

From: Hotel Sappho

## **Autobiography, Part I**

A hotel is like language. Both are careless. The purple drapes in the lobby a reminder that sex is only always two, or at most, three semantic turns away from rescuing a drowning deer. The women behind the kitchen, the ones who have been filling manilla envelopes with espresso beans, are invisible, yet their rubber boat is said to still be afloat somewhere off the coast of Lampedusa. *Simpatico* and *antisimpatico* have always been two completely different words just as the woman who walks into the lobby is wearing pants that clearly don't belong to her. She leans over the front desk and tells the clerk that late last night the Strait of Messina froze over and now all the women and children are able to skate across. The elevator stops at the third floor. A group of Russian tourists set the hotel phone on fire, and the clerk pulls her in close. Promises that if she agrees to look up the word λεκτον, he will meet her in the storage closet after his shift and show her that we are in fact defined by what gets crushed in the naming.

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IX. Page 12: “And the speakers are silent”

X. Page 3: She opens her mouth like this and like this and like this

XI. Page 342: Yesterday I spoke with K about a certain woman who charges 450 EURO (parrots not included)

XII. Page 20: It was on the front desk. I swear. It’s the same white house paint that Twombly used

XIII. Page 355: From: *Remarks on an Italian Woman’s Genitalia*: “If she offers you a cantaloupe, ask for a pear”

XIV. Page 7: When Pasolini was caught fucking four boys during a holiday festival, he was expelled from the Communist Party

XV. Page 66: 57 EURO. 44. 1. 9,499

XVI. Page 673: The fact that I got to just copy the book word for word for six hours, kept me wet for a week

XVII. Page 56: “No. It’s LATIN NEO-CAPITALISM”

XVIII. Page 93: This is more than tourism.

XVIX. Page 62. Bullshit. An American in Italy is never anything but tourism. (As though treading on the floorboards) (As though inhaling lingering spores)

XVX. Page 1,244: There is dust. A biography of owls. Between the columns they are speaking a lost language (yet bodies soft)

XVXI. Page 252: She turned into stone.

XVXII. Page 59: She turned into stone.

XVXIII. Page 173: She turned into stone.

XVXIV. Page 4, 935: She turned into stone.

XVXV. Page 172: She turned into stone.

XVXVI. Page 28: A gift from an Italian philosopher

XVXVII. Page 913: And awaiting the arrival

XVXVIII. Page 207: Isn’t there another story?

XVXIV. Page 7,299: More consistent with your last ejaculation?

XVXV. Page 4: Yes. That one.

## Sicilian Butterfly Dance

### Column A

The footprint of a fox without the fox

Writing that is “less graphic”

*Entering the same room twice, or spitting into a cup and then drinking it*

A basin filled with water that is always kept exactly at room temperature

Masculine and feminine figs

The introduction of electric lights in Rome

A woman who confuses *legs* with *helicopter*, *nose* with *plum*, *cinema* with *sex*

The fact that noun is a mathematical term like *homoerotic* or *topological*

Semen that tastes like a salty blanket

*Untitled (Variations on the Elegies)*, 1966

να γράψω

Trying to peel off the skin of an almond

“Reading” the name Catullus

The fact that both mouths open up into a hollow cavity

### Column B

is humiliating

is a skeletal boat

is the 1494 siege of Naples

is Leonardo Fioravanti

are the way in which Greek poetry of the Archaic period used the subjective “I”

is an essay on menstruation that Cy Twombly wrote one summer in Palermo in the mid-70’s

is the first time Cavafy watched a man go from four legs to two

is the importance of putting something sour in a glass of water and watching it fizz

is (plural *litterae*)

is tugging really hard at your mouth

is a good theory

is a meditation on remembering

is not reading, but a tearing apart

is why language is more dangerous than the body

2. 11. -

Cy Twombly completed “*Ilium (One Morning Ten Years Later)*,” Part II in 1964, which was the same year as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

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Between the ages of 12 to 24 my mother was in and out of a series of asylums In Cleveland. Right after I graduated from college, I found one of them. From the outside it looked no different from a pediatric hospital or the corporate headquarters of Xerox. I only knew I was in the right place because every patient I met found some way of telling me that the self is just another sign. Some did it by filling a bowl full of cherry pits and then throwing it off the balcony. Some got together in pairs and pissed on the middle sofa cushion in perfect synchronicity. Which, far from finding erotic, I decided was the perfect excuse to speak nothing but French for the rest of the summer.

But not

MAN #1: It’s not exactly a mark, it’s more of a trace.

MAN #2: So what you’re saying is, you’re in love with her?

MAN #1: Of course. Otherwise no one will believe that word and thing are one and the same.

4:43 pm

Via degli Orfani, 84

“I’m no art expert, but I know that *mentula* means *prick*”

“Or chicken vindaloo”

“Or: Con maschile pudore e maschile impudicizia”

“I’m telling you. I’m only here because he begged me to get on the next flight. Insisted he needed me to talk with someone who owed him something, *eccetera*, (*eccetera*?) Which I knew was a lie”

“Carbone. Car-----bone. Or goat. Or goat’s milk?”

“I said he could fuck Rome, but I would consider meeting him in Venice. I know, the one little word *Venice*. It’s just like the sound a cock makes as you jack it off”

“Alcazar  
Albagio  
Agemia  
Albacora”

“Although that’s certainly a factor. Just think about the number of words in Italian that come from Arabic”

“Rome was essentially built on a swamp; which, of course, Pasolini never knew”

“It’s true I have lived in many cold apartments, and eaten a lot of hardboiled eggs”

“How many ways are there to say *sodomy* in French?”

“The way a pair of tights smells after you’ve worn them all day”

“It smells of mouldering stone. Or foreskin. To burst near a hill full of goats”