Attempts at Preservation

A note on land

My name is Alexandra and I am a 4th generation settler descendant born in Amiskwaciy-wâskahikan (Edmonton, AB), Treaty 6 Territory. My ancestors first settled on the unceded territories of the Algonquin people in Pembroke, ON, and on the territories of the Nekaneet Cree First Nation (Leader, SK; Maple Creek, SK), Treaty 4 Territory. As I write, grey skies mist characteristically across the unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy̓əm Musqueam, Skwxwú7mesh Squamish and səl̓ílwətaʔɬ Tsleil-Waututh First Nations (Vancouver, BC).

The territories of the Kanien'kehá:ka people, named Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyaang (Montréal, QC) and the place where I travel to study and defend my degree, are also unceded. While the legitimacy of the so-called 'ceded' state of territories across the continent is also up for debate, the illegally occupied nature of Vancouver and Montréal does change my relationship to them.

I'm not sure where I belong. This is a settler confusion that I've heard repeated by many white friends, relatives, colleagues. We will likely spend our whole lives searching, feeling strangely unsettled. Learning and listening and looking. So, I connect and question how I can. A painting by my grandmother Rose hangs on my wall. It depicts a jaundiced and sunken Saskatchewan homestead, bushells of wheat pulled up, a sepia sky tickled by robins egg blue. When I look at it, I yearn for Rose more than for land. But I know I've inherited a land-based context, too.

We locked in
and down, both
because we were
supposed to and
because it felt
natural. At least,
it did for me.

As a child, I used to call the act of self-swaddling ‘cocooning’ and, while fully wrapped, would scarcely move for hours on end.[1] The pandemic has amplified this predisposition to squeeze into small shapes and slow down to near apnea; it has swelled my fondness for corners, too.[2] Fight, flight, freeze, or fawn, they say. I think I’m a freezer and a fawner by nature—perfect for the performer. Like the figure model knows, one can be absolutely charming while holding perfectly still.[3] But beyond these proclivities, moving at the onset of COVID-19 into a building that was originally a mortuary proved to be a powerful catalyst for extended reflection.

1. Mehtap Baydu’s *Cocoon* (2015) utilizes performance and relational aesthetics to ruminate on and obfuscate gendered, sexual perception (Baydu). I look at her knitted wrapping and marvel over the circuitous design, custom fit from the many shirts taken off many mens’ backs (Baydu). A cocoon swaddles meaning as well as bodies.

2. Maria Hassabi’s *STAGING: solo* (2017) involves a figure gingerly shifting positions, holding each at a protracted pace (Walker Art Centre). Slowly, I savour all the forms like silhouettes cut from felt, they are heavy and piled. I want to stack them in a corner to see their stupor shift. About the corner dweller, Gaston Bachelard says: “Here is a dreamer who is happy to be sad, content to be alone, waiting” (Bachelard 140). But waiting, for the corner dweller and small-shape shifter, is not a nihilistic function: “For to great dreamers of corners and holes nothing is ever empty, the dialectics of full and empty only correspond to two geometrical non-realities. The function of inhabiting constitutes the link between full and empty,” and so to wait and hold forms is to practice the presence of absence (140).

3. In 2019, I became a figure model for groceries and in exchange for the secrets of the trade. In that occupation, I discovered that my childhood diversion of allowing vision to melt, shift, and blur on a single focal point is a game that pays decently, if only for a few hours at a time. It helps if you can bring your body to a complete standstill, in spite of burning, aching, and rubberizing.

I have lived in many old buildings, but the Edwards Block feels the most ripe.[4] Built as the second location of Vancouver's T. Edwards Co. funeral home, the second floor doubled as accommodation for the business's proprietor and his family. Conspicuously erected in 1919-20—immediately following the rages of the 1918 Spanish flu—the structure practically overhangs Granville Street.[5] A headstone of sorts. The economies of pandemics reveal that, for a select few, death pays. For some others, death costs and cashes out—a wash. For most, death pays nothing and costs still. So far, I've been lucky to have kept my wallet shut and my body still, and I have come to understand stillness as a privilege: a form of healing, of rest, of preservation, as well as a formation of fear.[6]

4. And by ripe, I mean overripe—like Kathleen Ryan's sumptuous, glimmering, rotten, oversized fruit. Looking at her exhibition *Bad Fruit* (2020) makes my mouth and eyes water (François Ghebaly). I would love to graze these precious surfaces—I'm sure they are cool to the touch.

