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Belladonna* is an event and publication series that promotes the work of women* writers who are adventurous, experimental, politically involved, multi-form, multi-cultural, multi-gendered, impossible to define, delicious to talk about, unpredictable, dangerous with language.

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Author’s Note: In this excerpt from an upcoming Manhattan memoir—*Furniture Music: A Northern in Manhattan, 2004-2008*—the Narrator is reluctantly detained in Montréal for reason of an overdue novel manuscript.

**FURNITURE MUSIC [Molto Moderato]**

*If a line continues without breeding with the non-esthetic, nothing is created. You might add, the bigger the megapolis, the greater the potential factory.* Sitting, rue Jeanne-Mance café. Day after day. At all other tables faces at monitors likewise wishing to be famous, nodding in glutted noonday sun. On radio, stock barometer to be rising. So no more panic billboards up + down Broadway. Now what funky 1940s “Snatch ‘n Grab It” ’s playing relaxed, happy, on speaker. Conjuring worn runner rounding corner on pocky [10.08] sidewalk outside freezing A-C’d Soho café window. Booty authentic black alligator babyskin purse, rhinestone accents. Trailed by little half-veiled hats of 3 Soho boutique women. And gourmande lips of film-noir Lezzie, lean-back stroll, satin tailored shorts, satin pageboy. Some well-painted grandes dames, clown make-up being preferable to looking “old.” For the greater the demesne, the more social-demand exacting sceptic yet productive artifice. Mr. Warhol taught us that. Making of erstwhile traveller a poet. Who would have, in rounding any downtown corner, been *breaking*
own identity by breaking a syntactic link…. [Being] irresistibly drawn into bending over into the next line to lay hold of what is thrown out of itself. ….A passage of prose… I.e. prose’s soup of supposition, habit. The familiar

Ineluctable. Sitting. Absorbing local moment. Till inner deigesis a part of phonic tiling. Its brouhaha. Neighbours. Its local radio reporting at border-distance, first black President on slow train from Philly. Retracing for USians amassing along tracks inauguration train of iconic Lincoln. Always astonishing to Northerner: the faith, ÉLAN of crowds of the republic. Standing hour after hour. Awaiting moment President’s distinct cadence [Michelle beside, superb pale coat] rising over Mall: The road ahead may be long the climb may be steep…but we will get there. To be speaking in metaphor’s be lifting politics above binary apoplectic thinking. A poetic [Fedorah poet saying] profoundly American, Emersonian in its optimism. Seconded by Aretha, huge-bowed hat, huge voice’s stunning My country…. tis of thee. Reverend gets last word. Praying for …that day when black will not be asked to get in back, when brown can stick around, when yellow will be mellow [what meaning that?]; when the red man can get ahead, man; and when white will embrace what is right.” While here

short-lived [2012] Montréal student revolution. Filling narrow streets with their beauty, their cheekbones. Rosy demeanours + slogans for lower tuition. To-


She never doing that. You are wearing beige-crocheted or knit short pancho. Ruff round bottom. Something indecent or fake about this. As if showing your ass. Laying on back. Holding one foot up in air, feigning broken leg. Sliding, leg badly bent, backwards—ruffled-grouse-like—on ground. In order to—by appearing wounded—be distracting from hiding place of babies.

_____ Cited respectively: Viktor Shklovsky, Giorgio Agamben, Barack Obama, Charles Bernstein, Reverend D. Lowry, Éric Satie, Suze, Monique Wittig, Rachel Levitsky.

Today freezing then normal rain. Slowing to gentle drip of mouvement-ordinaire. Nice accompaniment for lunch with local poet. Ever pushing back long grey hair, getting up to pee. Having taken black powder to build muscles. Joking in self-deprecating way he he-man. Sex-pistols t-shirt, tattoos, ornate rings + other silver jewellery. Repeating ad nauseum can’t get it up. Taking pills for that. You laughing [on account of ad saying if still, after 4 hours, up—go to emergency]. Stepping out—small wine buzz—odour of breathy spring mud under slush. Follow some sweet hormone-y undergrads up Mr. Olmsted’s mountain. Middle-class sweaters, cigarettes. Winding easy, relaxed. Bursting with hope, politics, sex, curiosity. Spirit of wanting change. Soon to have been fomenting

Sitting Day after day. As if stoned [benefit of winter]. Café lights twinkling on terrasse. Under snow filagree. Subdued repeat-timbre ambience that …doesn’t upset customs; it isn’t tiring; it’s French; it won’t wear out… As in that woman near front. Fitted black top. Loose black skirt. Drinking carafon of rouge. Every few minutes, getting up, putting on coat, hat, scarf, going out for smoke. Lot of dressing + undressing. Hardly touching food. One of those smooth compact hard bodies, impeccable posture. Not focussing on hand written notes more than two seconds. Or one could say

To-days upon to-days. Half-asleep over green tea. Sunny almost melting. Disastrous for identitary wintry-ness of narrator. People speaking low …melodious, softening the noises of the knives and forks, not dominating them, not imposing itself. It would fill up those heavy silences that sometimes fall between friends dining together. It would spare them the trouble of paying attention to their own banal remarks. (And at the same time it would neutralize the street noises which so indiscreetly enter into the play of conversation). Bored-to-death couple entering. Woman beautifully dressed—wools, tweeds. Slenderish brunette. Hubby, fresh of cheek, clearly THE BOTTOM. She trying to talk him out of funk. Offering little empathetic laughs. He, near accusatory, reciting some problem at work. As if her fault. Having no trouble smiling at waitress grinding pepper on his shiny vegs. Woman not eating. You not getting eternal commitment. Mercifully


Woman coming in. Élise, maybe, from high feminist era. Defining feature: pockmarked skin. Talking talking in peoples’ face for love. Sitting, chatting fast to waiter [seeming to know]. Ordering huge croissants, hot chocolate. Adding sugar [not more than you]. Reading thick intello book [La Pensée Straight]. Stepping out without paying [apparently okay], slanting near-freezing rain. Gulls clacking, excited by precocious thaw. To south, political spring of hope already waning. Left grousing left-campaigning Obama over-indulging Bankers. Plus funding faith-based groups [having as activist, south-side Chicago, seen religion spurring social change]. Why all this carping? When everybody knowing left/right 2-step the cost of mainstream politics? R to have written decade later: I feel this [post-2016 right-swerve] moment shows the mistake the Left and the queers made by turning away from liberation and toward pride and acceptance…. One more