

CHEWING is the first stage of mechanical digestion. Upper and lower molars grinding repeatedly. Enzymes and the wetting contact of saliva begin to break down food. Then the slurry mass moves through the oesophagus to the stomach. Protecting itself with a layer of mucus,

the stomach releases gastric juices; its walls ripple to encourage proteins to fall apart. A thick liquid passes to the small intestine and the absorption of molecular nutrient complicates the question, *What is mine?*

Alone in the hotel room, my only measure of work or thought is my own satisfaction. The furnishings imply a domestic interior, without living. It's quiet and I adopt the hotel's lazy subjectivity, slip into it like a robe, become mindless and masturbatory.¹ This room is a domestic illusion legitimated by the money I paid and the contract I signed. I can see the library's dome through the hotel window. Like the hotel room without the bed or the courtroom without the bench, the library without books is illegible.²

In the hotel, I'm close to the bed the way I'm close to the book; lying down at the edge of waking. Reading is swallowing – words slide easily, and once inside spread indiscriminately. I've never been a fussy eater; I like the feeling of becoming full. My head is on the pillow. I read and words are forgotten too quickly or else they are difficult to shift. I accommodate the book, house its weight in my lower gut, palm moving back and forth across my stomach. My time inside reading is limited by attention and my attention falters precisely at the moment of understanding. To lose concentration is to police the boundaries of myself. I hear the judge's voice, low and gentle, she claims neutrality in her application of the law. The judge insists she is not expressing an opinion. At times refusal is more conscious – I push back the book like an infant refusing food, an attempt to draw a line and claim, *This is where I end*. The book is shut but the words are still in me: seeing and disagreeing, condemning cannot undo my pleasure.³

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ENTER the Law Library: a vast dome, beyond stone steps, two guards, their X-ray machine and security wand, an information desk and the desk librarian. The dome at the centre of the courts. A guard, looking through the skin of my backpack, asks if I have a sharp object next to my drink bottle. I offer sunglasses before finding a dirty fork. I exchange the fork for a slip of paper dated and signed. The guard confides this object because it is protocol: a metal fork could be used as a weapon. Walking through the library doors without my fork, I realise I've come to the Law Library to eat.⁴

The dome is a single lung, a swollen bosom, painted a milky colour on the inside. I'm in the library and my eyes are swinging. They're col-

lecting data by tallying the room's curves: clocks, tables, shelves. I see in a smooth, elongated orbit mirroring the architecture. Looking claims to accumulate passively; security cameras watch what is already happening.⁵ As I cross the library's central void my foot-

steps are quiet. They melt into the deep red of the carpet or are swallowed by the round air above.⁶

Waiting at the elevator, I am struck by the verticality of my body, its uprightness. I'm holding my head up top, mapping a hierarchy I've learned to believe in. Permanent-marker dashes are drawn from my feet to my head – up the front, the back and each side of my body. This is the axis upon which the operation is taking place, an operation I perform while the red elevator light is on. I rearrange my organs, my small intestine pushing past stomach, heart, lung, throat, making a steady migration higher – the entire soft

clump slides beneath the stem of my brain, digestive tract settling neatly behind my eyes. Rearranged without a wound or even a keyhole. I see differently with my intestine in my eye.⁷

The therapeutic purpose of the operation: allow a seeing that is more absorbent and insist on chewing more attentively than usual – or suck and make use of my entire eye as surface area. I want to break down law and library into constituent molecules then to let them recombine and enter through my eyes. This is an exercise in digestion. I recognise the taste of the law when I think, *Good*. To say I recognise the law is to say its presence feels broadly familiar, like banks or security cameras, a gaseous intimacy. I watch myself in the library through the eyes of a lawyer working over stacks of paper, I see myself as a good citizen, not out of fear, but because, penitent, I like the taste.⁸ The law librarians are loyal to the legal system. Their faith interests me; they see themselves as servicing the law through the collection, organisation and distribution of legal documentation. They know the shape of the law; they navigate its accumulation. It is not their job to ask questions. They tell me that in assisting self-representatives – those non-lawyers acting as defence or prosecution – they must be careful to avoid giving legal advice. The librarians provide information in the form of books and cases but they must not explain, interpret or imply meaning. They cannot give an opinion.

