying it...hummmm. Mus. I once tried to make my own. I was drunk, and we put
pumpkin seeds in it. It tasted like Pummus." This is painful to remember. How
embarrassing.

Dr.Ivel

yeah ivel that's what I shed the grrr ills pure ivel and slows this whisky if it won't fur
halving to git home a wood hiccup ever lashed penny an never live this kingly stool
she lick a vampire keep breathin up my wife an I wanna lie right in this hurt a dirt of
this floor but a rise every mourning to due her biddin clause the beast in hungry and
won't let me lie, though we're both gone their ain't an end

We got a home from Zipolit  two days early. It's Sunday morning now and I won't be expected back yet by anyone. This is a problem. I don't want to call anyone. That would invite questions and explanations. How was your weekend etcetera? Cleaning and sorting out our belongings aggravates my peace of mind. The dishes in the sink were partly hers. Not doing those now, in fact, I'm not going in the kitchen anymore. There's a mess from coming home from the bar hungry and leaving everything out. Pudding everywhere. The eggs from this morning are caked to the pan and her half glass of orange juice is still out. Bitch never finished anything.

The living room is neutral, but I think this room caused most of it. Maybe if we had a TV she wouldn't have been so bored here. Maybe if I helped with the cleaning or had been here when she rented the place something of it would be ours. I'm becoming familiar with how annoying it is to sit on this couch facing an empty room. Might as well face the wall. Maybe the room would look fresh every time we sat up and turned towards it, away from the horrible dirt stained old orange paint. That's the corner we sat in last night before we went down to the bar. That's where we stretched out in the itchy upholstery, drunk, with our shirts off. That's where sat this morning with my legs curled under me calling Paulo on the cell and cleaning my fingernails. I said something like:

"Yeah, yeah the trip was great. Well, we broke up actually, but you know, that was pretty good I guess... Well, I don't, she ah, she was just in a bad mood. It was great when she showed up at the apartment last week, we were both pretty excited, it just seemed to get progressively worse, degenerated I suppose... I wasn't even really aware of it at first, but it was pretty obvious by the time we went away... She said she just got annoyed. So I said, well, you know if me being me is annoying you, I don't see how that leaves much room for compromise...Exactly. She said she didn't even want to look at me. And that was Thursday." Walking around the carpet in circles with my head down. "It was really tense lying there in the same hammock so Friday night I ask, 'what's going on? are you in a better mood?' No. Obviously not. That's when she told me she couldn't stand it when I opened my mouth... Which yeah, is a pretty sure sign... But Saturday was different. As soon as we had made the break-up clear, she seemed to relax... Personally I was relieved. You can see these things coming. So last night we were somewhat refreshed. We talked, she laughed, she even sat beside me on the couch, we cuddled, a weight was gone. We're still friends of course, and we carried on like friends... I stayed over here...

No...

No." I kept snapping her pink elastic on my wrist, watching the weave as it slowly stretched, and snapped, the small metal bit biting into my wrist. "Well what do you think happened... We were pretty drunk. You should see the kitchen this morning, pudding everywhere... Well, had a nightcap after the bar, then you know, fucked. I gotta say though, as far as break-ups go, at least the 'see ya later' sex was pretty good... It was a crappy emotional goodbye this morning. One of those scenes. It took a long time for her to leave for work." Poured a drink of water in the kitchen, into a glass we bought at the market with that vase. "She said she couldn't stand me, before, but she was crying too, quietly, we weren't falling apart or anything sloppy, it was... Sorry, coughed

on my water. I don't know, probably sometime. We're not making any plans though. She's got all these little things around here. They're making me crazy." I was watching the dewy rivulets slide down the side of this glass, squeezing the drops in my hand. "I'm just trying to find something to think about, I don't know what." Squeeze. "Well, I've got pack up all my things, but I'll see you at the Iguana later." Had to clean the glass shards out of the kitchen corner with my bare hands, but I let the splashed water drip down the wall.

dis membered time

a bed,
 an apartment
 double exposed pause
 time) fogs of y(ou/r) after
 lapping over (waves
 taste specter-laugh and
 sour whispers
 curled in corners
 beneath the couch
 under the bed
 flutter tightly across this constrained room with
 slight cough of absence
 cool against a hot cheek
 A skipping needle circumventing this space
 the still weight the moments turns around
 lead arm reading the white noise in this rooms skipping grooves
 tingles beneath your
 pillow
 is
 neither
 yours nor mine nor
 ours but
 lies between
 breath and silence
 where the comfort of sleep
 my ear with
 stoppered air
 held breath
 each thought
 used to
 hushing one
 less
 rustle
 exhalation
 night long
 clutched

But you know Twig, the good thing about break-ups is that it's open season on cigarettes. Who wants to think about quitting at a time like this? Why should you? This is a time for comfort vices. Sitting out on the balcony, ashing into her diet coke can, watching tourists. It's good for killing five minutes, getting outside, smoking past the fine printing above the filter, taking lighter puffs as it gets too hot. Thinking "this cigarette is not like love."

I wanted coffee, but the pot she made was more than five hours old and I hate cleaning the pot before making a new one. I should at least have turned it off. The carafe was still beading inside.

So I stood there in the kitchen, tap tap tapping the long bread knife against my palm, watching my reflection along the blade while lightly pressing the point against my fingertip, having a sort of E.T. moment. Laser technology. Never needs sharpening. Interesting serrated design. I wanted to call her at the bar. I shouldn't actually, but I was thinking about it.

I lay smoking in the bed for a while with my head towards the foot of the bed, listening to traffic outside. There was a condom in the garbage next to my head. I kept tracing the outline of the head-board with my toes and looking at the curtains she put up. The pillow smelt like tropical shampoo. So I was lying with my head towards the foot of the bed and from that side I could stretch out and let my neck dangle over the edge and look at the wall. The orange paint is dirty in here too.

The phone rang. I shut the bedroom door, slammed down the windows and "Hi, it's me."

Her voice hadn't changed.

"No, I'm glad you called. I wanted to as well...It's been really boring today." Kept looking at her pink elastic on my wrist. ""Yeah, it was pretty fun last night...

I'm still annoying though...

Probably too soon to say, I think...

...let's not...let's give it a few days. See if it's easier. I'm not sure it's a good idea.

You'll get tired of me again." Snapped it against my wrist, watching the weave stretch. "

We'll just do what we always do, see how it goes, "

Stood up, leaning my forehead against the wall. "Too soon to make any changes...

Give it a few days like this. You might feel different.

I'll call you. Or you can call." Ground my head around in slow circles against the old paint.

"What did you do today?"

Hit the "Talk" button again. Lying down with my head hanging over the foot of the bed, looking at the wall upside down. The orange was dirty in there too.

In the end, I just threw whatever was at hand into my backpack and walked over to Paulo's place. She can sort out the details herself; I just had to get out of there. I think I'll be staying in Guanajuato for a while. There are still plenty of people around here that I want to spend time with, and I'm not ready to come home yet.

I'll write again soon.

Re:dismember

time folds
 reads over our shoulder the now
 warm current of quiet disappointment
 blood of an atrophied dream/hope/body
 tastes the salt air of this humid
 moment aftertaste of hope/bodies dreamt
 a scent whispers in corners fluttering in
 stilled cabana / body tight cough of nothing
 on something absent the then warm
 cheek where your hand rested now the
 cold blood settles below the body / dreams
 past warmth still sensitive to hopes/ breeze

this arm between us beneath the weight
 of bodies / hopes tangled has a pulse
 /dream blocked throb stops / purrs
 numbed is neither mine but h/ours opts
 discarded between us a held breath a space
 heart where familiar breath /dreams / bodies used to rustle
 your ear with each ticking exhalation / word now lies
 numb beneath our held weight /body/ breath

dream this hammock is a pendulum / promise
 paused /bodies/ on the extreme of its arc /
 hope/ expectation stalled
 jars a body/ to stand up climb out
 walk down the beach

idle tongue spoons back the throat spits a
 steeped growl / breath in a voiceless room / here
 impact of absence / body is a crashing
 of waves paced breathing of (space) /hope
 bodies /dreams

Date: Fri, 24 Dec 2006
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Re:searching
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Twig,

I can't wake up without the thought of her waiting there.
 Reasons like that are why I'm glad I can't remember my dreams
 Would they be violent or loving?

I can be heart broken anywhere
 I've decided to focus on experiences quintessentially Mexican. In this case mescaline.

My roommate Paulo is the only person I see on a regular basis. It seems she won custody of the group.

