

**The Otherworld in Everyday Life:
the Fantastical Realism of Contemporary American Poetry**

KOMURA Toshiaki

日常のそばにある「異界」:
現代アメリカ詩の幻想的写実主義

古 村 敏 明

Abstract

Much of contemporary American poetry depicts matters of everyday life, but the life portrayed in it includes not only familiar mundanities but also fantastical, strange, otherworldly elements. In this paper, which has been adapted from a talk given as part of the Kobe College Women's Studies Institute lecture series, I examine three major poems from the latter half of the twentieth century: Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room"; Sylvia Plath's "Cut"; and Sharon Olds's "Once." These poems enact various transformations and transpositions of what we casually call reality: the unexplored geographies of the indigenous lives that encroach upon one's time in the waiting room at a dentist's office; the history of bloodshed that gushes out of one's thumb, accidentally sliced out of the domesticity of meal-cooking; the mountain road full of hairpin turns that one gets lured into when one mistakenly opens the door of a bathroom occupied by one's father. These poems enact a literary strategy that I call fantastical realism, where descriptive realism spills out of itself, turning into an imaginative gaze that reflects and reshapes the landscapes before us.

Keywords: contemporary American poetry, Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, Sharon Olds, fantastical realism

要 旨

現代アメリカ詩は日常を描く文学である。しかし、そこで描かれる日常は見慣れたものばかりでなく、異形や幻想に満ちた空間でもある。詩においては、ふつうに「現実」と呼ばれているものが変容し幾層にも重なりあってゆく。歯医者さんの待合室にいる時間に溶け込んでくる未開地の原住民、調理中に切ってしまった指の傷から見えてくる流血の歴史、父親が入っているトイレを誤って開けたときに迷い込む青空のヘアピンカーブの山道。私達が「今、ここ」を生きながらも誘われてしまう、日常と隣り合わせの様々な異界を描く、エリザベス・ビショップ、シルヴィア・プラス、シャロン・オールズの代表作品を幻想的写実主義の一つのかたちとして解析する。

キーワード：現代アメリカ詩、エリザベス・ビショップ、シルヴィア・プラス、シャロン・オールズ、幻想的写実主義

Contemporary American poetry depicts matters of everyday life. The life portrayed in it, however, can be unfamiliar, disorienting, and even unrecognizable. As part of the Kobe College Women's Studies Institute lecture series on the theme "a glance at the otherworld," I will introduce and examine three major poems from the latter half of the twentieth century as instances of the metamorphosed ordinary: Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room," Sylvia Plath's "Cut," and Sharon Olds's "Once." These poems enact various transformations and transpositions of what we casually call reality: a child's visit to the dentist's office turns into an encounter with the unexplored geographies of indigenous lives, which encroach upon her subjectivity as she reads a magazine in the waiting room; a homemaker's kitchen accident triggers a survey of the history of carnages, as the blood that gushes out of her thumb slices her out of the domesticity of meal-cooking; the daughter is lured into a mountain road full of hairpin turns, when she mistakenly opens the door of a bathroom occupied by her father. What these poems present to the reader is a glimpse into the heterogeneities and phantasmagoria that abut on the mundanity of our daily life. In these three poems, realism spills out of itself, turning into an imaginative gaze that reflects and reshapes, forming a literary invention that I call fantastical realism: a primarily realistic rendition of the world that is characterized by metaphor-driven leaps into unfamiliar territories and landscapes.

The transformative power of contemporary American poetry originates in large part from the long tradition of an age-old trope: metaphor. Take, as one illustrative example, Ezra Pound's famous poem "In a Station of the Metro," a pre-contemporary poem in the high-modernist mode: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough" (1-2). This two-line poem, modeled after the imagistic brevity of the haiku tradition, describes a moment in a subway station in Paris. When the poem was first published in

1913, subway stations in Paris were not as well-lit as the modern counterpart. The faces that one encounters under the subdued darkness of the underground would be hard to discern, shrouded in a veil of mysteriousness that invites the description of them as the “apparition”—a startling appearance of ghostly contours. The poem, however, functions beyond the level of mere description: it pulls together two unlikely images to create a cognitive incongruence that becomes indelible in our imagination. With a flick of a semicolon, the two images are connected to one another. The specter-like faces of subway riders have nothing to do with petals on a wet black bough, but somehow these two unrelated imageries are tethered together in a way that transforms each other. What at first seems like the inhumanity of the subway crowd comes to be infused with the misty vividness of the forlorn petals. This ability of the vehicle to transform the tenor in turn reshapes the vehicle, a process that furthers and eternalizes the mutual renewals.¹ This mechanism typifies the function of metaphor, which has powered the motor of poetry since before William Shakespeare penned the famous line in *As You Like It*, “All the world’s a stage” (2:7), where two concepts from different planes, the world and a stage, are bound together, modifying and elevating one another in a reciprocal fashion.

