JACKIE CLARK
SYMPATHETIC nervous system
for ra, when we fell in love.
JACKIE CLARK

SYMPATHETIC

nervous system
health concerns          often noted routine           the lack of any further creation
the uptight laundry mat taking as little taking as much writing about the story of our life without
a dog or with a dog with something of a greater demand how the demand lifts
the grey stress the dull atmosphere evangelical or autonomous the stairwell for passage
we all have a small box we manufacture ourselves in some are more fluorescent like a song
you hear & don't immediately like only to find later it is all you want that you sit at your desk & write
now we are sitting here again proper & full of positive words the story has seemed to make itself into another story someone somewhere reads I will never have the privilege to be on the outside of it just a flawed inner correspondence with human hair & finger nails a groomed monograph of skin to be something the easiest trope yet irresistible the story through someone else's mouth sounds pleasing rarely am I asked to expound upon my own we all cultivate an image we eventually wait in doctors’ offices in hospital rooms the not necessarily near future is still a certain one the fist that is in my throat the palm lines on my hand impressed by the astonishing accuracy of astrology how very “like” me but of the things to give up I have a few dependable fluctuations yourself inserted in the waiting room the room overlooking Broadway in the morning time will move so slow in front of what is empty to stay seated a harrowing postcard a search for instruction that hubris believes lies at some inner depth to write about something real this society is run by vultures the train is the subjunctive of the light up above filters down strategically or by accident we keep talking & talking & talking eventually having learned time to speak clearly to pause in between words the chasm between bodily mentality the perceived audience infinitesimal the overhead feels rehearsed the doctor’s office where I recently departed broken or clipped awaiting confirmation procedure procedure consequence always an arbitrary resting the appointment & the announcing it is my aunt’s birthday today & I will call soon to say hello the poems I’ve been reading correspond to the season when weather is all we can see worn down a twin heart in reading then writing then writing this twin alabaster of the 2 train barreling downtown & with me on it everyone I love accounted for the summon of love this is our responsibility to keep stepping onto the train & riding for a while resting our heads on each other’s shoulders then stepping off when it feels right
morning of obvious maxims calculating representation a plan for when the current plan retires heavy-handedness for all avoidance techniques a little bit every day seems to get to the heart matters cohabitation support sometimes spot on sleeping face to face side to side

I love when one gestures for the other’s hand such simple physicality an about-face recoils communication attempts left free to float away with the wind we keep living so I guess we need to keep thinking about dinner steal days to read quietly on the couch thinking about bodies inevitably leads to thinking about the way they connect a seraph of detachment everyone seems like they are friends on the internet nothing is better having more to give is just a fact not a judgment what more should we be aside from posted intimacies another form of expression to build a small shelter to cover our respective shoulders the laughter we provide in the face of darklings if I wrote every day I wouldn’t know more about how I felt but would remember the day more precisely
exhaustion trope the willingness to will the smallest bird in the palm of my hands cold extremities colossal
fight against the seasons a powerless mastodon bones caught in amber to forever be
gazed upon no real execution administrative dalliance conventions for breeding appropriate protocol it must be
maintained by some subject an individual or automaton writing the act of being here
& now impulse makes the heart grow fonder each story one step away the glass ledge bringing
home a story of purpose slipping introspective all this time filled or empty it is time
just the same farewell fanfare looking ever more polite & controlled observation of artifact
this party & that party or the fact you were there pursuing all these lovely homeopaths a friend
cave to call my own the nets that coalesce above us the nets that coalesce below always
in some inner stable of stratosphere where over-crusted alabaster reinforces the cracks sweet
action a pathway to equilibrium nothing is delicate so much as severe taking up time that feels
in constant peril this body waits for results waits for time to be less so the mannequin front
runner promoted to director my friend cave had other commitments my friend concave
brought me to this moment the quiet click of the heating vents a little mouse lives
inside my walls if I didn't know any better it is hard to outlast all the diving fare-thee-wells
tragedy weighs more even when feathers through air cornucopia backslides falling
down to what is below nothing to catch our funny sensations to think of jumping when atop
to think of turning the wheel midtraffic of opening the car door while in motion
I believe so much of what we meet day to day & by I I mean me & by me I mean this
processing anatomy your powers hype & bully & basketball I am not alone at home
but sometimes sometimes I am sometimes my mom will call or my sister & we will talk about our bodies
or what traffic was like in general our animals some dead some alive
mirroring
one of the first
acts we learn
in the early morning
modeled behavior

that mirror that has followed us
that mirror
we’ve fallen in love with
& their child mirror

there are reasons
for everything
yet most things
remain inexplicable
country

house
we make up ways
to spend time
canopy of spider
to walk under
to walk

through
to feel the light
fall through
we walk along the water
shadow natural

occurrence
against rock
against water
the allure of a silhouette
so hard to resist
poetics

