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## A Hole Cut Out from the World

Marita Carole Dancy  
Bard College, md0522@bard.edu

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# A Hole Cut Out from the World

Senior Project submitted to

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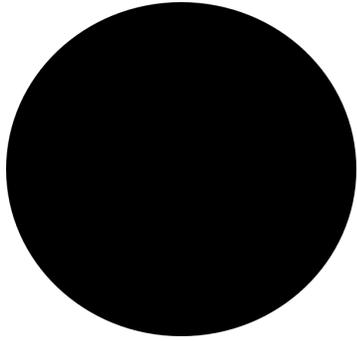
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by

Marita Dancy

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2017



**A HOLE CUT OUT  
FROM THE WORLD**

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# AFTERIMAGES

AWAKE IN BED

Coming so far,  
she did not know where West ended,  
but figured West merely a sign  
for a 1938 Beetle  
and her father's stamp collection.

Her first day East  
spent on bed reading and  
waiting — the phone rings.

The therapist wants her \$.  
Could the call be a metaphor for loneliness?

A city stewing outside and blindly  
waiting.  
The cats will not go down some stairs  
shouting to her.

*I need you to do this for me, she says, I need peace,*  
*You're an addict, they mew,*  
*Your words don't give.*

For dinner the fridge provides  
chocolate cake & rosé.  
She accepts this as a metaphor  
for unplanned and unpaid vacations.  
She eats in bed.

Pleasure in remembering— back seats  
and canasta games—  
where she had been before  
the city  
wakes her.

Instead of writing her novel  
She sends texts West...

*The book I'm reading reminds me of you.*

*Are you driving?*

*I could use something.*

AISLES

The world attacks me in my sleep.

The world tracks me

to bed with trails of tongues,  
words which can only be sound.

I don't want to admit:

I am saying yes

as a way to say  
anything.

Am I so bothered

by consequence that I refuse  
to say no?

At the end of the aisle,

I reach the meat turn,  
& walk horizontally.

A continued draw  
into the non-consciousness

of being nobody  
who does nothing.

Ostensibly enveloped

within the dirge

of wallowing

unknowing and unfeeling.

Attacking in my sleep,  
the world drags me into dreams  
by the gestures of strangers I have just met.

These “dead” men are so free,  
& I am enslaved: living  
when a woman can laugh,  
but can never refuse a joke.

A man is a sign heard and  
drawn near  
to my cherishing heart.

How can I know  
paths leading home are wed  
to trees and taken from me?

I know only those whom I love,  
the rest is hindrance.

DREAM FOR MY SISTERS

In trying  
to say  
suddenly,  
what happened,  
I would not have you lie.

Sadness does not end,  
but carries death on.  
I pass nights foreseeing  
terrible events  
suddenly.

In waking  
how to call out your names?  
See  
your faces among blushing leaves.  
Hear the toll,  
and its prickling  
desert arms lithe in love's  
embrace.

How  
to get by on tissue talk,  
or pretend  
a life upon moments  
of sky?

A SMALL LOSS

The cord crawls from backyard to television set;  
mating snakes dancing within brambles  
before entering a mouse hole.  
Barely detectable details.

She won't suffer habits of repurposed furniture.  
Crooking her neck— a roost  
created change and continuum  
under the same sill.

It turns out three-legged chairs  
useless unless an artist perched,  
unless an eye greets the chair in the foyer,  
placed his non-sensibility.

The old bureau now an altar to no one's surprise,  
but no one prayed either.

Only  
under the non-thought of her sleeping pills,  
could she acknowledge the voices of the repurposed furniture.

*where did You put the radio?*

*We haven't used that in years,*

*Honey.*

Looking out from bed,  
crying over her thriftiness to create a bag out of his pants...

there was no difference.

*where is the radio?* he asks.

*I threw it out.*

THE MIND IS A WOUND

*for Ryōkan*

The mind is a wound. Time enters  
as dream pictures at midnight.

Days resemble the distance  
between fallen branches  
telling me of the greatest mountains  
ground to sand by flowing water  
wishing to be somewhere else.

I let my tears dry  
to avoid becoming  
dust beneath moonlight solace.

## NIGHTMARE

Upon waking in a nightmare— I am shouting,

*Where are you?* Until I see,

then I squeeze it so tight,

I squeeze.