That metaphor anchors the transformative capacity of English poetry is a truism that is itself embedded in its very name; as Angelo Philip Bertocci points out, the word “metaphor” etymologically implies motion—*phora*—that is also change—*meta*: that is, movement toward change (Bertocci 88). What is peculiar about its usage in the three major period poems within the contemporary American poetic canon that are discussed in this paper is that its primary function is to transport us out of the domesticity of everyday life, toward some other realistic imaginary that locates itself afar. Although everyday life has been an object of literary depiction throughout the history of

humankind, it has garnered particular attention in American poetry of the postwar era. The cause of this phenomenon is outside of the scope of this paper—one may speculate that it has its root in the emergence of the Whitmanian everyman perspective out of the marriage of transcendentalism and realism in the nineteenth century; in the disillusion with and rejection of the exalted rhetoric of high modernism; in the Cold War era imagination of nuclear annihilation eliciting a reevaluation of quotidian details in everyday life; in the twentieth century impetus toward redress, which strives to give voice to what has not been given a voice; or in the contemporary poetry's adoption of affected naturalness as the predominant mode of its voice—but the effect of it is the production of the foreignized domesticity that uncovers strange elements in ordinary life experiences.

This disorientation of the everyday is the main trope of Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room." "In the Waiting Room" is the first poem in Bishop's last collection of poetry entitled *Geography III*, which was published in 1976. The biographical context of the poem is loosely based on her childhood in Worcester, Massachusetts, where she settled with her aunt's family after years of living with various relatives in the years ensuing her separation from her parents. The poem takes place in the waiting room at a dentist's office, where the child-speaker waits while the aunt receives treatment. One could reasonably argue, of course, that, depending on the child's circumstances, a trip to the dentist's office with her aunt can be a memorable, rather than a routine, event in her life. Nonetheless, the contention here is that the place and the experience are objectively commonplace enough to be considered unexciting—many people visit the dentist's office with little to no expectation of facing a life-or-death situation, and, unlike the emergency room of County General Hospital in Chicago, what Bishop describes in this waiting room experience is hardly a TV drama-worthy material—even if, for the child, it has subjective

significance: this gap between objective reality and subjective reception of it opens up a cognitive mechanism in which the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

The child-speaker, who waits for her aunt in the waiting room at the dentist's office, is transported out of her daily experience when she opens the pages of *National Geographic*. The opening passage of the poem narrates this transportation:

It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines.
My aunt was inside
what seemed like a long time
and while I waited I read
the *National Geographic*
(I could read)... (6-15)

The passage suggests that *National Geographic* was the child-speaker's escape from an uncomfortable surrounding; she feels isolated among adults in the waiting room. The winter in the Northeast is cold, but it is not only the weather outside that makes the place feel arctic; the eerie sights of the grown-up people's arctics—waterproof overshoes—and overcoats can be intimidating to a lilliputian child. Aunt Consuelo, the only person the child-speaker is familiar with, is in the dentist's office; the wait feels long partially because of boredom, no doubt, but also because of discomfort. The child-speaker gravitates toward *National Geographic* as the only familiar sight in this dance hall full of unfamiliar faces. The parenthetical statement—what on the surface

sounds like a proud proclamation, “I could read” (15)—further underscores that, among the “magazines” (9) in this waiting room, *National Geographic* seems to her the only readable thing, yet another sign that the child feels solitary.

In her gallant chronicle of her struggle with the aftermath of her childhood cancer that left the lower half of her face disfigured, Lucy Grealy describes how books became her tool of survival. Defying daily taunts in the school halls, Grealy decides that a mere insult about her face is a frivolous thing compared to a land mine or a sniper shot:

In those years, not yet a teenager, I secretly read—knowing it was somehow inappropriate—works by Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, and every book by a survivor I could find by myself without asking the librarian. Auschwitz, Birkenau: I felt the blows of the capos and somehow knew that because any moment we might be called upon to live for a week on one loaf of bread and some water called soup, the peanut-butter sandwich I found on my plate was nothing less than a miracle, an utter and sheer miracle capable of making me literally weep with joy. (Grealy 25)

As much as books can be the door that allows us an insight into the workings of this world, they can also be the portal that leads us outside of it, toward the otherworld. For Grealy, books provide a parallel universe, where she vicariously experiences extreme situations that steel her sensibilities and enable her to cope with the physical reality of the world she does not care to be in. And for Bishop’s child-speaker, the magazine constitutes a gateway to depart from the waiting room where she feels out of place.