the light the dark
the sum of these words
longing changes
the front side of the mountain
morning

quiet
the backside torrents
& blistering trees
soundscape like cars
moving along a highway

the wind through the pine needles
reaching our ears at some point
you just want to be better
in relation

extrapolating patience
make-believe desires
for the purpose of purpose
even here
I am writing
my song secret
when I think about what it is to have a voice I suddenly have no idea what mine sounds like just like smoking to pass the time the need for additional stimulation if honest one could mention the irreplaceable the idea help the idea held the piano galloped & lines of negotiation are drawn at times feeling comes to us dreams are premonitions other times they haunt it is expensive to petit four alone the want for more indicated through small actions we must learn to want to be alive we must learn to take action as if we couldn’t do otherwise
even if you don’t want this time is here for your trouble & how much trouble how hard it can be to carry what you need on your back the vague impersonal “you” a lame stand-in for the I the loquacious of all experience you want to be surrounded by friends I want the same I want to tell you stories about childhood I want to understand more through the telling it is not illumination but something more profound a piano sonata in my two ears a temperate commitment to the song hierarchy of wings my heart so much all the difficulty we masquerade around what is better than crossing bridges with flush cheeks with familiar conversation the arrival is always quicker because of it because of the daring commitment to continue I must trust you to see I must trust the warm pocket you wear on your face
today is another day    water falls from the sky    the couch & the cat & the current
descriptions sake    pulse for providence    pulse for poisoned words
the circulatory    that mistake coincidence as a sign    a guide
words that are interchangeable    a mountain knows such leisure
it has been so long    it hasn’t been long at all    tattoo upon the body
a reminder isn’t enough    what is permanent terrifies
over time    when you should learn    you don’t learn
it all dies just the same    redefine new ways
the different silhouettes    its facial expressions are unreadable
neither bucket nor faucet or ocean    the outside is on the inside
to the crypt    the stairs are dark
outline the desired shape    with your finger
descriptions for    that burrow in
storyboard of all known facts    this story for my intimacy
even the permanent dispels    & it dies just the same
to talk about the middle
nothing spills out anymore
the inside has been taken
the room is dark
make the outline with the air
errors clerical or otherwise my head already filled with elevation filled
with the parameter of the outside world without a known starting point none of this has truly
begun not in a controlled colloquium or rather it begins & begins & begins a new allowance superseding
the old to hang balance in silence what is the purpose of that to ask questions to a page a page
that I expect myself to fill a backwards philosophy I can only write what I have felt inside the sticker-bushes
& rock gardens walk with me my love nothing happens because of it
to write with strings so close the ties sweeping & busying themselves inside the small apartment I hear every move if we go out we go out with a purpose making plans basic gestures toward activity a resilient barricade center all these competing intimacies alone at home in the temporal realm everything unexisiting pulse relations in the fire drawer go ahead & pull it open let what’s inside engulf your face & surround the army you populate your outlines with let your decisions all be wrong & questionable like prayer before the monument there was a mountain & before the mountain there was dirt & each surface was beheld with wonder I miss the formative decorations the love the revolution turning on a previous axis
sympathetic & hypertonic
but existing just the same
circulation distress
under the sun
invite the cross-eyed mind to step forward
allowed to jump from one island to another
expanding siphon in my chest
to bloom
a day of bright but cold skies