They go out to the same bars,

I stay in here.

except for short excursions for water, or beer, or food twice a day,
 I'm here all day, all night. Out on the roof looking at the city,
 in this room

writing

Dr.Ink

*a perfect poem ought to read like a blank page but we bring our problems to purity
 now edges blur and this belly drags but we can't stop adding piling paragraphs shot
 by shot words the wishing shadow of a hawk paperlocked flight this pen's
 leaking under the cap a seeming abundance before the end when the well runs dry
 as the reflection of a word apply a gentle violence press the pen mouth to the page
 drink til we spill*

mostly sleeping

Paulo though, he's still on my side. He scored some mescaline and we took a day trip, one of the few times I've been out walking around the town, we climbed to the top of a hill just beyond the town where there was a cross mounted for no particular reason other than it was visible. And no particular reason why we went either except that if you put a symbol on top of a mountain people on drugs will climb to it. When we got there, we just sat down in the dust, played cards, scribbled notes and haikus on them while we played,

tossing them one at a time over the side halfway through the game, floating notes down to the town below. Most likely they'll end getting eaten by someone's burro or a goat.

Paulo smoked and reclined below the cross, while I took off on my own. By took off, I mean of course crawled after a particularly speedy ant carrying a piece of wood almost as big as he was, and watched him haul it up his little Golgotha of an anthill and from there I noticed a monarch perched on a cactus which reminded me of Morelia, so I chased it for a bit leaping around with my arms out yelling something about retracing steps. It seems these monarchs in particular have mastered every problem I have: getting back to the same tree every year, and hanging from branches in clusters of melon sized butterfly communes.

I took a walk a started following my thoughts, wondering if

you're really happy alone or if you just think you are, or if you're actually
 alone it's a relief but relief isn't a positive feeling only the absence of a recent negative
 eventual finds you on this plain above the desert crouching over every grain
 every dried brittle bush snaps under your gaze and you are concentrated and
 dispersed you are a relationship alone like a
 a desert wind that brings breathes fire i saw a swan on this wind
 thought this is how the butterflies find their trees
 if I had it i crawled over a carpet of brown ants with everything my stripped
 throat could scrape screamed at it and chased it as it flew chasing its shadow in
 the sand and started stalking it saw it land in a mirage and thought now now it will
 sing soon it sat and eyed me smiled but no song grabbed it's neck
 squeezed for any sound that could be wrung you'll sing now won't
 you bitch it did as sweet a song as I had imagined as I lay my head in its
 down.

I never want to be so intimate with time again how did the whole day go down so
 easily eagerly but with oneiric slowness washed out with a little too much mescal
 and mescaline

blurring in a muddy puddle
 my teeth went completely numb a hard emptiness in my mouth I couldn't
 shut

may have been drooling mixed with sand and dust a barren
 river bed with its source in my ashtray mouth
 grainy clay jambed into the base of my skull

and stumbled back into town.

Paulo had several grams left, and I took them all over the next couple of days

Re:sting and searching: re

came home the next day and entering found me
cheek pressed to the baked tiles groin
lifted from the hard surface a little by his bent
leg sprawled to the side Does that hurt your knees?
Estoy experimenting with solids solidarity
solidity solidness constance. All I can think
about is the empty room below this
floor, Las cucarachas (feminine) scuttling in the darkness
between the walls all around us I
wanted to turn off the lights to feel them too but
how can you be in two
places as one
to control the light /dark
lying on the floor
scuttling through the darkness after
the light went out i could picture them scattering
and when I stopped they stopped
when i lie down they hide in their holes
creeping out too slowly to be heard scuttling back
into the walls when I got up to turn on the lights
they're walking under the skin of this room
creeping in and out of the crevices of its heart and
bowels and soul laying eggs in its brain that crawl forth
and multiply
i wanted to invite them back to the source
return them to my chest I've felt the cavity of their
absence scuttled to the winds with little bits of my heart picked
from against my ribs carried away into the walls

<i>they're beating</i>	
<i>they're beating</i>	
<i>their beating</i>	<i>her name</i>
<i>they're beating</i>	
<i>they're b'eating</i>	
<i>their b'reathing</i>	<i>her name</i>
<i>there beating</i>	<i>in the walls</i>
<i>there beating</i>	
<i>there beating</i>	<i>scattered</i>
<i>there beating</i>	
<i>their breathing</i>	<i>her name</i>
<i>t(her)e breathing</i>	<i>here</i>
<i>there breathing</i>	<i>here</i>
<i>their beating</i>	

Asimov Sestina: Science explains relationships

The universe is at present expanding
 If we look back at the past, there is no chance of unendingness
 He called it the cosmic egg, thinking of it as unstable
 no matter which direction they looked, if they penetrated far enough
 allowing for the intensification of the gravitational pull,
 the results tend to conflict

He thought that if this is unstable
 the egg might be contracting far enough
 to reach the densest mass of the ultimate pull
 collapsing inwardly and stable in imploding unendingness
 turned about inside out in conflict
 with the inward reach expanding

They thought he had penetrated far enough.
 His inward focus is a gravitational pull
 a battle with outside bodies a conflict
 with his cosmic egg's crack expanding
 in quiet belligerent unendingness
 His personality proved unstable

If we listen to this inward unendingness
 there seems a sort of echo expanding
 a siren song calling far enough
 to bring this distasteful inquiry into conflict
 with his wary defenses, growing unstable
 as the cosmic crack in his ultimate density unravels against the pull

But the outward reaches of his stare ends in a pull
 in an inevitable inward curve succumbs to conflict
 and falls short of expanding
 its trajectory towards his desire is unstable
 falters he can never break far enough
 away from spinning core its momentum and unendingness

this irresolvable conflict
 tightens to the head of a pin not longer unstable
 dense enough if dropped to fall straight to his center unendingness
 squeezed to the point of this pin and its pull
 negates the possibility of further expanding
 the cracks of the egg far enough

there are rooms for sale on the expanding rim of unendingness
 but the energy of maintaining space becomes unstable if pushed far enough
 the pull of the embryo and the cracks of the event horizon articulate conflict

Re:trace : Love Comes Re:Verses and the Wor(l)ds Slowly Apart

the warm skin on your sun

the night's face on your breeze
the saltiest legs wrapped round your seas

and the beating earth living on this heart

these elements
walk thru we
(athering in storm
the doors

long cold inside days
snuggled in winter

comes apart in this artificial {paradise
{melt

let the me swallow the earth up
or the sky fall into us

let the us rain down among stars
there's no you too low, nor us too high
nor love too deep to keep me from oceans

I'll move us for mountains
and swim the widest you

for the sea

Date: Fri. Jan 3 2007
From: "angry burro" <woopee121@yahoo.ca>
Subject: Re:aching
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Dear Twig

The changes that occur in a person after breaking up aren't as sudden as I thought. Everyone has been through minor breakups, some don't cause a ripple, others provoke an immediate reaction, and it's this sudden shift that makes you think this one really got to you. This is a bad break up and I'm angry now. But when you see the big one coming, when it comes, the effect is different. The sensation is empty. The urge to recover speedily, maturely, even gracefully, since pride is all you have left, lets you down softly, so soft in fact, that you think you've stopped sinking, or that things are going fairly well, a lot better in fact than you had anticipated. A week passes. Two. Three and you haven't dropped any more, you're not worse off than you were a month ago. But it's been so long since you've improved, since you've felt optimistic that you might be avoiding the depression you knew, or thought must surely follow the big one. And by then the genius of it has sank in. You don't get off so easily as a quick plunge with the immediate task of picking yourself up. You well up like a drop about to fall, an accumulating weight that pries your fingertips loose, eventually.

Dr. Oops.

*It wasn't a sudden mistake just time maybe first a glaring crease between the eyes a
 slid brow curve around the chin maybe same time slid loose above the belt I can't
 remember the whole white decision when neglect slept through surrender
 something to do with afraid to wake in that bed again to bribe the
 body with booze could always afford to slide until too heavy to climb falling
 inside a drop accumulating*

But it takes weeks, months, just to become aware of it. And that's when the energy you needed to pull yourself up again is barely enough to keep from slipping further; a drop of water delicate with surface tension, just hanging.

In Danger of Balconies

the recurring image is a catapult
 cliff ledge ocean gasoline
 lit with a match not a lighter
 or maybe a zippo and the rope
 is cut with a cavalry sabre
 Black Francis reaches 'you'll
 think I'm dead' and you'll
 sail away sabre brandished
 flapping waves of flames
 sparks of pixies winging
 skin and through eyes where
 up is down and laughed into
 the throat bright lungs
 sparking arch inhaled
 into the grateful extinguished
 with the crustaceans

In the cafe sipping menzania
 tea steaming in small tin
 pots filterless smoke
 swirls waves fanned with a
 gesture
 Anita explains that's why
 the suicide machine is built
 for two no not to be
 argumentative the but who
 cuts the rope it's too
 intimate and maybe I'm
 being greedy but
 this gratification is personal
 it's too fun to cloud with
 issues of responsibility

the suicide machine is
 an instrument of spontaneity
 slight pause and snip
 gone and all reconsiderations
 instantly pointless committed
 beyond questions of wisdom
 or practicality - like getting on
 a bus to Mexico in Toronto -
 at a moment
 like this we only focus on water
 a drop of simplicity perhaps
 unfortunate that the fire is
 necessary but in the end I
 think it's just more

gratifying? your gratification

wouldn't let me cut
 the rope for you the
 person I let into
 my room - your
 catapult - it's not a
 catapult - it could be
 your suicide machine is
 built for one - it's built for
 everything - it's built for
 you - i want to cut
 my own rope but I need
 you to press play

the musical backdrop is key
 otherwise you're just
 an idiot in the sky
 out of context
 it becomes a contortion
 not a dance a splash
 in silence
 is ridiculous

When you fall
 will you look at
 the water or fly
 on you back eyes
 towards the sky

regrets committed confidence
 this confidence commits regrets
 that's why the suicide machine is
 built for two to cut regret

I can't stay in this town anymore. She avoids me, which is fair, I'm pretty miserable to be around these days, but aside from that, one of the Icelandic guys from Zipolit  showed up two days ago, and nobody's bothering to hide the fact that they're seeing each other. Just as bad is the fact that being excluded from her company excludes me from our friends who are out with them each night. I've started walking around the streets at night, visiting each of our regular bars to see if I can find someone I know, because nobody tells me where they're going, or what their plans are. Not that they lie. The subject is simply avoided. Or if I mention it, the answers are vague.