Books take us to the otherworld, but they are not so much an escape as the

interface of the world from which we want to depart. Just as Grealy's books guide her to the realms of survival and fear that are analogs of the world she is taking a temporary leave from, the Bishop speaker's *National Geographic* brings to her the otherworld that approximates the unfamiliarity and disorientation of the waiting room full of strange people and strange objects:

the inside of a volcano,
black, and full of ashes;
then it was spilling over
in rivulets of fire.
Osa and Martin Johnson
dressed in riding breeches,
laced boots, and pith helmets.
A dead man slung on a pole
—"Long Pig," the caption said.
Babies with pointed heads
wound round and round with string;
black, naked women with necks
wound round and round with wire
like the necks of light bulbs.
Their breasts were horrifying. (17-31)

It is inside Africa. Wearing pith helmets—the quintessential symbol of colonialism and othering of Africa that had justified its oppression—Osa and Martin Johnson, then-popular husband-and-wife team of explorers, guide the child-speaker along their witnessing of the exotic and the deviant. "Long Pig" refers to a human carcass that cannibals eat. Babies are weirdly shaped. Women are naked. Their breasts look nothing like whatever the child-speaker

had seen. They are scary—will they eat us, too?—and they are the essentialized foreign other.

The Africa of this *National Geographic*, in short, is a fantastical world, separate from Worcester, Massachusetts, where the child-speaker is located. But even stranger is the feeling that, through this interfacial flight from one world to another, these two worlds are brought together: by means of the shared affect—the feeling of alienation, isolation, discomfort, displacement—the exotic Africa becomes a metaphor of the unwelcoming waiting room. This metaphor then pulls together the two worlds; the alienation that the child-speaker feels in the waiting room conflates with the bewilderment that she feels about these *National Geographic* photographs. At the same time as the feeling of displacement in the Worcester waiting room is amplified, the reverse process also occurs: just as Worcester can be as foreign as Africa, Africa also becomes as recognizable and domestic as Worcester.

This entangling of sameness and differences pushes the soon-to-be seven-year old to introspection. The child-speaker awakens to the question of identity: who is she, and what is her relation to other human beings in this world? Aunt Consuelo's cry of pain starts to feel like her own—"Without thinking at all / I was my foolish aunt" (48-49)—and this conflation is sufficiently disorienting that it triggers a feeling of free fall: "I—we—we falling, falling" (50). The child's self-perception undergoes turbulence, a minor identity crisis in the process of navigating one's similarities to and differences from other people in the world.

What follows is an exercise in reversible logic: if Worcester can be as foreign as Africa, Africa can be as familiar as Worcester, and if another person can be me, I can also be another. The self separation is effected: "you are an *I*, / you are an *Elizabeth*, / you are one of *them*" (60-62). Objectivation—the cognition of the self as other—begins the process of dedoublement.² The child-

speaker refers to herself as Elizabeth, and this self-reference with an identifier aimed toward other human beings signals self-split, where she observes herself as if she were an other, without a synthesis of the two selves. The strategic use of italicization connects I, Elizabeth, and them, in yet another act of forging the connection between the self, the othered self, and the nonself other.

This rabbit hole of identity and relationship is the otherworld next door that exists side by side with the world we live in, and it is the door to that world that Bishop's "In the Waiting Room" opens up. It speaks to the power of books—*National Geographic* transports the child-speaker to Africa, the symbolic foreignized other that provides a gateway to this self-inquiry—and to the potency of the child's imaginative capacity—how many of us retain the ability or willingness to fully imagine ourselves in another person's predicament, especially those who are conceived to be fundamentally different from us, as exemplified by the cannibals in Africa? When the child stares stringently into her dedoubled selves, she realizes that she not only is Elizabeth but also an Elizabeth: a singular and a generic, a self and an other that is one of many. The child's inquiries—"Why should I be my aunt, / or me, or anyone?" (75-76), "What similarities... / held us all together / or made us all just one?" (77, 82-83)—lead to a discovery that the otherworld exists within oneself.

