

# BRAIDS

**ON LOVE AND VIOLENCE**

Sandy Williams

THERE IS A BOAT THAT HAS BEEN PERFECTLY HAPPY  
SITTING ON THIS SHELF MOST OF ITS LIFE

*One day;  
I will revel in a place called The Dancing Spirit Lodge  
I will play bass in a band called The TV Enthusiasts  
at a bar called This Ain't Hollywood.*

*I'll tie a bandana around my dog's neck  
and teach her to fetch me a scotch.  
And when her back is up,  
twerking and howling in sleep;  
every rabbit she chases in dream  
will lead her across the yard  
and home to me.*

*Listen;*  
Very soon I'm going to be in a room with her  
We're going to be in a room.  
There's going to be a room around us.

*Think;*  
*This is where rapid hearts sleep.*

*Mouth;*  
Feeling is a skill now

*Say;*  
Yes, this is one of those lamps  
set to light slowly over time.  
It mimics the sun.

*Move;*  
Up the stairs.  
Open a thin door.

*Think;*  
*This hallway is a road we will travel through in perpetual evening.*

*Said;*  
This is my famous garden.  
We all call it "My Garden"  
But please don't bring it up.

*See;*  
This is a photo she has framed.  
The background is a boat.  
The foreground is a younger her,

She stands next to an older man;  
he places one hand on hers  
the other on the tiller.

He sold everything he owned to buy  
that boat.  
The agent said he would be able to see  
the future from the helm,  
and it would be the same future  
every time.

*Now;*  
*Picture a picture all of the shapes you've made*  
*together so far.*

*And now imagine she said;*  
This is what I call "My Anger".

Laurene Buchheit

## J AND V FORMATIONS

when i have him on the phone i wave at him while trying  
not to smoke. i wave but he cannot see so  
i wave more and focus on my hand so i forget my V.

\* hearing his voice makes me want to smoke even more  
i try to take the mic of my headphones far away from  
my mouth so that he cannot hear me blow-in blow-out,  
a kind of pulsed measure i try to keep. in these moments  
i wished for him to be enthusiastically indifferent.

\* lighting a lighter is louder than a cigarette puff coming  
out of a. mouth. puff. mouth. puff  
i may not put the mic too far either or i would forget to  
answer when he is talking to me. i don't. but i read that  
birds like ducks and geese fly in J and V formations and i  
am all of a dither. JOY and VENOM that is what he is to me.

\* all. every. four. seconds. i. try. to. blow. the. smoke.  
backwards on the inside  
i wish i could just wave at him and say GO BACK TO  
HEAVEN LIKE YOU COME FROM THERE, i change it to  
YOU ARE A REALLY NICE HOUSE.

smashing the ears while being soft on skin, hard on dirt.  
some kind of velvet struggle, the fresh smell of the fresh  
laundry but the stains still remain.

he wasn't the one choosing it though. his clothes are  
now tinted of cold cigarette smell, one of the things he  
tries to get rid of he says. the older things get, the more  
the fabric gets old, the more it smells. the more it  
gets cold, the more it smells. i end up thinking about  
something else feeling proud because i am on the  
phone while doing two things at the same time.

\* if i look at the smoke i see blurry-blurry-through-  
though, i see my room and the carpet becomes a mirror  
that i don't want in my life

Céline Mathieu

## IT COMES IN WAVES

By Sunday morning she realised it all might have to do with this: her eyes looked in two different directions. What had felt like a simple difficulty to concentrate, now made sense in terms of focal points. The closer the object she fixed her eyes on, the more she felt the zoning out, a sliding motion, like a pocket knife, eyes shifting. It put M in a gas-like state, with her vision noticeably made up out of little dashes of colour, that now bled onto each other as contours blurred.

Jaw relaxed and head always angled to the right, like after the swimming pool with a little towel trying to catch warmth in pits— then too, she'd bring a shoulder closer to her ear, to comfort loose ends with joints.

