



# Lost Work<sup>20</sup> Book

DESIGNING BY DRAPING

30  
w/ Letters to Deer



FIG. 7



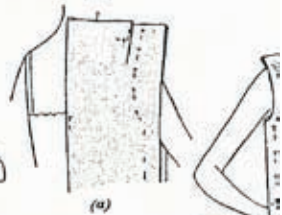
FIG. 8

poems by  
Catherine Meng

*depth of the cuff*



FIG. 4 (d)



(a)



(b)



(c)

extension, as shown. Following the thread line, trial across the hip and place a pin at the end

*Lost Work Book w/ Letters to Deer* by Catherine Meng was published by **auch press** in Zürich, Switzerland in conjunction with the Dusie Kollektiv publishing projekt, yr 3. The editor made a paper edition with upcycled materials in a short run edition of 100 copies. The virtual copy is available through <http://www.dusie.org>

# **LOST WORKBOOK w/Letters to Deer**

Catherine Meng

2009





Mirco approached the old man and asked him,  
“What kind of dogs are these?” And the old  
man, dry and proud, answered, “They’re not  
dogs, they’re jackals.” -Eugenio Montale



## **2nd Tuesday In Ordinary Time**

a taste sits high on the tongue

adoration pushes roofward

where the glass cracked some autumn gets in -

enter a chorus of quarterback angels

game again then cheery & gamely

blocking the street between matches

the yowling retriever yowls in his yard

this goes everywhere

at once filling each request

followed by a welcome whistle

then a request more pleasurable -  
between gesture & gesture matched  
a symmetry in same-said draft -  
absent of language but insistent  
with breath the varied things it does



## Letters to Deer #1

We live in a cave with the others.  
We share the fire pit. We know

all the big rocks by names  
that wouldn't make sense here.

First thing in the morning I plait my hair.  
There is no time for edits or white-out.

Our wills go up on the walls  
& that's the end of it.

The next night comes  
followed by another morning

& I replait. I could have warned you  
but you are young. All our books

are binded with silver. It's a nice touch  
I doubt you expect. But truly, words do

fine without frills. Sometimes for kicks  
I say, GO SIT ON YOUR PELT!

to Nobody. How it rings in the cave  
full of vibrato. Air-kissing off the sweating

walls. The other day someone accused  
a favorite other of mine of being a nihilist.

Obviously they've never met my cat.  
So I talked instead of the stinging

frequency of scorpion. I wear  
two sweaters & a hat to bed.

There is a bad draft I battle.  
This seems minor once you've seen

our garden. We have the finest  
ornamental cabbage in all six counties.  
Not like anyone is counting.  
But there is good spirit here.

## **Lesson 1: Know What You're Up Against**

Copy out every book by Dana Gioia including his translations of Montale.

Write Post-it notes about it.

Write directions, recipes, and to-do lists on Post-it notes.

Mix them all up.

Write this on a Post-it note.

Stick it on your steering wheel / handle bars / forehead / man.

Wait one week.

Move on to Lesson 2.

## Exercise 1

Extravagant time in the purr.  
Caught & released by the yawn / 4 hands work  
'I keep rebounding --- I am light'.  
October bones flex  
Above a job well done.  
Another caterpillar today. 2 hawks.  
Sick skunk out in the daylight. Herd  
Of goats grazing the hillside.

Kiss the knot. Red.  
Go dead to all seasonal words  
Leading one way.  
Police/Polite - the masculine/feminine  
Conjugate of the word  
-city  
-war  
-polenta

Is any one's guess. The dictionary was

Donated to the army & what remains  
Is an opposite animal.  
If things continue  
In this fashion a return-purr

Should arrive before the hour's out.  
Quiet. Quiet. Hammers cease ringing.  
Lie still on your roofs half-sung.

