

# *LCD*

N. Casale

# 1

## invocation

*They perfect asses. Aguante. Patience! Make life absurd. Surrounded by low-key racists. Approach that light feeling on your lower eyelids. Why did this thought arise? What am I feeling? try to be gentle. Punitive socialization is the conduit of self-oppression. Be beautiful, be yourself. Don't be afraid to be intense. Sore legs, body. What body? Forget intelligence, ego-grasping.*

Idle thoughts guide me through the void. Eyes wide in disgust at a cyclical present. I've been many beasts. I'm grateful for impermanence.

walking in a swirl of poetry  
tender words to no one  
so much fucking maturity  
i'm 22  
i feel dreamy and dumb  
awash in light and sound  
observe my nature  
macro responses  
defined by learning  
i have made myself soft  
though, i'm a try hard  
i step lightly and soften my face  
i try too hard  
to seem at peace  
oh! but i am,  
so much more so than other times in my life.

my identity is my religion  
my soul my body's prison  
too self-centered to listen  
for years I've censored my mission  
squandered my vision  
shirked and lesioned

worked and teased  
in a lifelong release  
sought ease  
bright peace  
but what about me  
i only need me to make me me  
nevertheless notwithstanding i persist  
preparing my soliloquies  
for an imaginary love to be  
love to be love for me  
set me free  
make me me

A hunched man with a saxophone stalks her through the room  
while she gesticulates wildly, and I'm supposed to think this  
is jazz, performance art. Contorted I finally jerk to a seated  
position and hunch myself— scrawling in the half-light, scorn  
shining out of hawk-eyes.

all of this is too complete  
well within boundaries  
a 'woman' uses her body  
a 'man' uses tools, saxophones,

this is bullshit.

every reaction is acceptable,  
push— slightly absurd.  
clap— i'm angry.

i don't think it's disingenuous,  
but well within boundaries,

he chases her around the room,  
he is the guide, controller,  
she is in response to his wail,

expressive logician,  
epithet without permission,  
they will never defend themselves,  
their 'art' is indefensible in my poem.

## 2

# the nerdy cat

I'm 'tired', 'anti-social', and 'strange'. 'Cat-like'. *A perfect fucking mix of masculine and feminine— right? Is that what I wanted?* My whole life is fighting. Alas, I still perpetuate socionormativity; the cool comfort of conformity. None of this is helping you. I'm fine, really. I'm just concerned that I'm wasting your time.

What do you need?

Do you need the words I have received from others?

Do you need those same words in 'my' cadence and candor?

Let's take a moment to reflect on the humor— that I think my life is worth documenting. That I think it could benefit others to read *esta obra*— in English: my ordure.

Fundamentally, I feel I have no right— that I do not deserve anything... but I have a computer, and the fortune to write this out. So I may as well. I am wholly borne of oppression. My lineage. In the 20th century, Americans. Before that, my forebears were of Italy— Sicily more probably. A few in Lithuania and Poland. Who knows what those fuckers were doing. Fucking, obviously... I wonder if I'll usher in another grisly generation. I vow to dutifully transmit the self-destructive, toxic tendencies of my white, American family and society— dependence on plastics, oil, dismal materialism, and the like, propensities towards greed, anger, capriciousness, laziness, fixation, fawning over false figures, cynicism, theoretic foundations of right and wrong, without calling into question the heretic foundations of a humanity in err— compounded to what life should really be like, *et cetera, ad infinitum*. At some point, wordplay becomes an empty game, an *ersatz*, gaming myself into— ah yes yes, I'm so self-aware, aren't I being such a *good* cultural critic. One of the good ones! Yes! Me!

Incessant discernment, of no small consequence! I other others like no other. Or like every other... Can't tell— my othering separates me arbitrarily from others. Otherwise, I am always doing more to change the course of this sinking ship— and I make it look blissfully easy! Watch my smug mug, as I recount my virtues over a warm cup of tea. Steeped in ego. Chronic cockiness. *I'm distancing myself from dicks, right?* This process' compensation: to be fucked. Anything for a lonely orgasm, really. Have a drab come, baby. Compensation for: my solitude. I was (am? will be?) engulfed in (over-?) sexualization. (There is no redemption. Fuck your small conception of a Christ who would consider me forgiven. I don't need forgiveness to be a fully actualized person. In fact, it supports me more to recognize my own polarity. There are no sins, anyway.) It makes sense. It all makes sense. In the most grievous of realities, the greatest understanding arises.

What moves me?