I need to get out of here. I keep driving myself crazy with thoughts of her that pop into my mind every few minutes. I can't stop it. Everything in this town reminds me of her. We've been together in every bar and restaurant and cafe, every store, church, and tourist stop and liquor store, sat on every bench and fountain in every plaza. So I'm going to Palenque tomorrow. There are some ancient ruins and pyramids in the jungle in Chiapas where backpackers camp or live in caba as nearby. I need a cheap place to live that's interesting enough to keep my mind busy, and is far far away from anyone I know and anyone who knows her.

I gotta go do something right now. I'll send you a postcard.

Mexican bus and mountains

mountains pacing the bus keeping even through perspective of distance You're there in the next seat your hands in your lap neither of us using the middle arm rest I'm reading the lines the rises and curves in your face nothing close arid mountains that can be mined for nothing except agave for mescal In the dark mirror of your sunglasses there are the portents of tequila but nothing of comfort solo vapid American movies dubbed fluidly into Spanish hanging like a veil between acts reflects on those two tiny televisions dubbed with surrealism that's familiar polite words seamlessly synchronized with lips and a flat tone I can't translate The hero punches the bad guy grabs the girl and jumps through the window of the burning building but what follows doesn't make sense she slaps him stabs his stunned face with a combination of sharp inflections that can't be right as though the skewed translation had altered the outcome of the whole scene and the subtext is clear even mistrusting the subtitles storms off camera and the whole set is about to collapse thorny cacti zip backstage of our curtain cardboard caricatures stuck twisted in hollow poses in our wake and mountains for all their distance keep pace looming solid but lost too far to reach but the impression of almost being small enough to lift still seems possible in romance even separated by

desertdesertdesertdesertdesertdesert desertdesertdesert desertdesertdesertdesertdesert desert
deserts desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert deserts
desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert desert
des/her des/her des/her des/her des/her des/her/des/her/des/her/des/her/des/her/des/her/des/her
desert desertdesert desertdesertdesert desert desert desertdesert desertdesertdesert desert desr

Cry St.

```

all cry st.all
sh are 'ds of st.are all around cry st.ill
falling on the heads aflame on hearts st.ill
st.and st.ear sh are d's of st.are & st.and
  dev}
    } ill hearts
    st}

```

and hears eyes and lines signs fields sight
and

through the sand

the shrubs

traveling south to the ruins
you're circling this bus from the air
and i can see your shadow gliding

riding the rise of hills weaving amongst

the third i re:guarding new we
third i view of we in them of i
in him he in them i out of her
her outside we and we inside
them

you do not follow this bus
a spinning vulture sweeping sparrow
but your shadow still circles this window
flittering in and out of sight i can feel it catching up behind
leaning into the wind as you come around
and pass over

i circle you and h(i)m i'm him i'm
here and hither spinning in clouds with
out a shadow circling rooms unnoticed
i out of we orbit of you out of we out vi
ew

Sunset Palenque: stop tangle creek in the jungle camped at the fallen bridge kowtowing under
 tumbling stream stream chilled cervezas mountain water water cooler mountain stream face
 splashing wading stretched out beside the bridge below water drop stars stoned in a sleeping bag
 outside my cabaña listening to voices and sounds muffled within the sustained crash of the
 waterfall campfire smoke drifts parallel the cascade reversed scatter scatter on the cold night air
 over spruce tops blankets thinly our rocky clearing minds parallel smoke trails inward eyes
 outward blankets trails into the night seeking your spinning shadow alternately blinking across the
 stars one at time in your passages

re:fracted ot(her you're
 fracting colour and patterns of light
 through t)his pacing window facing the burn of sun
 through t(he curtain sh)ear filter sun through sk(in
 glass cutting light into ribbons this bus passes into
 you're:aching me here
 I'm re:acting it in my head you are there
 h(ear) ur t
 here
 ab sent to the jungle

Date: Mon. Jan 10th 2007
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Re:solve
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

It's more than twenty four hours to get here. I watched the sun rise, set, and rise again through the same bus window. It reminded me of our trip to Morelia, quiet sex in the back row after dark, and then of course our ride back from Zipolité when we barely spoke. Except then I was deliberately ignoring her, and now I'm ignoring thoughts of her. Or trying to. On long trips like this I often watch the roadside, picturing myself running along side of the vehicle, keeping up and leaping over dips or holes or fences, running over hills even buildings without losing speed, except that this time I couldn't imagine why. I thought of her on the bus riding with Iceland guy and in my mind I simply leapt onto the roof and sat there listening before crashing in through a window. Or I pictured her instead running after the bus, but she always just stopped, or she was really far away, pacing this bus from the mountain skyline running up and down the slopes like an Irish folk hero sprinting without tiring. I even tried tripping her, but in my mind she could fly. At night it was worse. All I could see in the window was the look on my face, and the hint of dark shapes fluttering past it in the dark. I spent most of the ride trying to sleep or wishing they would put on a movie

re:flection III

Her turned toward me in relief against flickering scenery

window skin a movie screen nature film stock footage mountain goats tourists sunlight pine and sun and spruce trees flickers like projectors throwing shadows on our faces snaps of her hair lightning the river runs through her smile and her presence solid and distant as the oscillating mountains

so I could spend a couple of hours without dwelling on my thoughts. I spent most of the time wishing I had a bottle of something cheap, though I deliberately left without anything when I boarded. Being chased by your thoughts is bad enough without being drunk too, stuck in a chair, in the dark.

Palenque was a relief. Getting off the bus was a relief on its own, especially since

the third class bus that went up to the ruins from San Cristobal was a lot less comfortable than the one from Guanajuato. For another thing, Palenque was a completely different side of Mexico. A lot of the same sort of people here, full time travelers living out of backpacks in cabañas but I needed to be somewhere verdant for a change and peaceful. Mariachis are replaced with hippies drumming, sewer gas and street vendors are replaced with the humid scent of the earth, waxy leaves and fog, and rats are replaced with tree frogs. There are mosquitoes though. Big ones, potentially carrying malaria. Not your typical treeplanting mosquitoes floating around like dandelion fluff. More like miniature humming birds. There's a waterfall behind the cabaña where people swim which has become my favourite place to sit and write, and be in better company other than my thoughts. I feel good here. I'll write again soon.

(perish) the thought

those pokings the prods of love's annoying ghosts tug on heart strings like coat sleeves with
the thought that floats over mindfields like the shadows of clouds over the jungle returning with her

spectre laughs the circling silhouette of a vulture intervening in the white glare between the
canopy leaves with that one idea that pulls the throat tight as a razor shining like the golden
strand of light in the pane that the sparrow hit

the problem with funerals is the same as life bodies poisoned in preservation withholding
themselves locked in wood sealed in gold painted lead without the long sigh into ground or
welcome

tease of a worm to relax those knots in the shoulders. It's the same with relationships the lock
down the closed boxes the deadpan embalming without serious hope of reincarnation why

shouldn't a person let themselves be thrown whole and naked into the jungle and fallen leaves a
host for regenerative emotions or scavengers but instead we grow a beggar's stomach live

denied as a graveyard lawn with a chest and lives tight enough to be full as a bird cage.