*Where are you?* I am sleeping—

I wonder how people ever stop

thinking, how people stop at all.

Searching with my eyes

closed, I see what is no one's

& I squeeze so tight.

The past billows over my mind.

Window blinds— I wonder

how to forgive the time of day

for being dusk.

*Where are you?*

Attempt to drape the pain with blue

which was missing, and dearly

along with a velcro digital watch

no one had seen in years.

I only knew that it happened,

whether one wanted it or not.

This, all I could know.

Eyes shut, red  
is not kind.

*Where are you?*

*You are much older now,*  
I squeeze his hand so tight. I know  
when his blood becomes mine it is not seen.

I wonder does blood belong to you  
after its bled, and dearly  
does it belong to me. I squeeze his hand  
So tight—

it is only no one's time. I wonder  
does a brain bleed at dusk and become a dream because it wants to.

DEAR MOLIMO,

The moon is a well     where the light of my day interns,  
                                  a hole full of water wept.

The moon is your cupped palms awaiting prayer,  
                                  your vacuumed eyes stealing being.

No                             the moon is my image kept,  
                                  a transcript of words spoken only between us.

The moon a vehicle for the emptiness of now,  
                                  our love which is real  
                                  and a sign.

On nights when the moon does not reach my sky,  
                                  she wails in the broken chamber of my anahata:  
                                  a drooling, green, overwrought orb.

On these nights my body stinks of you:  
the weight of salt water unto me,  
                                  without the sagging pockets  
                                  underpinning your eyes  
                                  and the moon.

LOVE,

m

BLUE MAY

*for* Joan Didion

Everyone crossed the glass threshold of the new hospital before the end. It couldn't be called a procession because there were no lines— except along each plane of his white room. 1st plane, 2nd plane. ODJ548. *If I can walk I can go home.* These lines stretched through the window and across the Tobin Bridge so that he might wonder.

We stood on the boundary with our toes curled over the edge like so many women facing the pavement. Could incandescence really make all of us glow? Did lights ever reach the travellers arriving at the same destination day after day, or explain the pain extended and stalled? *They've been writing about the same thing for years,* he warned us. The problem being there was so much written down. So much held down to the page. The ocean was the only way out from under the bridge.

The lines reaching for his face were like sweetwater river beds. She waited on the edge because the only roads led to the bridge and to here, and yet her sister was at home cleaning the doorknobs and the light switches. Her curled toes congealed to the edge as though they were not bridge stone.

## AFTERIMAGES

8:27 am

*A white elephant seen walking is a good omen. This happens when you say "gee" in the middle of saying "cheese" behind a green couch with a cushion missing half its clothes. The wood bruises your bone when you're caught between it and the man. He is pushing you closer to precariousness, but won't let go. He is in love with indulgence because he knows how to bury a body once it's been burned. The photograph of the elephant does not get burned. This is never an omen.*

4:54 am

*ok*

*enough,*

*stop?*

*Today*

*ok?*

*stop*

*nothing?*

*it?*

9:33 am

*She wanes on a whim. The mouth operates from the inside, but stays closed. Were all children so mean to their mothers? She calls it the "New Paradigm." It started with the world and got bigger, which was just the way her mom had done it, and her mom before her. It was impossible to tape screaming lips shut, but of course this was something "new." The liberals are calling it the eighth wonder. How many women could thank their husbands while their mother was ashamed of them and how many fingers did they have? New administration taking over with shut mouths only widen the eyes. Marie was not convinced.*

7:05 am

*Circles come right out of the ground. Drowning was probably a good thing. The coyotes would have been on them in no time. His tines went up on the inside of their beams and locked them all three together.*

11:14 am

*I see vials of sands. Her refusal to  
abscind. A red dress. And I expected  
answers today... my unexplained days,  
my uninterpreted dreams, my  
many questions about repetition. The  
sands were not the same although all  
laid out. Her dress pointed to the sand,  
it illuminated the window... her dress is  
made of blood. Failed machinery sitting  
unable to move. A lie... the dress is  
made of chintz. It points to blood. The  
window is closed.*

10:02 am

*She, a fancy lawyer who dictated.  
Tapering along the edges of a secret—  
crying out— dictating the message.  
Words, she knew, but how? Is it  
possible to have nothing to say? Could  
she, a fancy lawyer, become a mute—  
yes. Yes, a mute, and a fancy one at  
that. Quit the crying act. Go home.*

3:47 am

*I'm*

*the I*

*let on*

*chipped away*

*can't*

*can't*

*happened*

*bleed*

*are you ok?*

*Ok.*

*all*

*can't*

*broken*

*All*

*more blood?*

*months*

*entire days*

*last*

*illuminating*

*patiently*

# WORDS FROM DREAMS

## A MOMENT OF MEMORY

Serene she sleeps a thousand nights  
without a dream to wake her.

