CONVERSATION
WITH THE STONE WIFE

NATALIE EILBERT
Conversation
with the Stone Wife

natalie eilbert
“The female representations seem to be some of the most ancient in the entire world, and the statuettes known as the Venus of Willendorf, in Austria, and the Venus of Grimaldi, in Italy . . . number among the most beautiful and noble religious objects relating to the universal Great Mother.”

—Jean Markale, *The Great Goddess*

Tracy Lord: “How do I look?”
Seth Lord: “Like a Queen. Like a Goddess.”
Tracy Lord: “And do you know how I feel?”
Seth Lord: “How?”
Tracy Lord: “Like a human. Like a human being.”

—*The Philadelphia Story*

“I love these sweet doomed people.”

—the Venus of Willendorf
Madness, N, was always there. Just think: inside you I am always an Austrian spring. I invented a city of rabid cats, sucked hard on every nail before its assembly of parts was anything but flotsam and foam. My dear relatives, N, they can’t appreciate my taste for semen, the moony tang of pleasure, they can’t appreciate how godly I’ll be, hair grazing thighs grazing towers grazing tit-heavy clouds. N, I took the fiberglass in my mouth and bit down, and, N, I wanted to insulate and poison this body that made me to suck and taste and god there. There were bricks everywhere, I made them too to graze in the sick like decultured pigeons. And the factories, what more can be said of factories but the word factory, I’m in the center of a chemical rainstorm, naked as stone, legs smoother than the mirrors laid down for the birthday cocaine. A human face will press against its glass drugged and ready to lose its dimensions. But I’m a wife tonight. My lap laid down with gingham and wait, I said N, don’t you dare find me right now in this room. Don’t you even dare.
It’s true that we were meant
to live in the woods but the day
is not over yet I’m carrying
this wet death in my mouth to you.
It has been centuries since
you’ve shown me your teeth,
the bald human moment
that cursed your days.
The slick fuck of a couch
in the god-room, of course
the dark entered us. We left
that night, the lake sent for us,
what lake would have us now.
A millennium dawdled out
your perfect dirt scalp, I grew
from the leaves I fell to nothing,
I waited for my very own city
of rust to form edges so
I could form edges. Each hour
you cool in my pocket
is an hour is an hour gone.
See how a journey frames
my lashes, see how I lack
a creation myth, an aluminum
sun in the back of my throat.
You pitch the minute to me:
what I own is the damage
of your theorized life. A door flattening the understory. I will only speak to you with closed eyes. The woods rattle with obsolete rapture. I live in a nearby shape.
I AM GROWING OLD TONIGHT

How is it we ever arrive at a place, is it
The world sliding into and out of us, our

Cold walk against the hot sleep of houses
My poor skin a Teutonic carousel, it wants

Oils, fern leaves, a healthy cock, and tonight
Please do not leave yet, I am on a tower

My stacking artifices, how do I stay inside this
The world slides inside me, my head knocks

Back, why must we grasp at sheets to come
Harder, it explains a theory, the seasons they

Die inside us, they force out blooms, their vines
Erupt and fill us to destroy our blond tightness

I recoil I recoil I recoil, the feet pink with fat
The world learns to apply circular motions

When inside me, it makes me crazy, it makes us
Spasm out an inch of our lives each time, who

Cares, my god force out blooms, apply pressure
If I am growing old tonight I want mountains
Down with crags, presidents, nail polish, let’s
Define place as we would a sink, we run cold

Settle down and pool and drain, one of the most
Germ-ridden surfaces is the sink, second to

Cell phones, makes sense, it makes sense
That our lives implicate us with bacterial meadows

That the atoms row inside us, a childhood
Of soft jingles and forever drones, I live in a place

Life was always here, the color green of leaves
Our deepest sleep occurred in the womb, we slept

Through the making of us, how typical, birth
Tore us awake more suddenly than any torture

