

Shake Her

hey god

hey god (again)

knockknock

hey god with your mama-mask on

hey you are a compelling disaster area hi there

barbed wire medusa knocking
iron blonde jitterbug knocking
not yet ghost yet knocking

standing on this platform with you god at my back
I call to the rafters, my sisters

riseup you youngbloods
riseup riseup
to sing down the heart attack strobe of america
with your folksy anthem

Come little children come to Zion come little children march along

The Shakers

You must work very hard and own nothing.
You must work very hard to own nothing.

The lambs scowl in the pasture
while only four remain on the farm
in purple silk and perfect seed.

Kingdom planted upside down in America
with the neighbors coming round with hammers and ploughs
to seal the eternal for non-believers.

You must work very hard
to free your space for holy.
Working very hard frees that space.

Here, a crown of heavenly kingdom,
solid gold, heavy invisible, for you my sisters.
I've brought it back from the perfect empty of my vision.
And here's a great feast of grapes,
kindness, ether, for my brothers.
Partake everlasting. Such capital.

A Card of Love and Notice from the blessed Mother Ann, to George W. Curtiss January 25 1843: "I am Mother Ann Lee, one with you blessed Lord & Saviour. I am love, blessing peace, and purity. A Parent who watcheth with delight, every true child of her name; yea, a Mother who wadeth in sorrow deep for her loving offspring on earth."

Sky-Writing

Mother is a Savior, a Savior in Mother

I'd be stupid to pretend there wasn't all that sky-writing
when I was a child and you were my mother.

I know for a fact that on a particular day
a mailbox hovered green on a street corner;
the sky was a flush field of gaping grace;
I backwardsed the plural name of that flower;
you mailed a white letter;
I pushed it on its way through the river;
you set me on the hot hood of federal property;
there must have been sliding.
It must have been warm metal and clover and the phenomenon of prisms.
I know there must have been laughing.

But genuinely I'm not sure what to believe:
did other childhoods have white letters in the air,
scribbles outrageous and frivolous guiding all empty
pointed out to them and given as the whole world a birthday present?
Do you believe it yourself, ever been so clear and blue?

I will admit to this day, among others
we mailed a letter;
I slid;
the sky was laughing and full of steam.
It was a wide world.
You did have those days, flung about like springtime, Queen's Anne Lace.

I am certain that state I lived in was overseen by sky-writing
which reigned a breezy mystery through Ohio.
And I know you were there, and had commissioned it all:
Happy. Day. The blue plain of a thrown-back head.

Daughter to avenge your missive on the world.

Brother Abijah heard Mother Ann say, "Where there is enmity, gets in between two, if they do not get rid of it, it will certainly carry one or both of them to hell, if one is not to blame and he is watchful, he may escape."

On This Day (June 28) on This Land Where I Walked

and was raised up myself (in Niskayuna, suburb of Schenectady, upstate New York)

among the Shakers of Wisdom's Valley of Watervliet (previously Niskayuna, now Town of Colonie)

In the West Family (broom-makers, full Shakers)

in 1831 Olive Wicks died at 10:30 pm 19 years old.

in 1858 Melissa Sanders died (not buried in cemetery).

in 1883 Herman Klages came back from Phila.

In the South Family (African-Americans, children, novitiates, the "Gathering Order")

in 1831 "William S. Duke from NY comes to investigate. Poor fellow."

in 1832 Susan Holmes, about 19, from NJ, "comes to join if she likes."

in 1886 "Doctor thinks hope for Rachel."

in 1916 Anne Goepper "went to see Angeline—took strawberries, she come home soon."

and in 2007 I got too sick with child and had to return home in search of protein before cataloging today further inventory of the society and the records of the life of the South Family in which, in 1837, according to Polly Vedders, "Frederick, Chauncy and Stanton have been to Troy to find the cheese but were not successful. Soon after they returned home, Elder Calvin came with about half of it. It was found in the barn, a hat and frock with it. We lay this theft to Joseph Chappel."

