

errata



Kristy Bowen

errata  
by Kristy Bowen  
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dancing girl press  
Editor: Kristy Bowen  
[www.dancinggirlpress.com](http://www.dancinggirlpress.com)  
[dancinggirlpress@lycos.com](mailto:dancinggirlpress@lycos.com)

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### **a few precepts of convention**

Even sewing can be suggestive. Or envelopes, the sigh of folded paper, letters sliding into dark spaces. Remember, a young girl unprotected by a chaperone is in the position precisely of an unarmed traveler alone among wolves.

To be out of the house late at night, or sitting up, except to study, are imprudences she cannot allow herself. Surely someone will note whom she receives, when they come, how long they stay, at what hour they go. Take, for instance, the virgins in the back room, spines bent over their arithmetic. Even their milk teeth are orderly.

A young girl must not, even with white sandals, or blood oranges, go on a journey that can by any possibility last overnight. To go out with him in a small boat, or violet skirt, seems harmless enough, but might result in a questionable situation if they're becalmed, or left helpless in a fog. Once, a man and a girl went out from Bar Harbor and encountering a still blue, did not get back until the next day. To the end of time, her reputation will suffer for the experience.

### **a short history of the corset**

Note the necessity of small hands, keyholes,  
a dilation of the eyes, or the haunted cabinet.

Like in dancing:  
lift the torso from the hips like an egg  
from an egg cup, and let the chest  
lead as if being drawn forwards  
by an upward pulling string.

Taken from the latin, *corps*,  
but then all nouns are accidental,  
all grammar, merely chance.

We understand  
no more than a pale lick of skin  
beneath bone, the sighs  
of cloakrooms or lilacs.

While hardly fit for bird calling, or orchards,  
the body requires correction, the borders defined.

See how easily one could slip outside of a story.  
Even through a locked door, quietly.

## **Elizabeth and the maker of maps**

Dearest Lettie,

In the dim study, my father spreads maps across the table. Names things. Points. All things equatorial fall soft into his hands. Oranges. Coffee beans. Native women open their thighs to him like the sea. Distances between bones are deceiving. The ears too close to the throat, and vice-versa. Mother's orchids falter in the greenhouse heat, windows shining, reptilian.

I dreamed I married a dull prince in an airless church.

I dreamed a murder in every house.

E.

## application for the Melville Dewey school

Bindings:

Materials needed:

awl, book cloth, box board, bamboo skewer, bricks, linen thread, beeswax, book press, brush, wooden boards, bone folder, needle

Do you, or have you ever?

when I said *ruined*,  
when we say *shattered*  
we open our throats to lemons.  
Not a shiver, but a trespass, first  
the halving, then the miscarriage.

Instructions:

If the signatures are falling apart, perform the brittle paper test:

- a. fold the corner of a middle page back and forth two times, then pull.
- b. If the corner comes off easily, the paper is considered brittle.
- c. If the paper is brittle, the book is a candidate for a box.

Cataloguing:

Hair color: \_\_\_\_\_

Measurements: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

At the carousel, there was a tumbling, and then, a door.  
A curiosity to be sure, the skirted tables, bare legs being known to provoke.  
Also, her penchant for reckless dresses.

in his "Brief Rules for Library Handwriting"

[to] take great pains to have all writing uniform in size, blackness of lines, slant, spacing and forms of letters ... [and to] follow the library hand forms of all letters, avoiding any ornament, flourish, or lines not necessary to the letter." (1)

Analysis:

The writer's *attempt to maintain a vertical slant* reflects her effort to adopt a detached or impersonal attitude, positively characterized by independence and restraint, but negatively by self-centeredness and rigidity. This aloof and impartial demeanor, reinforced by *wide spacing between lines*, reveals someone resisting the influence of both outside forces and inner emotions, preferring to rely on reason. The potential for cruelty is evident in the *blunt endings of many downstrokes or counterstrokes*. Prone to various afflictions, not withstanding debt, or fevers, disorders of the mouth. A pause between the letter "s" and the letter it follows indicates a love of foul weather.