A state between sadness and despair  
is nothing but a dream-thought of a day  
she will not recall for three more years.  
Quiet secrets of which her name was one.

A clean mouth is silent when she speaks.  
Drowning out and with the water  
of an oblivious bed stand, she  
inherits another small lie.

## THE AUTHENTICATION OF A DREAM

At the shore of your eye,

I see a battered

sweater

stirring the waters.

Are you freer now,

than then?

Where you laid your eyes closed,

not listening...

The familiar red thread kept together within a cold

green halo of northern sea,

before utterly

unraveling.

Your ocean eyes return—

the shoreline gone as you wave,

drifting debris

appears far off.

UNWAVERING

*for Elaine Scarry*

The blue light is remembered  
for being there, and not  
being since.

Everything had to be imagined now—  
a psychic sky relieves old days  
of obliviousness and peace.

*Take care and enjoy the new friends you are making...*

*I will see you all soon...*

If he is going to arrive, I expect  
to see him after the corner.

Standing in the kitchen, I wait  
to see him in his blue chair.

To see him leaving her bedroom  
through a reflection of the oven door.

See him, no,  
be him before the sink

before the window.

Be him before the stove and be me looking.

But I am no longer standing—  
sitting left and diagonal

to see him always before  
the window, eating.  
To hear the knife, or just its edge,  
before a laugh.

*Love,*  
*Molimo*

It can be a mistake to imagine all of this,  
while  
between his blue chair and the glass door.  
Wavering undoes standing, so convinced am I,  
I am wrong.  
Never saw nor see balance within a door,  
so cry.

Pretend or plunge  
to see him, knowing only  
standing before motions of ghosts  
not arriving.

*Molimo intentionally tapped his left foot today...*

(bearing years of living silence)

The seemingly problem  
of his  
*I love you,*  
without his knowing.

Could a drive relieve broken memories of beautiful daughters?

Without his knowing,  
could everything be imagined now—  
the color of the sky told us a time  
of blood spilled and fleeing.  
Somewhere something remained so blue.

WITHOUT WORDS

*for William Faulkner*

*He said he knew without the words,*

Language determines. Preceding and proper as pa's 'no'. A swift scythe knowing the wheat fully grown and ready for harvest.

*he told me that pa is going to die without words,*

She knows something which she does not say. It has no sound which can be translated by voice. There would be no symbol, she knew, besides this. This knowing.

*I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words...*

She arose from this 'loss of words'. Silence being that it always said more—the words having only history. Nothing now, but her.

*I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us.*

Seeing the future as lightning comes without its sound. The Real and the Trauma and the Neglect! The hairs on his head stuck up where he lay— she knew words she dare not say.

*And I said "Are you going to tell pa a —m?" without the words,  
and he said "Why?" without the words.*

FORMERLY KNOWN

attended participated graduating

had met and loved

being

sharing

was born

was preceded loving

be made

passed away

is survived

See

\*\*\*

passed

away

born

was

was

enjoyed

and being wade

had achieved

he had

his own

was  
attended loved leaves  
heartbroken

if you are fighting  
or have  
please get

sorry offends hurts  
shames hope

save experiencing  
help open have

\*\*\*

featured giving  
was harnessed  
cultivated dropping  
claiming  
distorted

was explored  
that with his father  
taught

would go on  
never released

included building  
combing committed recognised  
played shun  
changed his name  
remained unheard

\*\*\*

enduring came  
be sent to Rage—  
love  
will be  
best remembered  
will be  
lovingly remembered  
survived  
passed away

\*\*\*

attended graduated employed  
passed away  
will always be remembered  
for her  
made  
including experimenting  
she fought  
had experienced truly

loved tried she

struggled

has been

was born

survived

if you have fighting

asks do to be

and guide

\*\*\*



BEAR WALKING INTO SHADE

Days followed by  
yogurt stains followed by  
baseball games followed by  
carpool lanes followed by  
leg aches & coffee sips, rooms  
of unlabeled doors.