I exit the elevator on the second floor, walking the circular hallway repeatedly. The walls bulge in this claustrophobic dome and my eyes are sick like a stomach thrown off by vertiginous curves. I'm a baby looking into the breast of the adult who feeds me. There's milk but I don't suck;

I squeeze a few warm drops from my eyelids. Then I blink and they settle.⁹

On the library's third floor there are books that I read in an attempt to understand precedent. My looking is loose; vision with soft edges that does not perforate its object. I recognise a face in a photo of dead relatives and I understand nothing and every-

thing about their lives from that face and that feeling of recognition. Do you only feel it because your grandmother told you, *These are your relatives?* I gaze at pages of a legal digest; every possible legality or illegality indexed and cross referenced. I browse them like magazines –

1 ME: There's something about the abstracted subject or the numb subject that also sort of applies with lawyers and the wigs and judges and, also, all the other positions in the court: accused, witness, jury. They are kinds of characters in this repeated drama.

LAUREN: Yeah totally – it's theatrical and I suppose you could think of the hotel room as doing a similar thing. In that it's a structure that produces, um, a subject to behave in a really particular way – which is, well, it's particular in the hotel room because it's supposed to make you sort of bored and lazy.

ME: Yeah, mindless and masturbatory.*

LAUREN: Exactly yeah.

*Phrase from Briony Galligan. ¶

2 In conversation with the director of the Law Library, I'm corrected on this point. The book is not the base unit of *this* library; lawyers and judges require searchable subscription-based online databases of cases, judgements, legislation, journals etc. I come to the conclusion that in the context of the Supreme Court, the library building and the book, like the robe or the now defunct wig, serve a purely symbolic function – they are a claim to knowledge rather than knowledge itself. ¶

3 'Law as the theatrical relation between two people (fucking), between those people and the people watching via webcam (communicating), between the watchers and the corporations making money (exchange).' An excerpt from an email written by the artist to Lauren Burrow in response to reading the final pages of *Pornotopia* by Paul B. Preciado. ¶

4 AODHAN: ... air, how air works within space through windows and things like that and air being the material of the volume. And then energy flows, just trying to conceive of this space as not just functioning as a fixed symbolic vista or something, but then also something that is constantly penetrated, at flux or in flux, with itself or something. If we're thinking of volume and if we're thinking of something to be filled then we're thinking of a skin, right?

ME: Mmm a container of some sort?

AODHAN: A container of some sort, like a wall or whatever. ¶

7 The title of this work *Intestine in my eye* is a misremembered line from a poem by Leslie Scalapino, 'DeLay Rose', in her book *It's go in horizontal: selected poems 1974–2006*, University of California Press, 2008. The phrasing in the poem is 'intestine's in one's eyelids' and 'Intestine's in eyelids' and 'also their intestines in their eyelids while // still living'. ¶

8 'Back to the poetry library, which is full of white kindness and white ease, if you are willing to keep your head still then the library will hold you in its strong palm. Buildings like this are why the great European philosophers and every rich white boy had to discover in astonishment that the world might be neither self-evident nor for them. These types of buildings declare truth or experience a legislative matter to be decided among white men – architecture only the most tangible of methods through which this is enforced.' Hannah Black, 'City Built At Night', *Dark Pool Party*, co-published by Dominica and Arcadia Missa, 2016. ¶

3 'The only obscenity is the reader's repeated need to stop and build a moral defense against her own identificatory immersion in the textual imaginary, her own identification with a punitive sadism.' Lisa Robertson, 'Lastingness: Réage, Lucrèce, Arendt', *Nilling*, BookThug, 2012. ¶