M had just followed a lecture in which a figure was described as the "Klein Bottle topology". The subscript read "inside is outside is inside is outside is inside". On the slide, the drawing shows a continuous shape. The way in which it twirls not unlike an Escher drawing, but this was more organic round smooth glass-like. The complexity of it was how M imagined seeing an umbrella for the first time. Someone sketching the way it functions, the cover, (pencil retracing the rounded top) keeping you from the rain (not touching but signing the rain falling) hovering over a line drawing. The Klein Bottle topology felt like herself. Hollow inside; a big tube running through her. Now and most of the time obstructed by food digesting; but what she made up was a container of water with a thin fabric cylinder connecting mouth and arse, chunks of flesh and purple organs padding all around it, but really all just around a thin fabric inside is outside is inside. And abstracting it all now, cross-eyed, she remembered how filling the tubes of soft fabric brought pleasure. She imagined with pressing thumbs twisting herself outwards, inside out.

All. Every. Four. Bleeding contours.

Can he see that the room is splitting, or well, that I am? M is moving backward, away wards. Making a conscious effort to fix her gaze, so as not to alarm him. It's more of an inner secret. In the white hallway, he stands with his pants down, the jeans resting on the tops of his boots. M thinks back to what she felt waiting at the red light earlier. A hurried woman in front of her made a point of standing as close to the street as possible, closest to her destination. It was there she felt it, she thought: it feels like being potato slices. Freshly cut held together by the juice. The moment you want them apart, you slide them off of each other alongside one another. I feel like that, like two potato slices, freshly cut, and at moments like this, when I try not to let the fixed gaze, shiver along with my frenzy, I am the sliding of the slices too. And in me the scent of potato. M stood there and walked all over her own pants, holding a leg up like an elegant balancing ice-skater. It's just dust, the man said, and she wondered what dirt wasn't? But I don't feel dirty, it's more the inside of the potato, oddly juicy, and with a little grain, and hard, and sliced. And the slices sometimes sliding, silk grief velvet struggle and her losing him in the hallway but trying to stay put.

There is something that smoking a cigarette does to your neurones. Now that, M finds interesting. That it makes you breathe differently with all the inhalations and exhalations, is one thing; the obvious nicotine thing, though she knows little of it, yes okay. But that it enthusiastically indifferent, actually influences ones thinking—.

She watched a video about tapping, moving the light tapping gesture from the edge of the hand (the part that rests on paper when you write), to the crown of the head, the top of the cheekbone, the venus-bow of the lip, the collarbone to under the arm where a bra strap would be. You tap, she showed, and repeat the same phrase. Like "I am worthy". A pulsed measure I am worthy (hand) I am worthy (crown) I am worthy (cheek) I am worthy (lip) I am worthy (collarbone) I am worthy (bra strap).

A man unloaded the white towel stack on a metal roller. He was the man who brought the white towels and the white sheets to the hotel nearby. As he delivered the fresh laundry, he took away the soiled washing, M pondered, and for a moment, they must cross each other, cohabitant in the back of the truck. Seeing him, M thought about the feeling in her teeth when she bites them into a hotel towel. The squeak. The occasional trace of coffee, her wondering look whether on a towel so crisp she may find a trace of what she hoped to have washed off. The towel tucked under the arm, tightly gripping, rubbing the skin it holds on to, giving off particles still.

Her accent dropped on the water surface she mimicked with her smallish hands, her fingers now folding to gesture "rootedness" or "depth", and her eyes said something like "incredible solidity".

M described the dam system, speaking to no-one in particular, levelled hands, and explained the in-between space between two surfaces of water. She hesitated at the realness of it, the moment it opens its flood and — it floods the one surface with the 'once surface' of the other.

Karolina Rymkevicz

TO BE READ IN A SINGLE BREATH

permanent state of emergency  
started suddenly immediately  
my back went up, charmed  
with your lazy acts of chivalry

worshipper of symmetry  
you accused  
quite accurately  
clarity is a heavy artillery  
never a redundancy

face down  
sinking sunken sunk  
hissing his story  
what might, but should not be  
called "my anger" with glory

i shrank considerably indecently  
as enthusiastically indifferent  
as he will be  
but in a craving of complacency  
i do not fear futility

declension of silk grief  
and velvet struggle and its density  
suddenly immediately  
in a permanent state of emergency



**Braids: On Love and Violence** brings together short texts by four contributors from different fields: Sandy Williams, Karolina Rymkevicz, Laurène Buchheit and Céline Mathieu.

Céline Mathieu was invited by Margarita Zigutyte's Hard To Care platform to contribute and also to nominate a number of other writers. Their set theme was Love and Violence which follows on from the previous volume, Love.

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**HARD TO CARE**