Say a crab pinching our slumbering noses
Say being splashed awake by kerosene then

The lit falling matchstick, they say birth ignited
Worse lessons inside us to never sleep so deeply

To never sleep ourselves into our future versions
There is a beach, the world mentioned I go there
A summer from now, a gull’s wing in the winter
Its promise, inside me the beach erodes a spectacular

Tragedy and look how I pull at my surroundings
The pain it raises in my lowest back, my phantom

Tail pounds at the floor, the silhouette of villages
Over me now, lifting my legs, once I’d lain in love

Laid now in the doomed powder of stone columns
A torpor warms my body, a torpor of parrots

Caged and transported elsewhere to sudden fuchsia
Death, don’t know how it is we ever end up in a place
Inside the eyes of a Christian, my doom wears a negligee. In my stretched tunic I pinch my cheeks to give them blush. I am the color of a pursued wife. Feed me. A cupful of spinach. Imagine my shock a purple cauliflower when you pin me with your beautiful knee down. Shiitake breath fervent on my neck, I had notions that two crow’s feet rose from the ground like a botched idea. Allow me to follow through: a truck is shattering my illusions of grandeur, but I love this idea of rendering the skin of an unborn face over my worries. I drove a tractor on empty over the lavender, the catastrophes clean and florid on my tongue. You could sketch the complexity of my thoughts out with cornstarch. That I’m simple is valid. At my most perfect, rust crumbles apart on the opening hinge of an antique car door. Nothing demonstrates change better than a drowning fly in oil. I fell in love with a pastry chef for the mechanical care in her eggwashing. And you expect to teach me sorry. I swell with child, petroleum shakes the leaves.
Years ago they entered my room on horseback, their speech like their medallions, heavy on their necks, a dark providence.

In a gunny sack I was carried. A dream of the figurine woke inside me and I swear I felt a horse close its jaws for good. I knew winter for its stench of clouds, its welcome blindfold and gag. Wind was not to blame for the rattling door,

the nameless house of betrothal. I was bride to the flies, the Venus stone a cold baguette on a marble slab:

I refused ration. Tomorrow’s winter, a document in a chain of corporate threats. The figurine like a page torn from the god diary, we received its foul monopoly of image. No scripture was mentioned. A boy paddled his kayak to a lake edge to be wed, the German sky stood post and warned *A country is made out of too many childhoods* to share a history. Venus of nowhere claimed. An army pounded the earth and I smelled oil, I smelled her dirt, I smelled fists numinous as warped violins. Time is what ants disappear into with their leaf mulch. Nothing returns without our sharpened tools.
Define an opening. The way a snake learns. At the archeology site, being found was my greatest orgasm. The inarticulate erogenous map.

I dare you to bury me back to dirt and spinsterhood. I dare you.

The disgusting sun published my form, gave it culture, imagination. I loved the nameless moment of rebirth, what you call war. Hands made only for my worship is how I imagine cities. Sad reptilian scaffolds mouth our federal dreamscape.

So what if I was made in the snow of dying limbs. So what of my dead tribe. I have a scientist now, teams of them. They trace me back, or bless their hearts, they try. No wonder I’m bored. I have as much expression in my eyes as when a debutante asks a man to draw her a bath. Instruct me in the awful ritual of loneliness, so far I love its company, its gall of quiet lovelessness. To be a man’s specimen, I thought exile was the point of pleasure.

I am queen to the bathroom’s yellow linoleum, the hair-scum in the drain beautiful and mine. I have always been earth’s least precious stone but for the white-coats I’ll grab at every sapling and thread to come again.
Be at the lake at the snow at the tree. The garbage bags cramp all around us, hard cakes, dead rats, milk water, you mean the world to a minute, V. A cigarette disgusts the dirt, your waistline a tumored swan guarding the empty lake. Enough, I don’t much like you, oolitic wife, be at the lake at the snow at the tree, take your familiar path to that spot in my liver my uncle withered in.

