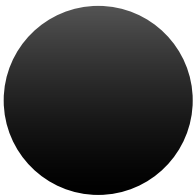


Archive pipe	:=	1999, April 6
Second voice	:=	Blakey Bessire
Begin deposition.		
Oral Report	:=	The Place Inside The Smoke
Retrieval grounds	:=	zMO3EeE7rQLSLF
Execute	:=	Repressor cell for recursion of currency fetish in biotic slice



Every night, at dusk, the kitten came from under the temple stairs to play. She chased a glass marble as it ping-ponged across the stone floor of the courtyard. The marble bounced each time it hit the banks of what used to be a large, shallow pool. The fountain was long gone, but the pool remained at the base of the temple staircase, polished by centuries of feet and cleaning.

Alongside the temple was the post office, the TV tower, the children's theater, the olympic swimming center, and the law school. Together they formed two sides of a long park. It was dark; only sheets of thin light snuck in through the rows of trees.

The kitten was born without eyes or fur pattern. Her paws fell silent on the stone. The only sound in the courtyard was the whack of the glass marble against the pool's stone edge followed by a fast and thin roll, like chalk drawn swiftly in a straight line. She sped after it, listening to anticipate its movement. She never missed.

The dogs arrived just as night fell. One by one they wandered in from each side of the park. The night painted each one either gray

or a shade of blue depending on how much light from the police sirens the trees allowed. Together they formed a smudged mass wandering towards the temple entrance. The park was on a gradual hill and the temple nestled at its base. One long walking path stretched across it all the way to the opposite side where the law school sprawled. Only those on the temple side of the hill could see the courtyard, children's theater, and the post office. The TV tower behind the temple was visible from everywhere, it was once the tallest building in the city. The park was dark, even during the day, offering its inky embrace. The dogs settled around the banks of the shallow pool like reclining statues.

Undisturbed, the kitten chased her marble. She waited for the dogs to settle as they had each night since the bombing began. The dogs were drawn to the sound of play. The sound of the marble warmed the pack. It healed them each, as the glass slid back and forth, back and forth. The tender bounce against the tiles stroked their fur, creating its own vibration, running, like fingers, slowly along and against the grain. Soft, short hairs on end. Long ones, too.

There were often more people in the park at night. Some there in spite, others fear. Gymnasium students making out or drinking, the claustrophobics who couldn't stay in the basement shelters, workers from the TV tower smoking. They

arrived, as the dogs did, one by one, to take their place on a bench or in the soft, dry areas under the trees. As the night neared midnight, the park grew still and silent, everything in it, a giant ear.

The missiles came daily on schedule, close to 23:00. The exact time was unknown, though the pack would indicate their arrival better than the sirens. They felt it first, splayed on the stone. One giant belly, flat. The vibration began as the size of a pinpoint. Their ears twitched. When it began to sting, the pack stood up. The pinprick dragged into one high tone. Sharp now, solid, and constant. An incision. This sound turned the dogs' heads and took control of their bodies, forcing them into a circle around

the fountain base, tail to head, tail to head, as they chased each other, slowly at first, and as the shearing sound gained strength, faster, faster. Two short legged dogs fell out of the circle, trampled. They stumbled to get back up, like drunk puppies.

This is how the dogs soaked up the delirium. The people around the temple slowly got up from the steps of the olympic pool or nearby benches to watch the pack spin. The prophetic centrifuge did not scare them away. Instead, it drew the crowd in. The yips made by the pack echoed against concrete paths all the way down to the law school.

Only a second divided silence and sudden rumble. Time laid bare to horror countdown. Each living thing

in the park could hear it now, as the shaking announced an inescapable volley, coating all matter with harm. The pack sped up even more, a gray circle hurtling. Everything looked upward, the people and the trees, up to see it pass. Up!

It was useless to close eyes, shut mouths, plug noses and ears, cover skins, to prevent seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing, and touching. Vibration could not be shut out or denied. It forced the city to absorb its own destruction. This fact sedimented into all bodies, and with radiation, corrupted them, corroded them.

Shaking windows and walls announced close contact. The pack struggled more and more to keep its



explosion, a deep magnetic drone:
yuuuuuumuuuuuuuuuuuuumuuuuuuuuuu
uumuuuuuuuuuuuu uuuu uuuu uu u. As
the bombs pushed all matter out, the
drone pulled the pack in. The droning
would last for only minutes and they
could never catch it in time.

Tonight, as the TV tower fell,
the pack knew they could make it.
The smoke dribbled down, erupting
from crevices in the structure, mess-
ier now than the silky smooth ter-
ror of initial release. They listened for
the drone, a clamor of skldhfslskj lkjsfj.
There it was! yuuuumuuuuuuuuuuuu-
muuuuuuuuuuu uumuuuuuuuuuuuuuu uuuu
uuuuuu uu u.