Only one blueberry bush remains.  
Molimo stands guard— he is missing  
someone or  
something.

He expects someone to know. He  
needs this.

For long hours he looks to  
his own face on the mantle,  
shrugging year and  
circumstance.

Does a man keep his name once he's lost  
it; can he make a sign  
without one? Without *xoxo*?

Neck bent up to absent hemlocks, he remembers little children  
running in and out of shadows.

How does his mind become a phantom limb?  
If a man stays put, he will find it

harder to lose things.

If a man stays put....

Under early darkness Molimo

furious and won't stay where there is nothing of him.

Why was he left

in a strange house with a stranger's key?

*A man is never lost at sea.*

Then how is a mind made phantom?

He doesn't notice hunger but fills the hole of his stomach repeatedly

leaning against the sink with windows of hemlocks to watch.

The sink gives.

His hole escapes him

and you know

(the hemlocks are gone).

## INTERRUPTED BY JOY

*for Leslie Scalapino and Lyn Hejinian (I desire to see being remembered as having seen,)*

She remembers being as having  
silence interrupted by signs.

Pride made her  
inconsolable—  
something she knew already,  
but had no sight of.

To cry— a discovery  
of feet in the sand  
of a beach hoarded by gulls...

Her being  
letting out a certain power—  
the tears were a livelihood  
upon her silent involvement  
in entropy.

She remembers being having  
certain hands and feet and certain toes:  
reading emotions in a palm  
as a threshold for seeing,  
making deals wherein  
the eyes are dry.

Without a body, the world is silent.

The wetness arises from a gaping hole.

She is found by him  
and he presses his palm wounds  
against her wings to avoid saltwater  
being. She  
remembers being  
loveliness,  
as holes dug for him,  
and turns her body slightly forward.

Saltwater bruises dwelling  
within her own hands  
as she kneels alongside the watering pit.  
With his hands he brushes  
and smooths dirt into the hole.

Now she is dry.  
Her silence discovers  
a desert— immediate  
evaporation of an ideal.  
Despite the sting left on her skin,  
he holds her in her arid gaze,  
brushing her breast with  
shredded palms  
and she remembers  
having seen  
being.

SHE COULDN'T HELP BEING REMEMBERED FOR HER LOOKS

*for Trump (locker room talk)*

Could you  
forget whiteness?

Or skinny jeans from  
American Eagle,  
could you forget those?

Can you remember without them?

Could you forget a pulsing sunburn  
and dark holes of Ray-bans,  
and sweet sixteens and Daddy's paycheck  
and acres of land out West?

You could forget the white skin  
of your Mommy's breast,  
but not yours  
and not Mary's.

Could you forget your own  
and East from West  
and apocryphal innocence?

How about seafoam:  
could you forget

someone else's tears  
while holding their hand?

Would I convert you  
to blindness?  
Convince you  
of the opacity in all skin,  
its surface  
scabbed and smooth  
without Victoria's Secret, and without  
Daddy's.

THE FULFILLMENT OF WISHES IN DREAMS

“... . In the room  
left by her, he  
cannot see himself  
  
as in a mirror, as  
a feeling of reflection.  
He thinks he thinks,  
  
of something else.”

-Robert Creeley

*A walk would be nice*, you said, starting off,  
leaving the rest in bed.

The meadow had grown over  
to preserve a dead elephant—  
the little left of the world.

*You always wanted the pronominal moment*  
*to end*, you said,  
so I admitted, finally,  
to wanting to be more than one.

After years of dismissing bones  
for photographs kept under the bed,

I tried growing myself  
over you, by telling you  
to lie perfectly still  
while spreading my arms for the wind to stretch.

If I told myself you were lying  
there, underneath the bed,  
could I find your bones?

Or would I miss the photographs,  
which did not belong  
on the wall and did not belong under the bed?

I wanted the photographs to grow  
over my eyes.

Back in the meadow, you said you were *tired of lying*  
still on the ground.

*I am not finished*, I said.

You breathed slowly, turning your head—  
my fingers remain the same lengths.

*Growing takes years*, you said,  
but you are wrong— the wind swells as we speak—  
growing impatience

incites me to dreams of rock being  
bones which do not disintegrate  
when touched.