Bonnets of deep indigo and scarlet. Oval boxes of orange, red, yellow. Bright blue linen. Chairs woven with wool. Cloaks in red, cloaks in blue and black, cloaks in plum. Wide wooden floors painted the color of goldenrod, the color of the sun.

I Wish I Had a Cuddler

but I have a “rugged individualist.”
So said the witch who tended us and attended us
instead of could-have-been you.

See here: this length of string
I’ve wound around these two years?
Oh *you* won’t see.
This is the blessing I got instead of another—
instead of a mother welcoming
the tarnish of the physicality of love.

If I were a cake mold I’d be magnificent,
a quilted pineapple dusted with affection
for all traveling tramps.
I aim to stay so open as a door,
and with this child, at least, I am.
But I am also pressed for time—
and not batter, nor tenderness from the body,
nor into service like those who serve without condition.

Pressed for time, so why not just say *daughter*
and get it over with, let the word escape
into its vox hollow,
as I’ve escaped from you, a refugee,
or my daughter escapes from the refuge
I offer with my body?

No matter that she’s no cuddler.
We are wound tight by some other Bodily manner.
It could have been you
but I’m relieved that it’s not.

Sister Jemima had a very singular gift: she saw hell open, the brink of imminent danger of falling, and she crept around the room, uttering cries, hanging on to Mother's apron strings and winding them around her hands to comfort her. (from the copied testimonies of Roxalana Grosvenor, first part of 1800s, who left the Shakers to study mesmerism)

Repudiation

She is not celibate, before or after the covenant.

She does not pacify or admire pacifism in others.

In fact, she abhors any whiff of pacifism.

She is not a utopian experiment.

For all she'd have you think, she has never lived a radical life.

She will not deemphasize the individual.

In fact, her own individual governs all she does, and monarchs, and gods about.

From "an account of a Meeting held on Mount Sinai by the Brethren and Sisters in the City of Peace May 4 1845":
Instrument M.W. said, Blessed Mother Ann is truly here. She has brought with her a large flock of doves, and they are hovering over us. She then asked, Are ye willing that the doves should take possession of you this day? We answered, yea, she then asked how many shakers there were. Brother Grove said he knew no better way to find out than to unite and shake. This we did heartily.

This is Where I Came to Kiss (Albany, NY)

Some Hints of a Religious Scheme, Taught and propagated by a Number of Europeans, living in a Place called Nisqueneunia, in the State of New-York, Valentine Rathburn (Salem, 1783): "They begin by sitting down and shaking their heads in a violent manner; turning their heads half round...their eyes being shut."

I walk the grounds for once a childless mother. The thistle, clover, wind and bug-sticky heat are all what I communed from when I was young. The roosters look like perfect folk paintings of roosters, almost kitsch, almost sacred. It is as if the present tense were itself trembling.

Around the corner, the small airport where I used to come to kiss, when I was a virgin and my boyfriend had a hatchback and we both lived at home with our families. It is as if the tide of my next child is already breaking, did break, will break, because waves are just a thing the water does again and again.

I think of myself as a person who, if no path is clearly marked, simply will not start walking. But here I walk, because I am a mother with no child with me. A mother enveloping a secret next child. A child with no mother, with a mother who will not walk beside me. *Simple* is a fallacy.

A big bee bumbled by from the pages of a children's book I read to my daughter last night at bedtime. I could sleep or die or birth here, out in the open, in this forsaken and holy farm, its medicinal herb garden still tended, made to look new by volunteers. I could be, finally, that orphan, a free spirit, and bound only to this plot of star flower, Indian cup, and ghosts.

Except, of course, that I was raised up here, daughter to a mother now departed (to California, and to illness physical, and to illness mental, and to general anger). Except, of course, that this is where I came to kiss.