**the dollmaker's apprentice,  
or various form of violence**

Now that we have capsized  
in our dark boats, the milk

goes bad, incandescent.  
Still, he loves them, pale

invertebrate things, how they  
suffer of astonishment,

of pinafores. The heart  
like a hinge box,

or better, leeches in a jar.  
We went out in the glass-bottomed

boat and upset the teacups.  
Night gathered like a skirt.

On some subcontinent, we broke  
the spine of the thing we could

not name. The tiny woman bathed  
in blue light, who wanted

an umbrella, wanted a suitcase,  
needs a dictionary, and only

the smallest lamp.

### **an essay on the constellations and other messier objects**

Moreover, we delight in concealment,  
the similarity of *satin* to *stain*, the page  
torn along the diagonal, its thinnest meridian.

At breakfast, the daughters are immaculate,  
sepia-voiced. Look at their failures,  
their hairpins, their ability to balance an egg  
on end for hours. The atlas becomes  
a telescope. See how small their hands,  
all points leading to the hyphen.

Now, desire haunts the milk pail, the radium bleed.  
They cut away, they loosen. Note the multitude  
of variables regarding stability:

index, line, the weight of carbon.

### **practical uses for table linen**

At night, someone rearranges the rooms  
in my body, pushes ottomans into

corners and hides the water lily print.  
Now, I'm all reckless stairwells

and falling sounds. Entire bedroom sets  
gone missing at sunrise. You're fondest

of the shifting windows, the ivory boned  
sofa shaped like a woman's back;

have placed buttons beneath carpets  
and hidden pens in all the closets.

The parlors fill with pink paper  
dresses and impossible chairs.

The kitchens, understandably, hide their knives.

## **Elizabeth and the mesmerist**

Dearest Lettie,

Children swim the jars in the tented gloom, double tongued, fingers and spines curled against the glass. Apparently, I'm the perfect subject for it, how I go out like a lamp at the clap of his hands. Something about the ears, how they take on water. I fear the women: the contortionist in her pink tights, or the wife in her filthy tank. All day, she combs her hair, sighs amphibious.

I long for the finest gilt scales silking the back of my calves.

Surely the stars are diligent. Surely the smell of brine, lovely. When he takes her, lifts and spreads the dark fin, the loveliest.

E.

### **the daughter of anxiety: a pantomime for two women**

A spacious garden room, windows veiled by a steady rain. One woman busies herself with flowers, another opens the door, then closes it, as if someone, or something, is expected. One has irregular bones, the other subject to strange currents. One's husband has died of snakebite, or of winter. The other is burning a letter.

Later, the same room. Both women are seated. A small table rests near the door. Dare we ask a question? To motion as if speaking? There's a chemical scent, not unlike absinthe. One woman fashions a small mechanical bird, or a poem. The room narrows. The windows grow mossy.

A woman is alone, resting against the divan. There is a man beyond the threshold, just beyond sight, or outside beneath the trellis. The other woman enters at the rear. She carries a coffeepot and a book. The furniture seems cheap, but grey in its loveliness.

## rules for irregular nouns

### 1. *genus, genera*

a. Forget the thing you came for. as in:

*There are trees enough between us.*

b. Syntax breaks all the bones ,  
fashions an index or an acanthus.

Remember:

*I was threadbare and calm, and the splinter still inside me.*

c. Here, we came for the ghost of the word  
inside the other word:

*When seen at a nervous distance,  
the leaves that spring from her mouth  
resemble sparrows*

### 2. *nebula, nebulae*

a. Beware any direct object that ends in *-ment*. It commonly implies slowness and pralines.

b. One word may possibly be confused for another. As in,  
*the instruments were very accurate*  
the dark gears, incredibly precise.

c. Like *diagnosis* or *phenomenon*, many are remnants of archaic systems,  
(Germanic, Indo/European, et al.)