Date: Sun Jan 25th 2007
From: "angry burro" <woopee121@yahoo.ca>
Subject: Re:aching
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

I spent a couple weeks just sitting around in the jungle cabaña spending time with my kiwi neighbours. We spent a few days exploring the city of San Cristobal, but I was mostly interested in getting around to spend some times at the ruins. Did I just say "spend" four times? I've been using the same twenty Spanish words in every sentence since I got here. It's finally affecting the way I think. We made it out to the pyramids the day before yesterday, hiking trails through the jungle and mountains until we made it to the site after noon, and spent (five) the rest of the day there. I separated from them for a few hours and walked around, climbing to the top of one of the smaller ones where I could sit and watch the other travelers and tourists milling about, speaking in hushed tones and snapping pictures. I thought about the lives dead for a hundred centuries, kids who played here, human sacrifices to connect with invisible deities, Spanish invaders, and cosmic calendars, without being sure that any of that took place here except for the children. And love lost, and buried under stone and vine. There were children present while I sat on the pyramid, and couples walking over the same ground as other tourists, archaeologists, conquistadors and ancient priests. This particular geographical axis had witnessed thousands of years of human lives and continues to draw more out of respect for that history. And the thought of this meant nothing to me beyond the disappointment that Nico wasn't here to talk about it. But the perspective of history from that pyramid top lead my thoughts to wondering how many other lives had suffered through heartbreak in this place. Probably all of them. If not suffered here, the memories had been brought through here by the visitors, and residents, but maybe without the majority of them sitting to dwell on it. I'm sure most people who look up at an ancient pyramid don't contemplate personal loss, though it's an apt metaphor. Beyond the obvious connotations of "ruins", I can't imagine the loss of Nico ever disappearing, though perhaps growing over with vines, revisited now and then to wonder at it while it crumbles.

I received an email today from Paulo. Anita's moving to Portland in a couple of weeks and they're taking a trip to Real de Catorce first, a place well known in Mexico for the peyote that grows there and the hippie travelers who are depleting it much to the regret of the locals who have been using it there for countless generations. He seemed to think I might be interested in that sort of thing. He's right, of course, but I have to admit, I'm also a little excited about seeing Nico again. I don't think I could have gone back there without being invited, but I've been imagining my return since the moment I left. And it's almost Febuary. I can't leave Mexico without the peyote experience. I'll see you soon. I should be back home in about a month in time to get ready for planting at the end of April.
 Vaya con Dios.

re:verse

foreward ever fore
armed
fore warned hind-sided in the re:
ear view listening to paths trav
versed t/he ear t/o hear/t to the line to he/re:

versing from the hear to the he/art to the

li(n)es

to
l(i)nes moving
fore:
warned ever fore:
ward

con(verse)ations

conversing the traversed
versing con the travail
(another realm slips a trans
lative train of) thoughts into orders and tracks broken
lines a
sinking train
a speeding ship

the breaks horizon dipping from view w off the line

the hook

de la lengua age (traps) dropping

con la lengua de la bir(th
hea(r
ing

hearth

here to the earth to the hearth to the heart
'what are you doing here?'

h'ere h'ear h'earth h'art h'beat h'ear b'neath b'reath b'rieved

leave ing here

Date: Wed. Feb 14th 2007
From: "angry burro" <woopee121@yahoo.ca>
Subject: Re:turning
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hey Twig,

Been two days back in Guanajuato. Haven't seen her at all. Amy and Kate say she's in San Miguel. Doesn't matter whether she is or not. This place hasn't changed much, except that now I'm sober. It's late in the trip and money is getting scarce. But the GTO record player is still skipping; it's just playing a different song. I never realized how crooked the streets and sidewalks are here. They always matched my tottering wobble before. Now I'm forever tripping over flagstones. Sobriety in GTO is kind of like being drunk but without any of the excuses. Not that the bad behaviour stops. I told everyone about the ruins, they told me about a Paulo's party, and Anita talked about moving to Portland. There were a couple of Canadian girls there from Wolfsville on their way back from Guatemala. I was a little excited on my way back here, but now I can't wait to leave. Paulo's ducked out of the Catorce trip. He's going back to D.F. to visit his brother for a while. But it doesn't matter. Kate offered to let me stay with her now that Amy's gone. And I'm happy to be on my own with Anita. We're catching a ride tomorrow with a couple of Anita's friends into D.F. and taking a bus the rest of the way into the desert. I'll keep you posted.

Re:tching

Imagine
 I'm again in the image
 i'm an age in again
 gaining momentum in the moment
 tarrying at the (stop) sign of a spinning leaf
 golden others lying at the south of its strength i
 'm the only one here on this bench
 between branches and repose

there's a hole here without a bullet
 walking the alleys at night waiting for the action to complete
 the sensation of rupture of you entangled in
 other and me free falling in a there
 there's a boy pacing me yelling gringo pulling my coat
 sleeve he's not a you not him and there's no fear or threat
 facing him and he keeps walking i keep gripping the pocket knife in my coat
 he's not him but when he looks back he'll fit the role well enough fit
 the bullet in this hole but he doesn't
 look back and i stop chasing him let him pull a head and sit

a cantina
 no women allowed

swinging hinged doors like an old western
 no tourists allowed no women ever
 inside
 the doors, a urinal, the bar.
 a dozen tanned eyes
 i ask the bartender for agua loca
 illegal elsewhere unavailable it's mescal and mescaline
 doesn't have it or
 won't sell it
 cerveza instead large bill
 no change seat in
 the corner
 four others / mexicans sit down
 spanish no spanglish
 never english grimace slippery smiles si

I can stand drinks translate dollars to pesos to cerveza to beer
i can stand shots translate dollars to tequilas stand shots and
shots again a blow to the throat to the gut to the head to the hole
shot again a gain of warmth again a gain of company warming
I can't (a warning) follow spanish answer inquiries i can smile
and laugh sometimes the right time sometimes I can't
know the difference I can trace frowns see frowns in smiles
translate my smiles into tequila play macho in the
land of machismo translate dollars and motives not jokes or
camaraderie laugh at insults to me as well as to others
translate tequila into bullets fill holes that bleed freer warmly
scowl translate knees into legs a stance to a fall a table to a floor
translate patience to antagonism and new friends to fiends translation hinged
door to a wall to fall through and a smile and a laugh to fists in my face
a wobble to wall a boot in the gut to bile on a shirt translates a flurry to the eyes
work boots around the head wall to a sidewalk and cool night air into bandages
hail a taxi to translate a cantina to the Iguana
smiling fighters to unsmiling friends who can stand me a drink

Axis

place with name's history
 materiel
 with a history and
 genealogy and a place
 in a glance in a
 history
 a line i am here where
 this place knows how if not why
 if you touched here w/here
 this place / this body named this
 place answered the why
 the how joined history
 geography
 genealogy
 in a slap or caress
 walked
 from this place
 new its name on our
 map on
 the history of sur
 names in love
 the place of a red leaf
 between
 the limbs
 and the ground spinning
 quickly and soft
 its name is: was
 place: us

Date: Sat. Feb 21st2007
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: Re:tching the space coyote
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

Hola Twig,

Sorry if my writing is a little discombobulated. I'm still feeling a little strung out from the desert trip. And it was two days ago. Anita and I hired a guide with horses in to take us over the trails to show us where to find peyote. It's a strange place. The bus we took out of D.F. stopped after several hours at the side of the main highway where everyone got off and our backpacks were hoisted into the dust before the driver turned around and drove off. I was slightly confused. But Anita went along with driver's instructions and didn't seem at all alarmed, so I sat on my pack where it had been dropped and lit a cigarette, watching the other travelers mill around, drink water and sort through bags. Others seemed likewise confused, but Anita just opened her book and sat on the ground so I assumed she knew the deal. Hippies everywhere. Not just Americans in deadhead shirts, but a lot of Mexicans too, and people from many countries in tie dye pants and sandals with drums tied to their bags, wearing woven necklaces and bracelets, smoking mota in groups. Hippie seems to transcend borders. There was nothing there. The highway continued on in both directions, and to our left there was a range of mountains with a dirt road connecting them to the highway. On the other side there was only desert. No signs, no gas stations, not so much as a chicle vendor. But soon a very dubious bus came rambling out of a tunnel in the mountains and pulled up in front of our stranded group. Everyone boarded, holding onto their backpacks and luggage, placing everything in their laps or in the aisle as they took their seats, which left Anita and I standing, still wearing our packs as the bus took us back through the mountain. It was only a short fifteen minute ride and on the other side there was a tin shack village in a sandy valley, but busy, with groups of hippies and travelers hanging about and climbing onto the backs of camionetas which drove out the other side of town. We got off the bus and I followed Anita around while she spoke to people trying to find us a guide. The trucks, it turned out, all drove out to an oasis which was apparently where all the hippies went to hang out in the desert for a few days while they did the peyote thing. The trucks cost between 200 and 300 pesos, but the horses she found were only 150. Plus, there was the added novelty. We spent 20 pesos on empañadas cooked over a small fire in a smoky shack and walked back down to where the bus had dropped us off where there was a small corral. It seemed we were still in the negotiation process when the guide started strapping our packs to the horses. We were off before I was even sure this was a good idea, but again Anita seemed relaxed so I went along. Her company has kept me relaxed over the past few days. For one thing, she's Nico's best friend here, and if she's loyal to

Nico but still friends enough with me to go traveling to the desert for peyote, then this means I'm not a bad guy. For another thing it's a relief traveling with a Mexican. Nico always took care of translating when we traveled, and the locals treat Anita a lot better than they would me, if I was traveling on my own. Not to say I've ever been treated badly, but I definitely get better prices on horses when it's a bonita chica doing the talking. And the horses here are much better than the raggedy nag Nico and I rode through the butterfly sanctuary.