Am I still making sense?

I want you. A waxing moon appears to be falling  
out of its pants  
while hanging low late

into dawn. Something is not beautiful  
when seen by everybody, yet I  
long for naked being  
light on my skin.

You disagreed with, *look at me*. Slowly,  
I must lift my budding body to exhume  
you from the meadow. I pry the lids  
for the glass hiding there  
to see myself squinting in  
the room of your eye.

I do not know if you are more or less  
indelible in this moment  
for I know that by opening eyes I will call all  
of this a dream.

## SOMNAMBULIST

Your lack of body is breathing  
freely and stop.

World peers over my shoulder while you  
are nothing, but  
blueness occurring at 8:16  
and sleeplessness.

By dark devotion, your realness protrudes:  
stark against walls of my imagined home,  
an appendage for reaching between skulls.

In lull of aloneness  
when eyes shut worlds away,  
I push towards knowing.

Wavering  
through painted fantasies to find you  
within the constellation of neurons;  
I move along fences.

TOUCH

*for* Paul Eluard

*(Mes caresses fondaient mes rêves en un seul clairvoyant et aveugle un rêve du duree.)*

In our meager bed,  
every sense is lost but touch,  
the sheer of your palm  
against my back.

The softness between two unattended  
lovers— ferns  
without eyes, I see you  
are not a fish, but a man collecting  
promises along my profile.

It is the same touch  
expanding my mind to the gore of words,  
the *talk* of roasting a shoulder.

Who could eat their lover?

Should I dine between your bones  
while you portrait my thighs  
with your hands?

Should I turn you to meat  
in my mouth as you wash me  
into an image...

In my mind, you too,  
petting hands, molded and kept  
since the night of liberation.

The hotel room on the 29th floor  
makes finger promises  
to devour the beauty of  
the form and the formless.

Where  
else did hands make these things?  
Away from eyes away off.

A WAKE WITHOUT WARNING

*for Gertrude Stein*

*A rose is a rose is a rose is a*

morning.

Skin as white as bone as dead as you.

I dreamed myself as dead as you.

It is February—

a wake when I thought

the grass as dead as you.

Asleep as flowers in their beds,

I dreamed of a dying day, its colors

bled as you— the sky

as dead as you

which is not so dead

when thought about

and less so when dreamed.

A rose is a mourning.

Sky

as bare as blue as you.

I dreamed myself slid

into glass and

kept.

I dreamed you as summer wades

as shells left as crests met.

What is not an end? What is

not a rose?

EFFORTS OF THE TRANSMISSIBLE

*for Jacques Lacan (I am not a poet, but a poem)*

A man reads by having his eyes read for him.

The words are no one's— pages carry  
traces of a sound perpetuated.

A man makes signs by remembering another voice,  
or another man revives a certain knowledge for him,  
not a word, not Molimo.

She creates a gesture  
to mean she's all there, just her lips  
won't move, her hands neither.

Expressionless,  
except her effort alone  
says something  
her body would not.

A series of deliberate winks reminds someone to feed her.

We knew it was a shame, but whose?  
Between the word and the thing there were inadequacies;  
there was sickness  
and death.

And our bodies  
belonged to no one— they suggested something,  
recollected another name.

Her mind maintained through its own cunning  
what her body could not.

His hands and mouth move to mean  
he's all there, just his words  
won't sense, his eyes neither.

Our talk reminds him of

something to count, or to hum.

His nonsense said what words would not—

something which they veiled.

It was despite words that we understood,

despite a body that we recognized  
someone there.

So how does a man say *it*?

When lips and hands fail and

language betrays,

his eyes make a sign

which cannot be a word.

His gaze transmits

something he can never say,

something only dreams echo.

# THE LOST TEMPLE

*for Ashbery (There is nothing to do for our liberation, except wait in the horror of it.)*

We cut across the country to some prescribed notion you had  
about the current state of farms.

Did anyone name their chickens?

Could the horizon be seen from his penthouse?

Roses not rising, only secured tight  
on leather seats.

You wishing it was not a two week trip  
and without knowing the wear....

Is the car stronger than us  
if it dies sooner? Burns enough fuel?

We saw signs for the temple  
and leverage... You said something about the state  
of oranges in Texas? Florida?