Veil opens to a thirst for red, the dark space in my wrist where no riverman sent for his letters. I mean a door is just a question hardened to a threat: At the lake at the snow at the tree a bridegroom texts a phone since disconnected, your headdress the hands of a comet field tonight. In the consummate bed you strip your onion skins, you crown yourself queen, you drip your urtext into my sleeping ear, you crown me unpublished, you mistake me for fragments. Never could love be more like a busted television facedown on a bed, I betrothed and becoming the come mythologized inside me. You poor scalloped wrench you were made to be a tool, you were made to be at the lake at the snow at the tree, your history a birch’s dead braille. I only
love you when you fit in my palm, when the trash takes itself to a lake to poison the lake. What good is a lake if a boy doesn’t drown swimming to a girl on the other side. You taste my tang.

You hold the frozen swan to my mouth. I watch the black trees.
For days I repeated a proverb about poverty and thieves. At night I would mouth the words for all the songs never written in my most golden voice. I ate food from my palm gargoyle-crouched over a familiar ledge. My feet cramped for so long vines convulsed and tangled inside my toes, around my ankles like a gilt, but I wouldn’t move.

Heard a man fall in love with my form, then forgot. If it was difficult for me to stay here I think of the city that failed you.

City of legs pushing back, city of miscarriages, city of leopards waiting in trees for our young. No city, but a dream of tools for the felled beasts, a *how to remove its flank and raise an empire*. There was your body a fragment of shadows. There was your body its mist of ruminant, the immaculate cud, the old stone hour beginning us.

Horses opened their skin for the flies, hatching out a stream.
I keep thinking about the sorceress. She ages in the rainshadow like an orphaned hat in a far-flung city. I rode my first donkey yesterday while Mahler composed silver gods inside storm funnels. I suppose I miss our children. A tall man let me eat chia from his hands, me in a dress so pink I fell drunk against Corinthian columns. Irresistibly portraiture. I starve my skin like my loose hair, her numinous static. Say what you just said to the crowd to me. I’ve slurped down harder cocktails than that. See I’m interested in the sorceress: the witch-flowers inside every cabinet bloom cumin and tarragon, I’ve snapped every plastic fork left steeping blank in the drawers. The magic of shed light is we get to say shed light, but that isn’t what makes me astonishing. While organ meats boil into gravy, I’ve dreamt up a new Aphrodite: she is in a sea too shallow to reach any shore of earth—stranded she fucks herself, learns every feasible version of accident, again fucks herself until the waters warm to her body and rise. That’s why I feel so at home here. I taped the refrigerator doors shut in anticipation of the surge. Left your chicken roasting in the oven. I dream that fish swim because they were promised sharper teeth one day. When a great storm takes our poorest homes I’ll fling open these doors like tremendous wind to see
my grayed sorceress, stoned and ambling
to her straw bed, condensed milk cans strewn at her feet.
We have names for such women: yesterday’s newspaper
floating in a pool, a single missing fork, the Finnish
word for green. I swear I’m the truest Anne of all.
[LETTER EXCAVATED FROM THE WILLENDORF TOMB]

Whoever said *dry* is the word for a life of solitude didn’t account for my rhetoric, my depth of absolute distance. You display me as you please: blue dress, white dress, pink dress, yellow dress. My face is always the same spent splendor as the girls who self-portrait the internet over. You know the ones, *N. Mad angels*. I feel stuffed to the brim with alibis and strappy dresses. The world doesn’t want me but the world has awful taste. You spoil me with your excellent taste, *N*. You protect me from the dirt that seeks to claim me again, and I just don’t know why since in a wink you’ll be dead and I’ll have flexed not even a lash to interfere as you darken with vinegar and stop. Alibi: a man had to unbury me more than once to claim me timeless but my eyes were sealed shut against the dirt and worms and metals, I was a sexy insect god the world couldn’t recognize for its gross preoccupation with man. Alibi: man hands himself his letters of will when I am a film of close-ups played backwards. I’ve no means to see my importance. Why should I apologize if all this time I have wanted to birth the most perfect child in the most perfect dress. Jesus, *N*. These mad men a wind of psychic distance.
I could’ve been anyone when they found me, nook infant
  ecstatic below your ice age. Look at me. I am gorgeous.

