

# Composition

Julie E. Bloemeke

The letter is already bandaged,  
cuts and pastes of phrases, plasters  
of characters, greenstick words, broken  
to mend. Still delete, still return,  
sometimes only the repeating eye  
of the ellipsis. The words we can  
never bring to key. What message  
after the refrain of silence?

What to say to the way we lost  
each other, locked in that not  
wanting to go forward and still wanting  
one another? Then: it was the young  
necessity of leaving. How we fixed  
a self to that point, everything  
appearing to move. Only we anchor  
us back, insist all is progress.  
Time: the concrete zephyr.

There is no punctuation  
for the nightmares, how I reach  
for him in sleep, or how he passes  
his index finger in repeated regret  
wearing the watchband to thin.  
My gift. As if to rub out time.  
As if, by touch, to stop it.

Is there a comma that bears  
the years, a period that will rise  
as monument to the inked  
puncture of absence?

How I whisper letters to him  
in the cover of night, how his mouth  
returns my name in prayer. The fragrance  
of exclamation points, the parenthesis  
that strain to raise their locks  
after seventeen years.

Maybe we justify the text.

Maybe only the question  
marks.

# The Persistence of Want

Julie E. Bloemeke

When we meet and I open  
the book of us, there  
must be an eye for fire:

all the things written before  
the smallness of us: composed,  
sexed, painted, bled into being,  
talked into creation, like,

that at last, there is your pulse  
wishing against me, your arms  
taking me, the willingness  
of geography closed. I write this

poem under every day, scenarios  
scratched and crossed into existence,  
destruction: how we leave and never  
return, the restraint, the volatile,  
the never meet, us both alone

in different countries, as it should be.  
I turn my prized sphere of story for comfort,  
tension, lust, nostalgia, to relive and invent  
you in the words because here

you don't go, we keep each other, we  
can change the possible with every letter.

But what if, in the wounded reckless  
skin of you, pressed to the wounded  
reckless skin of me, there is the (un)lock?  
In our imagined met: no more why  
or what if, only the frayed

human shirt, your edge so close to my  
eye, the vision made touch, and too  
this will go into memory, interpretation,  
story. But I only want this impossible

present, the space of us fissured in a space,  
the nervous anticipatory ricochet of heart  
so near to heart, the nonwords bleeding  
through us, our faulty thoughts, our errant  
bodies, the commitments we hold and question.

There is only the implosion,  
your face setting over mine, the relief  
of prayer made flesh. We can break  
the spell of water. We brought our bodies  
together again. And our faces close distance,  
time. And in the second before we seal this, kiss

that almost kiss, the tainted moment  
where I want every button undone,  
the swim of our bodies back, where you too  
can think only of the fall of break,  
the feel of us, on, in each other,

I want us both somehow  
to do the inconceivable: to willingly  
pull back, to choose to create  
some altered love where all of these marriages

we have made keep us and we let them,  
where even in our devastating bodies  
we choose higher, we stay at embrace.

# Gospel of Text, Books I–IV

Julie E. Bloemeke

I: Cell Correspondence

I touch you  
in the privacy

of my hand.  
You slide,

unlock  
me in yours.

I have not seen how  
you look at me,

our eyes unmet  
for decades now.

You even carry me  
in your pocket,

the one over  
your heart,

the one lower  
than your hip.

It is how we build  
the membrane,

body ourselves  
into each other:

I am your creation.  
You are mine.

The walled envelope  
of truth: we risk

no  
exposure

living in the *sent* cells  
of our messages.

II: After Weeks of Silence You Text Me One Photo Without Words

It contains this:

lake	waves	three mountains
clouds	polished sky	two birds
an edge	a shore	crossing

And the outline  
of your body  
over it all.

It is how you see a landscape:  
vast, inevitable.

No it isn't.

It is a photograph  
of how you miss me.

III: Text Confession Sans Sphallolalia

It happens  
when we take  
the memory of us  
into present  
tense,  
when in  
real  
*real?*  
time  
your words appear  
as pinpoint selves:

*kiss touch taste*

and, curious,  
I don't say *stop*  
I say please  
I say *Oh God*  
which can mean  
so many ways  
I touch  
the map  
of your name  
resting over  
my heart  
line  
these letter  
squares  
we call keys  
and I wait  
for the beat  
of your dots  
small tongued  
circles pulsing  
in the pause  
which means  
you are giving

me  
more more  
my eyes open  
my body charged  
to the press  
your sealed thoughts  
unzipped  
after decades

all of our carefulness  
lost  
to touch  
to text  
in my hands  
your long-revealed prayer:

you too want

our bodies wired  
as one.

IV: Picture from Bed

You text:  
*Send me?*

This means:  
*Send me a picture.*

I am in bed alone. You too.  
You want me captured, now  
when we are slightly  
drunk, able to think of touch.