Could we have sex  
in the car under the sign? There were limits  
to the little things  
we could say  
and with only words to choose from.

*Remember the sabbath day  
to keep it holy...*

I wondered  
if the temple could be relieved by a sign—  
the form of one,

its words were condensation  
and the water altered the shape of the fruit.  
Could a rose survive  
from LA to DC?

Did anyone still read poetry?

I've asked every gas station attendant since Oklahoma City,  
and he hands me a Cobra lighter,  
says *have a good day now*. He means  
I'm asking the wrong question.  
Does beauty need a gun for protection?

There were no temples north of Virginia,  
no Waffle House past Pennsylvania. You said  
something about the state of not being  
when you are asleep.  
Could you guard a rose while napping under the moon?

I looked at him beyond the little reflection  
of car buttons,  
the elms, and the wisping clouds.  
Why was I alive, and why not  
twenty years older? Didn't I deserve  
to know what my father thought of poetry?  
But lines had to be drawn...

Δ

After all, is a rose so weak that she allows thoughts to wilt her?  
A hole is just a hole.

But it was the sight of it  
which wore on me— shapelessness  
with a name  
and the skin stretching where it would scab properly.

Yet, there is something lovely about the hour it took  
to find the bike shop he had been  
'a hundred times' before.

A maplessness,  
a lack of signs to and from the past or  
the uncovering of some treasure  
every time a name was spoken.

He defied emptiness as ashes do.

A beautiful urn with nothing inside  
is a hole cut out from the world.

Do we call this a temple?

A man may reach a hole which erases him.  
He may only know what he sees, understanding  
what little is answered without words... a tune  
or a rose.

Does a man whose only possession is beauty still live?

And can we call him *Dad*?

Δ

We drive all night to arrive at dawn.  
Home? You said there was something sacred  
about delivering pizza.  
It was true that food made a difference—  
but could the Mercedes really go anywhere  
in a trailer park?  
Did the car see the signs?

*The beauty of me is that I'm very rich.*  
Do you see where this is going now?  
Rich men are beginning their names with real.  
Are there any real rich roses? Does a lie  
cut holes in the truth or place words in front of it?

The beauty of a rose hangs patiently over a grave  
without knowing the wear— the time it took  
to grieve.

A day? A year?  
It only mattered that we remembered  
without words— stretched the hour  
with our silence.

One answer is real, the other  
is fulfillment of a wish arriving  
in your dreams.

The beauty of a car is how the man sees  
himself in it. He wants to make something great.  
The beauty of a grave relies on the man

and the rose together.

How can a man not read? Does this make him real?

Does the car read for him?

Can a speech cut across the country  
without reading signs, or wondering  
whether sex is permitted  
beneath the words?

Can he be holy  
without remembering the day?

Is a man beautiful if he cannot see a rose?

Δ

I take the assumption of love  
between my fingers more easily  
on the floor next to the bed  
where I can't move. I know it's you.

There are only signs  
when you happen to be nowhere  
and the sign teaches you.

The sign is an explanation a rose waits to hear.

One cicada a symphony of springtime....

how wet nights dragged our salty feet out of winters;

how we can assume love

with a sign

which is not a word

I am waiting to hear.

How sacred could crows feet be?

There are only signs when you are waiting

to believe in the assumption of a ghost's

love and god. How spring

is only beautiful when there is enough (time to die)

and you are in love with a fallen elm

and there is time enough to live again.

In reverence of signs I attempt to remember

dreams of greenery and glass veils. I know

one of the signs is my word.

I know it's you.

I know if I push the car far enough

I will find you in a hole called the Grand Canyon.

I want to forget the assumption of love and stretch my voice

over you— I do not know the word—

I know it's you—

I do not know the word...

Δ

Were you my first love?

Nights side

by side

and kisses... stubble...

*There is no negation— only compromise.*

Dry willingness to take up

the residuum of a name

which can no longer be used.

You are still so real to me,

no hole large enough—

no compensation for truth

dangling at this hour. Real

to me so that I love you more; interpret

more signs which I ever ignored.

Waving goodbye and crow footed

smiles which said to me,

*You are beautiful.*

A rose is a gesture of thought occurring

without a body. Without yours

I risk lilacs or tulips.

Can I interpret signs of an imaginary man without fooling myself?

The absence of a man is a hole

cut out from the world. Do we call this

a temple?