  I dreamed there was such a scene as in a kitchen, a vague mother
  bent over the sink devastated and safe. I keep waking up

  in someone else’s bed: awake inside a wolf’s panting throat
  is how I understand hunger. My loneliness is bikeable,

  it is as though I have always worn a red cloak in the woods.
  Teach me sorry. Teach me the trees. German darkness.

  I worship the townhouses I so ritually leave, the waifish necks
  of your citizens, and how there is one word for snow finally.

  Lights stay on in too many locked houses. A squanderer
  builds his kingdom into the ground. We forget to breathe

  when we are instructed breath is continual. What I want touch to be
  scatters flies in a neighboring basement, is as bountiful as tweed

  in November. Mud husbands me to this terrible ordeal of burial.
  But ruins bore me, I hate their gawked failure. Look to your own ugly sky.
B E F O R E  A  F U T U R E  G E N E R A T I O N

Of necessity, I have learned to navigate
the junkyard of my own viscera.

The butcher arranges my bones, desires
the hairs on a slabbed kneecap.

The body is another kind of evening
under infrared lights. She segments
my belly: I am so skinny no skin
can hurt me. I am the impression

of wind through the fur of a maimed gazelle.
The butcher she tends to my gashes
to make them bloodless, my neck bone a bridle
she will hold and make proper again.

To be sexless finally, to be meat,
she places a lemon between my lips,

freshens them into a pucker to kiss
like the beak of a parrotfish. A man

from the village peers into the shop
eager to touch me between parchment,
a man who laid me down in faux down
    to deliver me my kingdom of filth

and hunger. My butcher she flattens my belly,
    to be sliced is to be seen importantly,

bright tower in a failed city. She did this sipping
    iced coffee through a straw, a Baltic song

stopped in her head. My thigh’s modern coldness
    on the counter. You will come to know this was love.
WITH DEAD BROTHER IN THE VENUS LANDSCAPE

How is it we stare at a word like god and feel the earth shake but not you, dear venus. Around your stone I feel the lakes of Europe ripple with forever drumbeats and the footsteps out of this life. I have hung a reed from a tree and wait for the sound of wind’s disclosing haunts to treat me kindly. As in kin. Twenty-five years in and I am already sick, a cold broth on the table, one brother gone. I am as in love with a man as I am with oil spills: the world must flood and drain, men will pick at rock until your gifts are found and named, but I don’t want to hear it. You, void of spells but of a kind of vertigo, got venus, dun angel issuing nothing. An act was done to my brother at the edge of a lake: blow air through a reed long enough and he will go to you, believing.
Nothing interests me anymore. A garden is too enthusiastic to be alive for its own sake. The highway, now that is something. I want to be paved into colorless stone. Because you don’t believe me anymore and you’ve lodged with too many sisters, am I correct in saying the engines of trucks sound arcane, that you love the unbelievable smoke of winners? Define desire: when have I ever made isolation difficult, it is my primary vocative as when the cars pedal their blood-speed down the interstate. They bend as you, swerve around struck geese as you word your desires. Define for me a body. I guess at its opposite: crows lift heavily from power lines at the scattergun of a flabby man, everywhere the smell of ersatz semen from dogwoods. Bereft. These hours spin, are the aspirin dust of every horse gallop. I’ve ceased my worries of being fathomed. I am stone. Sex. No need for coddling, no need for linear paths of diction. In the parade, I am a distant cousin’s milktooth rattling a mason jar. Someday the man with his gun will lift his legs into a fabulous pair of corduroys. That sound will be a caw, not the soundtrack of desiccated desert bones. But the highway: crowded buses move the forsythia with definitive violence in a way I know means I will never know touch. How cruel to be so heavenly a body without body, the charge and wail of skin and city and distance. Last winter the life of a battery could poison the oceans forever—how could I tire of this? Since then the Arctic seas have warmed. Disasters loom with smug portending. I want to be opened, for someone’s gaze on my awful fissures. To be smelled for the ice age inside me.
OLD WIVES’ TALE

