

Clayton Eshleman / COOKING

I slide down like a fireman into a cauldron-shaped machine.

The discourse

shifts, scaly zucchini

wants to be scrubbed. Mother said: get outta the tub
soon as you finish washin,

so I scrub and consider the chicken, the cold
under her arms as I carried her into the hospital toilet.

All of life is present every moment.

We know all this, or I do, dimly,

I wipe up something from the chopping block, it tastes
like 16th Street—best can do,

my birth? The flecks are more precious than
weight of bird in hand. Open the wine.

Curious, the antagonism wafting from the just-pulled.

But who wants to be opened? Down in the blood force,

I dream while I cook. Dreaming is

a kind of cooking, body between waffle irons bed and
night,

ghosts of the introjected sipping and picking.

I am closer to Caryl in bed

than at table, but tapers shadow us here.

Are we re-enacting the primal snack

as we cut, munch, and talk? The tall sip of Chinon

that plunges to my belly,

a shore bird zapping up a crab?

Have you looked into your mouth,

considered the Labrador of ice floes, jungular lagoons,

infinestinal havens under invasion

as the tongue, trapped rhino, goes through its

plungings, so articulate

after 20,000 years, then Andrei Codrescu on NPR:

he too hates David Duke—I throw in more Louisiana,

cleaning a shrimp; serrated knife down the back

held against the chopping block edge,

swole gut track furls back, husk won't disposal, so

I bag'm, thoroughly rinsing the headless, footless

Paleo bodies under harsh cold,
each pint of cooking so interesting,

I know you appreciate it
having shopped so carefully for all I fondle.
To clean a squid is to have a hand up the goddess.
To do so makes me want to help a cow give birth.
To cook makes me want to disembowel myself and eat.
Cooking is a form of labyrinthine pacing,
and is without fear, until we make contact with
the soul of the beloved, for whom we cook.
Then the two of us are out on plates
looking up into this gorgeous autumn. We are old,
and sliding about, but the dry golden trash
still clinging to the maples
is a kind of funky Greek Keatsean urn.

Kenneth Burke, 94, is happy for a tasty meal.

He has a chic grey cap, and settles in
at our table on his pillowed chair.

Salmon without oil, or salt,
spinach, rice, Pilsner Urquell.

He said that night: "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—
Body is Turd, Turd Body" and giggled.

Each evening we sit down to these bodies

in cocoon, these woven green beans,
this artichoke harobring so many compressed
thorny lips. A delicate char molded by
the coldest lake depths,

parts of my mother, parts of our mothers' mothers,
myself, yourself.

The wind rises outside,
the gold, rouge-red, orange bonfired leaves are down.
We are skeletons eating amongst skeltons.

This
is the delicious thrust and realization.