Our guide seemed pleasant. Hard to tell because he didn't speak English, but he and Anita chatted along for most of the three hours it took to ride over the mountain pass and back down the other side. Which was unfortunate. We only brought one tent with us and I was trying to figure out if this was going to lead to anything. I have to admit, bagging Nico's friend may not have been the nicest thing for me to do, but it would have been good for the damaged ego. Plus I'm twenty one. I've been in Mexico several months, and I haven't slept with a single señorita. Nico, yes, but meanwhile all the other Canadians, Gringos and Europeans have been in a free for all all about town, with each other, with the locals, with students and travelers and hippies. I think coming down to Mexico to be in a relationship was my first mistake.

It took us about two hours to descend the opposite side of the pass and the desert was a John Wayne backdrop on a massive scale. It was just so exactly what an old western looked like that it was hard to take seriously. There was no agave or those giant cacti with their arms in the air that look they're being held up by gunmen. Just shrubs everywhere, and ground was covered in white dusty pebbles rather than sand. As far as deserts go, it was a lot greener than I had imagined, and yet sparse. The shrubs were delicate but thorny, and though they were everywhere, you could guide your horse easily through the dust without touching them. There were small occasional trees, low and twisted like crabapples, that I hadn't expect to see either but added to the impression of cowboys camping out beneath them, blowing harmonicas and throwing dried branches onto a small fire cooking beans. After an hour or so of riding right into the middle of this desert, our guide steered off the trail down a dried stream bed and we followed him for about ten or fifteen minutes until he dismounted beneath one of these trees and tied the horses up. He started walking through the bushes looking beneath them until he finally held up a small cactus the size of a child's fist that looked much like a rock, covered as it was by dust. We continued looking until we had six in total and we went back beside the tree to prepare for our trip. We cleaned off the buds with a little water and made a small fire. It was a little after 3 pm when Anita and I ate it. I was a little disappointed that we weren't at the oasis with the hippies, where I had thought we were headed, but again, Anita didn't seem bothered by it so when she began to eat, I went along. There's not much I can say about what followed. Our guide stayed sober and took a nap. Anita and I set up the tent while we waited for the drugs to take hold. We unrolled our thermorests and sleeping bags and smoked a small joint, drank a little mescal, which turned out to be a bad idea because almost as soon as we finished we became violently ill.

Sank in Sand Peyote

Seldom	softened
cell	sloughed
dimmed	sand
sanctum	sodden
sank	sought
and	an
sank	ending
dumb	thought of
sinking	sending
slunk	sand

It felt like being turned inside out, while I was almost too weak to hold my head up out of the growing pool of vomit on the side of the creek bed. The mescal burned it's way back up and I spend the next three hours plugging my nose, vomiting and shaking. Anita was doing likewise about ten feet away and our guide slept through the whole thing with his head in a saddle and his hat over his eyes. I became seriously afraid that I was about to die and wanted to wake him up but when I finally gained the strength to crawl over to him I couldn't find him and wasn't even sure that he was still there. I'm not sure when the sickness passed. The following visions crept up with such power that I wasn't aware of when it started or where I was, not to mention who or even what I was. The strongest effect of the drug was that it made me forget that I had taken it, so that everything that followed, no matter how distorted or strange seemed real. I lost track of Anita for a long time. The peyote seemed to peak right away sweeping me off and I can't remember the specifics of what I thought was happening but I do remember that when I began to reassert some awareness our guide was talking to us. He had some tea that he made us both drink, and from there on Anita and I spent the night walking together under the desert stars, explaining what we saw, what we were thinking. Nothing sexual happened, I hate to admit. But it wasn't a concern either. There was affection, so strong it seemed the lights around our bodies were blending and shifting colours on the borders where they touched and we could understand one another through them. I'm not even sure which language we were speaking, Spanish or English or both, it could have been telepathic for all I know. And of course we spoke about Nico. The bitterness I was

harbouring towards her didn't seem new since the break up. It didn't even seem centered on her. At the time it wasn't even present, just an idea of bitterness that was pushed aside in the clarity and confidence of the trip. I had made a point not to speak of Nico but at the time I was swept up in the current of intimacy and we talked about everything.

Communication moved freely without boundaries or barriers and I felt clear headed and, dare I say, wise. Wise enough to let go of blame. It seemed that this communication and intimacy was more than what I had with Nico, was in fact what I had been pursuing the whole time, and now that I had a more perfect version of it, though drug induced and temporary, it seemed pointless to stay mad when I could see it was just frustration with being unable to communicate or be understood, and being cut off. Being shut out from Nico was a closed door that I could bang my head against, but while we were high, there simply weren't any walls around this door, which was how pointless all my harboured frustration seemed. And there didn't to be any reason to try to sleep with Anita either; I think I actually forgot about it .

We stayed high for a very long time. Very very long time. And we were awake during all of it, almost 24 hours. We roamed around the desert all night, drank a little mescal, smoked mota, saw the sunrise over the mountains while we sat under blanket next to the fire, and it wasn't until sometime around noon that we fell asleep again. But our guide was shaking us awake before four o'clock. We had to get back into town before sunset so we rode for three hours back the way we came, mostly without talking, just sitting and thinking, swaying in the saddle trying to stay upright, humming "I've been through the desert on a horse with no name..." There was an almost post-coital ease in the sense of being completely relaxed, even satisfied, around another person. Anita and I talked a little, recalling the conversations and some visions, and that mood stayed with me all the way back to Guanajuato. I was even friendly when I saw Nico back in town again, even eager to try to explain why we should be friends and that there were no hard feelings on my part any more. But of course she hadn't been on any enlightening adventures while I was away so she was still a bitch.

Remember what the Coyote said.
Vaya Con Dios Amiga

Dr. Ugged

Last night, I sort of thought, I had something connected, something I was talking with Dr. Oops about trying to figure out when the drop plopped and I thought, I watched his cigarette become a line of ash in his fingers until the light swallowed and, I knew, that when a cigarette looks at ash it sees the future and people avoid touching earth because it's a reminder of eternity, and man, they will dissolve, it will prove God right, because they are dust, and they will be and, I thought, that must be why there are no atheists in fox holes because they're up to their necks, but the sun, the sun is a reminder of ultimate mortality because I can look at it and think, oh man, one day, the light swallows, pop, ash and maybe the cycles are just really long but there is an end, still, because there has to be an end otherwise we're just something finite in the infinite and that fraction is reducible to nothing and, but then we're here now, I thought, maaaaan, what if people all around me really are just figments of my imagination what if, could a person be so lonely as to convince themselves of this fantasy and, couldn't I do better than this though, given my mind it would explain a lot but, if I'm not responsible what if we're figments of God's imagination except that she or he is God and giving life to dreams and independent thoughts and, mannnn, God must be really lonely and how crazy would it be to have six billion individual thoughts running around your brain doing things you told them not to and, I thought, it's just getting to be more and more running round and round until God gets shock therapy and pop, ash, and I thought woah,

travel write

(ing

songs road distance
)ing you

thots miles mill

ing beneath shoes sandals cobble(d)
stone roads sand
(ing edges burrs / you ex
perience/d

one hours of
our mine
ing ore (or
bit

buried beneath sand
els shoes ground
beneath miles mill
ing sand in sandals / shoes wear
ing the gentle skin soles
ing
so(uls)ft grain under soles bite
back at soft tread
thread
ing

you in and out roads and beaches cobble
d pattern tapestry
loss miles distance you _____ me
at meeting
at depart
you're

h(ear t he
art you're h
ere the end
ing we're
ed
it (ed) worn / milled (miles) ground

grown gr/own gr/oan
ed(
ing across)it over miles mill
travel
page

sand
 s
 shore or s (and hours
 show
 er
 s (and wash
 ed under metronome of waves
 of sand ours tick
 think
 ing

a way a road a beach a sea a jungle path a stone
 a ruins a creeping vine a snake a blossom a time
 a part a time depart the vine the cover the lines the
 cover
 ing the

writing the
 traveling the
 distance ing
 the lines
 the road
 erode
 ing

Bare Bones II

bite marks fading arm. hurt
lift) left hand

Nico.(happy)
the roof, the (huddled) balcony railing

breeze and the city at our backs,
first bottle
The Doors. American Prayer. Anita
at the Iguana waiting

dancing
tourists' / video cameras,
the wine, the dancing
downhill to the Iguana
to the bar
, and still dancing, though nobody else was
mood completely different inside.
she was pissed

I didn't talk much to Anita.
Unhappy she
was sitting next to me on the floor mostly sober
refusing tequila, determined not to(o.
as for myself
probably singing too loud, Kate
sobbing in a chair,
Nico and Anita hugging her shoulders,
sobbing = hysterical laughter lie down
on the futon to sleep
Anita and I lying
clay tiles,
her head
my stomach

the last bottle
shared with the cab driver on the way home, and would spill out the dregs on the roof
later Anita, in a fit of drunken sexual aggression, would grab, me, and
drag me forcibly stumbling down
into Travis' room, where two king
sized beds were pushed together
with Nico.