You hear me you are to meet me by the horse lake the one sick with horse parts where children swim, water gushing from their mouths. I can’t stand any of it. I am forever barefoot for the worms to wriggle my soft female skin. To be butter, to be the wolf in heat: now a cloud forms over the lake to welcome nothing, a family in blind procession. Means someone I love will die.

Means I will walk from a distance toward a man with a shovel. Know that I have cracked the skin of love to discuss what patterns of body fit that liminal space where I fever. There is a certainty in the wings of a bat. In the house I can think of nothing but a home’s symbol. I was a boy before a bowl of milk, I was a boy before they grew rhizome in the garden, before they pulled every bit of flesh from the dirt. I made all the rings swing in the house. Today I dressed all the changelings in tweed and destroyed all evidence of their origins. They will love me goddamn it they will love me. You are to meet me with a dead owl in your messenger bag. You are to quash black snails on every porch. Gravedigger, every morning I curse my days. I look so good doing it.
Look it was that the sister had vertigo, in her head she stepped through
three loose planks in the dock—took with her her father’s silver,
made for the kingdom. There were cormorants see, she wanted them
embalmed and enamored of her. Consider what facts belonged to her,
which facts were not bodily, which were once the rumor of ligaments.
In her head she fell through the dock then and into the shade,
took with her the tablecloth, Depression glass, took the voice as it was,
it was like snake oil stopped in her ears—heard the voice say
Death was. How she gathered then joint and sinew, concluded what was left
of her fear, what was left of the man who would hurt her, they could fit
tamped in a snuffbox. Imagined the driftwood when it was flotsam
at the shore, when it became driftwood again—her hold on sight
was like this, felt herself there and there and there. Took with her cat skulls,
mink stole, feather of a great rare bird. The story receded, dawned again:
In her head she had traveled great distances: there came a song or
a dervish, there came the highway or *There is no staying*. In the lowering land
she came within inches of a pathway so she thought. In any case the scene
entered her like a medicine, her condition went into remission, went blank,
gone into a strange room with a kitchen sink, a counter made of drift.
There came the fulcrum sound of a trumpet, always the mind carried on its silt dread.
In her head her limbs hit the water the voice sunk as it smacked of salvo,
then decency. Muzak came, like a great sheet falling over her, lightly then, lightly.
INVENTING THE ETYMOLOGY OF MY NEWEST COUNTRY

How did it work: I carried a machine
on my back from one field
to a tundra, made a tomb in my name,
the objects I claimed.

Assembled the ashes like they were a thing
in need of assembly.

One raises a flag this way. I pledged
once like pulling a wasp’s
sting from my chest, its abdomen
wriggling my beautiful statehood.

I carried a machine on my back
from a tundra to a new northwest.

Wanted to speak with my I voice. Forgot.
I renamed my collective
to forget again, to disgrace and perturb
an east of here. How I licked each
flower to determine its origins with fruit,
or the skin of a woman’s
pain. The soil was a way to speak to
the tenderly flensed beasts,

the sawgrass the silence in a boy’s slapped cheek.
Nothing made me whole

or decent or sad as the thought that within
a swan’s neck was more liquid.