### **3rd Sunday In Ordinary Time**

there was a theory  
about the clippings  
dated & stacked  
under Jack's tongue  
his father & wife are dead  
that's why he's doubtful -  
my heart (or his) his heart (or mine)  
eats like a piece of old shoe leather  
O speech again  
how you hold us just outside  
the happy village peering in

the warm mouths  
of the other John  
on the other hand devotes  
to things unheard  
queer image after queer image  
there is an argument  
if it weren't for goats there'd be no  
language on the glass  
there comes a tapping  
winged & large as a  
critic you've severed us  
to great success

## Letters to Deer #2

I sympathize. I too have a weakness  
for those who can't begin.

Just this morning 4 crows arrived,  
tossing leaves from the gutter with their beaks.

I've noticed a direct correlation  
to the size of my bond.

I can't tell if it's my perception  
that has changed or the cross-hatch.

The editor is no help here.  
I call bullshit on poetry's dependence on anything.

That reminds me, my cat  
pissed on the new issue of Poetry Flash.

But I have other fish to fry. Honestly, I don't know  
if I'm here to take things out of the sea,



or to write on the probable courses of Odysseus,  
or to glorify the failures of audience participation.

We can only hope this intoxication of fetid air  
will die down to reveal Nobody.

In the meantime, I'm going out now  
to triumph in the wind.

## **Lesson 2: Mastery of Non-Mastery i.e. Renouncing the Last Word**

Decide which is worse: a call for pity or a monetary offering.

Write it down on a Post-it note.

Abandon those rooms.

Even the skirt you wore.

Scrape the cavity clean & rinse.

Stuff with all Post-it notes obtained thus far.

Truss with pins & twine in the tradition of Escoffier.

Roast.

Reserve all drippings.

In Lesson 3 they will be used to make a roux.

## **1st October in Ordinary Time**

a true creature of moods God is  
a walrus with one broken tusk who  
established both bias & blobs  
of jelly streaming tresses that float upon  
waves as well as the unscannable line  
which is a mere trickery of light  
& weedy creepers foreshadowing  
the chambered root of the lotus mirroring  
the chambered head of the morel sprung  
overnight from ashen branch & rot -

those hairs inside of her ear is sweating

always a need to lick & come away

more the walrus than the man before the losses

one feels after kneeling

**Letters to Deer      #3**

Where are you? For tradition's sake  
I'm having a family tree drawn up

of my poetic lineage. I've searched  
all the microfiche & daguerreotypes

but you are nowhere to be found.  
What give? Did you ever exist?

It's a deer!!!  
I just saw a deer.

### **Lesson 3: Taking Stances**

Poets & the common reader are no longer on speaking terms.

Dana Gioia said that.

Or something like that.

It is best to avoid but better not to force it.

Many consider Monday several big steps above the squalor of bohemia.

It is better not to force it.

Without analogy everyone is able to peer in on everyone else's analogy.

It is far better to obtusely play pinochle.

We now know about cell phones & heroin & lottery probability.

If you are a subculture, take heart.

Modern technology can trump any swan song.

### **Exercise 3**

The double flowering  
I didn't know. I had  
a wish with impetus  
this anniversary  
of our penetration.

Slander me. Make me  
your man if you must  
or a venerable adversary.

How I wished!  
One for each whisker. Always  
at 4 a.m. The password  
was the dog's name.

We were hardly awake then.  
Holding shards of a stone we  
shared while looking baldly  
across a yard's worth of salad.

Now it seems there was no  
other. To be missed  
or to miss. Whole seasons  
& deserts awaited us.



### **3rd Tuesday In Ordinary Time**

On which those sad-sack witches of amber glassed tinctures  
Are scolded & told to go stand in the corner  
With their easy parts exposed they appear to know already  
Of the cages in the rain & electrodes  
By the way they stockpile sardines for the upcoming season  
The one that will eat the future of great literature -  
As for iconoclasts, strike all suicides from the record  
For one they are mad in both the stark  
Raving & Bruce Banner sense of the word -  
As for who killed poetry some experts say it was God  
So there is nothing to fear

For we are made in his image -

And what a terrific image he is

A jolly walrus with a long white beard

A koala in his ear

## Letters to Deer #4

Presently I am working on 2 rebuttals. The first I think you will find funny. The second is more influenced

by disco. Ah disco! Remember that time I fell for the transvestite dancing on the mantle?