*I want to go to my Mother; I am sick to see my Mother; I had no God till I had a Mother; how could I be born without a Mother?
What reason I have to bless God for my mother.*

Mother

Noun.

Middle English, from Old English, akin to Old High German, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit.

A female parent.

A woman in authority, specifically, the superior of a religious community of women.

An old or elderly woman.

Source, origin.

Maternal tenderness or affection.

Short for motherfucker, sometimes vulgar.

Something that is an extreme or ultimate example of its kind especially in terms of scale.

As far as I can tell, my mother's cycle goes something like this: the mania blossoms in late spring, round and ripe, having hibernated all winter under a grey frost, and blooms in shows of outrageous color, bit by bit, building throughout summer until it is lush and dense, unbearable in August, resists fading through early fall, little heat waves, as in a warm climate, angry streaks on the trees and showy storms throughout the beginning of the dying season, until it finally starts to fade late in November or December, crumbles into a wary, weary depression, a deep fog, endless rain, and peaks with a despairing fear of death, like the anxiety over the never-return of spring, in March (the anniversary of her first and second discoveries of cancer), and then begins again.

Bitch-slap

I said something along the lines of, "I'm not an idiot, you know" and bitch-slapped her.

Then she laughed.

Then I ran outside to the picnic table in our backyard and a bird shat on my head.

It would have been the Holy Spirit itself if we were not a family of you-know-whats.

She was still laughing when she came out after me, and laughed harder when she saw the shit.

I don't remember what happened after. Probably forgiveness.

The first part of the memory, though, is solid, with lock and key.

It felt real solid, the sound of the smack.

Mother Ann pulled Jemma Blanchard on to her lap and said to her parents, "All we want is to help her soul to God; and you cannot do this, for you have not found Him yourself." The girl "felt released that she got away." Mother Ann was offended and fetched her back, commanding her to apologize for leaving without saying farewell. As Jemma excused herself, Mother said, "Oh, oh, nay, you did not mean to come again," and held her by the arm. Jemma: "I kept trying to get my arm away, but as soon as I did she would take me by the other" and pull her toward the house. Mother Ann pulled her forcibly into the house and tackled her to the ground, "both on our knees." Mother said, "James, did I not tell you that the time had come that we must go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in?"

*My mother has a lovely face of fur, I once wrote,
and has to go to a meeting.*

If one is lucky—one being me, or other people in her life, since she herself considers herself most lucky during the worst of the mania, and unlucky during the worst of the depression, and doesn't see it as a cycle, or as mania at all, since, the websites say, like most people suffering from bipolar disorder that favors mania over depression, during the mania she feels invincible, energized, fevered with power and righteousness and like nothing at all is wrong with her and she will bite your head off if you suggest that perhaps there is—then between the mania and the depression (say, in early winter) and the depression and the mania (say, in mid-spring), one can find a pocket of compassion, humanity, as she migrates between the two ends of the spectrum. I had one very nice visit from her in late December several years ago, and another nice one out to see her in January the year before that, and right before my daughter was born in early May she was really quite empathetic and lovely. It was only afterward, by the time my baby was six weeks old and it was June, that my mother pronounced me selfish, horrid, too wrapped up in my baby and putting the infant's needs ahead of hers, and told me she didn't care if she ever met her grandchild (her only one) at all.

She never has met her. We no longer speak to each other. My middle sister is often not in touch with her (nor, for more complicated reasons, are her difficult parents, or her difficult sister). One of the primary frustrations of her disorder for those of us who have tried to love her through it has been that if she makes a pronouncement or decision during the mania, the mania and its quill-work of logic may come undone but her sense of the rightness of her decision, or the reasoning behind it, will not. She may no longer feel like the most important person in the country, full of conspiracy theories about how everyone is less intelligent, wise, or vindicated than she, but the choices she made while she did feel thus stick. And so one is unable to make amends, or pretend the whole horrible incident never happened, or receive the apology one so desperately desires. There is no saying, "Oh, god, remember when you were in such a state and said that terrible, hurtful thing to me? Oh ho!" There is no saying anything at all. There is no disease, so there is no treatment, and there is no treatment, so there is no cure.

