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RESPONSE 13: FLAT BABBLE/GESTURE

[illegible]

The fantasy of the perspicacious subject – the subject who knows itself, the subject that can know itself – is always already a complicated thing. The tumultuous swarm of the social, its frantic grasp and multiplicity, leaches into selfhood, as a virus. The viral quality of the social, or perhaps the virus of the social. The system defined precisely by the moment of its breakdown, by the flaws in its makeup, by its asystematicity. It's different than a system's limits being defined by that beyond them, the differential construction of meaning and belonging in the social field. This is on the inside. This is the gut-rumbling chaos ostensibly combated by the system as a defining quality of the system itself. This is the almost invisible viral.

The fantasy of the self-knowing subject is complicated, sure, and painful. The thirst for wholeness, questing in pursuit of fullness, seeking out that missing part. Always searching, always a horizon. Always, though, the quest.

But in the age of the digital? Forget it. Why? To quote Patricia Clough, “in the age of the digital, do we even have an unconscious?” It’s something to do with the fact that I am not without my iPhone. Let me repeat that: “I” “am” “not” without my iPhone. The instant I am disconnected (and how do we measure that?), I am not. I cease to be, in a very significant sense. More than that, though, even, it’s something to do with speed: the sickening immediacy afforded by the age of informational commodity, virtual connectivity, virtually everpresent media?

The Dewey decimal system, using numbers and letters, coordinates materials on the same subject and on related subjects to make items easier to find on the shelves. Each book in the library has a unique call number.

Parts of it I remember but parts of it seem to break away. I don't realize they are missing until I look for them and they are not there;
I am never sure if I locked the car door or not.

I get most of my thinking done in the shower, which is fine, I guess, except that you can only take so many showers a day before you dry up entirely. If you close your eyes in the shower you can really be anywhere and I guess that's the whole point anyway, isn't it?

When I was five my mother and I got into a bad car wreck. I remember sobbing uncontrollably because I thought the car's bones were all over the road. My mother hugged me tightly and chanted, "the car couldn't feel it. The car couldn't feel it."

Last week I read in the paper that a truck driver was transporting a bunch of bees across the country. He and his wife picked up 460 hives in South Dakota and on the way to Bakersfield, California a twist in the road took them by surprise and all of a sudden the truck driver and his wife were upside down and had 25 million very angry bees on their hands. The truck driver and his wife ran down the highway tearing off all of their clothes while being chased by millions of bees. I guess sometimes things can really get away from you.

A call number is like an address: it tells us where the book is located in the library.

My mother left us when I was twelve years old and that's too old to be considered a kid by most people, but I remember she made my father sleep on the couch the night before she left so that I could sleep in their bed with her. He came in and told her she had to leave, but she didn't. She just stayed there in bed and told him that wasn't going to happen and he sat down on the edge of the bed and cried while we both just watched him.

Because books are classified by subject, you can often find several helpful books on the same shelf, or nearby.

595.4: Spiders
595.7: Insects
595.78: Butterflies
595.79: Bees

The catalog numbers for chronic neurological disorders and for pregnancy are only 2 apart: 616 and 618. The books about pregnancy have pastel covers except for the ones about teen pregnancy--those are dark blue mostly. The next shelf over has books about postpartum depression. I imagined my mother standing in the aisle for a long time trying to will the two shelves together. "Depressed WHILE pregnant," "Depressed BECAUSE pregnant."

There are 20,000 different types of bees. Bumble Bee, Carpenter Bee, Honey Bee, Killer Bee, Bee Bee.

If a queen dies unexpectedly and the workers are unable to raise an emergency queen to replace her, the colony will fail. Stimulated by the absence of a queen and the pheromones she secretes, as well as the absence of new larvae, worker bees will sometimes begin laying eggs. However, only the queen bee has the instinct and ability to mate. Eggs laid by workers will still hatch, but because they are not fertilized, they will all be drones, or male bees. Drones do not collect any food or do any work, so the number of productive bees will dwindle until the colony disappears.

629.287: Automobile repair.

Some people never learn, you know. Like when I was in high school and I used to work at the Kite Loft, which is this kite store, and this guy came in with two broken arms and tried to buy a really expensive kite, but he was with his whole family and his daughter pulled me aside and said, "please, please don't let him buy that kite. He just got into a really bad kiting accident, which is how he broke both his arms." Which I guess was true because why would she lie, but what the hell is a kiting accident and how was he going to use this \$300 kite with two broken arms?

