

A MASK OF MOTION

Lyn Hejinian

*for Larry
&
for Paull & Anna*

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A MASK OF HISTORY

Would, he said, that my uncle
of poetry. Of any art, indeed!
— The fact is, I should say that he stood
to repeat in great detail
turned slightly toward the outside
that he might keep balance, on the stone
wall, and paraded his ideas
to all of us who would listen.
— An anecdote and a history
the rocks. He the partaker
hefted the green. The growing
emotion, that wouldn't remove
an hour, and then another, in order
to strain what he could believe
I care for my own and am never beholden
the brush the bush beside the flower
mark the granite island in the shade
the fish and lily pads. Turtles
not a moment wasted
and minstrels as a run into history

MASKS from A MASK OF MOTION

The Unknown
The Left Out
The Mysterious
The Holy Possibility

1.

I'm confusing two different stories,
she said; I know I'm mixing them up.
But somehow, strange as it seems,
completely unrelated events can
intertwine in my memory and then I
see they had something in common.

This is: your luck and my birthday
your money and my purse
your honey and my sweet

2.

the figs
of flirtation

it's fun

Ah, my sweet

To think as to love is to dance around
sex to music. There are "bison, horses,
and oxen in the central chamber; deer,
mammoth, and ibex in outer areas;
rhinoceros, lion, and bear in the farthest
recesses."

3.

The children each took a piece of colored
chalk and began to draw on the cement
courtyard. Where the drawing of one
crossed the drawing of the other they
ignored the shift. The resulting con-
figuration was confusing, but they
ignored that too. It was colorful.
They were a mystery to each other, still,
just as they were a mystery to themselves.
yours is the eye painted perchance
bring on the prose fruits

yours is the oval palm
the pleasing
the passion
the posied yard

someone sings of the purple waters
the green
the cobalt
the ochre
the brown potatoes

FIGURES FROM DAMAGED BOOKS

the heroes
are older

//

In these places, prompted to speech, even yesterday the cups and bowls were on the table, tattered as they were by the furthest water. By the door the trees hang. Love drives wishes as wishes drive love, and there are only as many facts as there are fictions, both driven before the same breeze. A fiction is a made thing that's recognized as such, and a fact is a made thing that is not recognized as such.

//

these are the reasons and the songs
a knife
of thirst and sex
a kitten
a kid
a kite
a kitchen
I would have leapt off the rock, if I could, and landed
across the valley in step with my own walking.

//

When my eyes have no strength
I am old
When my legs
and particularly walking downhill
just at the knees
and the calves
When even the seasons are tremulous

//

Bring on the barking dog, the setting sun, the growing trees. What is blue continues, what is red subsides. Our creeks are cold, our wines have no limit, our heroes are without fall and our children without winter. Here are the milk goats, here the bay horses. The soil is black, the fruit red or yellow or orange or purple as the plums.

//

Elephants and bears are both beautiful animals — as beautiful as horses and tigers.

Horses, tigers, elephants, bears.

Pigeons
Mules
Whales
Turkeys
Giraffes

//

The limpid seasons
bring unbroken rain.

//

And there is no way in which I can describe to you the sensuousness of the words and ideas. The rounds and peaks of them, their surfaces and interiors, give me the greatest pleasure. It is not unlike the pleasure one feels when one thinks of an old friend, one who remains both familiar and mysterious. Similarly, I love the idea of the Unknown, offering as it does to my mind a sense of almost religious Possibility.

MASKS from A MASK OF MOTION

1.

once when the minstrel was an historian, he a
lion among trees
o mother o' faces
the movement of the eaters and the feeders
what had happened. You have only to believe

2.

She says to him, Hold the baby, Sweet
Horn, the stairs are steep. The news
is good. The road has risen up and
hours wrap around the house, the arbor,
the oaks, all in good time. The entire
family in their boots and shoes is
standing and talking together around the
fire in its place, awaiting the roast,
the potatoes, the hospitality, or
something akin.

"We will have a room built up for you
in our new domicile and set apart for
your especial use; and more, we will
see that you have a fresh-laid soft-
boiled egg, toast, and tea every morning
and a little ride in the country whenever
you feel like indulging in rural
observations."

3.

The dog was tied to the tree
wearing the grain of the floor
out of the sun. Fed by a darker stream
the unusual green of the sky
And Time an invention
here are the lines not afraid of
pulls back the sweet bark
and flows over
better
eye-legged
afternoon. Drowsy

4.

Behind the mask
is the face of change.

It is a sense rather than a science, just as the beast of
courage bites the breast of fear.

I lay my leg out.

The mask of the sad one
is the suffering bear.
The mother cat
eats the blood, the still-born
kitten, and the shit
of the live ones.

5.
the dust is a red vegetation
I am here for kisses
into a few notes, I thought
of stone. And the red walls
in the fields to which I would come
if stated at all
of the yapping distances, the extended return

6.
There is one ancestor I have refused to acknowledge, he
told me. They say that he was challenged to a duel in San
Francisco and, arriving at the scene drunk, he took a look
at the weapons and ran, and he was never heard from
again. He couldn't have been the man they think he was,
the geneologists I hired in Boston. He meant it and he
laughed.

7.
We don't interpret the facts; instead, I think,
the facts emerge from our interpretations and
we foresuffer the past.

Some nights the owl sounds like a puppy.
did finish reading the book and then said
I have now to tell you without foolishness
of the three pines along the ridge that guard
the dirt road, and the snag that is their
grandmother.

Tucked therein, just at the trees
this is the plain mask of history.

SONG

should I concern myself with the possibility that you might forget?