I read the law without method, eyeing words I don't understand – sharp legal phrasing is difficult to parse.¹⁰

The pupil is a hole, a passage. Its diameter increases and decreases as the iris dilates in response to light. The iris is a crystal sphincter – a polished, glassy muscle of control. The judicial notion of precedent has followed me or I haven't been able to let it go. In my attempt to understand I hold onto the idea that this system has geometric form. I picture precedent defining the shape of

legal argumentation; two cases in which the same narrative arc can be drawn. When binding, it fixes form and ascribes it to the category: certainty.¹¹ The sphincter behaves according to rules; the diameter of the hole can be reliably predicted by measuring the quantity of light. A natural pattern interrupted by the administration of certain drugs that may relax the iris, dilating the pupil. And if the lid is left open vast quantities of light enter the hole. Overwhelmed by this intense brightness, the eye is temporarily blinded. The accumulation of case law lends mass to the legal system, this density anchors its consistency. The law thickens and becomes opaque to me again.¹²

Precedent is an authority and a mechanism for making legal judgements – a past decision is used to determine a factually and formally similar contemporary case – I debate whether this mechanism is analogous to reading. One particularity slips into the skin of another and becomes a general form. This abstraction of events is like the flow between reading one book and the next and drawing parallels where at first glance none appeared to be. But under the law particularity is not an affect or a character; under the law particularity is to say peoples' lives.

The back of the sculpture of Justice that sits above the main entrance to the court building can be seen from the round windows on the library's third floor. She looks out to the hotel across the street. I imagine the sculpture's obscured front, her robes clinging to her swollen breast. My view is round like the other windows and round like the dome. I breathe hot air onto the glass. My breath blurs her back – I watch it evaporate.

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IDREAM of swabbing the park at the end of my parent's street; a white-tipped pathology stick wiped across the urban reserve and placed in a sealed plastic tube.¹³ I can't see what I'm collecting because it's microscopic though I'm diligent in harvesting the invisible specimen. I wipe and then contain – trying to keep the outside world inside.¹⁴ This swabbing is data collection, is surveillance, is my adherence to an opaque protocol.

A lawyer friend tells me that barristers use the hotel rooms across the street as chambers. Barrister and client lying top-to-toe on queen-sized white cotton, heads resting on stacks of overfull pillows. This is the legal entrepreneur's home-away-from-home office, a numb domestic space produced by the room's matching furnishings. My data and the data of all those who checked in and then out is all over this place. There's only a micro difference between swab and security wand. I rub a swab on the law and the library. I grind the microfibre tip on court and hotel – especially on the hotel. I wipe up all the people who've called this bed home before me and I wipe the view of the dome from the hotel window.

It is difficult to absorb much nutrient from good and evil. I prefer to use *bad*, the word for evil in the language of childhood morality. The child is bad and punishment follows and then they can be good again. The trick is, for this to work, you need to be a lamb in the first place. The inside of bad is dry, peeling from the inside, a deep dry like that. The flaking of tissue that spreads and covers the interior is familiar, like the thin dead crunch of plane tree leaves.¹⁵ I won't ask a lawyer about my hypothesis on childish morality. I fear the wrist slap like they know what's in me: ignorance, simplicity and little girl. I mould the system into a self-portrait and it's not a sexy one. I picture an agreement with heredity, a contract of mutual understanding.

My compliance is enforceable: I assented to the terms as soon as I began to feed. My breasts are my mother's, the same teardrop shape. I know because I can see the resemblance. Consistency guaranteed through the implementation of an opaque genetic protocol. I tell

my mother but she insists she is not expressing an opinion.

I wonder about denaturing the binaries to which I cling ferociously. I try to remember what the term means biologically. Denature: a process of molecular augmentation, an irreversible change to the

structure of a protein caused by external forces or reactions – heat comes to mind. The sequence of amino acids is shuffled and a new arrangement of straight lines representing chemical bonds are drawn in new protein diagrams. And what of this new form? One consequence of this change is that the denatured protein can no longer penetrate the cell wall. Another is that a viscous membrane is formed on the cup of warm milk.