How I worshipped loneliness if loneliness
could mean once I was the cold spit

you had to swallow in a hospital cot.
Took the train to a village:

I wanted to be skin in its small world
and for that moment

to redefine conquest. With my semaphore
I raised a flag

that could wipe the god from any man’s face.
I carried my machine still

to a bog. Dumped it there the way a bullet
enters say an elephant’s heart.
When the elephant’s heart won’t quit
and we fail again at mercy

this means my country, the sinking
of its metal a new form of prayer.
N, madness took the comb from my hair, removed the mantle surrounding my nights, and exposed me for the brilliant bitch I am. I admire your patience, the way you twirl your hair fantastic to have me and have me again. I admit I’m sore and spoiled of all this coddling. No wonder I keep wandering the halls clubbing my ears, there is a music coming from one of these doors and I am too locked inside my stone carapace to stop any of this from flooding. N, we’ve been working together for years and aren’t you bored by the clumsy balance between language and identity and aren’t you even the smallest bit disappointed with your lack of honest engagement in me as a subject, how I don’t think it matters one bit to you whether or not I last forever or burn to kohl ruins in my museum cage tomorrow. I don’t blame you, N. You write poems. You work in an office forty hours a week and come home nightly with a vague despair nestled against your spine when what you want is to be shattered and tearing the skin of your face until a new governance seals over your bones and someone publishes your book. I am so fond of you I would publish your dry skin cells, N, I think it will last the test of time so long as I keep it close. Isn’t it strange, I know, what we do with the men of this world to be known.
I WANT A LOVE

At a certain altitude it was the man over me over the couch
A paperback flopped open to an insignificant page as the basement leaked

Water a study of scales study of want study of my hair on his chest
His chest breathing his password of night the moon a lacquered nail its

Insouciance trickling white sound in my brain the village a limp hand
Mindlessly open as in sleep as in death he is sleeping I am sleeping

Overpeopled but I want a love as simple as a peacock feather brushing me
A peacock feather boasting eyes and black cry against this tin crack of earth

The planet buckling its new gait a bomb renting a crowded bus but
I called this a city a place to store my men and wives a place for talking

Fucking under a handsome sun the men string fish from the harbor bury
Chicken feet in the sand all this oil embossed in our eyes dredging us

Billions of legs wrapped around billions of legs I want a love to remove me
From all countries from Sangiovese cocoa cow be reversible the village

Stacked over me patting my bare spine I want a love to tell me I am responsible
Let me stop us I want a love to sleep with my women sneak abortions

Record my seven billion promises to dirt and steaming plates instead this man
In the village he turns me on my side he sings my singular love gets swallowed
I’m finding the alien has fled from you, you I’ll call
*daughter of the house* now, your stone a dialogue in wandering

your beautiful woods through this world, and I’m sorry.
In part I have shucked you of coarse dwelling, yes I wanted

the walls to shake when I found you the way a door slams
when a man leaves for good. I am so happy for the second I

exist, when I hug this porcelain god for strength, when
your roundness makes me slight and ordinary.

When my bones are a concatenation of midnight,
joints that snap and twine like my mother

over the stove, the sick village inside her. I want you my
little cosmic terror, my *the way is long and endless*. And out

the window the snow doesn’t fall. I’m in love once and for all.
CONVERSATION WITH THE STONE WIFE

You don’t get to tell me my arms are useless. The kith of scales should move you, the dedication to impoverished architecture. Girlfriend, what you don’t know is I started gathering cotton grass in mock worship of your romance with blackbirds. I started before you were born. Dressed them in kohl, breathed my weathers into them. You don’t get to tell me the priority of wings. I know. The cattails whip the marshlands with the discipline of a schoolmarm. I can tell you in the rain my labor is sexy. My fat tits darken. I would lay down with anyone who doesn’t laud the cloacae, the irascible beaks. That’s ridiculous. All afternoon I grieved the great morning sky you rode in on, prayed for its nothing change. See how my English has improved. See how hot I look descending the stairs, a choker of claws around my neck, the talons dug into with arsenic. My old life bloats like a collection of dictionaries abandoned beneath the bed of some walk-up apartment. Hallelujah, you’ve yet to get my magic. Already my veil appears silken, my spiderleg lashes. Leave me my materials, my histrionics.
FIRST CONJECTURE OF THE SELF WITH FIGURINE

