

**t o s p e a k w h i l e d r e a m i n g**

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**E l e n i S i k e l i a n o s**

*to speak while dreaming* was originally published by Selva Editions (Boulder, 1993).

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Some of these poems originally appeared in *Big Rain*, *The Black Warrior Review*, *Bombay Gin*, *Break to Open*, *The Colorado North Review*, *Concept*, *Exit Zero*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Feminist Studies*, *In This Corner*, *the little magazine*, *Mesechabe*, *The New Censorship*, *The Santa Barbara News-Press*, & *The Thrasing Dove Review*.

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*for many, including my mother, Peter, Poets  
dead & living, & many others without whom  
I would not be doing what I do.*

## LOCATIONS

ruby-throated most common the one who came  
in sleep with secrets & mountains opened  
each morning in blue under bottle brush tree.

That was a place.

This, flicker or Clark's nutcracker,

in Estes winged creatures keep

no secrets        silent bird

calls

the Rockies close

instead of open.

context: a post that can't be opened  
to words, the ones surrounding me here.

As in: Language  
surrounded by fear.

My friends all needled in,

a homegirl's life is at home

in trailer park, in bar

to tilt

away from it I cannot adjust

to fit, wait for the aperture

in vein synthetic fluids form them

& for me poesy

's violent flow.

## A WOMAN ALONE

is like a tubular pregnancy  
or fishbone  
gets stuck in the throat  
sharp gullet that holds/  
holds millions  
of diamonds & whale  
bone to lock it—  
to force the locket & let  
love's diatoms pour forth.  
o diaphanous vertebrae! the throes  
of this woman  
the threads  
break apart

## KATIE

all that was ought, a hymn to it  
& her, bright star or caravel  
her red shirt  
she says she is cynical about it & draws  
her sail—  
a small spiral,  
helical, a cylinder at bottom  
of page, a maze  
& amazed at her  
glasses (i am)  
so thick-horned & heavy to frame  
or something about  
the sure car of herself,  
driving sockless, not wrong  
& to write without “her”  
would be a sail without wind  
would be fish or fry  
to a spoon  
o!  
to give her skirt  
or,  
room



## H.D.

aortic arch, my apogee  
as in aphotic & apetalous life  
a caravel or any of several sailing ships  
cloaked by capuchin went in  
    to carcinogen & bedecked  
        by carcanet swiftly  
            to the neck

## WHAT I LEARNED FROM SEA

From large bodies  
kelp-ridden & flot infested  
those waves where i sank  
    & swam, early morning caught  
in sand—  
    boarded—was it sedge  
    that laced our hair—

    each hand  
    rolled & flecked its finger out

abalone                      olivella  
                                    anemone

the pools we wandered & were  
stalked— foam lapped—  
restless slaps

the ankles



The waves that lapped  
up shore— things  
i didn't know that lay there like  
soft cnidaria or ctenophore  
sprouting colonies on stalk in  
gentle push, the dark slap  
-suction of water,  
H<sub>2</sub>O bends

at surface—that's why a blade  
can float there—

To get to  
Devereaux the marshy point i went  
each morning from asphalt  
to sea shore camp  
in wild cypress where enchanted—  
but then also *Devereaux*—a home—  
a hospital—autism &  
trisomy 21 dwelt there—

My mother, who could never  
pay the rent  
sent  
out for another, for  
a sidekick, a lover  
sent  
—her daughter—  
to summer  
camp.

they were the mad    unwanted  
we saw them  
    furrowing afield

        escaped, we dreamed    they grouped  
among the anise

        weed



& when I went back  
all had been boarded

weeds in the stables,  
campground &  
cabins

covered over

where Tom told stories  
about the chicken heart that ate New York

BOOM BOOM

BOOM BOOM

of the heart. he'd play the part

The hay  
bins broken  
Twice scared by a violin  
spider in straw  
where we'd  
kiss.

a walk along the high road to kiosk  
& then the road thru  
marsh grass  
Eucalyptus  
yarrow vetch —poor-will  
swallow crow, or

And i  
walked each (morning) shoes asleep  
in mud i once had  
a plot of land there—  
my only  
one—

I couldn't remember  
the dead man's name

Many a time we ate a meal  
on the stone steps that led up  
to the spire, me  
& my friend from the res  
now dead,

Barbara Dee.