5. The Edwards Block's building permit from 1919 describes the structure as: "Apartment/Rooms; 4-storey brick building 40x80 feet in size, apts. & undertaking parlor; ground & basement flrs occupied by the Undertaking Co., 2nd flr owner suite, 3rd & 4th flrs public hall & lodge room; day labor" ("2421 Granville Street"). I can't quite parse out all the realities of these perfunctory details. Curtailed archival information lifts a thin layer of veiled understanding before lowering another.

6. Outside the pandemic, stillness is a reality for people with mobility impairments. Within the pandemic, stillness may be considered a necessity for people with autoimmune or other health-related concerns. The interpretation I take of stillness as a privilege relates to my own, comparatively able-bodied experience of the pandemic, where getting groceries delivered and being able to work from home are luxuries.

While still, I look
at the ceiling, the
walls, the plants,
the television, the
cat, and hold
myself rotten. It’s
tender here, in the
old mortuary.

Here, designed as a place for death to pass through, the edifice now collects it between walls and floorboards. A humble home for little mouse and insect husks, mingling with more than one hundred years of soot and dust. A humid home, where rain water pools and rots away exterior sills, causing windows to flake and fall from the second floor to the busy street below. A lack of flashing. When climbing the tall, tight, winding, concrete stairs attached to the building's rear, I am reminded of the Tower card in tarot.[7] Dizzying. But walking into the foyer, down the halls, and pottering across well-worn carpet, I am comforted by that sweet smell of aging, like creeping into grandmother's closet.

7. Sometimes, Cindy Mochizuki reads tarot as a component of relational performance. *Fortune House* (2014) took place in Koganecho, Japan, where "Mochizuki traded intimate readings in exchange for the querent's 'monster stories'," which she would later "form into air-dried clay figurines born out of the fears, dreams, and nightmares that the participants left behind" (Kong). Yani Kong describes Mochizuki's work as being "both sensitive to memory and prone to the future," which is a deft and delicate tact when approaching an archive's tethered psychic realities (Kong).

The Edwards Block is too arthritic to survive an earthquake, but it has defied development for longer than might be expected. This refusal to fall might be considered indifferent, but the building's stubborn presence is quite laborious and requires a kind of insistence.[8] The old mortuary's efforts to endure are obvious and can be found on every floor. I gained access to the cat-piss attic to sustain my studio practice during the pandemic, and near its north-facing window, there were patches of what I can only assume were failed repairs. The wall was slightly yellow, soft like icing sugar, and thick. I painted it white for peace of mind, but I'm certain the wall—like everything in the building—has a limited shelf-life. Preservation attempts gone awry.[9] Perhaps I could paper it over.

8. Though the term 'activism' implies activity, Helen Nicholson contends that, within contemporary society, taking action in the literal sense "is no longer necessarily counter-cultural or resistant; it is also one of post-industrial capitalism's most important and valuable assets" (Nicholson 428). Inaction may in some cases be considered more defiant; when I cocoon I do not move, because I refuse not work, bend, or burden myself for the insatiable desires of the free market.

And buildings can refuse to bend, too. Steve Hess defines 'nail-house'—or 'dingzi hu'—as a "commonly used Chinese neologism that refers to homes inhabited by persons who tenaciously refuse to vacate them even after they have been slated for demolition … leading to the characterization of their households (hu) as stubborn 'nails' (dingzi) on a plank or wood that cannot be easily hammered down" (Hess 908). Though small, stubborn nails can cause mortal injury when strategically placed.

9. Cecilia Giménez, an elderly woman from Borja, Spain became an overnight sensation for her failed attempts to restore a 19th century Ecco Homo painting by Elías García Martínez in 2012, which the press quickly dubbed "the worst restoration in history" (Jones). Sometimes, however, something can be so bad it turns good; James MacDowell and Richard McColloch call Giménez's botch job the transformation of a "previously 'unremarkable' painting into something truly remarkable" (MacDowell and McCulloch 646). Colloquially known as 'potato jesus,' Giménez's gentle figure looks suspiciously at its adoring newfound fanbase, as if we couldn't possibly understand what it means to cheat death in such a transmogrifying manner.