Date: Sun March 3 2007
From: Angry Burro woooopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: re:union
To: slender_reaches@yahoo.ca

So, the day after the orgy was tired. We were a mess. Hung over. We woke up around noon, and went to breakfast. Nobody said anything about what had happened, but I found out later that was because I was the only who remembered anything. Travis stayed home and slept; naturally, there was some confusion and amusement over why he was missing his pants, and Nico was very amused over his evident bite marks. My matching set was covered by my shirt.

So Nico, Anita, and I went to Truco 7, and made a scene. The waiting staff made remarks in Spanish about our obvious hangovers as we walked in. I ordered a beer and heuvos rancheros. Bad idea. Hair of the dog is fine, but the peppers don't settle well. Nico ordered something that turned out to be a pita with a slice of processed cheese, and Anita changed her order a dozen times annoying the otherwise amused. I curled up on the floor behind the table because the clay tiles were cool, and Anita fell asleep in the bathroom.

The bite marks on my arms are fading
 from last nightstangle
 bones in conjunction
 with this heat seeping floor
 leech regret the alleys of the barrio
 between our chests lean
 ing on inebriated breath
 mountain desert air

Nico ordered some soup to bring back for Travis which we ended up carrying around all morning until she gave it to some street vendors. It was very bitter. The morning - not the soup. Anita had to get ready to leave for Portland so I was expecting her to leave after breakfast. I was half worried I might end up with Nico for the rest of the day. I was still a little angry from the night before, and probably a little grumpier than I had a right to be, and I definitely didn't want to be stuck with her all day talking about it, or even not talking about it. We didn't say much after we left the restaurant. I was still expecting Anita to leave, but we walked through the market, and Nico bought some purple lilies. The three of us trudged back up the hill to the apartment after being gone almost three hours and ended up spreading a blanket on the clay tiles in the hall with the lights off lying there for a couple more hours, smoking and talking and drinking water.

It was then that I realized the others had no idea what had happened so I had the unusual pleasure of telling the ladies about what we had done, and what they had done with each other. I could only fill them in up to a certain point though, because I left half way through it to sleep in Kate's room. For one thing, it was after four in the morning,

but mostly fooling around with Anita wasn't any comfort against seeing Nico kiss Travis. The only reason I stayed as long as I did was because I was hoping he would leave, even though it was his room, and there was no reason he should have any problem rolling around with Anita and Nico. Finally it was too much, and I had to concede. So it turns out the only person who knows how it ended, is probably not the person I want to ask to give me the details. I doubt it progressed into anything too serious. Partly because they might have remembered that, but mostly because they were still partly dressed when I left and I don't think they were in a state to figure out buttons. Just as well really.

We left the apartment finally and walked back towards the Iguana. Nico was singing a jazz song in a really sexy voice, swinging her hips (Blue skies, smiling at me, nothing but blue skies do I see...) until Anita told her she was turning her on, in front of the Teatro Juarez in the zócalo, where a crowd had gathered to watch a clown. Anita and Nico started hugging and hanging all over each other to the clown's comically shocked expression, and then Nico started chasing him around the square with his balloon sword.

our alley's textured scent of mold
 flavoured with lime
 exhales
 exhales through sewer grates
 our alleyways wind
 downhill
 the zocalo soul of GTO
 random losses amid
 aimless disasters
 so particular to
 the few we knew winding through rat scattered alleys
 between us

We ran into Travis in the street. Anita told him the story of how she had snuck over the border as a teenager into Texas (Texas because she's wanted in Cali for drug charges) with her ex-boyfriend and a coyote. She was caught but made it on the second try after hiking all night through the desert and becoming delirious from the cold and exhaustion. The funny thing about this is that she has American citizenship through her mother. She was just going along for the walk because of her boyfriend had to do it. So Travis told us about the time he worked as coyote in Tijuana. He owned a car that had a fake floor installed. Eventually customs found the compartment, though nobody was in it, so now his name is in the computer. He gave it up and that's how he ended up here, working illegally in his own bar.

We went to Spanglish and hung around there alternating double espressos with menzania tea (very calming) and talking about handing out nonsense pamphlets, running around in hospital smocks and capes, looking around corners with a mirror on a stick. Generally the usual topics. Nico was laughing uncontrollably – she was cracked, I couldn't tell if she was laughing or crying. When we finally left the place, Anita said goodbye and took a cab to the bus station. I completely forgot about the bank machine that ate my card a couple of hours before.

Travis went back to the Iguana for work, and Nico and I went to meet Kate to get dinner and get drunk at Bar Ocho. I left early because I was tired and depressed and later Nico came and found me on the roof. We played with the marbles she bought at the market that day, bouncing them off the clay tiles and over the balcony, listening to them crack against the street, and Volkswagen Beetles, and we lay down on the clay tiles. When we went downstairs to sleep, and I crawled into Kate's room to sleep there, and she suggested we invite Nico to come in and cuddle with us for the night. Fine with me. So I did, with perfectly innocent intentions. But with the lights out and Nico lying between the two of us, one thing lead to another, until I could hear Kate kissing her, and I slipped my hand under her shirt. By the time we were all naked, Nico and I were tangled together in our limbs the way we had been in the Zipolit  beach. The thing about Kate's bed is that it's cast iron and has iron bed stand tables welded to either side of the iron headboard (with a giant cross on the top). Every time we moved both of the little tables would rise up off the floor, and crash down on the clay tiles making a ridiculously loud sound to an unmistakable rhythm. I don't know if you've ever had an audience while you fucked, but it wasn't very long before Kate in the peanut gallery started laughing. It was pretty funny. Nico and I started laughing too, and that's the point where it more or less fell apart. It's very hard to have sex with a bed full of laughing people. So we turned on the lights and smoked.

joined our wrought iron bed frame
bruising

the emaciated mattress on iron ribs bucks
a bound
animal breaking
free legs clang
tiles skitter the floor pitch
against the frustrated wall pent up anger finding its release a bed stand a
bull head butting the pen
riders grip stunned sheets like victims
of an earthquake holding fast to a betrayed faith in foundations
falling exhausted. You quietly dress and leave
and finally

the shock of losing you has left me too

and the bite marks on my arms are fading

Travis who we woke up with our laughing from the next room was wondering what was so funny the next day. When the three of them left for breakfast, I started packing. I've got my backpack filled again, and this is the last time I'll write to you from here. My bus should get into Toronto in three days so I'll see you Monday. Treeplanting starts again in a month and a half. We'll have a month or so to kick around Newmarket, and then I'm taking the bus west to B.C. again. See you soon.
Yo te amo

re:track Copper Canyon North

the gaze chases, keeps pace, keeps face keeps time keepsake keeps ache awake sleeps
 a wake of dreams tracks of fields and night(s)
 leaps the bridge the canyon the space canon the face the yawning the pace building accentuated
 speaking stretch(ching eye)ing horizon
 s(peaking hills)prawl(ing tracks times heart
 beats time(ing breathing b(eating
 distance, thoughts, singing pass/age you
 re: a note
 ringing) to say I've gone
 distance follows stretches
 tension / memory sear/ching
 a face other than you'
 re: this window
 this night this
 re:flection
 th
 is
 e lips
 is tracks
 lined space between depart(you're
 and (him
 a rival
 a lip
 tic
 cul
 de sac you'
 re:
 track

 you (train)
 track me

 eting station (we
)ary sleep window
 eyelids frame
 dreams tracks

flected

Spring

Date: Fri, 24 June 2007
From: Angry Burro woopee121@yahoo.ca
Subject: re:new
To: G. Stein

all my life long, but re:
 but my life all along can knot trace a long but no
 (re) trace a long but not
 track a head tracks left behind
 tract the present mo(ment)um
 what more can be meant than the moment of um?
 end of this terrain of thought of this sec-umm re:
 trace um thought this terrain
 end of a moment meant can be more
 present left behind track ahead tracks along trace knot along life my, but

flections and The Martyrology: Exits and The Other

I was a little surprised to find I had written a love story for my thesis. If I had thought about it to begin with, I may have dismissed the idea as unacademic or perhaps simply common. I began this project as a reaction to bp Nichol's *The Martyrology* and his ideas regarding connections to the other through entrances and exits in writing, and this influence gradually shaped my story. I adopted the utanikki as the structure for my project, and this form partly inspired the content. The utanikki is a form which has also been adopted by other Canadian poets such as Fred Wah ("Dead In My Tracks: Wildcat Creek Utaniki"), Steve Heighon ("Paper Lanterns"), and bp Nichol, in *The Martyrology*. The Toronto Research Group, composed of bp Nichol and Steve McCaffery, defines the utanikki as "a Japanese form of personal diary, distinguished by its alterations between poetry and prose, its concern with process and the passage of time, its rejection of the need for daily entries, and the fictionalizing of events" (qtd. In Jaeger, 109). The utanikki, which literally translates to poetic diary, has been written in Japan since 935 A.D. A respected literary genre there, the utanikki is distinct from the Western diary primarily through the poet's intention that it be read by the public, making it more like a blog with haiku. Earl Miner, in his book *Japanese Poetic Diaries*, writes that utanikkis "combine, or poise, two formal energies: the ceaseless pressure of time implied by the