Monarchs breed on  
the track that leads to grave—  
granite spire to mark a sailor

Colin Powys Campbell Lieut. Colonel  
Central Indian Horse Army  
1859 — 1923

& on the other side, Ian Drummond, age 2, his son—

they'd come  
to bug the Injuns—but crashed  
down to sand shored, the strange tumble  
weed & dune field jelly comb & yellow flower  
tidepools half

a handful wide

There was no marking,  
no sign  
or cross

for the Chumash



Sally forth, my dark-eyed waters,  
my waiter-on-seas  
What spirit that swelled there  
under kelp & squall,  
the long-nosed eel fish that frightened  
me once, far out in the waves  
the horse shoe crab half-buried in bay

The path i talk about leads from other the side  
of jailed or crazy or disabled  
who scared me when they grimaced  
thru the chainlink—

12 years & there  
a fire ring, we'd sing  
songs where

*up in the air — junior birdmen*  
*up in the air — & upside down*  
*I'll give you two — box tops*  
*& one thin di - i- ime.*

before i went to search athwart for elf in  
Cypress — old stage by sea  
where we  
had watermelon hunt & feast or  
  
played sardines packed in the hollow  
of the bloodthick  
  
trees

& in the dry

pine & sand, we heard

the sea

where we

drowned

almost many times,

& really.

## THRU THE MOUTH

the hard things that lay there where  
blood should go its flow  
                  lumped in—  
                  richest  
                  fed smithy,  
                  fired in memory—

Put a hot hand on it! Oread, melt  
melt & manœuvre thru the mouth—  
molten, not gun metal—meltdown  
“Texas man kills 22, shoots self”

I too am loaded then triggered by  
a twig or leaf falling, a  
memory of what has been, what  
past-tense was sap to limb- a little girl's  
mouth on pap hardened  
in resin—her mind's  
a fly in amber held  
by lower spinal sorrow—

o rosin thy brow tea drinker sinner  
                  sing roseate  
& gold rhododendron on the mouth-mem  
a membrane—brain stretched thin flim  
flam element a veil a mouthpiece  
a reed to blow by  
                  what stretches across  
california means child hooded the hazy  
sea morning over your aies.  
A mattress to stretch out across is this  
mem is this sea  
                  row there to lie,  
                  stretch strain a descant  
slam! o go  
there to spread out across & to dream  
while speaking.

**THESE ARE THE TONES**

Saturday night screams from State Street  
back lot of the Schooner Inn

“BITCH! YOU’RE SUCH A FUCKING BITCH!”

His voice deepening dry into concrete, etches  
across parking, rattles gravel

Her words, unheard—  
apologetic tones—her voice  
swallowed & lost to dirt—

## RINGED BY THE MAGDALENE

Love,

a many fingered thing  
many hammered  
a multitude of moods in her  
blank  
sutra,  
she should rend it, anodyne  
to desire

it is height & depth,  
breadth of gold  
on her breath  
she craves

nothing  
but a room where no voices are heard  
where even the moths  
don't make noise

## **THIS AUTUMN**

a few bark  
bits scatter slate, nothing speaks  
of cat fast  
asleep on wood  
pile where fire  
nearby burns.  
He turns over in bed she, away can't  
make a cold hand warm she stays up reading  
much of the night.



## **AUGURIES.**

To find the rhythms of—  
                                  the rhythms of daily—  
                                  I can't

Where spirituality is a luxury & we are isolated  
even from ourselves.

Where my eye closes to the lampshade, the night  
pressed up against the window, and voices drift  
from deeper rooms. Next to me,  
a page turns, and we do not speak.  
Next to me, a page turns, & we sleep.

**MORE ACCURATELY**

We are alone unto the sunrise  
he said

We are alone unto the kitchen  
unto our chocolate cake  
she said, more accurately

**THE MAN'S BACK,**

pits plums in lowlight, tabled  
by equations of  
love, light leather,  
harness to bit,

She chomps of old  
hers not a fruit  
that keeps

He's in  
her  
now—no  
sabre or pistol—

He's in her  
hair— stiff peak  
egg whipped  
sea foam  
mountain lip

in her as pit is  
to plum, no stoned  
cherry left  
undone. An endrometrium  
cauldron rises &  
in her each month: much  
build up.