Similarly, Sylvia Plath's "Cut" also explores the otherworld that one possesses within oneself: one's own blood. The poem describes a cooking accident: a slicing of the thumb, instead of the onion. The occasion of the poem is traceable in Plath's biography; Plath cut her thumb while cooking, and although she did receive treatment, the injury was significant enough for her to record that she felt her thumb had gotten shorter than it previously was. Even though the event itself may not be an everyday occurrence—it is, or should hopefully be, fairly rare that a cooking injury requires a trip to the doctor's

office—it takes place in the familiar domesticity of one’s house: a kitchen, which, in the 1960s, still exemplified a female domain. In this sense, this major period poem too counts as an instance of the discovery of the otherworld next door that exists right beside our ordinary life space.

“Cut” has been interpreted in numerous ways: in a psychoanalytic reading, the detachment of a part of oneself can be seen as a type of dissociation; in a psycho-biographical reading, the cutting of the thumb may simulate a castration of a hated phallic masculinity, namely, her recently separated husband, Ted Hughes; in a feminist reading, the poem could be viewed as a celebration of the feminine body and the reversal of the stigma attached to blood as the reminder of animality and mortality, which philosopher Martha Nussbaum posits as one basis for sexism;³ or in a historicist reading, the poem has been characterized as a political allusion to the Cuban Missile Crisis, a dominant international incident at the time, which was symbolic of the sense of apprehension over nuclear annihilation felt by many in the Cold War era. Those are all valid readings with sufficient backings from intelligent readers, but if I were to offer yet another alternative reading, it would be thus: the poem depicts an uncovering of the history that one carries within oneself.

In “Cut,” the speaker’s mind registers various instances of bloodshed that took place over the course of the U.S. history, as she witnesses her bleeding. Those historical events have been regarded as foundational to the construction of American identity. “Little pilgrim” (9) refers to the Puritans, who are first arrivals from Europe to the New England region of North America. Their relations to Native Americans were friendly in some instances but also hostile in others: the inimical encounters developed into various armed conflicts that constellate as the American Indian Wars. “Redcoats” (20) were worn by the British soldiers who fought against the Patriots during the American

Revolutionary War. “Saboteurs” (27) recall the French resistance against the Nazis in World War II. Likewise, “Kamikaze man” (28) is also a World War II phenomenon: the suicide attacks by the Japanese aerial force. The list goes on: Ku Klux Klan and the lynching; Babushka and the Russian presence in the then-contemporary news of the Cold War years; the traumatized soldiers from various wars in the twentieth century, including and up to the Vietnam War, which was intensifying when this poem was written in 1962. These crucial events form a storyline of American history. The American Indian Wars are part of the travails of the nation-founding story of the United States, which culminates with the Independence War and the Declaration of Independence. World War II is often reconstructed as America’s last triumphant war that cemented the place of the United States in the world order. And the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War are symbolic, respectively, of the fragility of world order in the nuclear power era of mutually assured destruction and of the emergent awareness of the lasting nature of war-related psychological damage, as epitomized by prolific depictions of posttraumatic stress disorder in both art and journalistic media.

Since American national identity does not rely much on bloodlines as it does in some of the other nations in the world, the blood in this poem connotes less the source of cultural or national identity than a vehicle of shared experiences. The experiences that are shared within the larger community become the basis of mutual bond, and that is what the Plath speaker finds in her blood. From the kitchen of one’s house, the poet-speaker is transported to the otherworld: the history of the country that she was born into. There, she touches upon the collective traumas that she shares with fellow human beings. Collective traumas affect not only the national psyche but also individualistic identity formation, and it does so by linking the experiences of others with one’s own psyche. In one recent example, the September 11 attacks would

qualify as a national tragedy that induced a collective trauma in many U.S. citizens and residents. Its effect has variances and gradations among individuals—some have taken away a feeling that the U.S. is and will be under attack; others internalize the heightened security and anxiety that have become a part of the ordinary scene at the U.S. airports; and still others take with them the imperative to reconnect with the world at large—but this national-scale grieving prompted what Judith Butler calls the tenuous making of “we” (Butler 20). The result was that, regardless of whether or not one has any direct experience of this tragedy, many people in and outside of the United States felt, at least in its immediate aftermath, that they were a part of a larger community where they felt a sense of solidarity. Although many of the historical events referenced in “Cut” occurred before Plath was born, what the poem suggests is that collective traumas connect members of a community across generations. The world before one’s birth is, in many ways, an unknowable territory: the otherworld. The present world is connected, through shared memories of accumulating deaths, to time periods before our birth, and to people who lived in those eras.

