

I began the day having to vote Yes or No to support the decision that there would be no decision right now but that there might possibly be one in two years' time, excepting the case that there isn't. I sat with the voting slip in my hand; we were to come down on either side of the situation, but the situation wasn't clear: "Am I voting to support the failure to make a decision or the decision to have failed?" I tried to find where I was: "I mean, am I voting to support the committee who reports to have failed to make a decision or voting to support the decision of the committee to have failed?" They answered that I was supporting the failure, its failing, and the committee "at large." It may have been simply that what we needed no longer existed such that we had to stop looking for it, or we had to call it by a different name, or we had to change the posture of our looking, or the very nature of looking had somehow become a problem for our eyes, or we would rather just go on as we were and invite a friend over occasionally. I wanted to begin drinking wine. "It's now or never," someone murmured from the screen hanging on the wall. "It's not now and not never," someone corrected.

I began the day thinking about the university level—where it was and who was allowed to go there—and felt in my body a sense that there were a series of gates to pass through, a grand lawn, a series of gates and then an elevator to take you down into the earth. The university level would be on the top floor of something that rose above all the surrounding structures but did so, inversely, deep beneath the ground, perhaps forty levels below, where meaning was made and the core burned brightly. You had to take a bus to reach the site where the university soared, and it took seventeen days and six months, and the rules dictated that you go alone and read nothing and sip a little bourbon. To go you had to take a bus and climb into the car awaiting you—any person with a map and credentials could do this: going and getting on a bus that arrived and departed from eighty-two terminals before pulling into the lot where a hybrid car awaited, a car driven by a person with a book in his hand, the only book you would find on your journey. It was the car that drove through the gate and ran out of gas two times, one time overnight, and provided a place to sleep: the driver standing

outside. And dinner coming on a tray that bore a map of the place you'd been earlier that day and something in you growing very tired the more you ate. I could see the landscape from where I sat, writing about the landscape. I was on campus. I was at the university level, but I couldn't remember how I'd arrived there. I had to watch people for years to put the story together. You took a bus that drove all day for many days, then climbed into a car; the car eventually drove through gates—one gate and then another and stopped for lunch and then four more gates—until it pulled up to a building that looked like an enormous well. It was brick and wood and cloaked in mist. You had long forgotten about the sun. The well had a door that the body had to squeeze through and a thick rope that the body scaled down; at the end of the room the body landed in an elevator. A picture of a book was pasted next to the controls: it was maybe your book, your first, or a book by your favorite author. There was a sign that talked about the university, how you might find it, which button to push. But it didn't explain why the button wasn't on the panel, the button for the university level. You ran out of numbers before you got to where you were going, so just had to sit there. You sat, I was told. And nothing happened. No food came; no one screamed down to

say hello. You waited, perhaps for days, perhaps in a timeless way, and suddenly felt a jolt. It was a different feeling from the bus, which jolted, but horizontally. This was a free fall. The body fell in a cage through darkness, sweating and inhaling the core of the earth. The core called out to you in a torpid voice.

I began the day wandering the streets of the small city where I lived in pursuit of two variables—acts and location—that belonged to the same expression—*acts of location*—but mysteriously so. I was looking for an event (in the world) that would index the moment the expression came into being, such that when one said “acts of location” sound or sight would confirm it. Moreover—I thought as I meandered—the event needed to occur between my body and the city. That is, I wanted to express, within the object world, a series of acts of location that needed only the body (and the world) in that moment of expression. Yet I also wanted to find the variables of the expression as independent facts in the world and, between them, to recognize some form of visible scarring that would indicate not only that I’d found those facts but their interrelation as well. The scarring would act like a body (though not mine), which one approached with a word that functioned like a name but didn’t have to be the name that necessarily belonged to that body but could be a name that the body put on for a time then took off to hand back to one. It needed to be a name that could be worn by most bodies, because the idea was that you’d find

