

Drafts

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS is the author of eleven books of poetry; her long poem project, begun in 1986, is collected as *Drafts 1–38, Toll*, from Wesleyan University Press (2001) as well as this volume. DuPlessis is also known for her innovative essays in *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice* and the forthcoming *Blue Studios: Poetry and Its Cultural Work*. She is the editor of *The Selected Letters of George Oppen* (Duke, 1990) and co-editor of *The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics*. Her critical books include *Genders, Races, and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry, 1908–1934* (Cambridge, 2001). DuPlessis has received the Roy Harvey Pearce / Archive for New Poetry Prize (2002) as a scholar poet. In 2002 she was awarded a Pew Fellowship for Artists.

Drafts

DRAFTS 39–57, PLEDGE,
WITH DRAFT, UNNUMBERED: PRÉCIS

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS



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*Dedication— as engagement—
is incomplete and potentially
annoying—to both those
whose names are pledged
and those whose names are not.
But it's a reading, hardly personal, really,
though, of course, deeply engaged,
made of poems and sentences constructed
to see what meanings we are all/ might be inside of.*

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Grid of Drafts 1–38, Toll and Drafts 39–57, Pledge.

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Draft 3: <i>Of</i>	Draft 22: <i>Philadelphia Wireman</i>	Draft 41: <i>Of This</i>
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Draft 7: <i>Me</i>	Draft 26: <i>M-m-ry</i>	Draft 45: <i>Fire</i>
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Draft X: <i>Letters</i>	Draft 29: <i>Intellectual Autobiography</i>	Draft 48: <i>Being Astonished</i>
Draft 11: <i>Schwa</i>	Draft XXX: <i>Fosse</i>	Draft 49: <i>Turns & Turns, an Interpretation</i>
Draft 12: <i>Diasporas</i>	Draft 31: <i>Serving Writ</i>	Draft L: <i>Scholia and Restlessness</i>
Draft 13: <i>Haibun</i>	Draft 32: <i>Renga</i>	Draft 51: <i>Clay Songs</i>
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Draft 15: <i>Little</i>	Draft 34: <i>Recto</i>	Draft 53: <i>Eclogue</i>
Draft 16: <i>Title</i>	Draft 35: <i>Verso</i>	Draft 54: <i>Tilde</i>
Draft 17: <i>Unnamed</i>	Draft 36: <i>Cento</i>	Draft 55: <i>Quiptych</i>
Draft 18: <i>Traduction</i>	Draft 37: <i>Praedelle</i>	Draft 56: <i>Bildungsge-dicht with Apple</i>
Draft 19: <i>Working Conditions</i>	Draft 38: <i>Georgics and Shadow</i>	Draft 57: <i>Workplace: Nekuia</i>
		Draft, unnumbered: <i>Précis</i>

Draft 39: Split

“The confusion and aimlessness
of thoughts”
hurl cross-hatched
dark-wood directions,
diffuse dark
tanglewords
void dreams, dark ticks – of
nah for nicht,
not for note,
selva for selvaggia.

There
was a smudged midge
(this the past)’s
small death—
such a little nothing bug. There is
invisible (now present) continual
emptying, blank, through maximal
damage.
There will be no point
(a future tense)
to all this.

Eyes glaze; pen
loose, inattentive

limp hand
falls, adaze,

and, from
nothing, an

“It” mark dots
down on the page.

.

One day lose him her
One day lose them
Inky weeds all unrevealing
Hidden and without extension

As if, like referenced persons, they’d not been.

.

but speak of how that “it” emerged

it’s “there” it’s “where” it’s never what

you think Might be

small bugs hit against a light, hard surface, might be

“blurs, lens flares, intruding shadows, amputated compositions”

to me like little momentos

places I

or meadows where they

.

might do what puncted by claves
might hear dizziness in rushes,
watery tintinnabulating pebbles shaken down a chute

Any “settled” circumstance of the ordinary
vibrating strangeness,
any hypnogogic changes,

the dark silhouette

of an event horizon

any two shadows blown—it and its after-

math (defined as harvest: mead, mown grass)

any windless, starless deep

will Verb; will Verb verb.

Eyes wrapped dark as any thing
No word strong as this intensity.
Take it all as a loss.

No way seeing is-ness
no way saying it-ness
except resistance.

Black arrow shot in blacker, blanker sleep.

.

No verbs. No words.

No writing. Nothing there but
— —lessness and angry, back and front

but also look around thee.

At undecipherable Graffiti
sloppy scribble over the Focus

Group poster's high-end dewy-eyed design,

dark vandal slash marks on the photograph of Things
whose gem-like research Codes are not thereby undone.

.

Is that the only "Yes"? from demographics snaked around the
mall?

the only "No"? in rips of undercounted rage?

Once there were nine miles of women circling the missile base

once singing down a country road were women "no more

war" no military destruction think the Peace conversion

cardinal rosettas talking, webs and ribbons tied to fencing

now here preemptive arrest Entrapment activists before the
demo

police info sucked up Right-wing hit list

Arrest the puppetistas, wreck their stuff, their art.

Where and how can we speak of

this moment or method,

infiltration, blackout, provocation, disenfranchisement—

It is this:

You made a dot because you are a dot.

.

of difficulty getting to work foreign in a foreign country *vorrei girare* could manage to say but not explaining wheel stuck axle looking fucked we wanted to move but couldn't could only say I want, would like, to turn. This is the place where hopes had left their traces type trances before realizing *girare* and *jeer away* so the dream wakes revolutionary melancholia here's another day.

.

A student sound-spells

“social morays”

which calls up sting rays

scudding through oceans.

Not an accurate metaphor

for fulsome power—

such underwater hot-wired show
 concealing actual *cui bono*.
Just open my heart and there you'll see
 graven inside, ideology.
Suppose the convictions
 chanted *One Two Three Four*
would that still be
 viable?
would it make an intelligible way
 that she acts, she reveals
a muted klaxon of insider deals?
 To Act—right. And then be written off.
When you are powerless
 you say the same things
over again
 and over it seems
the opposite of poetry,
 no plumping sumptuous brocade
with self-
 fashioning diction.
So writing is impossible,
 my dog eats and is
vaccinated, unlike some people,
 and I am helpless—can this be?—
hardened from the concrete
 infrastructure rigid through me.
What would it take
 to articulate it?
Is writing this way
 legit?
Why is this entitled
 split?