Even though the historical incidents referenced in “Cut” are all from U.S. history, the expanse of the poem is nonetheless not confined to the boundary of national identity. For one thing, the alluded events are not necessarily seen from the U.S. centric perspective. Redcoats, the opposition of the American Patriots, are the lyric speaker’s blood that is coming out of the sliced thumb. References to saboteur, kamikaze man, and others are largely one-word or one-phrase lines where the lyric speaker’s vantage point remains unclear. Sides are not taken, and the conflicts are narrated as facts of history with little interpretive clues. Given the ambiguity of the perspective, one can creditably make a case that the ethos of the poem is not necessarily nationalistic but rather idealistic, in both the affirmative and pejorative senses of the word.

Another sign that the poem goes beyond the national border in connecting various people's worlds lies in its penultimate line: "Dirty girl" (39). Just as is the case with many of the phrases in this poem, this line is ambiguous enough to invite various interpretations. In *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum asserts that the research on the theory of disgust has found that there is frequently a strong gendered component to the projection of disgustingness onto others⁴. According to Nussbaum, men learn that success means being above the body and its frailties, so they learn to characterize some underclass, including women, as hyperbodily, thus in need of being dominated (35). Women have historically been linked to the idea of blood, which accompanies their reproductive mechanism: namely, menstruation and childbirth. When one wonders why "Dirty girl" is the penultimate reference before returning to the present world of the injured thumb, an argument could be made that it signifies the sexual and the reproductive, the two concepts that have often incurred assignations to the realm of the hyperbodily. This summative blood imagery subsumes all the previous images of historical violence, as though to suggest that all instances of human hemorrhage—whether from a personal injury or from collective injuries—are remembered and synthesized when a newborn travels through the birth canal to come into being.

The last of the major period poems that this paper discusses is Sharon Olds's "Once." Like Plath's "Cut," Olds's "Once" also takes place in the domesticity of one's house. Whereas Plath's poem chooses the kitchen as the feminine space that reconnects various kinds of bleeding—from wars, injuries, reproductive activities, among others—as a metonym of past and present lives, Olds's poem spotlights the most private of the private spaces: the bathroom. The circumstance of the poem is quite simple: a daughter opens the door of the bathroom when her father is in the process of defecation. Presumably, the

daughter is old enough that this incident produces a mutually awkward moment: the daughter feels embarrassed, and her father feels embarrassed. Although the bathroom is part of the everyday life experience for all living human beings, there usually are not many people who routinely see others doing their business in the bathroom; it is a rare window into the private world of another human being. One mystery that has plagued my students whenever I teach this poem in class is that the father seems to be completely naked: he is described as “naked” (1) and “all of him / was skin” (6-7). As for this mystery, the present author has only a speculative interpretation; the likely scenario is that the father was not entirely disrobed, but for the daughter, this incident laid bare her father in totality, and it felt to her that the father was more naked and exposed than he had actually been. In “Once,” this private world of another human being—the one that many people may live their whole life without seeing—is the otherworld that Olds explores.

Upon witnessing her father on the toilet, the lyric speaker is transported to the mountain road full of hairpin turns, which, through metaphor, links to the never-seen-before enigma of her father’s body. When the lyric speaker opens the door of the bathroom, the pictures of her father that she sees are a “shorn lamb” (18) and “a cloud in the blue sky” (19) that is sprung out of the “blue bathroom” (20). The world that extends out of the bathroom is the mountain road:

...my eye had driven
up the hairpin mountain road of the
naked male, I had turned a corner
and found his flank unguarded—gentle
bulge of the hip-joint, border of the pelvic cradle. (20-24)

The metamorphosis of the naked male body turning into a sinuous mountain road is a metaphor of the experience of seeing the unexpected; one cannot see ahead of the curve, and the new unknowns reveal themselves each time one turns a corner. At every turn, what the speaker discovers is the previously hidden defenselessness of her father. The theory of self-disclosure stipulates that the revelation of another person's vulnerability increases one's affinity toward that person. The tone of the poem is a subdued joy; there certainly is an unmistakable feeling of embarrassment, but there is also a sense of muted delight that arises from the discovery of a facet of someone that one had not known before. And unlike the previously referenced theory of disgust, the bodily elements here are not the target of projective disgust but rather of affection.

