

Sylvia Legris / THREE POEMS

bones: almost discernible

poses with her brother for a man under black [a woman
staples blankets over windows is
listening through eyes she is *smile* smiling]
smile for the . . .

all she sees black
light glaring pupils

[test test attest

color bars
ed sullivan reruns
judy garland

a grid

somewhere somewhere some-

several
gradations
of grey

hold

-ing pattern

hol-

ding

dong

the witch is dead

*

click

click

click your heels together three times
make a . . .

*

[nuclear medicine:
radioactive substance swallowed or injected,
distribution watched via special machine]

*

click:

view-
finder

*

find her

a violent woman in the violent day[†]

pacing

hugging her-
self,
holding a

single
breath

single

breast

*

this is a dream:

her father in the front room plays piano
— ghostchords echo stairs
shudder house

[†] Muriel Rukeyser

[shutters
the house:
she shrinks under light

*melting, i'm
melllll ting*

shrieks
under

*

a dream:

her father composing
arrangement of tones

[arrangement
of bones

half-asleep dreams ivory,
the cat downstairs pad across keys.

over two hundred tones in the human body
— she's heard them, listens

in her sleep

*this is the world/not these words/
not this poem/this is the world — bp nichol*

marginal notes

my mother plants plastic k-mart flowers in the snow.

*kiss
her*

from the road
a red and yellow blur

*kiss
her*

— trick of the seasons
a trick
of the senses

*kiss her to
[death]*

*

everything moves so fast.

*

a writer friend says these poems are too earnest.

(when my mother dies

my brother and i dance a do-se-do round the kitchen table

ding dong the witch is dead swing your partner . . .)

“where’s the irreverence?” she asks.

*cut it
here*

silence

cut it
there

(dead
silence)

cut it

in the middle

*

enough pinning insects
i spend 4 years pinning my mother
(see,
there she is, in the relaxing chamber,
head a distant bob.
this is not the love boat,
this is love/is *this* ____?).

in a killing jar a few drops of acetone (nailpolish remover) — a slow stun.

i paint my mother with nailpolish, periwinkle blue (lungs brim with
seaweed and brine).

norman bates norman bates, is it true a mother is a son's best friend?
what about a daughter's?

she is drumming her nails on a kitchen counter, ceramic tiles, a
mahogany

cough
cough

even from six feet under i hear her . . .

shut up
shut
up

*

turn 360 degrees
add earth 1 shovelful at a time
stir until silent (dead silent)

[was that irreverent?]

maternal: ma(e)ternal

problem:

to construct a mother
from bits and pieces
name here, date there, not enough
to fill a picture: an incomplete
formation

incomplete

**question: does a mother die when
her body dies?**

a woman lies in bed,
right arm bent over her eyes
against the light

genetic memory

sometimes catches herself
in the mirror
head held at a certain angle
lower lip curled under her teeth

familiar poses (family
postures)

information:

my only knowledge of her relatives
comes through memories she related
to me even these i remember in-

-completely:

she was born on sunnyside. had one brother, five years older who some days would walk her to school and other days pretend he didn't know her. her father was a musician, a music teacher. he left when she was eight. sometimes in the middle of the night her grandmother would hear the piano mournfully playing by itself and on the mornings following her father would turn up out of nowhere. briefly. she was embarrassed and made fun of: she was fat, ate lunches other kids laughed at (leftover stew sandwiches, lumps of potato and turnip squeezing out sides). once she wet her pants in school and had to spend the rest of the morning sitting on the radiator to dry, pee steam escaping, filling the air with laughter. she longed for her father who eventually stopped coming. she longed for her grandmother, who took care of them, to love her. she longed for her mother who lingered with cancer for years to die.

my mother's memories go

something like that