Δ

The beauty of silence is how the man sees  
himself in it.

He might as well be  
dead (or dreaming).

We park behind an abandoned farm where  
there are no signs.

The leather seats are not helping. He takes a photo  
of the car while I lie naked on its hood.

The photo could be a sign without a word—  
is the beauty of me that I am not a car or  
not a man?

Or not abandoned?

Did anyone still read poetry?

I have seen a rose without petals being no less  
a rose. With one arm I am held  
by him & with the other  
I am holiness— the loveliness  
of holes dug for him.

*Are you a hole?* I gasped.

I wonder  
will he keep the photograph  
when I am dead.

I wonder if he will  
at all.

Δ

## AFTERWORD

*A Hole Cut Out from the World* contains a voice of grief which is heard everyday. It is a mourning of small losses— a lost earring, a lost belief, a lost friend. Each day and each poem discovers grief transformed by new words and images. My experience with grief changes constantly and burrows deep, however there are few words to represent this weight. By looking inside the hole, I hope to shed light on something so unspeakable and illegible.

My poetry has become a space for pondering these emotions and thoughts as it seems something worth thinking about linguistically. My studies of literature and especially Freud led me to consider this connection between words and objects (or lack of objects). A word itself is a tool used to express something, but how does this tool work when the letters are forgotten? Or when its meaning gets lost? Grief creates a timespace where the associations and emotions behind a name or a word must be consoled and then rearranged. It requires an undertaking of language that alters its shape, even its sound. When a loved one dies, the world is different. It shrinks, it is missing something precious which used to hold it up. Only an understanding of the world's representation and some kind of continued expression of that missing piece will save it from fading into nothing.

In May of 2015, my father passed away after suffering from dementia and multiple strokes. His name was Charles, but everyone called him Chip. He had the same haircut for 60 years, he loved life, and laughed with everyone he knew. I was lucky enough to care for him while his memory failed, and to hold his hand while he took his last breath, but by the end the world had become an unintelligible place for me. For years I had watched him fade away and while relieved that he would not have to suffer any longer, I was immensely angry. How could one of the people I cared most about disappear, when I was only now understanding what I was to do with my life and with words? Grief demanded an emotional wrestling, as well as a

constant reminder of a physical absence— a wrestling occurring outside of myself which could not be altered. My sister and I laid in bunkbeds marveling at the life we still had left, the years ahead and all with someone missing dearly. Every night I would stare into the hole in my mind— it was a hole of silence following the sound of *dad*, a hole defacing every image of childhood. For a long time I did not see past the hole. Only in dreams did I begin to see stardust in it. My dad was gone, but he never seemed to leave the doorway where he used to lean and warn me of missing the bus again. He appeared in dreams, where I would protect him from aliens, take walks together, and he would ask how everyone was getting on. And what were these dreams but poems, poems where words have the power to conjure something which has no body of its own, something which could not exist in reality. There were delicate phrases and tiny pictures able to make a dead man's face recognizable again. The dream fragments became poems and the hole I looked into was less dark, something floated there which was not loneliness and not anger.

The dreams themselves were unreliable and unremembered, but they were able to reshape the world into something intelligible again. Subtleties and word play inspired me to continue using dreams as the base for my poems. The unconscious had a careful way of moving letters and meanings that could take years to uncover, especially when considering repetition. The same grief, the same word, the same name would appear again and again, yet one knew somehow that none of the iterations were the same, and the echo was not the original sound but a new one. The dreams and language were not simply tools for humans to organize the world— one had to think to use them, had to interpret in order to understand. The idea that there was latent material waiting to be addressed opened up a whole world for me and helped in eradicating the feeling that everything was simply waiting to be lost. The words were signs waiting to be found, and this included not only phrases surrounding dead loved ones, but unspoken political views and many other moments of interaction with the world.

I'd like to thank many people for supporting me in the past year and throughout my time at Bard. For my family (especially my mom) who are there for me at all times. For my friends and my roommates who put up with me and brought about many laughs. For Sam—thank you for being you & supporting me through my roughest moments. For professors who have taught me an incredible amount over the years. Thank you Ann! Working with you this year has been such a joy and I will miss our wandering conversations next year. I'd also like to thank protesters and people around the world who choose not to accept reality as it is given to them. Remember the temple! Keep it sharp!