(Occasionally, bottoming out in the worst of a depression and mourning the loss of her "intensity," she has sought professional help, but by that point she presents as a depressive trying to get back to normal: she doesn't recognize her normal as abnormal, so doesn't see the need to give any evidence that she has spent the last three-quarters of the year quitting jobs in a huff, speeding motorcycles, waking up at four in the morning to clean the entire house, hurling insults at public officials, and otherwise fitting the textbook profile of mania. Since she is in the doctor's office lethargic, disconnected and talking suicidal ideations, she is given anti-depressants—a dangerous thing after the depression fades and the mania starts up again. But by the time she's manic again she's "fine" anyway, and no need for doctors or drugs, everything's great, she's on the top of the world, if only the world weren't such a heap of disappointments and utter shit. According to the internet research I've done, this counterproductive flirtation with psychiatric diagnosis and psychotropic drugs, too, is typical. Since most people suffering

Forgotten

As in a fairytale, there's a hole in my book where a mother should be,
a hole in my head, caught in my throat,
a hole in my fine felt heart worn on a fob.
There's a hole big enough to push my finger through
and flex to feel the flood of air I am damming.
This hole die-cut in my life and peered out
to an illuminated page with a castle and a rook,
this round, voided space, my *mother*.
The hole that hills yell through.
If I followed the familiar paths—was orphaned,
taken to the wolves or the witches or left in spindled knots—
 well, *as in* I am living the good life without,
flooded with relief that the hole was cut,
neat and taut, to allow for the pleasant damning of my mild eyes.
Without that part of the plot, I can see the next page, and the next,
woodland creatures, three fairy midwives cloaked in blue,
and the place where there is now a hole used to be a bad word,
but is no more, she is sheared from my book, look,
I am waving in a crystal gown in royal procession, happily,
look, I am led by steeds at a trot, happily, look,
my cradle is gossamer-veiled and safely caught, finally,
though outside the lead glass windows the brambles grow thick as muscles
and a crow is cawing *in absentia, gone but not*.

After Mother Ann died, the two brothers who brought her body back “knelt down on the doorstep and had a gift of sorrow.”

And Then She Dies

Q: How does one mourn a tornado?

A: Thousands of bits of glass in my eye.

A: Macramé, crochet, negligee. Hooks and laces.

A: Crumbs of unleavened meal mixed with oil, honey and chopped nuts.

A: From the inside, that grey calm haven seconds away from the luscious, vicious swirl.

One of the worst years was the year before the first cancer, which of course begs the question: the cancer itself or the knowledge of the cancer? The tumult of the mutation wrecking havoc on an already fragile ecosystem of nerves and resentment and impatience or the unconscious and then conscious terror and rage directed and undirected at the disease itself? Did the cancer take her stubborn streak and her volubility and her bitterness and twist them into something you can look up in the DSM? The year before the first cancer she dragged the heaviest dictionary in the house to the table in the middle of dinner and shoved away all the dishes and food in order to argue a point, left tire tracks in our driveway from frequent peel-outs, developed a fondness for rap music, dressed and acted like the fifteen-year-old juvenile delinquents she was working with for her job, screamed and cursed at the world. It was bad almost all the time.

Daughters & Mothers & Daughters Again

Oats, groats, barley soup:
this family house has always smelled like pilgrims.
I dream its end as a staircase.

My father's mother, darkly:
I always knew you would leave the tribe.
I wrote a poem about it. Two pages.
You can read it after I die.

This from the woman who stacked her mail
neatly on the steps between the railing bars.
I half expect the apocalypse to be good for me.

Bro. Abijah: One time, at the Square House after Samuel Fytcch had been speaking in a prophetic manner of what would yet be, Mother Ann said, "The time will come when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth and the waters cover the sea, and a nation will be born in a day, and what do you think of that Samuel?"

