



F LETTER

OATH

A FOREWORD BY EILEEN MYLES

Only yesterday I think it was yesterday I drove here to Long Island from New York City and I stopped at a small farm that sells milk and eggs. The name of the farm is welsh – Ty Llwyd.

The language excited me and I couldn't stop telling the woman there about my trip to Wales same time she had moved to the states – bout 1970. She showed absolutely no interest. Yeah, yeah. I was in Russia in 1995 and 2017. I digress. I'm queer, and most recently I'm thinking of myself as a *they feminist*. I was formerly a *they lesbian* wanting to suture the two groups dykes and trans wom-

en in particular since there's a growing sense in the trans community that lesbians and trans women are in opposition and I just don't think it's true. But I'm becoming more interested in attaching my transness to my feminism not my female body. I think the female body is every body's business. Yet so much of the pleasure of this book (and my own work historically and today) is all the iterations of the things that happen to a female body. The pussy in time:

*Her vulva resembles a wild grey
rabbit –
large, a bit fat and grey
with long hanging ears. why?*

Rabbits are vivid, they are running around the yard I'm writing in. Pussies are vivid. There are two in the house I'm living in. As a writer early on men got their hands on my female work. I remember a guy an editor cutting away at my poem to what he regarded as es-

sential. I think recitations of the female body seemed unnecessary to him as did story and certain rhetorical strokes. It was like when I was buying the eggs

*someone once told me that a poem
is a pure thing that doesn't have a
single unnecessary word*

I mean who is licensed to say which words are unnecessary. I remember when I published my first fiction *Chelsea Girls* a reviewer (male) bemoaned how much it was just my daily lesbian life. On and on. In comparison to works of genius like Knausgaard that aim for a deeper content necessarily?

*I often imagine that instead of books
I'm hauling
dynamite*

What are *my* instruments. Existence, right. The act of inventory. Rage, paper and pens. The computer I'm writing on.

And I will epigraph some future book
with this:

write, paw

The simplest line evokes universes of
liberation. Because I want

a world of different labor

Female anger is dead serious. Female
anger is funny. To put something on a
teeshirt doesn't mean it's any less true.
To think it could be there too instead of
brilliantly being in a poem in this book.
This small elegant book. So many of my
best lines were hatched in the midst
of talking to myself, in the day, all day
and launching it in the world. Seeing
who sings to it like I do:

*it's possible all women make up a
secret organization working under
the guise of an oppressed class*

It gets painterly. And

fog around a child's bed

It's incantory, complex and dirty.

*I love your pubes suggesting
prospective fucking in the semantic
rye
and massive beetles under teeth
sheets
rooting in gold roots for gold things
everything in this world makes me
think of fucking*

My friend CA Conrad exists a great deal of the time in ALL CAPS.

I've only published one poem that way. It was written to be read at Occupy Wall Street where poets had the ideal situation which was to read their work and have each line repeated collectively like the human microphone. I feel this:

*I'M PUTTING SOMETHING IN MY
MOUTH
SOMETHING THAT'S YOURS,
CHECHNYA
ONLY
YOURS,
CHECHNYA*

I was having a nervous breakdown in 1995 when I spent the summer in Russia. I was going through a break up and she was with me, she was femme and I was butch and men gave her space and acted like I was invisible even though it was my gig. And I don't drink and she did. People stopped speaking English once they got drunk and most of the English speakers anyhow were men. Who I met. And I was going through menopause. An episode in a female life

*It's only proper for a sham wedding,
The last lifeboat in the immense
ocean*

I'm not so much embedding these fragments of your work into mine as I made a pile of some of the things I found in this book and loved here and thought I'd paint the background in. Grass, intentions. Voices on the other side of the hedge. A lawnmower in the distance. Totally bourgeois. So what. I was moved that the first poem in the book was by Lida who then was named later on by Oksana in the middle of the book. I felt tossed into a community. Reading her work (Lida's) I felt

*impending doom eight months later
he was killed in Afghanistan*

It struck me that he was probably gay and his friend knew it and was trying to fix him before it was too late. He had sucked his friend's cock more successfully. I hope.

*a little boy was riding a bike down
the endless hallway
he looked at me with hateful eyes*

there are lines that are just so fucking metonymic in their grace.

There are lines like a curse that yodel radiantly out of the toothy mouth of the curser, way too incendiary to ever become cliché:

so die for us, black sun of the pig's uniform

We're hopeless as we reach across that gap

will it be read

Starting there, I mean, in the lines going across the page making sound and pictures, accumulating pictures, throughout this book that propose to my mind the anti-monumentality, the wideness of a vision if not female or feeling that way, knowing oneself, someone othered who nobody knows they are looking and recording and it's in this horizontal of the battered portion of the human race that we're living closer to

the likely truth of the future as opposed
to politicians and developers and in-
vestment bankers killing each other in
the name of family and friends

*I have this dream: there's no more
us. Flying out into the light*

It's a recipe, it's a formula, it's a spell

2 syllables

*how can you lose something from
nothing
but that's just it*

I have been invited to witness. To smell
the crowd and be charged by histo-
ry, our desperate pitch. I'm blasted by
fragrant stillness. The smell of us in-
side and out, a vast interior, a bird runs
across the lawn, and – fucking shit –

*The blue eyes
of the groundmeat saleswoman.*

—€M

September 4, 2020

Greenport