

**If you, then I**

by Claudia Ferraro

Show me head on chest  
Show me undressed  
under piles of rest  
compressed,  
in two curvatures  
surfaces that sigh

Read me like I'm science  
Like I make sense  
like I have thousands  
of defenses,  
let me break like  
I'm a child

Give me two eyebrows  
dyeing to meet  
equations already  
complete,  
lips plus love  
equals a lie

Let me ask why and why and why and why and why  
do we ask questions  
we know the answers too?  
I am spread thin,  
for you  
staying in,  
for you  
not with him,  
for you,  
for you, for you

**Ad Hominem:**

**(of Latin origin, meaning "to the person", in relation to the formulation of arguments)**

by Claudia Ferraro

After Susan speaks she sits down.

After she presents a case for turtles needing somewhere to lay their shells, Sam asks the audience whether we can believe anything from a woman without shelter, who isn't up to date on her doctor visits and smells like late nights.

I think that late nights have a lot in common with early mornings.

After Susan sits down she wears her words like a sweater. They reek of her childhood and too many lost things and she knows that none of them are capital letters. Are just consonants lapping. She knows that Sam knows too much.

I think that lapping sounds a lot like laughing and laughing wants open mouths and ugly tears.

When I ask where beautiful words come from I'm told that:  
A snake always has a slithery tongue, even when he's making love or even when he's telling me that I'm the love and I know it's true.

Even when a bird guffaws, or a monkey snickers, or a giraffe goes quiet, still we know there is an army in their bodies.

If we look close enough we can see the slow letters marching across troubled tongues on their way to do battle. Their backpacks filled with their insides:

liver

lungs

sick stomachs stringing syllables together to sound like a song.

Susan was never wrong. She just wore the wrong security. She just spoke out of turn: not in the ocean, or a hospital, or the damp alleyway where she learned to count by throwing pebbles at literate people.

I would have said something. I would have spoken as if I were a textbook. But I learned to always raise my hand and, that day, my arm was shorter than Sam's tongue.

**And For My Last Trick,**

**I'll Fall Through The Mirror**

by Claudia Ferraro

This uniform is itchy  
and smells like my baby  
ripped from my fingers  
and spitting up milk  
on the white shoulder  
of a busy sidewalk  
and meat taken  
in the process of making  
mules out of perfectly  
good cattle

Tonight my heart twitches  
when my knee should buckle  
up, should break open

until it's ligaments  
look like curly hair,  
look like little girls  
who matter when they moan  
over something simple  
and the way it shatters  
till it's home

I take it off, take  
them off, take it off again  
and again and wonder  
why tears don't shine  
if they are rare, why  
people take more pictures  
of the sky when it's red  
like lovely dead things,  
things we love because  
they are dead

Condensation covers  
my face, my nation  
covers yours, covers  
cost too much  
to get in, try again  
on a Sunday when some  
one is on your side,  
is holding your place  
a little space  
on the sidewalk

**So, Silly**  
**by Claudia Ferraro**

Oh my God, on Saturday night I am a  
man. Laughing at, licking at bubbles in brew  
and on you, boys.  
On Sunday's I always feel  
silly. Not silly ha-ha but more like sloppy  
silly, sickening silly, slack-jawed big mouth but  
nothing's coming out, silly. It's always sunny  
on Sunday's, even when it's raining. Even when every  
one on the sidewalk is staring at me with two  
toned eyes. And I'm wondering if it's obvious, can they tell  
I don't know which foot I'm gonna step with next? Or  
do they think I'm magic?  
It's silly when the woman breaks  
her heel. It's silly when no one stops to help her, hold

her. It's silly when the dog takes a shit right  
where the woman's heel lays and the owner puts it back  
on the leash and apologizes but still  
doesn't stop to help. Doesn't know how  
to. I, too, don't know how to. So I step right  
in the dog shit and let the woman see. I take  
my bare foot out of my too-high-heel and smile  
and she stares and my face widens, willingly, while  
hers scrunches into a pile of dog shit and  
it is so silly.