My dream remains with me throughout the day and I think about wiping the inside of my cheek with the reused swab. Pushing its tip past my lips to wipe the inside of my mouth – dead buccal cells lift easily. The cell walls are my mother's: hand-me-down bags she carried until the age of thirty-eight, when her walls became mine, her membranes wrapping all my trillions of cells. I know this is not how genetics works yet I persist with the image. Metaphor often has a blatant disregard for scientific fact.¹⁶

I separate the cell wall from its contents, stripping back the outer layer in one continuous piece like apple skin or orange peel. This delicate surgery spills cell guts onto hotel room floor. My cell's entire contents: a pool, a puddle no longer determined by an outer limit, its organelles now spare parts and its DNA loose data. I'm stripped of my maternal enclosure, it is impossible to distinguish the denatured protein from the lawyer from the client from the hotel from me. Too small to see with the naked eye and too small to hold with the naked hand, this puddle is scooped from the floor then slips and falls to rest invisibly on queen-sized white cotton.

This place has nothing to do with me and I'm free of it as soon as I'm out the door. This place has everything to do with me and I'm hungry so I feed on it. I swallow precedent, digests, dome and sculpture; I chew book, bed, robe and view. The accumulation makes me nauseated but there is pleasure in continuing to eat without a fork. I eat it and sometime later I pass it. Upon exit I deny that it ever came from me.

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11 'NECESSITY OF PRESERVING CERTAINTY IN ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. The importance of adherence to precedent in courts of justice, as a general rule, cannot be too decidedly or too often recognised. Even an erroneous judgement is less injurious than are uncertainty and fluctuations. And, where it affects property, or the rights of third parties – especially after the lapse of years – any change is dangerous, and may be seriously unjust.' R. v Macdermott (1844), *The Australian Digest Second Addition: Precedent to Private Company*, 16. ¶

12 'CONFORMITY OF ENGLISH AND AUSTRALIAN LAW. I have in the past regarded it as better that this court should conform to English decisions which we think have settled the general law in that jurisdiction than that we should be insistent on adhering to reasoning which we believe to be right but which will create diversity in the development of legal principle. Diversity in the development of the common law (using the expression not in the historical but in the very widest sense) seems to me to be an evil. Its avoidance is more desirable than a preservation here of what we regard as sound principle.' *Per Dixon, J.* WRIGHT v. WRIGHT (1938), *The Australian Digest Second Addition: Precedent to Private Company*, 27. ¶

16 'But the metaphorical space can't be inhabitable without welcoming meaning's propensity to move across materials: Metaphorical meaning does not identify itself with a position; it moves in a fluctuation, serially, to indicate modes of materiality.' Lisa Robertson, '7.5 Minute Talk for Eva Hesse (Sans II)', *Nilling*, BookThug, 2012. ¶

13 'action's // the gap between sleeping and not dreaming and dreaming and // waking', Leslie Scalapino, from 'DeLay Rose' in *It's go in horizontal: Selected poems 1974–2006*, University of California Press, 2008. ¶

14 'We are gradually witnessing the miniaturization, internalization, and reflexive introversion (an inward coiling toward what is considered intimate, private space) of the surveillance and control mechanisms of the disciplinary sexopolitical regime. These new soft technologies of micro control adopt the form of the body they control and become part of it until they are inseparable and indistinguishable from it, ending up as techno-soma-subjectivities. The body no longer inhabits disciplinary spaces but is inhabited by them. The biomolecular and organic structure of the body is the last hiding place of these biopolitical systems of control. This moment contains all the horror and exaltation of the body's political potential.' Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie*, The Feminist Press, 2013. ¶

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CEDED.
WAS NEVER
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THIS WORK WAS
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