And the bedroom window looks original.[10] Except for the piece of plexiglass that has been screwed in to cover a sharded pane. Two sheets within the frame, in fact, have cracked and broken. Remnants of tape and blue tack dissolve around the edge of a missing corner in the glass—a gaping hole I've often wondered in front of as rain mists in. The charming living room windows, on the other hand, include shards of a different kind: stained glass panels. Even as they buckle under the building's heaving body, they cast a dazzling glow across walls on sunny afternoons. Stained glass: a way to dye the domestic,[11] provide some privacy from the exterior world and vice versa.[12]

10. As it became more affordable in the 19th century, the public's insatiable need for glass necessitated a strange collapse of individualism and mechanization in glass-blowers. Isobel Armstrong explains that, for factory owner Lucas Chance, the "intractable conditions of glassmaking" necessitated a specific type of management: "on the one hand he attempted to see labour as purely instrumental … [and] regulated by abstract, standardized formulas that made the labourers' mediation invisible; on the other he recognized the specific particularity of his workers as unique individuals, men with bodies and minds, locked in relations of reciprocal need with master and manager" (Armstrong, 38). What is an artist to do when they are considered an indispensable dispensability?

11. While I have seen many stained glass windows in gaunt Italian churches, Julian Yi-Zhong Hou's *V. Dead Dove* (2021) feels much more soulful than those elderly shrouds. *V. Dead Dove* gently depicts and cradles a supine bird, with amber and radium emanating outward from its hallowed centre (Hou). I have long loved dead birds. When they appear to me in public spaces, I always think they are the most fragile wretches, and so I pause to quietly reflect on their minute remains. Brow furrowed. Last time I found one—a pigeon, I think—I laid a flower across its small, opened chest.

12. What colours do we cloak the public world in, from within our private spheres? Armstrong suggests that "to enable the collective seeing which is its purpose the glass-painted window had to negotiate the hazards of the very opacity conferred by colour itself. It can empower seeing and disempower it" (Armstrong 121). Stained glass can inhibit vision as well as allow it, our literal rose coloured glasses.

Such intensive,
intricate work
to spot-stain
cherries on
plaster divides.

A more final kind of stain: almost immediately after death, blood pools near the bottom-most portion of the body, wherever that may be.[13] Imagine a young cabernet sauvignon. But pooling blood does not always indicate the end. As I rinse out my period panties in the bathroom sink, I think of Margaret Edwards—the undertaker's wife. Did she wash out reusable cloth pads like my mother did? Susie dropped hers in an old ice cream pail filled with water that lived in our laundry room. A quick pre-soak. What did Margaret do to sanitize her monthlies, and did her husband Thomas mind? He looks stuffy in his portraits, as undertakers tend to. Arguably, he would have seen worse than menstrual fluid in his day to day. Bodily refuse at work, bodily refuse at home.

13. This phenomenon, called livor mortis, is scientifically explained as "the gravitational pooling of blood to lower dependent areas resulting in a red/purple coloration" (T. Simmons and P.A. Cross 12). But that's such a cold description. Illustrative photos look warmer, like blood baked into skin. They reveal patterns too, of what the body's laid against. For coroners, a final first impression.

What kind of home did Margaret keep? She and her husband lived on the second floor of the Edwards Block for almost twenty years—through the Great Depression, even. For over a year, I have leaned into the old mortuary while channeling my underlying, depressive desire to keep still and stay inside. It's for the better. Stillness: like death but to avoid death, so I hold myself and the couch and reread *The Yellow Wallpaper*.[14] Only, unlike that yellowed prison—in spite of pests and their holes, splintering floors, attics that swell, walls that crumble, bathtubs that burp—I have always loved the old mortuary.[15]

14. Like glass-blowers, post-industrial settler women of North America and the women of their homelands are also entangled in individualist/mechanical responsibility. We are taught to happily sacrifice our own person and desires to domestic and emotional labours, while maintaining a charm that will secure our father's or our partner's affections for years to come. Elaine R. Hedges describes *The Yellow Wallpaper* heroine as having been "destroyed" by postpartum depression; she "has tried, in defiance of all the social and medical codes of her time, to retain her sanity and her individuality. But the odds are against her and she fails" (Gilman and Hedges 54). Like in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, if we fail our gendered premises, we are thought to be broken.

The measure of a woman's dispensability and the steps taken to 'rehabilitate' her does hinge on her class and ethnicity, however. It is worth remembering that the new mother from *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a white doctor's wife.

15. I have always relished being alone. Especially in the dead of night, when quiet covers sleeping bodies like a skin and I am wide awake around them, I ache with desire alone. But more so than those moments of comparative aloneness, I forever reside in isolation in my memories. The Edwards Block has provided me much solitude, and like all "the spaces of our past moments of solitude, the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude, enjoyed, desired and compromised solitude," it will "remain indelible within [me], and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so" (Bachelard 10). Forever, my old mortuary: a place to sit inside my head when I long to be alone.

