

The Back of Her Head Opens into a Spout: An Anthology of Bottles

Chapter 2: A Minor Electrical Feeling

In which containers from the anthology are placed into a video and onto the floor.

A conversation about conversations, containers, and what's inside

Houses are really bodies. We connect ourselves with walls, roofs, and objects just as we hang on to our livers, skeletons, flesh, and bloodstream. I am no beauty, no mirror is necessary to assure me of this absolute fact. Nevertheless I have a death grip on this haggard frame as if it were the limpid body of Venus herself.

from Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*

It might be a mood... Moods are usually underrated as an aesthetic experience, it's somehow hard to credit them.

They are not particularly linguistic, in fact silence or receptivity might be a way of reflecting, collecting, and disseminating—something.

Language is only the top layer of things anyway. Don't we try to unpack the other layers visually?

The visual is always part of it. A mood might be what's generated when a stable or idealized internal image comes into contact with the disorganized physical world and starts to decompose there.

A mood *can* be physically affecting. You can walk into a space and feel it instantly.

I associate it with the home, I suppose because you can feel it most when it's contained. I am thinking about how when you are a child, the entire environment seems to fill up with each of your parent's passing moods.

It's funny to think about patching the leaky barn, trying to seal in a mood, something inherently transient with that serious gesture of pushing, tapping the holes.

But there's always contact involved, our bodies or minds are opposed somehow, because the mood is always in response to things; it's a form of dialogue between inside and out, self and other.

I wonder if in the last year the balance has flipped with our experience of containment. What's considered more real—the life in here or the life out there? Is what we call real less situated outside of the home now? Traditionally spending too much time with your interior is madness, right? But maybe we have begun to perceive inside and outside as more equal. It reminds me of your story about a recent encounter with a drunken stranger who wanted to lean forward and chat without a mask.

I felt myself jump: it was as if someone had walked up to me and poked me with a stick. I was shocked, like—what are you doing, man!?

Too close!

Speaking of barriers and things arising through contact, what about the sequence of image-words-image we talk about sometimes? I'm trying to get it straight. There's the exterior image that exists in the outside world, the verbal description of it that comes from inside but also exists in the immediate world between you and the person you communicate with, and then the resulting image in the other person's mind. The last of which is purely subjective and exists only inside the other person.

That image functions as a rorschach, which makes you wonder about the degree of coincidence amongst people's mental photography. Obviously there is overlap in how we are trained to read images but then there are always these outlier responses that might not connect to a familiar logic.

But in any case the image is not shareable even though you can share the words. It's like eating, flavour.

Right. Eating is a useful analogy.

We eat next to one another and we talk a lot while we are eating, but what's going on inside of each of us is separate.

That's why I like to speculate about telepathy, because there must be ways to communicate the interior sensation as well; but maybe we only get glimpses that register in the form of a thought or a mood that enters you suddenly and inexplicably?

That reminds me of the descendants who are thirsty because the ancestors ate too much salt. Feeling someone else's mood in your body and being unable to make sense of it—a disconnected sense of apathy or attraction.

Do you mean the question of lineage or carrying things?

I wonder... There's no rule that metaphors have to mean one thing. I was thinking about the way people used to use Homer or Virgil for sortilege. You could ask a very specific question and get a very specific response by reading at random but that doesn't use up all the poetry. It's not empty afterward.

So maybe there are nested containers, different interiors.

I love this idea of trying to share something that's one hundred percent secret and enclosed.

Or wanting to, even thinking about the desire to. Although actually we attempt to experience the inside of one another all the time as a part of the way we read one another. It's exciting to think of in relation to a chain of images unfolding and ending in the inside of another person... But can that be documented? What is the role of the record in that, or in our collaboration for that matter?

I'd always assumed we'd keep going until we've made an exhaustive library of everything.

For us in particular documentation is important in making things shareable. But it's also significant that there's such a time zone translation to contend with, a slice or cut between us because we are so distant geographically and in time. The delay demands a kind of documentation that almost relates to analogue image making. The steps we take to document everything are like a technical process.

There's also a funny denial of the present because there is no present—I'm in your past and you're in my future.

There's no shared immediate, so we constantly document and create archives for one another.

That seems like part of the library idea.

Writing encyclopedias, with all the hubris of knowledge making.

Busily filling volumes full of feelings... With ordinary documentation you have a real world thing to compare it to, all you have to do is hold it up next to the real thing and you can assess the documentation for accuracy, whereas any number of our encyclopedia entries can be perfectly correct all at once because the thing (whatever it is) is invisible.

It's hard to apply the scientific method. But I'm curious about the idea of what's correct. How do you develop a system to determine the soundness of things? It's like trying to map experience—it's subjective but it's not random and it's not disconnected to the outside world...

Maybe that's what disciplines of introspection are for, to keep you from wandering off into psychosis. They have to do with situating oneself in an experience, or perhaps developing a sense for mood?

To push against the linguistic layer and expand it constantly so it can encompass more.

I love thinking about the experiment you did around visual telepathy.

We should do it. It would be good to do over several weeks to develop confidence around the cues.

Yes, because it's not even communicating exactly, it's sharing something from inside.

I noticed when I was doing recordings of people's premonitions that most of the time a direct premonitory experience takes place when something shocking is happening, there's an anomalous event. It often has to do with death, which makes me think it's the severity of the circumstance that forces us to find a correlation between the inside and outside worlds. But it must happen all the time in subtler ways. I suspect the stories are just examples of the moments when we are forcibly made aware.

So it's happening constantly.

I would assume so.

I think there must be a strata you can determine to step into and from there read the whole world. It would be magical and a little dangerous.

That makes me think of an artist I know who is sometimes accused of pareidolia, seeing random patterns where there are none, making connections where they don't exist. I always get irritated by that doubt.

If they can see the pattern it exists—Jesus Christ!

Exactly. I get offended on their behalf.

Who is the authority who gets to say whether a pattern exists or not? An algorithm? The biggest stockholder? If they can see it, it exists.

You only need to look long enough and it's there, you can see it too. It's a bit like walking in the room and deciding to see. You can start anywhere.