*You believe her when she tells you the radius of her palm equals  
the width of a star.*

### 3. *stratum, strata*

a. The tongue prefers the Latinate, the *celestrina* and the *castanet*.

b. *She was holding a nest of paper wasps,  
the window sills, all the cells covered with silk.*

### Mr. Godeys' latin

i. what x equals

mother, mater, maternal  
two, duo, dual, duet  
tooth, dens, *stem.* dent, dental  
foot, pes, *stem.* ped, pedal  
heart, cor, *stem.* cord, cordial

ii. that which sings to the thing that sings in her mouth

- a. the poet is giving the girl large roses  
(or is giving large roses to the girl)
- b. the girl is giving the poet's roses to the sailors  
(or is giving the sailors the poet's roses)
- c. without money, the girl has nothing  
(the courage of the girl is not strong)

iii. the arithmetic of red dresses

- a. *fortuna* derives from *fors*--chance, accident, the girl saves the poets life.
- b. without philosophy, fortune and man often go astray
- c. we often see the penalty of anger

### from the dream concordance

- pg. 67        you were thinking *torn* and the  
hyacinths had **teeth**
- pg 78        caught when telling a lie, her **teeth** began  
to crumble into her palm
- pg 89        an atlas roughly the size of a table, his **teeth**  
gleamed in the lamplight
- pg 99        forgotten the buckets, milk-heavy, the day's  
**teeth** already into her
- pg 104       the space behind her **teeth** and  
tongue purpling and erratic
- pg 107       when bending at the waist, the movement  
of the comb's **teeth** along the scalp
- pg 110       hard **toothlike** projection from the beak of  
embryonic birds, assists in hatching, and  
later falls off
- pg 112       the top of the backbone and already in the  
**teeth**, the fever spreads to the ears
- pg 130       exhibited a certain sweet **tooth** and affinity  
for lemon cake
- pg 145       loss of teeth could denote a deprivation of  
vitamins, but may a loss of love. Unusually  
large **teeth** may indicate dishonestyor  
wordiness.



### **the milk diaries**

All summer, the cats howl  
in the dark corners of bedroom  
closets and we long to be

tenants in these bodies,  
their cotton and wire,  
their pretty devices--

to live half in this world,  
the other given over to the misaligned,  
the headless Betsy beneath the bed,

or the dark blue bottle.  
Our small sternums accommodate  
cherries, perhaps a spoonful

of milk. Our tongues  
trace the saucer while our ears  
empty of mothers. What is left

but linen, the smallest cube of sugar,  
or this voice that breaks like a plate  
in my hands? In the drawers,

the barrettes have teeth,  
and unevenness shakes the tiny cakes.  
Even the chairs are disappointing.

Who knows what lingers in the spaces  
between them? What sweet things  
waiting to be sliced?

The ribbons, knowing better, knot  
themselves while we sleep,  
thread through  
dollhouse dark windows.

### **a cure for ordinary fevers**

Begin with pumice, forsythia  
the roots of bulbs unsuspected til spring.

(it will take shape in the throat,  
the scaffolding of ribs)

add: 1 cassia bloom, a girl unfortunate in her dress  
the hair of a clairvoyant  
pomegranate juice, or the swollen seeds (the acoustics of red) a heretic's  
tongue, or in a pinch, rosemary

Mix well. First, we must relearn snow, dream of a box with the cosmos inside, or a  
tinge of birch bark. Sew in a light blue pouch and place  
beneath the bed.

Soon she will suffer of letters, of preludes, a book open to an uncertain page. Will  
dream her body is unwritten, is a sundial at the bottom of a lake.

**from the hysteria notebooks: a gothic**

I. Catherine, for a moment, was motionless with horror.

Our story indicates the parlor door  
remain closed, the lace at her wrist  
worn, and slightly rent. Granted,  
there are bones in the body science

hasn't even discovered yet: this,  
the one at her throat that tightens  
when the white dress takes flight  
from the window, or the slivers  
in the ear discerning motion.

A woman in the corner is counting spools  
of thread while a man in a black coat watches.

The light falls to ruin.

*He had then proceeded to throw suspicion upon the girl, saying that he had heard from Frau K. that she took no interest in any other thing but sexual matters, and that she used to read Mantegazza's Physiology of Love and books of that sort in their house on the lake. It was most likely, he had added, that she had been over excited by such reading and had merely "fancied" the whole scene she had described.*

II. Attitudes Passionelles

When he touched her, violets on her tongue,  
and afterward, in the folds of her bed linen.