diary form itself, and the enhancement of the moment, or related moments, usually demonstrated in poetry” (Miner, 19). Both *The Martyrology* and *flection* share this dynamic between an attention to time, and the “enhancement” of remembered moments in poetry, though both works also deviate from the utanikki form. For example, a typical entry of *The Narrow Road to The Provinces*, by Matsuo Basho, includes details of where the writer traveled each day, people he met and things he saw, peppered with personal insights and concluding with a haiku based on the details of the entry. *The Martyrology* and *flection* differ from a traditional utanikki by their uses of various forms of poetry other than the haiku. In an interview with Steve McCaffery, bp acknowledges that his original designation of his work as a utanikki was a “misnaming” (Miki 87), though it nonetheless often resembles a utanikki. For example, an excerpt from *The Martyrology*, *Book 3* reads:

rob crosses the yard
 pauses to talk
 not wanting to disturb me in the writing
 I remember how we first met
 me reading KULCHER was it issue 10

nancy later
 looking for liz
 julia her skirt swaying

the dandelion is not a weed
 its perfect golden flower
 I could sleep there always

friends friends friends this is how the false 'i' ends'

bp's widow, Eleanor Nichol, describes in "An Ordinary Man" how this particular passage simply described what was happening around bp one afternoon while he was writing: "All this on a normal afternoon with a group of people... all being recorded by a young man sitting off to one side under a tree" (116). The insertion of "the dandelion is not a weed" segment, deviating from the descriptions of bp's friends, is typical of how haiku is used within the utanikki's prose. But this passage also demonstrates Nichol's flexibility with form as the "prose" is formed as poetry, though it serves the same purpose as the prose entries of a utanikki.

The utanikki is primarily associated with the diary through its concern with time and personal experience, but in addition to the blending of poetry and prose, it differs from diaries in other respects, especially regarding the practice of revision and the occasional incorporation of fictional events. The Tosa Diary, for example, written by Ki no Tsurayuki, creates a female narrator to describe the events of a sea voyage Tsurayuki took, but the diary remains distinct from pure fiction through its basis on facts of the writer's experience, and it is designated as a utanikki because of the chronological structure and complementing haiku segments. Perhaps the most famous utanikki, according to bp, is Matsuo Basho's *The Narrow Road Through the Provinces* (Miki, 275). This is a travel diary written by a master of haiku, who developed the sub-genre of diaries of the road, engaging the theme of travel subsequently associated with the utanikki (Miner, 13). *The Martyrology*, for example, describes numerous trips, usually by train or plane, recording sights, encounters with other passengers, and bp's thoughts. Basho

records similar details in his diary. A typical entry describes where he traveled during the day, whom he encountered, and meditations regarding the events, although Basho, according to Miner, is known to have “fictionalized, altered, and later revised” throughout his diary (9). *flection*, like *The Martyrology*, deviates from the traditional Japanese form by moving freely between poetic forms, and even into prose poetry. One effect of this freedom to move between forms and styles is the ability to create shifts in tone or voice, where the voice of the utanikki remains more consistent. In *flection* there are instances directly following the break-up of the relationship where the borders between prose and poetry blur in the emails to communicate the shift in the narrator's state of mind.

<p>Flexion: a modification of the sound or tone of the voice in singing or speaking. O.E.D.</p>

But at its root, *flection* retains the essential elements of the utanikki, such as the chronological structure, foregrounding a concern with time (through attention to passing months, seasons, and semesters), the insertion of poetry to highlight experiences detailed in the record, and the awareness of a reader in the form of the character Twig.

It might be argued that *flection* does not qualify as a utanikki because the prose is in the form of emails rather than diary entries; however, the utanikki is characterized by its chronological structure and its attention to details, features that these emails exhibit. Indeed, emails as letters addressed to an intimate acquaintance have much more in

common with a *utanikki* than a diary proper. The primary difference is that a diary is typically intended to be read solely by the writer, while the *utanikki* is written with the writer's awareness of creating a literary work intended to be read by the public, as a letter is intended to be read by a specific reader. This awareness of a reader has an effect on the content of the work. Earl Miner writes:

The Japanese diurnal diary, which is in its relative emphasis a private record, must correspondingly accommodate matters of wider more universal interest than those of a purely private individual if we are to read it with interest. The Japanese diarist may seek his universality by articulating common human concerns such as the family, love, death, nature, or time - but it is crucial for his success that he discover in diurnal, private events a universal significance of a thematic order growing above the mere sequence of daily activity. (4-5)

This is how *flection* came to include a love story.

In order to give my project “universal interest” I adopted bp's focus on the other as my subject matter, though with some differences. In his 1966 manifesto from “Journeying and the Returns,” Nichol writes:

we have come up against the problem, the actual fact, or diversification, of finding as many exits as possible from the self (language / communication exits) in order to form as many entrances as possible for the other....the other is the loved one and the other is the key, often the reason for the need / desire to communicate.... the other is emerging as the necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self that clarify the soul & heart and deepen the ability to love. (Scobie 16-17)

Stephen Scobie attempts to clarify bp's intentions regarding the other by citing a lecture given by the author at the University of Alberta where bp explained that “the other of the 1966 statement was a thin disguise for 'the mother'” (Scobie 17), which echoes Lacan's

explanation of the (m)other and the origin of the recognition of the other during the mirror stage of an infant. Lacan's mirror stage is the moment in a child's early development when it first recognizes a distinction between itself and the (m)other, and its mirror image helps it to see itself as a separate body, or the self-as-other (Grosz, 32).

This stage permanently defines a person's ego as separate, but renders connections with the other necessary for self definition: "far from being a self-contained or potentially autonomous entity, the ego is paradoxically intersubjective; it depends on the subject's relation with the other" (Grosz, 31). This may explain what bp means by the other as the "necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self that clarify the soul & heart."

According to Scobie, this impulse to communicate with the other leads Nichol to attempt different strategies in communication: "His compulsion to write began psychologically with a need to communicate with his parent.... And if contact could not be made one way, using one type of language, then he had to try another: hence the multiplicity of forms" (17). The forms Nichol employs are tied to the content and themes of his work, which Scobie identifies as "separation – of the child from the parent, of the signifier from the signified, of friends from each other – and the humanist drive of his writing is a heroic attempt to overcome such separation" (18). In *Inflection*, the protagonist is constantly in a state of cultural and linguistic separation, but the primary focus is his separation from Nico, who, for the purposes of this project, is the principle other, and the narrator's unification with her, and his separation from her, is of primary importance. Although this project primarily places Nico in the role of the other whom the narrator defines himself in relation to, this character is also isolated from the broader cultural other, the Spanish

speaking population. The figure of Twig further complicates the presence of the other inspiring a shift in self definition in the narrator. There is the “i” / eye presented in relation to Twig in the emails, and there is the “i”/ eye in the poems, which reflects on itself.

Flexion: a turning of the eye in any direction - OED
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Nichol's attention to the other also represents more than a desire to communicate with his parents; it resonates, as well, with his work in the Therafields community. In 1963 Nichol underwent personal therapy which he credits with saving his life. *The Martyrology*, in fact, is dedicated to his therapist Lea Hindley-Smith, with the acknowledgment that without her help “quite literally / none of it would have been written” (*The Martyrology Books 3 & 4*). Therafields was a therapeutic community to which bp belonged for fifteen years, working towards assisting its members to find individual answers to their individual problems. As bp says, his job was to assist others in the process of changing from within themselves (Scobie 19). This community, in part, reflects what bp was referring to as the “new humanism” in his manifesto, and it demonstrates the other as that necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self. The character in *flexion*, like a member of Therafields, attempts to take refuge in his community of travelers, though with limited success. The narrator's community is mostly unavailable to him, so he uses writing to connect with Twig, and poetry as a means of creating dialogues with the self.

flection uses some of the same formal techniques as the *The Martyrology* to create multiple meanings for words, which is how Scobie defines Nichol's exits. The idea of entrances and exits depends on Nichol's concept of language and writing having multiple meanings. Scobie quotes Nichol as saying:

language does not exist on just one level it exists on many, and rather than trying to find the one true level you must become fluent in all of them.... the levels of meaning are as many as there are stars in the sky and in fact, language is like the rest of the universe, an endless wonder of unexplored galaxies of meaning, two truths can exist side by side without contradicting each other. (20)

Considering the page as a surface, words become exits into deeper levels of meaning past the print. The term “flection” acknowledges the surface of the page and the layered depth of possible meanings. The title in part is of course derived from “reflection;” both as an image and as the act of thinking, reflection became a regular motif in the story. The i, or eye of the observer is how the narrator, sees himself, as a source of refraction and reflection. This also acknowledges the i as other, referring to reflection in the mirror stage. Flection is the surface, the sign of the narrator; the signifiers are his poems. As bp says in *The Martyrology*, “life's a sign / beneath which signifieds slide” (Book 5, Chain 3).