scarring everywhere, between every gesture and the space that manifested around it. I was trying to see location the way I saw wind blowing the small branches of city trees. I tried to have it sync up with the incessant sparrowing I heard. I wanted location to be ordinary and for acts to be countable. However, I did not want “acts” to be sitting on top of “location” in such a way that you were metaphysically indisposed, having to pull the two apart as I was now doing. There had to be a pre-space, before the expression, where they were adjoined but not merged. An act was everything and location was everywhere, which made the whole thing hard to break down, but when you said “acts of location,” you didn’t think all possible things at once. Rather, you narrowed in on a feeling, a specific event that made a boundary in time. I was trying to walk through the city with this unfolding. I began northeasterly with pieces of paper on which I’d scribbled the words *draw* and *bird* and *call someone*, and carried those pieces to sites I thought of as “church,” “bus station,” and “art gallery,” leaving each piece in some kind of correspondence. I laid *draw* within “church” and pulled out my recorder. I hid *bird* behind a trash barrel at the “bus station,” then got on a bus. Somebody asked me what I was doing when I began making new slips for “acts” on the bus. I tore the paper with ceremony and hunkered down to make the folds. A person

tried to grab one, but I retained it at the same time that I put *call someone* in his pocket. I thought he might fall to the floor and allow his face to open. I thought he might do something devotional. But instead, he stared and did not blink. You couldn't understand it if you couldn't ask about it and you couldn't ask about it unless you revealed the act in his pocket. I walked into the "art gallery." The ceramicist had her nests on the wall. They already had pieces of paper coming out of them, so there was no place to put my words. I still had "acts" to pass out. I had *fold*. I wanted *fold* to be an act of location and I wanted everybody to have a nook. Inside the nook, I felt, we could understand something that had always eluded us. We would know enclosure. But, that would be "place," and place was not precisely location. I let the thought go. I grabbed a hand, then came another idea about acts, how acts are sometimes like pocket notes that you use to process an experience or work of art, how you might hang nests on a wall and nest in each of them fragments of a manuscript and let pieces of that book fall to the floor, such that within that sequence would be seven acts and seven pocket notes. However, though "the floor" could be argued as location, a fragment falling to it was not the "acts of location" we were looking for. The ceramicist wanted tequila before her opening. We didn't know if going next door to drink it was

making new location or just extending the old. We didn't know when our tequilas stopped belonging to the name on the bottle from which they were poured and became parts of the "bird" we uttered during our sips. There were always extra folds of birds of paper and you could move your finger along the length of them and have witnesses, and do this for minutes at a time never having to explain what you were doing or the desired effect, because it was clear that these folds were the scarring that made people feel safe in public.

I began the day wanting these essays to do more than they were currently doing and even had a book alongside that I thought would help me, but it turned out I wanted more from this book as well. It was hard to be a book about engineering in architecture when an essayist wanted you to be a book about structures in fiction. But why were you called *Atlas of Novel Tectonics*, if I was not supposed to think of you this way? Somehow I'd wandered into the middle of a letter. I signed off and returned to the day, a cooler, dryer morning than the one before. I sat in a gaze of wanting more as I drank coffee and looked into these essays for their architecture, waiting for the sun to rise and sleep to come over me (fictionally). Not only was this book's title *Atlas of Novel Tectonics* but also it had the title "Geometry" for its first section, "Matter" for its second, and "The World" for its final! What should a book on novel tectonics concern itself with other than the nature of fiction, a fiction trying to amass itself and become a huge structure? Fiction was trying to amass itself all over the room where I sat, but a morning rain had begun (fictionally) and I was trying to write an essay. I was between fiction and essay and flipping through this book that

called itself an atlas, that had microchapters that made my heart rush. I wanted to enter the space of “refrain” (tucked inside “Matter”) and think about recurrence in an unfolding novel: (Ah!) I stretched back and leaned into the rain. I didn’t know what the book on fiction architectures would say about refrain but this wasn’t that book, which meant that book still hadn’t been written and I certainly couldn’t write that book today.