the right raised slightly more disequilibrium a borrowed phrase
to put off writing with more writing letting the sleep pull you under
living in such a state the day a six-footed monster
imagine the interplanetary potential for shore-worn glass to unhinge
I only know borrowed vocabulary
tell a truth & tell it wrong
what swells expects to be filled how easy to want
in its beginning a subsection of succeeding
it is hard to know it's easy to remain
when it is quiet when it's still
the body is polluted exhausted but posturing like a wheel turning underneath the body
is harmed is flexible touchable is usable until the very end the sole
c-curve the tilted hips resting in chairs all day a project in moving
a recognizable fashion more than a want for a single window just a breeze unconscious
to the train a day daze the tripod for livable hours the picture the big one I am lost
colossally anthropomorphic fragments stolen ingenuity steals the bank vault succeeds premeditating
the archive of past flowers writing to describe writing to define to sort the tools & store the tools
a museum retrospective a search for unifying themes pragmatism is lethal
lining up all the pins making a place dig down into the ground & scour the artifacts
hang them at different points on the body communicate your logic rhythm to the field
you will be misunderstood & worse you will feel misrepresented
to tell the joke because you know it not because it gives you pleasure at this height nothing feels
arbitrary eager for better reporting skills a charge or permission to go forth
reticent needs to accompany your pride to be serious about the future it’s been so long
since your last reflexive raven you looking at the books that surround you what have you been looking for
the lowering coast build a sea wall in between your heart & the television auxiliary forces
prepare dinner-sized news I can’t look I feel bad about not looking when I close my eyes
what do I see tough expectation “you” messages & “I” messages
driven for the driver’s sake everything is almost exactly the same since you left accumulation
of all the days things have gone missing without being noticed red blue silver yellow
please take a color take it & put it under your face let the color melt inside your body
traveling between systems let it bust & waylay the convections use the colors
to inflate balloons to hang on your door this is a plea from the body to shower the river
with something radiant & proud something deserving of triangulation I don’t talk to anyone
in poems anymore because what I want to say most is too practical
walking from one stone building to the next the rain-manicured lawn unexpected fondness detachable presence it comes & goes the work that needs to be done shortening of rope animated distance the natural word as I speak it from my tongue rhizome philosophy walking to the podium please help me transcribe your otherness inside your suit coat behind your collar give me some sign you have plans to achieve
under the sun structure unforce fabled wind tour the badlands with others ordinary ruin
televisions left to despair over time the bike transits outwardly approachable needing solitude
for an act that would rather not be alone driving head first into the promise strong cheshire smile
friends fading a glimpse in passing glimpse the rocky terrain
second jurisdiction    how to fill time    someone to sit across from    the table    abbreviating discourse
everything just goes quiet    after a while    walking for news or plans or some way    to augment
the current situation    what are we supposed to do    sensory deprivation    reading can’t cure
or doesn’t cure    doesn’t distract the mind enough    a day like any other    the living brushfire
skirting up the alley    the dumpster hired to clean up what needs to be cleaned up    feels like it would be impossible
but as I sit here    I know that it is not    to start some barometer waterfall    a force field peppered
with plutonium    a mind influenced by words it has seen elsewhere    to write something of the heart
a discourse at a sustained length    everything feels remote    I would say foolish    you can reread letters
go in search for someone    so far so long ago    but the physical discourse doesn’t vary    to not be
ungrateful still    ambitious    sweeping speeches to sweeping rooms    the serious intricacies
of cotton-puffed capillaries    the parameter guarded by collage cutouts    replications defending against pattern
the meta interior a room in a room    a building in a building    a nonspace in a nonspace
fold into the stairwell    fold into the echo it creates
our sun-filled mouths

to take up

fall asleep

fall asleep

the (im) pulse

that accounts for most of the day

out my window

an independent processing machine

dwarfed

making plans again

formative power has changed

now air

that melody

the sneakers that carry you

hunted

in the mountain

fill it

if you are next to me

heart shape carved

in the ceiling

too foolish to use it

I want you to take me

with you

what black pool have you been swimming in

when can we start

the championed press

to its greatest potential

I am looking

at you again

I am getting better

to a tall tall forest

I want to be

people fall to the wayside

the automatic

falling to the wayside

now some kind of underwater stenographer

now helmet

our efforts

to avoid kaput

to transcribe

while putting on your sneakers

how urgent

could words ever be
three dimensional blue sky the memory photo behind my eyes the skyscraper angling dramatically with the seasons everything is new the open door the first time the sounds of Saturday morning the plants growing inside their pots another reflection behind my eyes our silhouettes in the water blue & green with just the right amount of sun we construct its meaning after the fact the same afternoon we lay on the barren grass our faces pointed in the direction of the sun our competing creations have no place here here our hands can touch & we don't have to say anything excavated pressure if we were going to live our lives differently this is how I would want it to be
razor edge       deliberations carry over      voices carry over     visibility         the emperor marches
forward         makes crosses         with its arms         a battle of uphill
in the day time    the long list of classifieds   & somewhat promised-filled acrobats   a battle evermore
persistence       allows for long walks      long standards      long unfilled        even arid conditions
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persistence       allows for long walks      long standards      long unfilled        even arid conditions
of circumspect lung power    capacity dehydrated         dehydrated dotting blood        dotting the nose
masquerading the denomination    the trees filled with lamps       the elevation full
women who connect    when women topics are broached      the belly with baby        the mom in another state
how alike or unalike       your smooth skin      the secret to keeping the body presentable  the secret
to surviving in this house      in this head         that dusts the lens     to ask
for favors      without being in any position to demand      no leg up        no asset of return
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**Jackie Clark** is the author of *Aphoria* (Brooklyn Arts Press) and the chapbooks *Red Fortress* (H_NGM_N), *Office Work* (Greying Ghost Press), and *I Live Here Now* (Lame House Press). She is the series editor of Poets off Poetry and Song of the Week for *Coldfront Magazine*, and can be found online at [nohelpforthat.com](http://nohelpforthat.com).

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we keep talking & talking & talking
eventually having learned time to speak clearly
to pause in between words the chasm between