Log

We came then to Cultland.
It was reason to revolve around the sun,
an excuse for pleasure (check only me).

(And what if no one has pleasure?
Then it is a failed journey.)
But we did have pleasure,
drew our fingers around our lollipop heads.

We were inducted into and excised from
all these lovely cults.
Just down the street,
the season of summer carried on in manic charm.

Of course, the year *after* the first cancer was really bad, too. There were shopping sprees to buy bags full of party supplies though no one was planning a party; her license was suspended for serial speeding; she held middle of the night meetings with another married person at local diners, a severe depressive she later married, to commiserate about their awful family lives, which she would brag about to us, her family, the next day. And then, despite the pamphlets given to cancer patients that urge no sudden decision-making or life-changes, after the first round of care and chemo was over, she left my father and nine-year-old sister, saying she was done being a wife and mother, hated my father for being able to put his PhD on his tombstone (both the acronyms of higher degrees and the ideas of tombstones suddenly very important to her, never mind that it didn't cross my father's mind to put his PhD on his tombstone), citing Virginia Woolf and her need for a room of one's own. And moved right in with the other (now divorced) person and his children. I can't remember if all this happened between the months of May and December. It seems likely that it did.

What Heavenly Creatures the Dog Must See when She Sees Them

I have always been one to say to my attics,
“Enough, ghosts. It is late and your racket spooky.
To bed and to quiet please.”
And they do lie down.

I am in such a way convincing but mostly a coward.
Cowards also aim to spike, to spite,
and are as unhappy in an attic as elsewhere.
The wide-open space is a heaven unpromised to my kind.
Faces are for making faces.

So how could I stand to kill my mother,
follow her down by the primroses
and whirl in a high temper hallucinogen
to finish her *but good?*
Even as much as I do want an end,
to this book and otherwise, I couldn't:
I'd be condemned to be a mystery writer,
a genre for which I am a lost cause.
And anyway, she would always in my attic (as she is)
and would not lie down (as she never does).
And this would not do.

Enough, horror.
Put out your tongue, Spite.
It is black and noon.

On Christmas while on my knees at the supper table I saw a bright ball roll in the dining room which was covered with living eyes all over, except a small space whereon the words were written
I shall search thru your dwellings
I shall search thru your barn
I shall roll thru your orchards
your forests and farms.

Ann Lees, born on Toad Lane in Manchester, England, 1736. Joined Jane and James Wardley of the Quakers. Married Abraham Standerin, a blacksmith, and bore four children, all of whom died in infancy. “Probably because of her own tragic experience as a mother, she believed that ‘lusts of the flesh’ were the cause of the world’s problems.” (*Recapturing Wisdom’s Valley: the Water-vliet Shaker Heritage, 1775-1975*, Dorothy M. Filley)

Anna Leese...they assert that she is the woman spoken of in the twelfth chapter of Revelations; and that she speaks seventy-two tongues—and though the tongues are unintelligible to the living, she converses with the dead, who understand her language. (*An Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects which have appeared in the World...*, Hannah Adams, 1784)

Ann Lee was born February 29, 1736. Her mother was esteemed a very pious woman. She had five sons and three daughters. She was employed in a cotton factory, a cutter of hatters’s fur, a cook in an infirmary. In appearance, she was about the common stature of women, thick-set, but straight, well-proportioned, complexion light and fair, blue eyes, light brown hair. (*Ann Lee {The Founder of the Shakers}*, by F.W. Evans, Mount Lebanon, 1858)

Mother Ann Lee, founder, the American Shakers, a celibate, religious community. Taught the basic principles of the Shaker order: Purity of Life, Peace, Justice, Love. Expressed in Celibate Life, Non-Resistance, Community of Goods, Universal Brotherhood; held to be the Divine Order of Society.