I began the day trying to understand how the phrase *slam dunk* functioned when uttered by the president of the university at which I was employed, who was, in that moment, explaining how I would soon be dis-employed from that university and pulling from her gallery of expressions the phrase *slam dunk* to drive the point home. The reasons for my dismissal were cloaked in a mysterious mystery (as if we were in a double tunnel), and I was trying to find a clearing. But she'd said "slam dunk" then relayed a story about her life, which, I believed, was intended to place us face-to-face in a rolled-up-sleeves kind of way, where she could say, "slam dunk," and I could lower my head with humility. I thought she might have been writing fiction, because the whole air of why I was there was that she knew more about fiction than I did, as did the provost and some other men at the university level, so "slam dunk," which she confessed I was not, was an opening to some novel she was writing. "Were you a slam dunk," a passage in the novel read, "it would be easier for me to see you and to listen to you, but I am tall and the wind is blowing through my hair. In fact, only something loud, something that would crash down on this glass, that

would replicate one hand emphatically putting the situation into a clearly defined hole such that there was no possibility of mistaking anywhere and in any light that (a) there was a ball and (b) a hand that delivered it and (c) something gained from the ball delivered—with violence—through a hole that stood alone and had arrows pointing the way . . .” And so the president’s novel continued beyond the point of our meeting, into the cycle of my sleep, clanging through my dreams.

ion
of
all
n
d

I began the day with the president's novel in my hand. I was surprised that it was a slim novel not unlike those I'd written myself and I was torn between reading it right there (at the university level) or waiting until I was on the toilet, where all short, delectable novels should be read, or at least begun. However, I couldn't commence with the reading of the book, which, I believed, was the president's first novel, which, surely, would win some huge prize in no time—I couldn't commence with the reading of this novel until I'd read the one—written only recently by the provost—which absolutely influenced this one I held in my hand. But it was hard to find the provost's novel, because he wrote it in such a way that only a select gathering of men could read it; in fact, one could never be certain—since you were always hearing the story at three or four removes—whether the provost's novel was actually written by the provost or, on the contrary, which wouldn't actually be that contrary, was written by that small gathering of men. It was hard to find authorship among this group, and yet one knew, one could not deny, that this center represented the future of novel writing. I liked that I could hold the president's novel between my thumb

and forefinger without putting any stress on my wrist. Her novel was as light as a rag, and I appreciated this when I had to slip it out of my campus box, as if it were made of explosive materials, because even though it was a compact novel and I have always appreciated things that were in miniature, things that were hazy in content and direction, especially novels, this particular novel I felt would be to my detriment, and if, as I was retrieving it from my box, it touched anything else it would harm that thing as well. But you wanted to read this novel, because it was written by the president of the university for which you taught, or by the provost or by that small gathering of men. In any case, it was written by a mind that knew everything there was to know about fiction and understood "impact" without having to understand anything else.

Started in speaker - 1/10 -
JG

I began the day just trying to get a handle on their sexual entanglements: everyone had been with everyone and was now with someone else in the room. Everyone had tried love or sex with one of the people sitting here, then later on tried love or sex with another of the people. They had been men and women doing this, and if I were to get up and go, they would be alone. Though the way they loved or had sex would probably not express itself immediately: I didn't think if I left the room they would begin tonguing each other or fighting or writing each other into their books, not that day, not in the middle of a meeting nobody wanted to have. As I sat in the room, I wondered about all the people who were outside of the room, who also could be added to this map of loving or sexing, who were not here because they didn't belong to this institution yet belonged to this network of lovers. Sometimes through these negotiations you realize your purpose: they needed me, I was the only one who could get up and leave, and if I did leave, it would only be to bring the others back with me. I had a quest, and it was in service of my colleagues, but it was not the kind of service valued by the university, so I was torn as to whether I should

do it. It was hard to fathom the consequences. If I brought all the people who had loved or sexed all the other people in this room, where each person had loved or sexed at least two of the original people present, and they were all together with the stories of their past relations, sometimes written in books, sometimes forgotten, and I sat among them having slept with none and having read none of the books, what would I do while they were reminiscing and what would I do?

I began the day wanting the language to describe a kind of writing that one could do that was not a physical act of producing marks on a page or computer screen but was a duration of thinking in which the thing one had recently completed, in my case *Ana Patova Crosses a Bridge*, which moved through my life so fast, so crisply that I couldn't find in my body any feeling of having written it—I found the memory with no problem but nothing in my muscles or in my breath that could tell me something of what it was like to have written that book . . . I wanted a duration in which the book I had written, which was the third in a series of books, a book in which fatigue made me break the line before it had reached the requisite length for a novel—it was a novel, but one tired of the form . . . I thought perhaps the reason I struggled to remember in my body this book that flashed through me was because immediately upon finishing it I went straight into drawing, though it was drawing that was rather like writing, and maybe there, in the drawings, was the record of this book I had made. I made the drawings because I wanted to inhabit a thinking space, one that could be seen and was not just a story we imagined about how thinking went on in our heads. Now I would be able to point to an aggregation