Not silly ha-ha but sillier like a fool, like I am a fool  
for you, your limp and lonely lifeline  
if you'll let me be, silly.

On Sunday's all of the ha-ha's are serenading  
me and I'm scared shitless.

So I eat them, lick them and taste them, let them soak  
on my dry tongue like communion. I hope  
they belong to a greater deity and  
this is just me getting to know them.

Our first date will be this weekend.

Like, maybe after a minute in my mouth  
I will learn the name of the man who spoke  
and slipped me this particular "ha".

Not my father but  
not a stranger, or maybe a man  
with a woman he believed in and a laugh he spent so severely  
on Saturday nights.

A silly man.

Slide on down the sidewalk and if you look  
at me I will make you step in it,  
mister slick, mister mine. mister sick of this taboo and this  
woo-able-man.

## **Bruised Surfaces**

**by Claudia Ferraro**

The knees liked to bow in front of nothing,  
in fields where grasses walked away,  
through coarse curls and thin throats.

The sun liked to scream out for no one,  
in fields where no straight lines were ever built,  
or freely divorced without lots of paperwork.

Our injuries have imaginations, they are  
silent, flying through space, in fields  
where a purple star wishes to remain lonely.

The hands liked to touch the top of heads and say  
nothing - the heart liked  
when they all came in composed bodies to the field.

I liked it when you came to me in the fields.  
The winds are children in the field.  
The waves are specks of friends in this field.

Don't pretend that we can join a game without invitation,  
can tease strong blades as though they don't rest in sanguine fluid.  
No amount of practice will make fingers not matter as they write  
about the fields that knees liked to bow in.

### **They talk too much**

**by Claudia Ferraro**

Recently, after a good conversation with a friend, she told us that “kindness is appreciated right now.”  
Right now.

In canada, right now.

On this couch, right now.

In her body, right now.

Appreciated like allowed.

Appreciated like please, okay?

Like loudly whisper for all of her to hear.

Recently, we had a good conversation with a friend. We appreciated  
her application of lipstick, and the way the red talked  
to her teeth. We spoke about cooking and climate and country,  
pickles and periods and pacifiers,  
and not a single precedent,  
or that lone despot,  
digging through despair for disagreement.

Recently, we had a friendly conversation that was enough,  
that did it's work and declared “this day  
is done.” Our tongues grew  
tired and started to trick our mouths  
into shapes that suggested

resting places, and we knew and so climbed through and called out  
“canada,”  
“couch,”  
“body,”  
“bury us in too much appreciation.”

### **Chin up, Child**

by Claudia Ferraro

She was a spiralling circle and a single dot  
He tread a straight line but, maybe not  
In the sounds of lilac and turquoise  
In the colours of conversation and noise

In blankets weaved and strung up meat  
There goes a dancer with two right feet  
Elders lived within her bones  
Drew veneration of a simple home

In Collingwood she lived and grew  
And precedents were never new  
And people bought her history  
For a little laugh and a silver penny

She and He both clung to the barge  
One of ladders long and waters large  
They tried to find where it all began  
And only saw persons much greater than

The past and future spoke so loud  
among the fleeting present  
And gave it meaning beyond now  
turned time to the richest peasant

Don't mistake the quiet for standing still  
The grasses sway where they are willed  
The people gather at the base of the hill  
Each one trying to get their fill

The climb only ends to start again  
And hope can make 20 out of 10  
I've heard time can make miracles of men  
I'd like to stay to see us bend

Soon old carvings will coincide  
And old friends see eye to eye in time  
And husbands bow down to their wives

when their needs get met and still they cry

If this is all there is, can I have more?

If you ask me to, I'll start a war

The kid I am can see it clear

I hold her near

You call her dear

The kid I am will always be

The single dot within a sphere