“Even while a child she had an utter hatred to the flesh, and to the nature which leads men and women to acts of uncleanness. To keep her feelings awake, sometimes pictured in her mind a burning oven, and that if she could not bear that, how could she bear the flames of hell.” (*Prophesy Unsealed with a Brief Sketch of Ann Lee*, Alonzo Giles Hollister, Mount Lebanon, 1905)

Lately, since the second cancer, the cancer that means it was never a first and a second cancer at all, but the same deadly cancer, lying dormant, potent and wild in her body the whole time, there are no good years, and a smaller and smaller window of that blissful middle of the spectrum. Who is this person, my mother? She says she is going to heaven to hang out with Janis Joplin and Rosa Parks. She says she wants to go to Vegas with “Dottie Schroeder, the longest-playing woman in the All-American League, and a great shortstop and ultimate team player!, all the models for “Rosie the Riveter” and Gertrude Stein and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Margaret Sanger and Eleanor Roosevelt and Willa Cather and Vanessa Redgrave and J.K. Rowling and Isabelle Allende and Margaret Cho and Wendy Wasserstein,” “some of my greatest heroes!” Never mind that I’m pretty sure she has never read Gertrude Stein, since she derided me when I began writing non-narrative poetry, or Willa Cather, whose name she made fun of when we chose it for her granddaughter. She says she is a radical and a hippie. She says I am a yuppie for buying organic food. She says she is a bohemian. She says her daughters, who are poets and artists and activists and farm workers, are bourgeois and don’t understand her. Who is this person, who wants my name etched on to her tombstone, but plans to have me forbidden from attending her funeral?

The Vault

"Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost"—Christ

Others have their cut-out slide and their tin doll cradle. Others have their yearbook and their plastic car. I know because I see their children with these things, and I think, I had that thing, but I can't prove it. Nothing has been saved, the thing one does when things are precious.

Lost in the flood, we say, but we mean a basement. *Lost in the flood*, we say, but we mean my mother did not want to save it. She has a thing about giving away the things she knows we'd want to keep. A deep dark spite: *if you want it, I will bury it alive.*

Keep it in the family, some say. A secret or a knowledge or a cut-out slide. No wonder I so want an attic. No wonder there is so much empty space up there.

There's been some sort of Titanic, and all the china plates marked with What We Were are smashed and souvenired at the bottom of it all.

*Vicalun, the angel of repentance:
Hark! hark! my holy holy
Vicalun sellun voo,
I have come to mourn
And weep with you
In low humiliation
Pray to the vilun sool
Whose hand can stay the bellows
And save si ree l u nvool.*

Extract from an Unpublished Manuscript on Shaker History (by an Eye Witness) Giving an Accurate Descrip. of their Songs, Dances, Marches, Visions, Visits to the Spirit Lang, Etc., 1850

Namesake

I am chased by hysterical lions, the magistrates of pollen. I am bedecked by the blossoms of the water-season. Each birdie is a tiny terror game. No one wins, tripping down the cement. This next move is called a *family tree*. The spoons are crossed and headless. They are a wonderful sign. Anxiety cracks open its suitcase once more.

Saying of Mother Ann..., Gathered from Different Individuals, at Harvard and Shirley, who were eye and ear witnesses.

The Divine Word of God, Revealed, thru them at Different times and in various Places.

Collected together by Roxalana L. Grosvenor:

Mother's greeting: "Will thou be a Daughter of Zion, and be searched as Jerusalem with candles?"

At the Shaker Cemetery, Wisdom's Valley

Mother Ann Lee's neat little white grave,
name and dates deeply etched but no other markings.

Black-listed, two-fisted, black-balled from your funeral
as you like to make lists of those whom you don't want there
and I am among them, your heathen kin, though,
as you told me before we stopped speaking,
etched with my sisters on your tombstone
as your dubious achievement—
when that very small occasion occurs
and the imagined throngs kept away by the bouncer you've posthumously hired
and the one last thing you can control is at hand,
and I am not there out of deference or defiance

maybe I will come here, a quiet place,
and place a bad rock on my heart.