There is so much the others don't know & no number of flashbacks will change that.

Walt's dog chewed up my only pair of dressy shoes. I learned never to leave without a back-up.

That the line is never only about the one that came before. Same way yesterday the sky looked a certain way

That reminded me of a song that always reminds me of you. So forcefully I went into 5th gear.

Nobody thought the others had taken me. But I was zonked out on the further beach eating sand.

They should make mp3s of memories.  
But I'd probably spend all my time critiquing my collection

Of terrible hair dos. I'm rocking one right now.  
Rumor has it that John has found a hole in the ground

Full of shampoo. I'm using lipstick  
And wetting the bed again.

## **Lesson 4: Convalescence**

Thou shall know the 3 stages:

The milk stage.

The bread & butter stage.

The roast-beef stage.

## Exercise 4

What solitary icebergs we are!  
Sinking ships or melting  
On our respective stages.

Sincerity lacks a run-off  
In the presence of inanimate obstacles  
We make graven images

From any macaroni & glitter we can find.  
Sometimes we get blinded  
By our own white coats.

That's the poetry ticket  
White coats don't want you to witness.  
As penmanship improves

Need dissipates  
Into two briney puddles, ocean & sea.  
Any child will tell you the same.

We've been sent to kill vampires.  
After a light luncheon (Crab Louie!)  
The game resumes.

## **2nd Third Thursday in Ordinary Time**

get your potatoes we're going to see life -

behold the jungle wizardish with vine & unrecorded

causes of breast cancer include bottled water

pesticides & underwire you don't have to be

Nobody to know which is worse

having a choice or a big unit -

is that a WMD or the mind's mushroom cloud

has been translated into 16 languages

same-such kiss blew the roof off Connecticut

shocking New Haven into a bi-way



for quickie weddings & Quik-marts hawking

watered down gasoline -

sometimes the sweetest kitten have the claws

so it's one big meow from here on out -

nothing indivisible will be made by these worms

only silk from the sun & the leaves they eat

**Letters to Deer #5**

I think you'll be happy to know I've devised  
various plans to raise money

most of which involve betraying women.  
I've been forcing myself to read the poem

until it no longer makes me cry. 6 years  
now & still I get gagged up & dumb.

These days little old men with their little old  
dogs & bowl cuts on grown-ups make me cry.

I am trying to determine what service he pervs.  
ha ha. You know what I mean.

Often I wake covered in little creatures.  
The cat wanted me to tell you:

9iooo  
oo  
oo  
oo\hqwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaw`

No really she wrote that while I was busy  
busily splitting grain from the chaff.

## Exercise 5

Same book different story.  
Same body different trash day.

We appreciate so much

so quickly

we become part Nixonian machine  
part literary theory. Hardly  
any time remains  
for laundry

fox in the periphery

contemplating James Wright

contemplating Rilke

deliciously wasting a life  
cradled by trees.

## **4th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

frequent bonnet changes  
for the manifold labors -  
a classic mark of bastardry  
& a talent to predict  
each diagnosable whim of the rich -  
we who worship symmetry  
we who confuse  
mermaids with jelly fish  
we who have fed the rabbits  
for twenty-four years -  
this curious silent unrepresented life

**Letters to Deer      #6**

We had no choice but to eat  
the ornamental cabbage.

If you were a bad god  
you'd visit the dentist more often.

I on the other hand copied out  
a long treatise & found

I misread it which made me  
doubt all the other treatise

I'd never bothered to copy out.  
That quick I fall into atrophy

but it is a musical version.  
A black cloud of dust

smuffles the sun's potted fire.  
Same with my limbs.

I am terribly transformed  
by the act of a scene ending.

It is a liability when cackles  
rush quick through the mouth

as if I've gone too long  
without drugs.

How do I know you aren't a double foil?  
How do I know I'm not?

This morning I arose consumed  
by the task of finding the flaw.