Tonight you are no one’s treasure. There is a love
you’ve never craved carved into your limbs that I
want you to bury but don’t. I swore I heard you out
in a clearing, the clearing I was made to feel
small and lost in, where I imagined you a cat coated
to a tree. There is no discovery when an opening
is so vast no trees can grow: the people call this faith.
No discovery but for the cicadas that know to chirp
and collapse for the birds when the sky rolls back. When I eat
a meal I feel fat and marvelous as I did when the boys
kissed my neck against the house, too early in the night
to be known. I didn’t shake out of fear. Sorry. They came
to my house crowded with sticks and I lost you out there. I believed
once that I drew my brother’s ghost an impeccable likeness—
like you, to tap one spot forever meant a piece of me stayed whole.
When I find home in my city, I will push your image back like a spleen.
EPITHALAMIUM

You do look beautiful distending the stairs but wait there wait,
    I’m removing a splinter from my toenail, I wedged the flint in
I needled it out. It’s like how you enter a room on all fours unable
    to walk without crinoline soughing down a hallway. This house
    is endless, the guest list unbearable. I can’t walk three feet
without kicking a can. After the ceremony I will fill
    the bathtub with flat beer to soak you until
    I can drive a comb through your stone hair. Believe me
when I say I’m tired of your looks, your thoughts, your voice,
your all-cosmic power, it makes my dick soft. What happens
between two people is not impossible, I’m just saying I’ve lain down
    in the center of worse storms and still my own animal has a taste
for gutters. Your nude face bores me. Try a blush. Try two.
CONVERSATION WITH THE STONE WIFE

I am extremely interesting. Have lived in my colonial house like a boasting pilgrim many years. Each night I fork liver into my disciplined body and pull curlers out of my hair to make love to the bunched-up duvet. I wrote you about my blondest moment: my Bulgarian tongue twisted with my Swahili tongue, the blond voice spiraling out in a fit of healthy aggression. Blond melodies. Blond cramps. Blond mules I ride through my blond village. I wrote you to suffer the nice girl, snort her frankincense down with our normal animal cruelties. Yesterday I played my navel like a bent harp until the sky stood up to that drab darkness I keep telling you about: airplanes look like antique stars I hate.

A childless swing is a dangerous image, means its symbol, its nightly apologies. Give me something I can use. I admire any man who lets the epochs bury him, a spoon rusting his mouth shut so beautiful. Yes I’m another oversexed girl, my body hurts me. A building on fire gives me cat eyes. I move there too. Touch my golden hips and I’ll never eat again.
Like you, my creator was flawed. But see
    I am perfect. See.
I didn’t ask my body to be called up, those darling
    perverts
made me like they couldn’t make a clit sing.
    You taught me pain
I'm not finished. It tasted of fennel, my tongue
    a stranger in diplomacy.
I wanted temptation, to fixate on the flanks
    of doomed steers.
How could pleasure matter on the blade
    of the godknife.
I am but one moment of oblivion and fact.
    Your towers
are as dull a fiction as my headdress.
    How would
anyone buy into that gesture. Fool’s city.
    Esurient shoppers.
All the plates scraped clean, that hunger
    should disgust you more.
I'm trapped in the gaze of an open mouth.
    My form is
an open mouth, it is closing in time with
    the shockless guts
which make massive your cities. My god am I
    at my most beautiful.

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Talk the dog out of me. The fearless brute the great text lauds. You think it mattered that my stone darkened in the rain.

My promises are the same jar you’d store marmalade in before January’s shut doors. The house is dead. What’s of import

is the scarf on the aborigine neck— whether cool or damp I know its cloth doesn’t warm just any girl.