Landscape plays a greater role than one would think  
The dark moors, the moon. How can we but forgive this girl, dear reader; her  
dresses unravel us. Or him, his penchant for the distraught. Now, we are moving  
through dark rooms, the rustle of skirts, held breath.  
Something must have been here in the moments before, the thread that, alas,  
saves us disappearing round the corner.

### III. Rest Cure

*Hippocrates first proposed that hysteria was caused by a wandering uterus. He believed that the uterus could dislodge itself in the body and wander around the female body attaching itself to other organs. He explained that the various symptoms of hysteria, such as nervousness, depression, and hysterical fits were caused by the uterus's interactions with the other organs in the body.*

You see, the woman in the attic is nothing more than the axis on which our heroine turns—  
countryside, silver locket, cover of snow.  
A bread knife has more to do with it than how many saints she could name in one breath.

Here, an illustration.

Take away the books. The sharpened point of a compass, its circle widening. We are apt to fear the body, the sentences scrawled beneath the teacup's pale lip. Each tendon a wire, jumping at the proximity of silks.

The villain is your father. The villain is your doctor..  
The villain is your mother, ten years gone and wearing white. Once they've taken away the paint box, you can stop pretending.  
Those darling, fragile reds.

**some notes from Mr. Darwin on the "Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals"**

(

The foregoing facts show that, as a general rule, blushing in English women does not extend beneath the neck and upper part of the chest. Still, the wrist, for example, has been known to pinken at the slightest glimpse of dissection or uneven sunsets. A woman informs Dr. Brown that when she feels ashamed or agitated, she blushes over the entire surface of her body, most noticeably the back of the neck. Once, he unfastened the collar of her chemise in order to examine the state of her lungs, and a brilliant scarlet spread over the skin, from the damp forehead to the tip of her spine. Often when the skin of the thorax or abdomen is gently rubbed by a pencil or other object, or merely touched by a finger, the surface is known to become suffused with blood.

## instructions for the young naturalist

Wet or cold summers reduce breeding success, as in the storm that took us by surprise, or the wind that pulled the book from my hands.

It is known that as the *Celastrina argiolu*, or Holly Blue, population builds up to a peak over several years, so too does the population of a parasite which eventually causes a crash in the populations of both.

Meanwhile, in the deep shade, the body's lit interior, the idea of *soft* is given. He prefers me like this—ghosted, afflicted. How the language candles to the windows of the cabin, rattles the cyclamen.

This is how the sky is hung. I open my mouth and the throat remembers at which point the water takes to cold, that the blackest bird survives overnight despite us. Because it is fractured.

Because it is tilted.

**excerpts from *Mme. Charlotte's flower dictionary***

*azalea*: typically denotes temperance. As children, we peered between the pale ribs of the porch, our throats swollen with rain. What does it matter? The ache of laundered sheets, the sweep of hair.

*columbine*: folly, or interrogation. The opposite of primrose (consistency). Indicates a love of small bodied things, and dressing for dinner. Her stationary sported irises (meaning message) to make matters more complicated. What are we trying to tell?

*holly*: foresight. A girl in love with water, how she hums to cisterns, fisted in her tight bed.

*lavender*: distrust. the opposite of violets (faith).  
Perhaps affiliated with the slipknot. The scrim.  
Her uncle's model of the cosmos.

*marigolds*: sorrow. We are enthralled with our own heaviness. The birches stretch pale arms, while fossils line the shelves of the study, the unlit lamps, the boxes filled with wings.

*rhododendron*: danger. I've been dreaming witches again. Women bent over beds of perennials, laced inside the latticed windows. strangers lingers near the door.

*zinnia*: absence, or merely aperture.



**douglas and sherwood's new expansion skirt,  
with the patent adjustable bustle**

Several reasons why these skirts are superior to all others:

The steel springs are of unequalled temper and flexibility. They can be wound around the finger like a piece of tape. Can be used as a compass, or a wick for a gaslight. They immediately resume their place when being dropped.