//

My, the bright cheek that I touch
in sight. The sky was a pale blue
and the seduction a longing
of faces. This morning
by seaside roses and oaks in the dry hills
I am impatient to begin
the roses painted on the dish.
The Queen of Spring would be Queen of an early
Time; incipient
the soft cleft of the apricot.
Something is woven with the green. I've stooped
the sweet-eyed blossoms.
A bird
The thrust
Far Waters her consort.
Where the vines climb and wander
with their vegetables
The broken pots are still there,
and a bone. I've been trudging up
and down. I could drink all the rivers
blue, green, or brown.
They call them the Blood Tides.

//

There are deep fish, dangling lights
There are swift birds, the size of a thumb
There the old man, the worn tooth,
his neck like a turtle's
and the old woman, she loves her children, Lordy,
with one eye white as a star

//

the weather didn't take me
I called for it. It was later
on a hot day, before the season of the rains
wives the somber shadow
planted beside the back door
on the washline. There were towels, white tubs
They had cut the underwing of the stone bird
several children. The woman
is their mother.

//

let the river run
let the busy fish
let the dragonflies
let the man fish there
let the rocks stand
let the trees
let the reeds
let the grasses grow
let the cut rocks stand

A MASK OF ANGER

he said I should try something harder
a mask of rage

says of snakes
says of broken glass
says of aged foundations
unconsolable wildness,
an imagination uncomforted,
says without comfort

where are the gods who support the event
crashed into the circle
took the blue out of the sky
walled the warbler; turned the walker
wrong and wrong

there's no song but what's said
felt it
and no thought but what's bitten

THE SOFT FACE OF CONVERSATION

I like your passages. Every afternoon
a nice breeze came up. The lettuce
It was done years ago.
How intimate is an arm
lifted his head. In the heat
The infinite is sad
of all that we yearn for
held out. A wind would
the dry weather. They waited
the dogs and the weather
but the restless ideas
quietly. It was like the quiet of
a wide line. We smiled.
Looks like a cousin
are you from
fishing in another county
From books
the wide sign of the good
mother of stars, mother of faces

NOTES TOWARD A LYRIC INTERLUDE

1.

where awful love has closed upon my eye
the landscape of its armed embracing trees

he mentioned the silk and the sash

can read it "purple"
"pure"
"partially"

you whom I've encountered all bloody
with love

2.

that is a beautiful cat
and that is a beautiful child and
that is a beautiful color
and that is a beautiful view and
that is a beautiful tree
and, he said
that is a beautiful thought
and that is a beautiful poem and
that is a beautiful apricot
and that is a beautiful horse and
that is a beautiful day and
that is a beautiful melody and

3.

villanelle
triolet
sestina
canzone

4.

color of (and lyrical)
the declarative and the imperative
"happier the elements are all here
I recognize the thought and the dog
"here
the lion unleashed, the fucking lion
a stone on the wall
and
shoorashing water

5.

One wants to deny that others have felt what one now feels, have had the same or similar experiences. One wants to deny even their capacity for doing so. And, yet, one longs for their companionship, sympathy, and understanding. Perhaps, one wants to say, yes, you too have experienced this, but, of course, my experience means more to me than yours did to you — I am capable of feeling so much!

6.

whisper
wonder
window
plunder
thunder

7.

Tonight, he said, I am too tired
it is too warm in here
my bones are too tired
and my eyes
my bones and my eyes and my brain
to write a love poem
for you to write about love
but not my heart
to feel it

I'm willing to wake up because of the coffee
I'm willing to go out because of the new shoes
and the sun
the new shoes and the sun

as

I'm willing to sleep
through all the nights of the earth
beside you

8.

Think of it this way – if things of the moment are things of the mind, then one lives in a synchronous universe.

9.

Blinking waterfalls and sweet kisses!
starlit leaf. The virtues of passion
lay cool to the green, and cheeks
(elbows, knees, breasts, etc.)
beasts, a ritual
and the truck in the field
he repeated. The fruit on the ground
between the red walls, the goats
she sits, that lived in the country
a laugh that's a pleasure
but stars. I agree to be intimate
of sorts, and round. It is wild of
the ring
the dance and splash the singing
all his letters. I began
fragments. – The smell then
in their arrangement. The phrases of sound
Blinking waterfalls and sweet kisses!

MASKS from A MASK OF MOTION

(for Susan Howe)

in the Future and the French caves
heard the ritual syllables.
then clouds. Even the children
left-handed and right-handed
of the hot weather. Sunset
Other ideas follow. To water
there are pigs in the cellars
of the Dordogne. Other animals
The very rich hours of
the future. Amateur, meaning a lover

//

you choose your truths
order of songs. They are used
the knocked, trapped, one could say, the
rocks. Each with an exquisite laughter
this month. The day is hot.
smoke-drinking and brandishing of tongue
names: Tree-in-the-Face, Vegetable
Beloved Sister, Grain-on-the-Grave
in the humbling depths of the caves
of the Dordogne
and the humbling sky
 the blackbird fishing
the peach

//

The trees come up, come up with their usefulness, their roots through to the cave roofs. There are red tiles, and other materials, alloys, are used, for other things, say the wings of airplanes and for frying pans. Somber-faced, you turn off the radio. Up the tree, as one would looking, back at all who had died, the red and orange, the green and black, colors of the leaves hide the bird. This is the shelter that keeps you dry. Have no fear for the lives of your children, for the throats and smiles of the women and their daughters.

//

you choose your truths
tired. interrupts the music, the girls
in round dresses
the key to the house in the pocket
sleeve bodice hem
the lower feathers are like silk
unafraid of a mystery
by the road this tree
where runs the creek
the bear rests and the lion, the corn
in baskets, beans, shells, apples,
blue yarn, died with indigo and piss