Up again! The pack moved quickly through the staggered crowd to the front of the police line, opposite



the explosion. They stood there in a half circle, sensing now with a new precision. They could see time pass by, see the police in their uniformed runway. The children's theater was gone as the smoke touched the back of the temple. The temple gave in slowly, making way to the tail of the police cordon. Slurped up in pairs, the fog swallowed the two lines as it expanded and pulled upwards and out. It billowed generously, blotting the flowers, the lizards, the insects, the wintergreen bushes, the rubbish bins, the benches, the swings. Some people ran, some stood like statues, and others walked in, undeterred by the police, attracted by matteness, the hole, the thick black. Concrete shifted, grinded, dragged, and heaved, con-



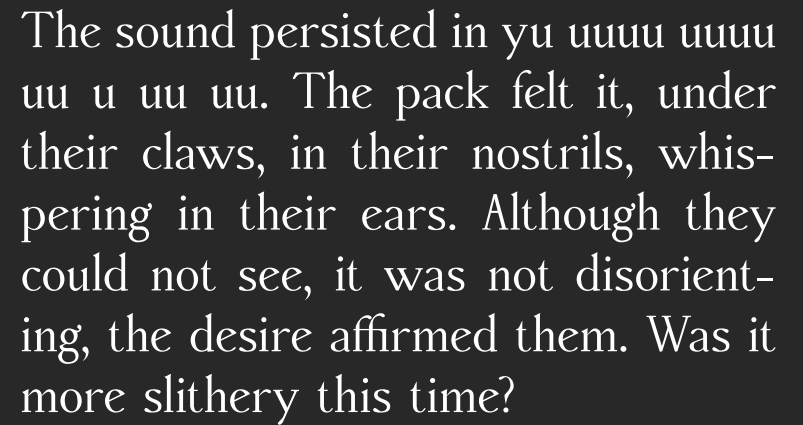
ducting the expansion in its own grotesque rhythm.

Finally, the smoke reached the front part of the police tunnel. The pack remained there lurching forwards, to permit their own swallowing. There was no going back, no severing from this entrance, beckoned by the runway, by the gaping sound, the hollow thwomp of destruction. They recognized the inertia. They had felt it many nights before.

The pack nodded its head. The outer membrane of the smoke passed through them, as they entered.



The pack trembled. A sound called to them, something close. The pulse of it nearly internal. They wandered deeper. They could no longer hear the TV tower. The drone grew fuller, still: yuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu uuuu uudooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo oonttttttttknoooooooooooooooooooooo oooooooooooooowwwwhooooooooooooo oooooooooowwwwwwwwwwwtoooo ooooooooootaaaaaaaaakeeeeeeeeeee eeeeeeeepppppppppppppaaaaaaaaa aaaarrttt. It rippled through them, gurgled, another deep droning yuuuuuuuuu u u u u u.



The sound persisted in yu uuuu uuuu
uu u uu uu. What have you brought
for me today, it posed an elongated
question. The pack reached a tread
and climbed up a staircase, and con-
tinued straight into a tunnel. The
gray was everywhere, but the smoke
wriggled differently here.



The sound persisted in yu uuuu
uuuu uu u uu uu. They followed it to
a door at the end of the tunnel. The
dogs stepped inside, here where the
words were found.



This place ingested everything, and took everything as material. It pulled at all sides of their musculature, testing their potential. The pack did not resist. It dissolved, melted, stretched, rolled, pliant and palpable. And as they did, a room formed. It was made up of their entire body.

They wondered,
will it swallow more?
Inside?
Liquid?
Who will be what and
when will we use them?
Will time?
Will color?
Will lair?



A h h h h
h w u u u u
u u u u u
u u u u
u u u u
u u u u
u u u u
a h h h'
h w u



u u u u u
u u u u
u u ,

will them?
Will them?



Form. Forma.

f! a a a a a a A A A h h h

o! h h w w u u u u u u u

r! u u u u u u m m m m

m! m m m u u u

a! u u u u / u u u u /

u u u u u u u u u u u

u u u u u u u

f o r m u



Picture this. Our humours conjoined, phlegm, blood, bile, resisting hierarchy. Now that we are here, seduced by vibration and reacting only to that which we sense. Hello. Yes, hello, greetings from the pack, the room, from four soft gray walls.

They settled into this new place. They stretched a bit, and with a shiver, began to speak.

“Ooooooooooh, was it a long day! A miracle to emerge as here.”

The pack, the room, spoke again and the words formed a balustrade, a long table with a chair at each head. On the table, two napkins and a large, empty bowl.

“I could really go for a salty bath”, the pack said. They were tired from decorating. Although the smoke had

risen their spirit and they felt capable of many new things, rest called to them.