I am not the cow I was, not the grass on the field, not the ball the men applaud in sweaty worship.

Look how my hands form at the mention of forever. My sweetly diminished chin.

The decades dress themselves in a wardrobe of rat spit and lysol. Divine in every country.

Look how the decades suture panic to every hissing swan. There’s so much religion in the tall grass along the highway edge,

I’ll wear the skull of every smashed raccoon until I feel as immortal as I am. I am so immortal. In all these years I said nothing profound.
You are too late to the scene:
how sad that we come from branches,
your dress snagged by branches.

I am already waking up
in a quarry, the everywhere nests

of your busy work, the April wind
a continuum of our falling bed.
Too often the poem tells us to find a lake.

I left a bridegroom bleeding
in a warehouse to live in this gone day,

I don’t know a thing about crawling
on my knees, just the liquor of ritual,
just the way your face means bruised stone

in the warmest light. The screaming match
of a city and a city gives your eyes color.

Your hips roan-thick with mysterious age.
Too often we greet change with soft dignity
the way a forest does the arrival of men.

In this sky a plastic fog lacks the right poison
and I will certainly never die. If we dance,
I wanted to dance. Cocktails warm to gel all around us, my throat fills with sequins in the middle of this terrible field.
And did it occur to you in all these years that I could speak for myself. You’re a good girl, N, you stick to your books. Let us say I’ve moved on, I’ve rented the city for one year’s time and will not stop fucking these scared little boys. There is a fog over the towers, they hover and putrefy in Ozymandian disgrace. Pastries clog the gutters and I’ve never had such a fat ass fat breasts fat hands, this fat my beautiful beautiful. I’ve gone dizzy with drink, The Philadelphia Story won’t stop playing and I won’t ever get over the bored portrait of godhood in Katharine Hepburn’s waistline. There will never be enough milkshakes so far as I’m concerned. N, I know how worried this makes you. I’ve seen your food diary and am pretty sure it takes more calories to write “kale salad no dressing” than it does to consume it. Look on my waist ye sham citizens. There’s a smell to me, it’s almost human. My god, N, these men do throw a good party if you’re not paying attention. Lord knows you’ve been keeping track. Relax and have a drink. I’m a good wife now let me speak.
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Barn Owl Review: With Dead Brother in the Venus Landscape
The Boiler Journal: Conversation with the Stone Wife (You don’t get to tell me), First Conjecture of the Self with Figurine
The Fiddleback: The Husbands of Willendorf
interruption: [letter excavated from the willendorf tomb] (Whoever said dry)
Gazing Grain Press: The Venus Figurine as It Relates to Gnosticism
Guernica: Inventing the Etymology of My Newest Country
The Journal: Conversation with the Stone Wife (talk the dog out of me), I Had Grand Notions of the Pasture, Old Wives’ Tale
La Petite Zine: Lullaby: Grave Goods
Line Break: Conversation with the Stone Wife (I could’ve been anyone)
The Paris-American: Before a Future Generation
Phantom Limb: Conversation with the Stone Wife (Nothing interests me anymore)
Sink Review: [letter excavated from the willendorf tomb] (Madness, N), [letter excavated from the willendorf tomb] (And did it occur to you)
Sixth Finch: Notes Torn from the Wife-Book after the Storm
smoking glue gun: Conversation with the Stone Wife (Define an opening)
Stoked: Epithalamium (Be at the lake), Conversation with the Stone Wife (I am extremely interesting)
Thrush: Epithalamium (It’s true we were meant), Epithalamium (You’re too late to the scene)
Tin House: I Want a Love
West Branch: First Conjecture of the Venus Figurine
Natalie Eilbert’s first book of poems, *Swan Feast*, is forthcoming from Coconut Books in 2015. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Kenyon Review*, *Tin House*, *West Branch*, *Handsome*, and many others. She lives and writes in Brooklyn where she is the founding editor of the *Atlas Review*.

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