The covering is of the finest lace yarn. Silks perfect for an execution.

Their expansive property is a reality, the springs joined by silvered sides, which prevent the ends from crossing. Prevent purpose, or haste. To avail against rust, or unfortunate weather, carry cyclamen or lemon water.

The wearer can contract or expand the skirt without disrobing, at pleasure.

Eyelets, slides, hooks, and fasteners add greatly to beauty, as well as usefulness. Give the hint of something to be undone. Paradox. When bent against the settee.

Their lightness recommends them, weighing as they do but twelve ounces each.

## after the bleeding hour

### a poem for three voices

what lingers is the scent of  
cinnamon an affinity for ellipsis.

thievery is not uncommon.  
the other a fist full of matches.

the doctor, with his love of sharp  
things

the rooms are filled with fever  
we have taken everything.

for when it comes

except for what is fastened

strange viral  
inconsistencies in the  
sternum

and placed in tight  
sheeted beds.

once, the bed beneath  
the fire eater  
surrendered up a tiny  
blackened mouse.

of sharp things, this love  
of anesthetic

except for what is absent,  
what is dear.

the rooms are filled with

this love of anesthetic

one of us takes a blanket

the rooms are filled with fever

when she said it felt as if

we have taken everything

dark, arterial splay

we will not speak of it, for when it  
comes

like a kite to a string.

**elizabeth and the night swimmers**

Dearest Lettie,

I long to be bodiless, relieved of this curtsy, this black skirt sewn by mothers strewn like alphabets across the retina. Already things have begun to loosen, I feel the arterial spill and stray, a dialogue in the anteroom.

My dresses take on an attractive pale—akin to river water and witch hazel.

You ask of my tendency toward melancholy, the sad accidental. All night women swim the Thames, singing. Beyond the shutters, the taxidermist plays the piano forte, smells of camphor, or almonds, something slender and unlaced.

E.

## appendix

### Fig. 1

Costume for a watering place, and suitable for half mourning. Black French grenadine dress, made over black silk. White pique sacque, bound with braid, and trimmed with buttons.

### Fig. 2

Dinner dress. Dress of Satin de Mai, made over a thin blue silk. The body is full, with straight waist, belt and clasp. Buttoned beneath the elbow. Hat of mixed chip and straw, decorated with a blue rosette and light fancy feather.

### Fig. 3

Costume suitable for a young lady. Pink grenadine dress, with pompadour corsage and muslin chemisette. The sash is wide pink ribbon, with fringed ends. Delicate cuffs and the collar of lace.

### Fig 4

Green Empress cloth riding habit; black straw Tudor hat, with white plum; white gloves, with black gauntlets.

### Fig 5.

Walking costume, with embroidered figure, skirt trimmed with five box-plaited flounces. Bound on each edge with purple silk. Flowers are the most simple and natural ornaments any lady can wear. Note that the muffler in the fashion plate is of ermine—which is in favor this winter.

## **index, or list of devices**

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vulgar woman, the, 13

writing paper, 14

## errata

p. 16, in the paragraph entitled *the arithmetic of red dresses*, replace all subjunctive verbs with the French word for *tungsten*, or better, a tent of stars.

p.23, *In 1884, Mr. Darwin's comments were taken as unfounded, thus the second paragraph should read:*

*In the afternoon, the rose teacups and the candies, their pink and whiteness, smooth rather pleurably in the mouth. The vacant mind is ever on the search for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. The arch of her foot itches to the hum of saints breaking in the corners.*

p.25 , third paragraph, *in love with water* should read *burning all the rooms*.

{This erratum more accurately reflects a debt to the author of *Nineteenth Century Women Learn to Write and Sew*, than to the book listed in appendix d (missing).}

p. 26, in the third paragraph, after the semi-colon replace the word *silks* with *disarranged*.

p.27, left column, replace all even numbers with the given names of the daughters born in the village 1856, or the days of the month you missed, taking out, of course, all of the Wednesdays.

appendix B (missing) at the end of the section entitled *Everyday Linens*, replace *the tattered nest of sparrows* with *algorithms and animal bones*, Add the prefix un- to each pretty verb.