For once, I do not pause over  
the small curve of darkness  
under my eyes.

I snap immediately.

I do this  
not for the photo  
I won't send,

but because  
I want to be  
the last question

before you fall  
asleep.



# E-mail from Museo Correr

Julie E. Bloemeke

I

You are in Venice, everywhere the shift of tide. Some scenes I conjure myself, releasing my version from its pages. Others you create for me: the flight of pigeons, their expectant eyes, an adagio lifting through San Marcos. Even the sun grabs the columns as if to stop itself.

And after this paragraph: sudden space. You scumble, mention you are wearing sunglasses, though now it's almost night. That you ordered a glass of the Soave I told you I dreamed of one day drinking. That you are holding the screen in your hands, barely able to read. You tell me you try to type, but the tears are merciless. At first I think you say this for the beauty of Venice. Or because you are walking the wish. Then I think—selfishly—maybe it is because of me, or us, though I do not say it.

I am sitting in the pine forest alone as I read this. Thank God I am. Two years we have been writing—art, books, travel—never a mention of our past, of an us, never a cross into the intimate. But here in the city of water, bridges, you reveal the glass truth, the unexpected text no letter could prepare us for: Your marriage is over.

The strings in me snap, I buckle into the needles, all of their spines breaking against me. How to navigate an ocean? Because now all I want is to reach you, to do what I once knew best: to save you with my body, to steal for a moment what I should not. But I am left with a pulsing cursor, a tainted screen, the need to share when I can only offer:

I write faith, pray that my words  
will somehow light any candle  
within you. I tell you there is a chapel:  
San Giacomo dell'Orio. You promise  
to find it. I send, sick with words  
that cannot save a thing.

II

As my words depart, yours arrive. Our crossing  
in the ether. Another message: *What I did not say  
was why I am telling you this now.*  
*It was the painting. Antibes is here. Our Monet.*  
At first, I cannot make sense, think  
you are using metaphor, but no.  
The painting—our painting—  
is in Venice, on leave from Toledo.

And my hands cover my face and I am back,  
further into our younger, unstained selves,  
the two of us holding each other before that daubed  
precipice, glittering toward the city, to Côte d'Azur,  
how we vowed one day we would see it all together.

Neither of us have been to the painting since.  
And now, you spell more: it has its own wall  
in the Museo Correr. As if waiting for this, or us.

III

It is the questions that open now, the way I press  
my fingernails into my palm until I anchor  
myself back in. It is the way you type  
a word, only to pause and touch the mole  
I once vowed myself into, claiming my space  
on your body. The place I kissed that last day  
before we drowned for seventeen years of silence.

And now you walk the streets, their narrow veins,  
bloodless as you move through them. You have  
dinner alone, looking to the Rialto as the sun collapses,  
as you will me to walk over, without a word,  
to give my body as lightning or escape, as anything  
that will close the pain.

All of this you can never say, and never will,  
out of respect or deference or secret I cannot know.  
Instead you hang our landscape in the gallery  
of hope, trusting in all that seems to remain.

# On the Underground

Julie E. Bloemeke

Sated by London, we ride the Tube  
back to Bank, you in your indigo  
tie, my anniversary present  
already loosening its knot.

Our children are an ocean away.  
We are able to love our quiet love.  
Content, you take my hand, sigh in to me.  
We hold this gaze until I become sleepy,  
turn to rest my head on your shoulder.

Eighteen years. I smile to myself.  
Today we did not have to argue  
over the bills. I did not have to pull  
your socks from the bed. Again. We  
even shared an orange. Across the way

I become distracted by her short black boots,  
zippers traversing her ankle, glittering  
tracks to her toes. Yes, I think, to have  
those teeth. Golden too. I follow her body  
to shadow stockings, leather skirt, higher

still to leopard scarf, raven bob,  
the bright surprise of her lips, red  
in the dark of these tunnels. Her ears,  
beaded to headphones, unknown music.

Looking out the passing glass,  
she glances down, sees our hands.  
Her face registers, softens. She does not see

that I see. I watch how she loses her body,  
her edges. I loosen my fingers, slide them  
under my scarf. I know this look,  
have given it too. She is making you hers.

Once, I would have pinned her in stare,  
squeezed your hand in triumph, as if  
I owned a thing. But I see this differently  
now. Her eyes cast further into a certain light.

I close my own. Let her have you for as long  
as she needs. Even if she leads you, nameless,  
into her imaginary bed. For now you are her  
greatest pleasure. In time she will remember  
you as the man with the diamond

tie, the fantasy whose arched lips she unleashed  
over her body. I cannot tell her these lips  
are the same ones I daily curse, kiss, marry  
again. Instead I want her to have you,

keep you, love this unknown love. Let her make  
you this beautiful, this pure, your hand open  
to hers, the rushing train, let her hold you  
forever in it.