I don't knit, but I embroider and bead as a way to keep still, to pass the time, to forget the burden of my body.[16] I wrap myself in blankets, still. Ones made for me since birth, and others that I've mended obsessively since moving away from my mother. They'll all become threadbare one day.[17]

16. Beads are weighty things: shiny and opalescent. When I was small, my mother was a jazz singer and I coveted her sequined, beaded gigging clothes. Whenever possible, I would sneak to see her hanging dresses. They appeared so heavy and lifeless without her body inside them. While there, in a darkened closet, I would caress each dress and listen to beads shimmer against one another.

But beads may hold more significance than one person's childhood gleanings. A hereditary material language that is constantly evolving, Indigenous beaders have passed on the techniques and aesthetics of beads for countless generations pre- and post-European contact; beads bring a brilliance and honour to life, death and the everyday (Gray 5). Contemporary Ojibwe practitioner Nico Williams (ᐅᑌᒥᐣ) uses beadwork to depict a combination of traditional stories in dynamic, geometric shapes, as well as common objects like scratch-and-win lotto tickets (Deer 2018; Deer 2021). Looking at William's work, I can see some version of past, present, and future simultaneously, all shimmering against one another.

17. Like every place I have ever lived, the mortuary will persist long after my time here ends: not architecturally, necessarily—it's really on its last legs—but as memories of space that filter through and tint one another. I think of Do Ho Suh's *Passage/s* (2016), which depicts a series of corridors in translucent, coloured fabric (Rappolt). Though, Suh's spaces are still taut, while memories of place tend to age into a hued and gauzy fray.

Nothing can escape the realities of duration, though certain gestures may preserve slightly past our best-befores. A relatively recent commercial option in North American mortuary practice, arterial embalming has proven to be both ecologically and monetarily expensive, but provides a surreal level of preservation to human features. So long as the casket seal endures.[18] Maintaining a living body can be just as chemically grotesque. I started using retinol this summer, to set my creases. My scalp itches when I'm stressed, so I pour oils and viscous salves to rub in, wash out. A fibrous polyp took root in my right buttock last winter and continues to grow.

18. Funeral homes go to great lengths to preserve arterially embalmed bodies by selling "sealed vaults designed to keep air and water out" (Roach 81). What absurdity is this: as if life could be kept from cradling death. No, life seeps in everywhere, wraps around everything, and slowly breathes and breaks.

Loosening, peeling, protruding: this is not what I expected when I imagined aging as a little girl. Is there some cure for this messy, gradual decline? Others must have escaped this fate before me.[19]

19. Some die young, but such a martyrdom is bittersweet. Sadly, these ends can bestow more value than a figure was granted in life. Coco Fusco's performance installation *Better Yet When Dead* (1997) creates a series of wakes for creatives and activists Selena, Ana Mendieta, Sara Gomez, Frida Kahlo, Evita Peron, and Sor Juana, each of whom died at young ages and of violent, mysterious means (Fusco). Posing as each figure in turn, Fusco calls these performances "living dioramas," and says that the technique enables her to "play with the border between the real and the fictional, between appearance and reality" (Fusco). A desire for recognition in and from the dead can create an uncanny slippage where, in their absence, we see ourselves.

My mind traverses slides from a decade's worth of art history lectures when, in darkened classrooms, we gazed at and glazed over unnamed painted European women circa the late 19th century.[20] All depicted as, like me, slightly anemic: languid, lounging, sleeping, sumptuous, and almost certainly numb-in-limb from posing. They also appear deeply thoughtful.[21] Decidedly themselves, these femmes exhibit power in their immovability and their unwillingness to share who they are—not that the painter ever asked.[22] Still, despite most else about them being shrugged off, like models' clothes on the studio floor, these women's bodies are invariably preserved in paint, never expiring, always young—so long as conservation efforts endure.

20. Femme-presenting figure models must possess a unique air (read as: individualism), even while rigidly returning to long-pose positions (read as: mechanization), and they are—more often than not—inevitably recorded as an anonymous body (read as: a means to an end).

Donna Huanca's painted performers are also anonymous, but they take up space in a decidedly collectivist manner. As in a mycelium network, each model is allocated an outfitting and a space to inhabit, to coexist alongside large painted forms. They are also allowed to move through their painted environs—albeit "glacially"—with some measure of self-direction (Jansen). These models have agency, unlike many poseurs past.

21. Late 19th–early 20th century Canadian paintings of women display a trend toward "reverie" and, through feminist art historical analysis, connect "scenes of female sitters engaged in their own thoughts and pursuits and women's increasing insistence that they be fully recognized as persons' both legally and by society more broadly" (Huneault 215). These femmes insist as they sit, the same as I do.