What is the nature of honesty in 21st century America?

What is this body, that has never been born,  
and never will die?

Apparently no one can exist as a character; rather, we all must exist as caricatures of ourselves. It seems that we're expected to be honest.

What is my body good for? In (no) particular order,

- |                  |                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. orgasms       | 6. sleeping                           |
| 2. eating        | 7. reading books                      |
| 3. deep breaths  | 8. a shield in the next mass-shooting |
| 4. biking fast   |                                       |
| 5. hearing music | 9. hugging friends                    |

Everything's happening in continuous time, strangely. I'll say to myself, "Oh, I feel so different from how I was then." But it was just a week ago, yesterday. I'm not getting enough sleep. It's perpetual sunrise... the sun rises later these October days.

I've forgotten what it's like to touch another person, to be with another person. Everything's isolation. Perfect execution. I just want to share the happiness I've found this year... with you. Or should I say them? It does not matter... both referents are absent and self-same, yet named.

I can solve problems. The rhetoric of it: I can't solve this one. It's a stick in my spokes. Shut down. One second I'm a train moving through space. The next frame I'm all garbled up, you can imagine.

i see people who look like you on campus  
and everything drops  
i've fallen off my bike  
and people gather round  
to try to help me  
i don't allow myself to be  
i just lay there  
relegated

i don't hate everyone  
i'm just hurt

two similar years  
a summer of life  
a fall of strife  
listening to Longstreth's  
platforming  
so sick

shit body image  
the only thing that's attracted to me  
is my shower curtain  
chided and childish

Nothing feels pertinent anymore. I'm dissociated. My name? My body? My corporeality? My embodiment? My mind? I take my whole existence for granted. I am disturbed by what I find in the mirror. The synthesis of the commonly separated body and mind.

I'm so distracted angry lost in my fucking head all the time.

So I try to reconnect and (end) I'm only met with disappointment in my body and culture and hatred for this body and culture. It's all that I can find in my body. My body is an abstract. As a result of this culture, as a result of the intellectualization of even the most mundane and physical experiences.

It's impossible to be selfish. Especially when the only thing I want is some freedom from myself. Some catharsis. Someone to love. To keep me from hating me.

I take it so far that I start to forget/deny that I can offer love to another person. Alas, all I do is plot and plan. That's an exaggeration. I operate on extrema. I'm just certain of my need.

Times of love are few and far between it seems. I've learned a few things. It's time to leave.

"My thoughts are sub-vocalized. My mornings are a whisper. I awake to a wall of noise. A sample of the Beach Boys on repeat. Fuzzy NPR, buzzing news of war and half-truths. And my phone, with its fairy waltz. I'm immediately hungry."

Grits, oats, oat groats, nutritional yeast, salt, sriracha, black turtle beans, almond milk, soy sauce, tofu, broccoli, spinach, salsa, green beans, chickpeas, split lentils, orange lentils, yellow lentils, cinnamon, artificial vanilla, zucchini. Most of it ends up in the pot. M harkens to *Watt*. Like Sam, he's only half-conscious, coalescing in crude phases of sighs and snorts. pre-LCD, precursor. I sigh, jostled awake, "That fucking asshole."

Socially-sanctioned junkie. 'Safe', junkie high on prescription drugs. Sibillant the day proceeds, solitary he seethes.

And all this time I thought I didn't exist. But I'm supposed to be him right now. All narrative fails. It's just me.

D and I are one. My limited perspective is hers. Apparently my characters are just me. In any case, I encountered an unreconcilable experience with D.

We were walking from lunch to the Great Togetherness Meditation Hall. On the silent path, we talked. As we walked, the chalk spoke of peace, joy, and nature.

She apologized that she couldn't make more eye contact. She said my eyes were beautiful and made her uncomfortable. I wanted to tell her that my awareness of our different skin made me uncomfortable. How supportive I wanted to be, how much I want to soothe sorry history. How beautiful her eyes are... dark and infinite. How much I respected her patience and love, despite this crushing culture.

And how she may have spread the sorry sickness by implicitly affirming that beautiful eyes are of those whose genes afford a color and light that is not brown. How we find these obscure oases ordinary, not beautiful, while they pool into perpetuity and peer in profundity; do we truly find them unworthy of remark, of looking into?

I felt (feel) so hopeless, doomed to perpetuate this socialization. I'm so/too serious.

This year we met again and talked at length. She dressed me in my temporary name and we hugged. We were open, genderqueer, gentle. I can only offer what she wrote:



## Appreciation Note

no mud, no lotus

may you discover  
the art that's in your  
heart — may you  
recognize the interbeing  
in every beast.