He bathes  
while she waits under cover—  
quilted & feathered, fine in  
—this return—no wagons  
or worms, no pony for mail—  
no model for love, no way—

look up, peony,

engine off door slams—  
he's made the jam—  
—new man—  
—cooks—cleans—sews—

but bottle cap to baby  
doll, big  
difference in men  
&  
women

diced in domino,  
in ebony & onyx —a mean cradled rolling—:  
out of sea, we creep  
a species or two ahead

untailed, maimed  
by  
what  
but

Eros  
took his time-  
tables with him when he left

yet he would be in her as ghee  
is to butter, as seed  
is to shell, soft  
oyster gel in her  
gut—bloom  
applewood or plum,  
bloom, sleek  
strata of cell  
mouth,  
bloom, spout  
red & ringed in  
her & of  
whom?

him.

## LOVE SONGS

i.

man next to me leafing  
thru sleep, he leaves  
his headlights on, sleeps  
light all  
night. Not rue,  
sleeps dark winged  
horse & thing in  
dream heavy time. His breath  
a tree spreads

deep.

ii.

Now—im-  
possible, I am  
with needly leg & bandy headed  
night what do but banter it  
up—

                  hid hip under  
slip cover shock test  
      cold blanket  
                  autumn a.m. as in  
                  late—  
                  lip to lip we warm it  
My legs  
wake up.

iii.

iv.

Which is something like saying I'm a baseball  
fan & I've never seen  
a game.

But will play that wide-mirror's arch,  
poet given water-born Arché  
a cough reflected breathes air  
off my armpit, the coughing  
of the one I love.

v.

This is not the descant I mean to be but  
some of us can't carry a tune much  
less a letter box or mail  
station under the arm.  
Pit stop, silly. Close yer eyes.

## ORPHEUS & 3 CONVERSATIONS

Loving like salt  
we will go  
to hunt a code

a phone line cut off  
isolated  
in a hell in a hole in  
cranked silence

Call the police  
to investigate  
this scene this  
opening door

Pass over this open mouth  
this beggar's alarm  
a thief in rags come  
steel the words  
plucked  
from the mouth as raisin or grape  
o resonate  
or soak us  
in oaken casks & pine sap

oh give us this day,  
Orpheus,  
our molten bread  
the grains like small birds in hand  
the glitter of oat  
barley,  
wheat

Open  
the hand,  
let us eat.

THE SONNETS



the morning is not yet & will be soon  
washed of my eyes  
& yesterday's & today's undone,  
those ballasts & ties

i realize

I am always any, other or some but I do pinpoint it  
sometimes: this is willow or thrombosis & you can  
lean on me as night, as you might  
a pillow, I am a lamp to thee  
who see a door, who relish a roadway, who move on  
thru the suffering of a woman, of a man who  
becomes bull of seven battles who becomes  
undone, who  
becomes

the place between yr legs which is the place  
arched & described

    between 2 stars

        wounds of a fashion, it was sd,  
            as an orchid, & opens

    sweetly confident in sword/

Swarm yer battalions, little brother,  
with honey & ants, inch your way  
toward luminous night where we  
disarm the eye & bone pipes whistle  
with birds singing thru them, our dark  
coral in blood swinging from tide to tide,  
never arrived, always just begun.  
Begin. Again.

who touches this touches a woman  
I spring into your arms in Whitmanic what  
    obviously I have nothing  
but  
what brings the wind/ what the wind  
hums I do  
get afternoon dark I do  
grow pale & slow & now I come  
in the wings of it  
as the world in you I will fetch  
a strong fahrenheit for you  
I will count it out,  
I will reduce it to indigo I will carry you home  
    little by little  
in my hands

You, a “someone smoke surrounds”  
are in Antarctica, the machinery in your breath  
clanks & grinds  
    (momentary halt)—

Send your thots out, let them ride  
    this carnival affair: air

Sing thru your yer teeth,  
Hammering oxygen, let your ear acquire me

You are as firm as winter ice & I  
am waiting for things to soften, O big  
    man, fetch the seal oil & anoint us, &  
    remember on your way to the floe:  
let fall  
yr weapons

Straddled by snow, we go  
out like a lark like a fire  
goes out with a hiss, ashes neigh  
in dusty death the way this  
village has emptied to cold.  
We are spent in dark woven veins, the milk  
    hasn't come home  
    since 1966,  
when rue filled us  
with country. We come  
to this tethered island, our mothers in full  
threshing floor lit for  
the bell spills its heart into Sunday,  
beat of this village

