THE

Somnambulist

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The father feeds her his melancholic disposition. She takes it.

I would maybe like to leave this behind. For me, leaving it behind means taking it from the back.

But this might not be a good way to do it, to leave it behind, to take it from the back. To go around, loquaciously deferring. A savvy circumlocution. Circum, they say, means to go around roundly. Perhaps blindly. As in melancholia, it may go on for some time. Like a game, if you like. Pin the tail on the donkey.

Blindfolded. Sometimes we are. Once I was. Well. Not when I saw my father sleeping that time. He was holding his soft knob. He was asleep. His hand was circum his cock. Does that make sense? His hand was casually wrapped around it roundly. Sleepyhead. I write it with the deepest affection, as though I were recalling a still of John Giorno from Andy Warhol's *Sleep*.

It's not so long before I am taking it from the back, scraping it from the underside of someone else's dream. I walk backward out of the room quietly like I'm Paul in his sister's dream. *Walking oddly*. Like the dead. In reverse. Back.

Death, Djuna Barnes said, is intimacy walking backward.

Paul and his sister. My dad and me. All walking backwards, dreamily, still dreaming. Hold on. Keep talking. We are almost asleep.
How can one express neatly the prosody of a dream? The scansion of things. To each a rhythm unrequited. The stressed and the unstressed. The living and the dead dangling off a precipice, like a pronoun: He. In my dream, my father’s tormentors become blurred as their couplets fly off into the realm of honeyed language. They address Him. Sleep.
Without a body it was as if
his bed had swallowed him
for a long time I didn't think
about my father my uncle
their beautiful strong mother
-of-pearl white teeth stranded
they sink beneath the trinkets
and the little pink slips this is
where I live with my dream
-lover my dead-lover
the sinner lady and the saint
night moves are another name for the nascent hustler curves of my uncle's secret thoughts
The first time I felt exceptional was when I read out loud to an audience a poem / it felt like showing my tits for the first time / see a real hustler knows it’s not about the money ought one hustle if one is to become a poet is that any way / to make a living depends how / you want to live but nobody explains this to you when you are a poet / you are not like Charlemagne a king self-selected so now I ask myself at what point could I come out and call myself out / call myself a poet / when I could say something about death / when I could / like Orpheus / walk backwards and forget / but I can’t un-remember the moment I chose to be a poet any/more than I can remember “the incident”
To speak of “the incident,” I must commit a few crimes and omit certain facts. The facts that don’t stick, you understand. Some facts refuse to bend.

You are invited here to speculate, ask questions. What kind of person is she? What kind of poet?

It doesn’t bother me. A Somnambulist can sleep through anything. “Can she?,” you ask. She can.
Writing poems in times like these feels like a last resort

as when sick
if you’re sick gargoyle salt

Me? I gargle language

grief’s backwash

grit semen salt sediment

in this way it is very rude to write a poem

to spit it out swish it around gurgle swallow

savor it

Poem, out!
The pain that plagues me most often manifests in my mouth and throat.  
I suspect my symptoms are a sign, but of what, I don't know.

As I investigate all that may ail me, I find an article on the Vishudda chakra,  
located in the pit of the throat.

One poet asks in the preface to her book *Grief Lessons*,  
“Do you want to go down to the pits of yourself all alone?”

I do and I don’t. But the mysticism of the Vishudda beckons me forth. In  
bed, while reading, I consider my recurring *streptococcal* rotted throat.  
The implications of being sick, sick of missing someone I have grown  
too accustomed of talking to, about, with.

Those well versed in the secrets of the Vishudda say it’s guilt that makes  
the throat red, rot. I feel that, the steadfast aversiveness of it. Pain  
pitches a tent inside the poet where it hurts, as they say, in the pit of  
the throat.
once I paid a sum so handsome
on my face it shone the next day
courtesy of a man whose missing
tooth told me he was thirty-six
ah to be in sync with one's script ah
to be the author rather than the sordid
stiff actress I touch the swollen skin
left of my right eye I ask Is this grace
is it violence is it black inside like inside
a black plum neither black nor red-violet
* "The prosecutor was not to mention that the illegal drug was CRACK. The court specifically prohibited the use of the word CRACK because, in its opinion, the term would be very prejudicial to the defendant based upon recent news headlines." Paul T. Gentile, Bronx County District Attorney, 1988.

† "Nothing so animated the recent War on Drugs as the alleged causal link between crack and crime. But this link, too, contained a good deal of myth." Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice, edited by Craig Reinarmen and Harry G. Levine, 1997.

‡ "Crack disappoints the pleasure a drug might be expected to arouse. Hence the quality of crack as pure instance of ‘Being-on-drugs’: it is only about producing a need for itself." Avital Ronell, Crack Wars: Literature Addiction Mania, 1992.
Ashamed, I shudder. Some sort of aphasia overwhelms my mouth, throat, and tongue;

I don’t dare divulge what I know nor what I know such knowledge costs but you can

imagine that secret, in a coffin somewhere imagine seeing that coffin for the first time and seeing in it not just my uncle, but parts of my father, buried next to parts of myself
Lara Mimosa Montes is a writer based in New York and Minneapolis. Her work has appeared in Fence, BOMB, The Third Rail, and elsewhere. She holds a Ph.D. in English from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. Currently, Lara teaches poetry at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and works as a contributing editor for Triple Canopy. She was born in the Bronx.