Dear N, ~

Hi there! I am regretting not talking more with you during this retreat, along with a few others.

You were among the ones I was really looking forward to seeing again. Last year I didn't get to write you an appreciation note. So here it is! ♥

**You are so grand.** ★

Your energy is so gentle, yet also pretty intense—and it's a refreshing and delightful mix. I'm a super awkward being, but I want to thank you.

For sharing space w/ me, allowing me to nerd-out to you about animals. Your presence is much appreciated.

*(sorry for commenting on your eyes again)*

D 

And on the back, she wrote:

“Shelters exist in all  
things— if you look deep  
enough”

And now she's the only thing that'll bring me back to Blue Cliff. I'm so **busy** each day, supporting her from this **great** distance. I bow twice to my cushion— to her, if not explicitly, implicitly.

I shave my legs and have them touched on the bus. I can't even remember my name through this fucked narrative lens.

only i can understand  
intimacy through a lens

A thin immature punk sits across me, restrained. I feel my voice denied. This story was fucked from the start. Inane utility— what's to find in a previous present moment. It's the same sad story— a fragile self seeks validation from a vapid and virile incapable impossible companion. Read *Notes From Underground* if you want that garbage.

i don't have anything nice to say  
you can't support me  
i don't trust you  
yet i long for you  
in the abstract

for what i feel you could represent  
what i hope you could be  
that which you are not as yet

WE MET TOGETHER IN  
CLT AGAIN, HOLED UP IN  
THIS CITY AND WALKED  
AND CONSOLED IN OUR  
TOGETHER TRUTH, WORDS  
PERMEATING, A DIALOGUE  
THAT ACKNOWLEDGED  
THE COMMONALITY OF

ALL DHARMAS, AND PO-  
ETRY IS NOURISHMENT  
FOR A MIND. SOME TRUTHS  
I KNOW, SOME I'LL NEVER  
LIVE BY, BECAUSE IT DOESN'T  
MATTER WHAT I WRITE,  
I'M TOO FAR GONE ANY-  
WAY.

form is emptiness  
emptiness is form

NO MATTER HOW MUCH  
I SEE IT, IT WILL NEVER  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IT'S  
TIME TO WRITE LOVE SONGS,  
TO STARE INTO STARRY  
SUNS, TO DRAW OUT THE  
BEAUTY I THINK I KNOW,  
AS IF I COULD, AND NEVER  
DOWN MYSELF, CAUSE IT'S  
ALL TRUE, NO CLAUSE NEED  
BE PROVED, NO WEIGHT  
NEED BE MOVED, FOR EV-  
ERY PLASTERED PAGE THERE  
IS THE INCOHERENT LEFT-  
WARD BLANK SPACE, AND  
ONCE IT HAS BEEN NO-  
TICED, ITS NONSENSE SHINES  
FROM THE OTHER SIDE  
OF IT'S PLANE OR FACE,  
AS IF IT WERE TWO, AS  
IF I SHOULD READ SPACE  
FOR ITS INSIGHT INTO MY  
CHEEKY LIFE. POPPING  
BUBBLES PULLING AT SEN-  
SATION, RIPPING TINY RIPS  
INTO THE SKIN OF MY  
HANDS AND FEET, I CAN  
SEE IT RISING TO PULL  
AT THE STRINGS OF MY  
LEGS AND ARMS. I'VE HEARD  
IT ALL BEFORE.

i finally started to see,  
my blood running through  
me,  
it's too late to call out,  
and say i've been well  
i'll go too far to tell  
traversing tramping  
lands spanned by  
telephone wire  
beckon me!  
contraband  
dares to lead  
me away from this place  
no one there,  
2 separate experiences  
are my plan,  
nothing is important here  
i'll change it all later  
no shit now  
"why can't I make anything  
worthwhile"

It was before we became adults,  
too mature for our own good,  
too immature to be under-  
stood.

Could I have been sweeter to her?  
I was just a kid... maybe kindness  
only emanates from me in brief bursts.

D is nothing less than a miracle. Those aren't  
even my words. But I re-commit them, as an  
*argonaut*, and sail on the waves of changing  
language, walking the euphemism treadmill.

Now-a-days I don't mind M. I'm just afraid he's go-  
ing to murder me.

I fail to put myself outside of myself because there was never  
any outside or inside. I am the cosmos, cliché, cliché, cliché.