Compost creeps the hot  
autumn race & Hyacinthus shouts  
at every petal's base:  
that flower-hero's been fooled  
by a change in season, by sun  
's quick tilting from reason.  
Poisonous bulb struck by a discus, this  
west wind's got it in for us  
Blood numbed, this is about  
the hyacinth almost bloomed outside my October-  
heavy door but  
O ηλιος knows more & I  
am no good greek, can't tear  
hair for love  
's flower



a wound down sky of  
Colorado flies over  
& over again i say these men these women  
this airplane in my heart or  
anyone's sun undressed There is nothing  
to express a morning glory or the way  
i'm unhappy  
with my white ink which spreads  
cool & uncouth thruout  
a closed mouth  
Oh let it church itself right  
& into

arrival's cathedral



Send a messenger a handspan high  
o You(th), tell me, what secret words I know  
You fly like birds in all directions, cockcrowed  
You've got your midnight skin on  
Now that your high tide & blush are over  
you go quicker, into the light & ancient  
Cathay can never hold  
    soft hands to your dress  
I am impressed  
    by the newness in the sky & your fast  
    advancements, your conversations with night,  
but Let me in on the secret phone call:  
I know death, I know women  
who don't get up,  
I know how they look in the morning.

## TELL EUPHRATES

to see how she gumbled fingers gently  
jointed, she jumbles & scours it up w/  
legs like a crane, lincoln green  
    at home in her womaning  
        her saffron paps are unlaced she is  
undone as a homemaker  
    or “have these hags away!”  
    & yr head aches to see her so naked  
        token exposed, a greedy cormorant  
soft, quote one height Sibyl  
    she plucked  
my beds of ember  
    my itching finger

And when she spoke  
she spoke thus:

A daughter's geography is much farther  
than a father's, as in absence of  
    a headless carpenter  
        making noises  
        at night.

Not even water  
can wash it, the thud of a plum.

The men in her  
risky physical history, this sonnet reflects  
the way we think about love.

Don't be mad at me: Rise, rusty goddess  
my love's sweet coffin a sorrow,  
a truant muse,  
    old December's bite  
    is bigger than her bark & we  
        wait  
        on soft snows  
of some shaken house.  
Let this sad interim like the ocean be  
    an elemental thang  
    Did I chide dark  
flowers for turning? This is the low of it:  
Strong microscopes made men &  
out of you, a women tightens her necktie

## HENRY V

guard the crown in yr heart  
he'll rake there for it.

metal posture  
greyhound cannon speaks mettle  
trumpet mines beseiged my  
speech O discipline knave  
beseech this half-fleur buried heart  
silver pike splits it we  
no longer  
awe defensible winter  
          coming on, retire, o calla  
lily  
to that bitter mouth  
of soft snow

December bares her teeth & trees drop  
their load as snow,  
as leaves. This season slaps where  
    There are sirens  
when I cry, & tongue-tied  
    emotion rides side  
saddle to the threshing floor. It's a ground in full in  
    earth's iced belly, this house seeks heat while  
    Hands  
        spread back  
        their sap & gently shake—  
O    Open, palm, iris, see  
        winter's funny parachutes with  
Eyes to wonder straight

## LIPO VIA EIKO

What stem & gleam, a butterfly  
“comes to”  
wings caught

in split

& again

in the East, sun's caught  
on tree's branches  
I know  
a woman planting melon  
at the blue gate  
who waits  
on sun, on moon  
A humble position is always like this—  
“I've seen many high school ballets based on it”

This is a black geography

This, a told tray sure

A test

A Winnebago

An untold dictionary

A dreamer

This is resin in night

A jasmine petal

A nation

with rules

An autumn, an Empress in grammar blue

A back hand break

Any more like this &

we'll all be wearing leather jackets for sure



bring the muse back into the kitchen  
or at least into this field of magnetic air  
she is a young art student  
w/ critical manicure & critical hair  
she is siddhi-cynical & wakes  
    closing an eye to do some religious  
        devotional to her  
            darkness matinale  
    O let her forge us a rocket lion  
or something about  
        the unreasonable power  
of these mountains white beneath the loom  
of Aves,           crying for penny candy, she saves  
those of we who jump to prove, prays”  
    crave love

## A HISTORY OF BALLADS

no one kens whose hook lies there  
in the chthonic, in the mouth of her  
earthen lake is a pit  
& outside the door, jackmanjii  
trumpets take three years to root  
Eros mixt, she pulls hawks & hounds  
awkward from a pan. rejected as flimsy  
    & bounded old :  
pike out the bluest eye  
who fears the folded moon, folded arms  
    in deadly storm, the gold  
        kim, gold combs, gold quim  
her eyelid

falls

having dismantled all trophies  
of roses & nuts  
the delicious female plunged  
& into

the fact that the sea  
devours cliffs  
on which we contemplate the value of "eye"  
might mean something more than... (what?  
dirge? dare i use so fractitious a world?)  
yet thee in thy august continent  
of grace & gravy o god america how i love  
thee like i love a dog's tooth,  
a drowning man, a banner or what is to be said  
for a rusty knife?