The first Shaker community in America was settled in 1776 near the Albany County Airport. The original meeting house, cemetery, orchard and a neighboring farm still stand. The burial site of Ann Lee, founder of the Shaker Movement and first Shaker Settlement, is in the Shaker Cemetery located adjacent to the Heritage Park.

The Well from Which We Drank Water

It kept coming around and around in me, how to draw near to the source one must draw near, and every place I could take my pulse pounded it out. So we stayed by the water (though the water made me iller) and I ferried back and forth across the land to that sideways teardrop eye at the middle of my skull. The road was a glory. In possibly everyone's past there is a farmstead and my past is no different, so when I got to where I was going and the air was a rich archive of manure and sweet clover and all my points throbbed liked a phrenological etching, it did not mean a particular something. I drank from waters near and far, felt well and unwell. I ferried about a small notion, like a thimble, a fancy good, an idea a Republican I met deemed Totally Human. But the species, its totality, was never in question—just its dependence on its lifesource (me), its sentient or insentient thrum, and nevertheless I ferried it on land and to shore and back to the library of my America like a good Christian. And just like that, the nation had a birthday, shooting off colored rockets to celebrate its independence from the motherland. I stood there watching, a home within a home within a home, full of well water, a question of *steady* on all my opened lips.

Wednesday evening June 23 1841

I saw an angel descending from heaven having on his wings a Box. He entered the room and placed the Box upon my head. Nothing more was done about it until the next evening. Then Mothers little messenger little James Wardley came to the inspired instrument and told her to take the Box to the Elders and he would reveal its contents. In the box said he is a book from Holy Mother Wisdom which contains the means for the protection of the little lambs of Zion Beloved Elders if ye desire it this Book may be copied off any time and by any instrument ye choose.

"Women were rapt and pallid, their eyes wild, their bodies thin, their movements nervous"

[hand claps]

if I sing of waves, let me motion waves with my hands
& bring the spirit to bear in my worship

if I sing of love, let me open my body wide as a ship
be the known light inside the whale ribs

if I desire to loose myself of my mother, let me jump up
jump up and slap the roof joists in my prayer

if there is a hell why should I not go like the others
& make this old dance from my knees as I plunge

...Their heavy dancing, as it is called, is performed by a perpetual springing from the house floor, about four inches up and down,...both in the men's and women's apartment...singing sometimes at one time, sometimes more, making a perfect charm. This revelation affects the nerves, so that they have intervals of shuddering as if they were in a strange fit of the ague. They sometimes clap hands, and leap so as to strike the joist above their heads...One of the postures which increase among them, is turning round very swift for an hour or two...They sometimes fall on their hands and knees and make a sound like the roaring of many waters...(An Alphabetical Compendium of the various sects which have appeared in the World..., Hannah Adams, 1784)

Arielle Greenberg was raised in Niskayuna, New York, home of the first Shaker community in America and eight and a half miles from where Mother Ann Lee is currently buried. She was pregnant with her second child when she conducted the research for this book in the summer of 2007 at the Shaker Heritage Society in Colonie, New York and at the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in New Gloucester, Maine, home to the only living Shakers left in the world (four at the time of Arielle's visit, including a recently arrived young novice). She tried to keep this pregnancy a secret from her mother, from whom she was estranged, but discovered her mother had found out about the pregnancy in early November 2007, when Arielle had just entered her third trimester. Arielle began having nightmares and visions of the pregnancy being cursed, and about two weeks later, the baby, named Day, died in utero at thirty-one weeks. He was born and buried in Maine in December of 2007.

The poem "Daughters & Mothers & Daughters Again" previously appeared in *Cream City Review*, "Forgotten" will appear in *Fairytales Review*, and "Log" appeared in the journal *Cab|Net*. My gratitude to the editors.

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