

[Umbilical Hospital is a poetic ekphrasis of Leslie Thornton's "Sheep Machine," part of her Binocular Series. Filmed in Saas-Fee, it shows a flock of sheep grazing next to the structural support of cable car system. Leslie Thornton views her video installation as film paintings.]

YOUR CLITORIS IS GONE

You are an alien wearing a sheep-asshole hat & candlelight pokes out from the softest ether & your eyes are born out of sheep pasterns & you are wearing a contour mask for the wyes & the clitoris is gone. Your clitoris is gone, disappeared probably in your butt crack, or perhaps it has grown smaller, smaller than a pearl. Your face & smile are grim as the night. There is a window on your forehead that leads through the mountain. You can see the landscape there. & you multiply yourself five times. What are you? Then? If not a sheep machine?

YOU WALK AROUND A LAKE WAITING FOR A STAR TO ADOPT YOU

You walk around a lake, waiting for a star to adopt you. & when it appears, to adopt you, that is, you can feel the five seeds of infinity gaze back at you with their burly tongues, hanging down like those werewolf dogs, hyphenating their salivating panting & you think it's possible for you to hyperventilate now. All five dogs wearing insignificant crowns, betraying the heat of the ontological question: Am I still alive? You take each one aside to question the source of its exhaustion. Does infinity behave like a dog? Panting? Hyperventilating? You do not know your infinite circles of darkness.

WHILE EVERYTHING BECOMES SYMMETRICAL

While everything becomes symmetrical. The lake. The sky. I climb over the hills without you. I climb over the hills with you.

MAKE YOUR UNKNOWN KNOWN BY WALKING AWAY

Make your unknown known by walking away.
Two moons sit side by side like owl's eyes. Not
glancing. Not looking. Not blinking. Just staring.
Courage & wisdom: these are essential wheat,
daily bread of air & time. You advised the
moon owl: If you stare enough, a pastoral field
will unite a lake like marriage made inside a
concubine's hairdo.

TO RELINQUISH OR TO RELEASE

To give the cosmic lake the ripple effect of sound
and to amplify its existence, the wheat, shuffled
around by the wind, willingly or unwillingly
volunteers for the task at hand. Blooming like
the smallest mushroom cloud, the wheat arches
its back & awaits the invoice of time to
relinquish or to release.

IS IT POSSIBLE? DOES IT SEEM?

Is it possible? Does it seem? Five scrawny Egyptian drag queens are wearing dark garden oasis dresses with matching headdresses, their five pairs of twiggy, spiderlike legs dangling out. The five queens are united at the pelvic bones by the pentagonal structure floating on the cosmic bed. Are they swimming or are they recumbent, getting their annual avocado-colored tan? Sheep cluster together like dandelions. Wheat in the wind. Wheat & other combinations of life.

YOU ASK POETRY TO LIVE BY ITSELF IN THE WOOD

You expect nothing to happen, but something has already happened. You ask poetry to live by itself in the wood. You ask politely. Very politely. Maybe out of pride & rigor. & then, an array of wheat shows up, blurring the line between blondness & sheep's wool. & naturally, the web of spiders keeps you in the wood. You keep yourself there until you break apart like twigs.