What angel do you carry in yr cheek,

Sky,

transfixed & praying

for baseball by water:

*el rio el rio*

Thus the chords rise out of the mountain

to join

the real w/ the seaweed

as we sit near the very end & break

scattered over the wooden

plates

Let some hairsplitter awake,

for none of these words are mine

choreograph some other odd spine & loose them

on vague & on oceans sputtering their breath

to newly made veils; And I, no bride, wish peace

on the South Platte or any

Mississippi

so crane's latin's a little off so  
read wings by oriole, by wingbank  
Vast the engines outward, Eastern it toward  
speeding  
    light & failed  
        vision    come home  
            to here    where it rains  
                as an infusion    of gypsy song

Jump lightning, jump andalusian dog  
o shine pasture / pastoral ear of golden  
Spanish                                    sesame  
which began with the Bronx  
    boys showing their waists  
        cinched as some great river, some blue  
            tongue of the sea

she who had her nest in your heart  
comes here with a perfect (church) in her mouth  
she is leaving w/ lights  
                  she leaves  
w/ highbeams unwinding  
the yarn in her throat  
          the two soft pools  
                  that serve her will not polish  
                          a glass solar plexus  
  she crosses  
          the ticket counter as the river comes into you  
& the wind makes a hut in your fingers, enough  
to fill tobacco jars & she knows your eyes as hiding  
in some distant star

We are what the movies have made us—immense  
& longingly triste, a dulcet sea  
I who sit Sunday out on the couch see the kiss its  
couplement of iron & form & my  
oh my this cannot be helped  
by changing a screen, these birds cannot be calmed  
whose only measure is buy a kiss buy lips  
Bide yr time, for these that we ache  
in our knees stutters at the counter,  
shooting out a wish:  
after all the tuna fish is paid for,  
    after this bomb of a heart we come  
home to here where we put our feet up  
& hope for the matinée to find us

America, rise up  
& talk your clothes off, speak thy name  
unto rivers, say it  
to moons, till your colors drop off  
Discover me to carry a flag, say your name  
unto the steppes, unto a fly's fine wings  
grub yourself into the night & wind tight  
    into the dark curl of it  
Let thy symmetry disperse!  
Salute your silver & dollar, the blank  
metallic state in yr mouth, spit  
it out & let me rest  
my head in a hummingbird's  
nest, not thots not this.



This world's a trumped up charge &  
I've battled my way out of nursing homes  
& yes I hear you as it covers  
    California, this  
    radio wave this  
    radioactive what  
I'd like to make a comment  
I'm just a nobody  
There is nothing out there  
I am in my right mind  
I'm just a volunteer  
I am on watch  
I am this chain, this  
politics imprisoned.

It is indeed all falling  
to carbon & rust  
but  
there is a reason for which  
bones do not break  
down  
into dust

I am a motor hoping for fractal or crop  
It's a circle that breaks  
round this streaming  
    , this freeze on a dove  
Some heat waves its hand  
over ice— this house  
hold on high where the blood dries  
                    up,  
Stroke heart's thermostat fast, eat stones  
for the ore, mud for the salt.



I'm loading up for a tour  
of the weather, a large backyard w/ no medals  
to hold me, I am searching a shadow under

(beauty, black-eyed & salty-tongued,  
Give me the wild boar  
for courage from a break in the sun)

these hands like crickets, as many  
as shake from the sky & inside  
is a dark universe— Hold out  
for the slender boat, stand in for this  
rough dance—  
there is a way of seeing  
the day pass on & i do trust numbers enough  
to write their signs.

the 28 constellations of the moon  
are fastened & belted to this:  
spindly snow bee, buckled below, unloose  
the wise ice pick of yr eye,

prepare me  
for earth & all other dissolution

That a lake is just water  
moving thru water proves it, & what can be carried  
to it comes to. Tune in  
to the seven belts of the sea, let me  
land in the distance, in a clearing of angels,  
in a term that is not legal, let me arrive,  
created thing, with my bones in my body  
& into the bright, slanted lights