504: unassigned or no longer used.

796.1: Kites

They say the bees are disappearing and probably that's true. I don't know, but I do know that when I tried to expand my dead moth collection to also include bees I certainly couldn't find any. The ancestors of bees were carnivorous. Then they started eating so many pollen-covered insects that they just started eating pollen.

When your mother leaves you, you are pretty sure that nature is making a mistake. The most unfair part about it is that someone else is doing something and all of a sudden that makes you into something else. I was one thing, my mother leaves, and then I am another thing.

When I am 16 I tell my aunts I've been having joint pains. I tell them I think I have Lupus.

"You know that runs in our family."

"What, Lupus?"

"No, thinking you have Lupus."

This is the kind of thing that happens a lot.

One day last week I felt the familiar cat's claws pawing at the inside my stomach that indicated the approach of my period, but I'm pregnant so that doesn't make any sense. And then it happens, and it happens suddenly and it is the worst thing and I buckle over in pain, but nothing stops it and there is blood everywhere and nothing is contained and all of a sudden I am no longer pregnant.

The doctor says he is sorry. The doctor says I couldn't have done anything differently. The doctor says sometimes this just happens. I was one thing and then something happened and now I am something else.

The next day I got sent to collections by the library for my late fines, which felt awful.

It felt how Wile E. Coyote must feel after he gets blown up by his own dynamite and then gets hit by a train. Or like how that guy probably felt when he was getting stung by all of those bees right after he had crashed his truck. It seems like things can't get worse and then they do.

Dewey died from a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 81. Even the master of categorization couldn't keep everything separate forever.

Four days after the miscarriage my mother called to see how I was. I thought about telling her that somehow it's not fair that she would get to leave a kid that she didn't even want and I wasn't allowed to have one that I wanted so badly, that knowing the number's not knowing the thing, it's just knowing where that thing goes, that you can break your bones doing the most basic things like flying a kite, and that most of the bees are dying, probably because all of their queens left.

Instead I thought about how at the library some of the numbers don't even get used, and I told her that the car had probably felt it after all.

bright lights on ice
pore-spotty faces and the bleeding of lipstick
steam clouds the approximate volume of lungs
badass kids who really think so
sweet girls in their special hats
something collapsing in my skull
but not the skull itself

my inner thigh
the right one
fell on the blade of my left skate
my tights went slutty, a little blood

and all you said was
damn girl

a deliberate attempt to
scatter through fall
without losing color
or dropping an invisible magnet
neodymium child
your skin is enough
i could say fuck gravity with conviction
we could drag iron filings across my table
like blackbirds peppering the sky
to escape a season of grey
blissed out on sleepy squirming
wishing my head was a wet windy tree
or achromatic rock
hollowed out to shimmer
rolling along some ancient
mountain to whom
groundedness has not been alien
radiation leaves no trace
stability is the potential of all elements
apprehension is absurd and
magnetism keeps my body here

iodine
and the sphinx
the cause and the cure
have been the same fucking
thing

lost in the feed
or abuse of privilege
in the new world
while some hold this performance
brilliance on command
in a place lower than love
you expect honesty
while smelling like this
never was your style

i could try to sound like i know these
mechanistic views of nature and women
clever enough to control
the speed of an apple falling
or the curl of a girl's hair
or the lightswitch behind someone else's eyes
when the sun and the cut grass are too fucking much
or an almond split with molars
and one or both halves feeling like planed marble
some too smooth natural thing, questioned to trust
i could give a token of something
to someone's privilege
out of step from vacation or any far off
time when the light is right and pretty for boys
or the biomagnification of a history's toxins
up the trophic ladder -
that's how it works. we go on and we sink our teeth in and grow,
and learn that wolves are wolves but they never say
when is it safe
in my heart i am a conservationist
just traipsing through
but i can't stop smoking or worrying
or squishing things that bite
or fighting with trashcans
full of memory or nature or women.

sixteen
cutting up heirlooms in the attic
sulphur fumes
this crackhead
woman maryjo my mother met in n.a.
lighting matches in the bathroom
downstairs for over an hour
thought the bottle of nair was face lotion
screaming in the bathroom
downstairs for over an hour