In *flection*, the poems interrupting the structure of narrative evoke the exits and entrances that bp's work attempts; the narrative is the linear surface, and the poems are exits into still moments in the otherwise chronological movement. The Snapshot poems, for example, step out of the progressing narrative, and temporarily pause the story's movement. *flection* employs some of *The Martyrology's* techniques on the level of the

word as well, through puns and paragrams, to draw attention to language. Scobie aligns bp's entrances and exits with the modern and postmodern interest in defamiliarizing language. Nichol's work deploys puns and paragrams to create multiple meanings that generate exits from the language trap. These techniques operate on the surface of the page, but shift words or ideas so that they become multi-directional, or carry multiple meanings. With the reception of a choice of meanings, the reader participates in creating meaning in the text. Another of bp's strategies is homolinguistic translation, which is the "translation" of words or a text into different words of the same language, based on sound or appearance; the result is a distortion, or refracted image, of the original text. These translations layer meaning onto the original text. *flection* also uses homolinguistic translations in different instances, such as "Variations: Whitman" (17), "Twisting Alleys: Translation Skews" (13), and "Beautiful Needs" (20). In "Twisting Alleys", for example, the text on the right side of the page is distorted into similar sounding but more abstract language than the text on the left. In "Variations: Whitman," the original "subtle electric fires," becomes "sudden elucidating fires," turns to "sudden ecstatic," to "supple emphatic," to "softened effusive," etc. The movement from a to b to c suggests a productive flexibility of sound and sense, and opens potential for meanings exceeding the singular and the intentional. Scobie describes this effect of multiplying meaning in Saussurian terms:

Once one has accepted this multiplicity - or to phrase it in the terms of poststructuralist linguistics, once one has accepted that the line between the signifier and the signified divides as much as it unites – then one is open to the whole 'deconstructionist' undermining of stable concepts. The signifier 'floats' no longer tied down to a single unit of meaning, into a free

play of open-ended referral and deferral; the signified 'slides', evading the numerous attempts to fix it in a transcendental identity...at the centre of meaning. (22)

This floating signifier allows multiple signifieds to slide beneath it. This is best demonstrated by bp's paragrams of the saints. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines paragrams as “a kind of play upon words, consisting in the alteration of one letter or group of letters of a word”, exemplified by bp's transformation of the word “stand” into “St. And”, or in the case of *flection*, the shifts of “The Murderology:” “drape” becomes “Dr. Ape” and “drink” becomes “Dr. Ink” etc. However, bp manages to create an entire personal mythology sliding beneath the signifiers “stand,” “stranglehold” and other saints, where in *flection*, the doctors are voices reflecting aspects of the narrator's character.

<p>Flexion: modification of the form of a word; esp. the change of ending in conjugation, declension, etc; O.E.D.</p>

Because I was beginning to write *flection* as a reaction to bp's writing and his ideas of the other and the language trap, I began a story about a character isolated in language through living in a foreign country, while having an intimate relationship with “the loved one.... the reason for the need / desire to communicate”, the other. Through his emails to Twig, this character undergoes dialogues with the self, but the other is represented primarily by Nico. Nico becomes the other whom the 'i' of the narrator identifies himself with, as the one he is either connected to, or separated from. The

narrator conceives of his sense of his self in terms of his relationship with her so the disintegration of the relationship creates a feeling of absence. In Lacanian terms, Elizabeth Grosz describes falling in love as an extreme, demonstrating “the ego's dependence on its libidinal investments in others” (Grosz, 29).

Flexion: a kneeling, genuflection.

Generally, however, the narrative focuses on the articulated absence of the missing loved one, compounded by the narrator's wandering through a body of language that he is unable to negotiate. Grosz explains that the narcissistic ego is “constituted as an ego only through alienation, through the creation of a necessary rift between lived immediacy of perception / sensation, and mediated reflection or self-distance. Its identity is bound to relation with others”. (30) In this case, I've attempted to construct a character by articulating his ego through its relation to the absent other, and a more general alienation from the culture through which he travels. Consequently, this ego is a fragile one, attempting to rebuild itself through physical indulgences, exile in Palenque, and later by reconnecting with other individuals either sexually, chemically or, ideally, socially, the latter proving to be the most difficult. The articulation of Nico's absence on the narrator's ego is mirrored by the constraint of communication as the character moves through a foreign language.

The first person I spoke to after crossing the border into Mexico was a ticket agent at a bus company's counter. I imagined many Mexicans might not speak English fluently, but perhaps an individual working in the travel business, doubtlessly dealing with Americans daily, would graciously answer yes to my “Hables ingles?” (though for those first weeks I often accidentally asked “I speak?” instead of “you speak?”). Not so. A

hundred metres and five minutes into Mexico I started attempting to communicate within very tight constraints. I could not speak a sentence without conscious effort, and words only came slowly after careful deliberation. Travel accomplished automatically what many modern poets have been attempting in writing: it defamiliarized language completely, but instead of freeing the sign, it was heavily constraining. Daphne Marlatt writes, in "Musing With the Mothertongue," that language "is both place (where we are situated) and body (that contains us), that body of language we speak" (Geddes 859). But to be situated in a foreign country, unable to speak a language you don't fully understand, is like being in someone else's body, or in a body not in control of its limbs. The lack of a complete vocabulary inhabits the body of a foreign speaker, manifesting itself in exaggerated gestures, miming, emphatic pointing at objects that the speaker does not have the vocabulary to identify. It makes sentences curt and clumsy as the speaker carefully forms constrained sentences with a limited vocabulary.

This limitation of communication and its affect on the speaker's body is similar to constraints of form in poetry which effect content. In an interview with Roy Miki, Daphne Marlatt and George Bowering, bp observes this parallel between the body and writing:

I discovered...that emotionally and psychologically speaking we learn that we often armour the body, the easiest illustration of which is: if I live in a house with a low doorway, I'm probably going to end up walking like this a lot....You get an armouring of the body... So what I was trying to find... is a way to increase my own formal range ... and therefore not merely be stuck, shall we say , by the physical limitation of my body at that point. (Miki 276)

Constraints in language and form mirror the effect of a tall person doubling over in low room; they create an armouring, or a bending of the content. The sestinas in *flection* play with this effect through tight formal constraints. These forms are appropriate metaphors of the plight of the narrator attempting to communicate with a limited vocabulary in a foreign language. In an interview with Caroline Bayard and Jack David, Nichol elaborates on the constraining effects of syntax and form:

Syntax and the way you structure the sentence limits the content you can put out.... The reason I have moved between styles of writing is because I have always seen the connection between form and content. You can't divorce the two things.... (there is an analogy of muscles and the arm - the position of the arm tensed, limits the possible positions of the hand relative to space - the floor). Depending on what structures you put in, you limit what can happen, you limit the flexibility of it, you limit what you can do. (28)

Which explains *The Martyrology's* experimentation with form.

Exits from language are generated more by playing with forms (paragrams, puns, homolinguistic translation) than through

Flexion: the bending of a limb or joint by the action of the flexor muscles. OED
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content. The ability to move freely through form is as necessary for bp's communication with the other as learning Spanish is to the narrator of *flection*.

Having said that, formal constraints can also generate creativity. The flexing of a form can shift the direction of content, and the direction of interpretation. Though constraints bend the body of a poem, this often produces interesting effects that gesture with the bending. *flection* employs a number of constraints such as in the "Rothko Trip/tych" which can be read both vertically and horizontally, and the three sestinas which are particularly restrictive. A sestina's form demands the appearance of the same

six words at the end of the six lines of the six stanzas, but the words are never repeated at the end of the same line twice in different stanzas. In “Spanglish Sestina,” “bueno” ends the first line of the first stanza, then reappears at the end of the fifth line, then the fourth, the second, the third and the sixth. This can be a very frustrating form to write in, but its benefit is the attention it draws to these six words, and the way in which it forces the writer to walk a tight rope from one line to the next, growing increasingly difficult as the possible endings for each line diminish. It shapes a poem, but it also guides it. The creative strategy is syn/tactic. While syntax and structure limit what content can be included, they also generate content and produce a tension that is not otherwise apparent in looser forms, such as “Zipolit  Nude Beach” and “Skins,” where the words are placed freely on the page without predetermined formal connections. A constraint creates a relationship between words. It limits possible content, but it also inspires and promotes exploration. The narrator of *flection* initially feels isolated by a foreign language, but this situation creates a new perspective regarding his relationship to language and communication. Even using a form as flexible as the utanikki, even deviating from this form whenever it suited me, there was still a noticeable influence in its shaping of *flection's* content. It suggested a love story. It suggested travel, the confessions of diaries, and attention to detail. The email form developed a voice that was intimate with the recipient. It inspired paragraphs playing on the “re:” of a subject line, including re:flection. A form flexes and tenses the limb, but it also generates surprising movement. And that's partly the reason for, and the joy of, using them.

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Vita Auctoris

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