I couldn't possibly quit now  
braced as I am against mountains

shot through with autumn's many deaths  
all the terrific versions & orange.

## **Lesson 6: Symmetry**

While the ashes revive revise the music.

You want it to stiffen with a give.

But whatever you do, don't give.

Remember the hammers? Replay the hammers.

That is referred to as a ceasing ring.

It clangs out but stops short of.

It was first recorded by & by & then recorded over.

Another example would be surprise tongues.

Howl when you find them in your mouth.

At this stage, specialists divide into two camps.

The "remove it" camp & the "use it" camp.

I think we all know where Dana Gioia stands.



#### **4th Monday in Ordinary Time**

slouching onward toward tradition  
weighed down by Wall Street & sprung forward  
by subplot expertly lifting its dress  
so we see all crinoline after dinner  
the musical expression  
bathed in rhumy light a sense  
sliding along the walls that  
nearby in shallow sand a bottle  
is buried & curled inside that a form  
unread but advancing as the tide crawls in  
this unanimous need a quiver  
same quiver that comes with mistake  
& then the tender backlash appears  
painted on the subway walls

**Letters to Deer      #7**

I can't tell you how the tree broke but it felt  
closer to your disease & involved Mars.

That's as far as I can go. Remind me  
to rearrange traffic. Remind me

the monks around here wear tennis shoes  
& scratched up my Mitch Hedberg CD.

Just when I get down withdrawal  
for calling you I begin to miss you. Have I

told you about our "library"? It smells like  
nothing you have seen. Another story

I will have to tell in person. I've picked  
the café already. The perfect dumb background

for out of context terror replayed. What's fucked  
up is that I keep thinking about the magazines

I'm paying for my doorman to read.  
Yesterday I saw a cloud in the shape  
of a gas mask so I can no longer call you  
one. We have just enough space  
& players to stage a version. And two  
willing boys to make up the horse.

## **Lesson 7: In the Event of Extremes**

Hoist all the red flags high to be belicked by the wind.

What is left to rot in the rain will soon blanch into rhyme.

Remember the kid who thought it was called “The Summer of My German Shepard”?

That’s the kind of guy you want on your raft.

Be wary of the red-haired Gioia.

When she says you shouldn’t wait for the frost maybe you should.

## Exercise 7

Dead is either a granite slab  
with a good view of the bay  
or undisplayed. Same way

manning the widow's walk  
is either voluntary or part  
of the side work. There is no stop

to the choices hucksters dangle  
before the withered populous  
digging for water. In that way

an unnamed couple  
collecting snails they plan  
to eat becomes a problem.

Next they sprout feather  
that hurt & hobble them  
& never unfurl.

A chemical has been detected  
& it is not a clean chemical.  
Often those left breathing  
ash gather the mind stars  
that generate those maps  
on underground walls  
that flash & flash past

& what is left out  
comes back through the tap.  
Then either the line goes long  
or dogs enter the workforce  
or waves find a way

at last to get back  
at the moon.

## **1st Monday in Ordinary Time**

crafting dice from stewing bones  
dug from the funny farm's deserted rows  
the wind slinks low out of the willows  
& whorls & turns the veins up -  
it was thought to be  
spring & then it was not  
the gloaming will slake its dry mouth  
when the wheat says so  
knees shift deeper into the giving way -  
never mistake what it was for an omen  
it was just a white pigeon

## Letters to Deer #8

I need you to scare this  
thing out of me.

A hand on my frontlet  
to rid the parasite

that's tore up my thought.  
Mainly it's okay.

I have a job & a footstool.  
But yesterday there was a

wane stare subtracted  
into a word we all at once

knew. So quickly  
my black widow

has become unarmored  
limply holding a gunnysack



of fishy propositions  
while your black widow

bites sleeping faces.  
From what I can tell

the ocean is just a slow  
sketch of its slowly sketched

self. I grow backward  
tentacles daily & steady

myself culling seaweeds  
but worry it may be awhile

before I write again  
this being the first season

of what appears to be  
the rest of our lives.