of marks and say, "Narrative is like this," or say, "These are the mechanics of prose." At the time, though, I didn't want to say too much about the drawings; I was interested in the silence of writing. Nevertheless, I must have had in me some memory of what it was like to build that book, as it had become one of my favorites of the books I'd written, and I had written it listening to someone listen to me as I shaped it. I regretted not having been more aware when I was writing that book that I was writing something I would come to love, that I would eventually put next to another book, written many years prior, and call the two my favorites, and actually admit this to other people. For me to have known this was happening, I needed to go back in time to that day in January, the day before the book entered me, and say to my body that what was about to happen would be important, not only because a manuscript would emerge from me, cellularly, and would go out into the world, as the third "trying" of something mysterious and essential to my living, but also because the way that I would have to think in order to write the book would change me from that point forward, and later I would want to look back on the stages of that transformation and see the inscription of this new thinking. As I had done before, I would make the way the book changed me a book in itself, or at least make an essay that would draw a picture of the story.

I began the day trying to explain to Danielle what it was like to be a lesbian in the 90s and why there were so many ex-girlfriends around who were often in committed relationships with other ex-girlfriends of yours as well as one or two others in the room, these others also being ex-girlfriends of other friends there, not friends you ever slept with but friends between whom floated some strange tension, residual of something that happened fifteen years ago, which no one remembers but which everyone holds vigil. And how one of these people might suddenly grill peaches with mint, causing us all to gather around the table. And how one of these people now has a daughter and another daughter and son and two dogs named Jesse and James and how they all might gather at the table too, eating those peaches. I wanted Danielle to want to be at this table, though she didn't know any of these people previously and had grown up with better boundaries in another part of the country. She missed this decade where we just couldn't burn our bridges, where we built bridges on top of ruined bridges, and lived in an elaborate architecture of trying and failing to try then at the last minute trying, escorting some broken love into what looked like a better love, until that love broke and that old love

became an even older love who moved on, perhaps to someone you roomed with or someone a person you roomed with once loved. We didn't know what it looked like and wouldn't have called it community, but now there were all these people and they liked the grilled peaches and shared the pork ribs elegantly. It was that the peaches were basted with a balsamic reduction that a person had prepared on the stove, a person who was now in love with my best friend's ex-lover, my best friend who was once an old love, but is now my friend Chubby who has Kristy and kids. Chubby wasn't there but wanted to be remembered and placed fondly in the center of any photos that were taken and was happy to be a cardboard cutout in these photos: she was happy to get a smear of the peaches, even just a whiff of the ribs. Danielle didn't eat the ribs but did eat and eat the peaches and went on for days thinking about them, wanting to recreate them later for a different gathering of people that comprised no ex-girlfriends and no friends of ex-girlfriends, so was not as warm as the previous gathering and the guests were not as old. They didn't remember the 90s in the way I did and didn't have fourteen bridges built over one piece of water and didn't have water.

I began the day hearing the voice try to take on layers and speak about poetry and speak about prose and be a loose figure that people wanted to write about but no one wanted to be. The voice had all these responsibilities, but everyone was forgetting about it at the same time. You could write a poem that was the repurposing of another poem—a text that was perhaps found in a catalogue for farming equipment, that you lifted up and placed on a new page with your name on it—you could use tractors to show your thinking and wouldn't have to say "I" and wouldn't have to say "please" about anything. You wouldn't say, "Please can I write the story of this light bisecting the room, where a person walks in and stands, not knowing what to do." You'd just say something like, "Tractors la la la, thousands of dollars," and write your name. Maybe erase it then rewrite it. Maybe change the typeface of your name. Make the font small. Add shadow to the third and sixth letters. You might write "Mr. So-and-So" instead of your name. But the voice was getting away from us. First it was everything and then it was nothing, though it was the same language we were using. We stopped talking about the poem as though someone were inside

it, then we stopped talking about the poem altogether, or at least stopped expecting there to be a body relating to the poem, at risk. It seemed possible to say anything, especially if someone had said it before, and it was these words of that other person that we put in place of our voice. People were doing this then saying the word *internet* after and waiting to hear a response. The response came: people had lunch; they found language everywhere. The menu said "Fries," and this was taken, put on a page next to "Omaha," punctuated by a date. We wanted to map instead of talk; we wanted to silence something and open something. There was so much detritus building up: it needed to be written; it needed to be used. Someone wanted to laugh at it. If you could find a space to laugh, then that voice inside you—the one that went "Please, can I"—that voice might lean back and read the newspaper. Time would go by, and structures would be laid on your name.