Why does the lyric speaker express affection at an undignified sight of her father? The clues to the answer to that question are found in the following passage:

...He looked so unprotected,
so seamless, and shy, like a girl on a toilet,
and even though I knew he was sitting
to shit, there was no shame in that
but even a human peace. (12-16)

Disclosure and resultant vulnerability are a set of critical components in relationship building: one must be trusted enough to be allowed to witness this spectacle of defenselessness. Furthermore, what catches the readerly eye is the simile, "like a girl on a toilet." In this moment, the father's male body takes on the characteristics of a female body, traversing the gender boundaries; this imagery of androgyny temporarily erases one barrier between the daughter

and the father. The final sign of affection is in the declaration that there is no shame in this activity. The use of the crude vernacular “shit” is purposeful; it is a rejection of euphemism, which connotes shame. By discarding shame, the lyric speaker affirms one of the basic activities of a living being. Most animals avoid showing both the act and the evidence of toileting: humans shut the door and flush the toilet; cats hide and put sand over what they excreted so as not to leave traces; and other animals follow similar patterns, to avoid being attacked while they are in their most vulnerable state. The flipside of this secrecy is that the revelation of the toileting scene intimates an assurance and assumption of safety. The lyric speaker’s tempered joy and affection toward her father derives from this confirmation of human peace.

In this instance, peace realizes in two forms. First, it is an acknowledgment that the relationship between the daughter and the father has reached a certain degree of equilibrium—the path to which, given the father’s history of alcoholism and abusive behavior, can speculatively be described as hard-won. Secondly, by engineering this conciliation between the daughter and the father, the poem creates an atmosphere of harmony, a world without strife and skirmishes. As we have seen in previous two poems, the otherworld is often a reflection of this world. And the otherworld that this poem depicts is a mountain road under the blue sky. Given the familial context of this poem, a reader would not be particularly hallucinatory to envisage from this image a peaceful family vacation. There is, of course, a sense of trepidation as to what is coming ahead—it is a serpentine road, after all—but such apprehension is overridden by the poem’s accidental disarmament. In “Once,” what the encounter with the otherworld—the father and his body—brings about is an affirmation of peace on two ends: in the personal relationship between the daughter and the father; and in the perception of the human world at large, shaped by the restored filial relationship.

These three poems—Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room, Plath’s “Cut,” and Olds’s “Once”—present themselves as instances of fantastical realism. In fantastical realism, a space that exists within the realm of the everyday becomes a gateway into another world: from the waiting room at the dentist’s office to Africa; from the kitchen of one’s home to the history of bloodshed; from the privacy of a bathroom to the body of an opposite sex that turns into a mountain road. The doors to the otherworld are found inside the ordinary experiences of everyday existence. These outside worlds remain realistic, but the yoking together of the two is counterintuitive enough that it creates a sensation of the fantastical. How the otherworld gets discovered is through the power of metaphor: the poems transport themselves to another locale by means of bringing together unrelated elements. In the case of these three poems discussed in this paper, the linking happens in the way that makes the poems simultaneously both realistic and fantastical. This melding of realism and phantasm has, unlike magical realism, less to do with escapism than to do with twentieth-century feminist reimagining of the reality: in this reformulated reality, the domesticity of the indoor space opens up to a vast range of possible worlds, where new connections and intimacies are forged and affirmed. This style of realism is fantastic in both senses of the word—irrational, odd, fanciful but also marvelous and captivating—for discovery of unknowns is one of our dearest intellectual delights.

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- 1 In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, I. A. Richards characterizes metaphor as being comprised of the tenor and the vehicle. The tenor is the target to which the attributes of the vehicle are ascribed.
 - 2 The term dedoublement is defined as one’s capacity to observe oneself as if it were an other, without necessarily effecting a synthesis of the self or unifying the self (de Man 187-228).

- 3 In discussing the theory of disgust in *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum explains that experimental psychologists have identified contaminants—such as feces, the corpse, and other bodily waste products—as the perceived evidence of animality and mortality. Because of our needs to manage our anxiety about those aspects of ourselves, the feeling of disgust arises in us, as a way to shun and disown those traits. Those groups of people on whom this disgust could be projected, including women, function as the animal “other” and are subjected to exclusion and subordination out of the same anxiety (32-33).
- 4 For a delimitation of the theory of disgust, see Note #4.

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