

(Soma)tic Poetry Exercise & Poem

by CAConrad

M.I.A. ESCALATOR

--for Jen Benka & Carol Mirakove

I rode several of my favorite escalators in Philadelphia, taking notes up and down the vantages. At the top and bottom of the ride I would show photographs of myself to strangers and ask, "EXCUSE ME, have you seen this person?" Sometimes there was confusion, "ISN'T THAT YOU?" I would reply, "No, many people think I look like HER, but have you seen HER?" I feel very fortunate to have been born BEFORE the ultrasound machine. My generation was the last generation to have a male and female name waiting at the other end of the birth canal. My generation is the last to have our mothers touch their bellies talking to us as male and female. Pink or blue?

Both pink and blue, "Have you seen this person?" I enjoyed my conversations with strangers and made at least one new friend, a handsome man who knew I was the person in the photograph. That person, I am that person and agreed. The ultrasound machine gives the parents the ability to talk to the unborn by their gender, taking the intersexed nine-month conversation away from the child. The opportunities limit us in our new world. Encourage parents to not know, encourage parents to allow anticipation on either end. Escalators are a nice ride, slowly rising and falling, writing while riding, notes for the poem, meeting new people at either end, "Excuse me, EXCUSE ME...." My escalator notes became a poem.

I HOPE I'M LOUD WHEN I'M DEAD

I have a
mannequin for
a paperweight
it is difficult to
type with such a
large paperweight
I reach around
lovers late into
night typing
from behind it is
impossible to
tell which
is Virgil
poetry
can be
of use
the field of flying
bullets the hand
reaches through
loving the aftertaste
finding a deeper
third taste
many are
haunted by
human cruelty through
the centuries
I am haunted by
our actions since
breakfast
you said *too much poetry*
I said *too much war*
the biggest mistake for
love is straining
there was a
door marked
MISTAKE we
entered
you said *too much fooling around*
I said *fuck off and die*