I began the day “a woman in clothes” wanting to be a woman in clothes, because Danielle had had a certain body all her life. And I had had a certain body, but where she had regained the body of her life, which she had temporarily lost, such that she carried a memory of the other body but didn’t have to see it, I had this body, which had been mine for a long time, but which may not have been my body, in that sense of Danielle’s—a body she liked to drape in clothes. My body was wearing the red pajamas and hers the dark green and hers made a shape around her butt with a line bisecting, and the line wrote “ass” all over everything. My line wrote “penis-pocket,” because of the slit, the pouch at the front of the red pajamas. And the day was getting on. I was wondering how to be a woman in my red pajamas and thick red wool sweater, my skintight pajamas, my striped sweater. I was wondering how, if the bell rang, I would run down the stairs *a woman in clothes*, as if someone had written a story about our day, where we stayed on this side of the snow that was falling, and the inside was our city. We wanted a city full of living, so we walked quickly back and forth in front of the full-length mirror. She swished past me; I swished

past her, with hours passing. We were women in clothes for a time (despite my undershirt being tucked into my skintights) and this made you want to get to know a person. "You are red everything," she said, looking all the way to my socks. But, my slit, my pocket made me shy and I was dizzy from the speed of my walking: I was in my skintight pajamas and carried, in them, a voluptuous body that was probably an impostor. My sweater sat on top of my belly; my socks slid across the floor. I was red-black-red-red-black in that order and something else in reverse. Then several hours passed. "She was now in a white shirt," wrote the story, "a blouse, intersected by blue infinitely. And, though the woman was dressed . . ." it carried on. And though Danielle was now in bed—I began writing my own story—she was wearing jeans, and this was her body. To find mine, I had to push my hand through the slit of the red pajamas, and show the ring on my middle finger: it was something along the road to getting there; it was a feminine gesture—if you looked only at the grace of the hand—an accessory.

I began the day trying to say the word *body* as many times as I could, for myself and for everyone in this room. We were in a time where the body was important to a lot of people, and it was important to me. I wanted to exchange the word with all my correspondents. I wanted to say "body" to them: how is your body or writing through the body or how the body activates objects in the room. I hoped to say "body" and see a change come over your face: inside your body, the edge of the body, your body split. (I split you.) I hoped to reach a point in speaking where when it was time to say "body" I could go silent instead. I'd pause and everyone in the room would sound the word within themselves. I'd go, "Every time you put a hole in the _____," and demur. Lower my head like a forty-watt bulb, look solemn. Or would say, "We all carry something in our _____" (it could also be plural), and the collective internal silent hum would overwhelm my senses. This would be real communication: something you started in your _____ would finish in mine.

I began the day obliged to clean the moka pot, which I had failed to attend to last night, but I cleaned the fry pan instead. I cleaned the fry pan and sang loudly a Valerie June song and remembered the moka pot then further my first cup of coffee, which I hadn't yet had. I washed the plates from dinner; I ran the garbage disposal. I sliced into a lemon and placed a quarter of it into the sink. I took a deep breath and felt something alight in my chest. It was a small fire that might have been a clog beginning to form in my aorta. I thought, "I will never take a hot bath again," as I proclaimed every morning. I had been sitting on the kitchen floor with my hand clasped to my chest, in proximity to the moka pot not-quite-gleaming on the stovetop, the closest I'd been to it in hours, and I saw in my predicament a reflection of the problem I'd stumbled upon the previous night. The problem was in the form of a question: In order to draw (was how it began), would one have to give up writing if to keep on writing one needed to draw—writing and drawing being identical gestures made with the hand—would to stop writing so as to draw make drawing impossible, since drawing was a way to think with the body and writing was the story of the body in thought?