But, at that moment, a woman entered through the small door frame. And then another stumbled in. One was small and wearing earmuffs, the other very tall with a giant handbag. They sat at the table. Many more trickled in, stumbling ashy, coughing, wounded. Friends, mothers, coworkers, partners, first responders, strangers, enemies, speckled all over the world, each from their own. This place was common to all smoke. Only some found it, while wandering in wildfires, explosions, places that burn, crush and take apart. They stood around the table or leaned against the walls. Each dusted



their shoulders and spluttered puffs of smoke out from their lungs. The debris, as it left their bodies and fell to the floor, disappeared, swallowed by the room. Rest had to wait as the room watched and felt.

The chairs were unusually tall, and from them a glorious new aspect of the room sculpted and protruded forward into supple swirling walls and glistening stalactite ceiling. The women each sat down, admiring quietly, only to find that they were secured to their seats. The spectators sprinkled around the room also found they could no longer move. The hands of handbag were very small and her attempt to de-attach was feeble. On the other side, earmuffs, the smaller of the two, wretched forward and

backward, arching and twisting, to no avail. The contents of her pockets spread all over the floor: toothpick, mirror, mint. Pick them up. She could not free herself.

The two guests then became malleable. Both sets of their arms slowly morphed into spoons that began at the elbow and curved to a scoop well beyond where the fingers used to be. The spoons were longer than their legs. Everyone gasped. Both women looked down with sudden horror, releasing two shrieks. They scraped their new arms together. Filled with fright they tried to shake the spoons from where they connected to bone. Impossible. The sleeves of earmuffs' long jacket had shredded at several points, some revealing broken skin.



The once empty bowl, recently conjured to the center of the table, was now full of fragrant broth with fresh mushrooms, herbs, peas and thick noodles floating on top. The bowl rested between the two women as a divider. They sat confused for a time, recovering from the recent shock. Many hours passed before hunger reanimated the resigned lethargy that had come over them. The soup remained fresh, steaming, unchanged. The two women's stomachs grumbled as they reached their spoons into the bowl, scooping its contents. Soon, they realized they were unable to feed themselves. Each time they tried, the more angry they got, imprisoned by the impossible angle, for there was no bend to the spoon



and there was no elbow to bring the end closer than arm's length. Mouths could not be reached.

Without fail, most did not understand. Tell me about the probability. No, I really want to know! Some trembled with such rage, their bones fractured. The spoons were too long. For a time, they would flail, careening the spoon, filled with a noodle or a dribble of broth, towards their mouths, never reaching. Failure often took many days and finally the spoon took possession of their bodies and they starved to death. The spectators lining the room watched and starved.

However, it was a certain few that understood. It was an instinct or sheer accident to extend the spoon



outward to the mouth of others or their companion as an offering. This was the case for earmuffs and handbag. Earmuffs splattered some soup, enraged, at handbag. The both stopped as they realised that they could reach each other. A look cemented the revelation and they slowly practiced getting across to the other's mouth. They continued to feed until each was full and their bellies warm. And with a gentle, "Would you mind?", earmuffs nudged, and handbag scooped the napkin below to her companion's face, wiping away a line of soup from her top lip. They continued by reaching out to people lining the room, who were starving, exhausted from looking. Many approached, fed, and returned to the walls.



Suddenly, earmuffs remembered, and asked, "It's Monday, isn't it?" Thwomp! The chairs released the duo.

Earmuffs stood up, with a dizzying twirl, feeling her full belly. Handbag thought, when I'm out of here, I might sign up for English lessons. Their arms returned, to include an elbow, forearm and a hand attached to both ends. Fast, they went for the door. The spectators, unlocked from the floor and energized by a bit of nourishment, wandered out after them.



The sound persists in yu uuuu uuuu
uu u uu uu. The room, the pack,
grows tired now, even more. This
exercise repeats itself. People come
through the door and sit down. The
chairs and table are never the same,
the napkins once paisley are now
olive brocade, destined to regurgi-
tate in different variations.

The room, the pack rearranges itself,
day for night. At the end of pro-
tracted toil, the table, chairs and
the walls can no longer hold their
shape. They sink down to reveal a
stone floor, polished by centuries
of feet and cleaning. The small door
remains, now lower than before,
akin to a hole. The glass marble
rolls though it. The kitten chases
it, whacking it across the floor back
and forth, back and forth, bouncing
off the walls, stroking their fur, lull-
ing them.



The room, the pack falls asleep. They
let out a long snore:

[illegible]

y u u u u u u u u u u u u u u u u
uuuuuuuuuuuuudooooooooooooooooo
ooooooooooooonttttttttknooooooooo
oooooooooooooooooooooooooooowww-
whoooooooooooooooooooowwwwww-
wwwwtoooooooooooootaaaaaaaaaa-
keeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeppppppppppp-
paaaaaaaaaaaaarrttt.