22. One such blatant and peaceful refusal can be found in *My Dreams My Work Must Wait Till After Hell* (2011), a video performance directed by the duo Girl (Chitra Ganesh and Simone Leigh). A slowly breathing, reclining nude faces away from the camera, her head completely covered in stones ("Girl"). This quiet work powerfully situates the femme figure in opposition to traditional art historical expectations.

Dead or alive, keeping one's body intact requires costly, constant care. Thankfully, efforts for preservation that are separate from the body proper are often more modest and accessible. Folksy, even. I recently discovered that my great grandfather Leonard Moss made gravecovers out of concrete and broken bottles for a living. Small graveyards for farm folk; glass and stone as epitaph; names pressed after pouring. From within the homestead, great grandmother Mabel Moss likely used gelatin to set salads, maybe raw egg to whip ice cream, certainly sugar to keep jam.[23] I wonder if they thought of what they were keeping, just by being on that land?[24]

23. Known eugenicist and doctor Helen MacMurchy addresses Canadian settler mothers in 1926 with this charge:

> The Government of Canada, knowing that the nation is made of homes, and that the homes are made by the Father and the Mother, recognises you as one of the Makers of Canada. No National Service is greater or better than the work of the Mother in her own home. (MacMurchy 5)

Did Mabel Moss Make babies in the Name of the Nation-State?

24. Punctuated with small beaded landscapes, rudi aker's *topographies of a someplace* (2021) reads:

> When the highway was the riverway and tim horton's didn't sit on sacred ground i was born to a nation that the white men built around because if you build it they will assimilate if they assimilate they will die this is the field where we died nother more than an injun camp we could go back but they built and they flooded but all in the name of progress all in the name of whiteness all in the name of (aker)

Engaging with histories of place feels like unknotting muscle. Even with noble or irreverent intentions, a settler's position on stolen land is charged. My family has made a footprint simply due to its size; more of us means the expansion of the colonial nation state 'succeeds'. I think of my grandparents —Lloyd and Sophie Moss—who shared a simple, common desire to create a home, to preserve the self and those in their immediate care within that home. To preserve the family line by having many children—too many children, maybe, as thirteen was a handful when they lost their home. Being a part of this large family, I have been taught to preserve the self as memory: to bequeath small tokens, tell stories, sing songs, give kisses.[25] I preemptively weather a lot of loss.[26]

25. Just two days before his recent death, my sweet uncle Freddie arranged for me to receive a dishcloth. He was quite earnest about its effectiveness for "countertops, dishes, pots and pans". I later learned that these simple cloths, purchased in bulk from a dollar store, were at one time used to wash his infirmed body.

26. During an artist talk on November 4, 2020, Erika DeFreitas spoke at length about how the concept of 'pre-mourning,' or anticipatory grief, impacts her practice. *The Impossible Speech Act* (2007), for example, involves having icing flowers progressively applied to her and her mother's faces, and photographing the process until both are fully covered in brightly coloured sugar. DeFreitas calls this amassing a 'death mask,' and says that by involving her mother in the work, she "thought of it as a way to outlast the inevitable" (DeFreitas).
I've been rushing to collect and archive ephemera from my mother's family, as I've watched many of her siblings pass in recent years. Instead of rushing, maybe I should just bake another Johnnycake—like my mom (and her mom) used to make.

Lately, I've been practicing preservation in alternate forms: to digitize and catalogue old photographs, newspaper articles, and audio recordings, and, in so doing, to alter them. To collect and cauterize. But preservation attempts do not inherently allow for criticism—in fact, they tend to censure through reverence.[27]

27. Speaking about archival theory in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation commission, J.J. Ghaddar emphasizes "the need for an expansive approach to crucial archival notions such as provenance and record-ness" as archives will always be "a contested site of power and silence, of inheritance and disinheritance" (Ghaddar 6). For this reason, I advocate 'rereading' alongside 'preservation'. Histories must be allowed to be retold to avoid reification. As they become tattered, histories reveal more about their own making.

I imagine the haunting beauty of the now-crumbling Edwards Block would pale in comparison with the old growth forest that it toppled.[28] Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations are the ancestral stewards of this land, where large fir and cedar trees once grew together and sparse buildings now loom. More devastatingly than COVID-19, smallpox swept through these peoples twice: first in the 1770s and again in 1862, causing Indigenous populations to plummet.[29] 'Vacancy' induced by epidemics meant Manifest Destiny for far west colonists, who were alarmed by such vast and empty land.[30] What lonely trees, better pull them down. The building I call home, the city where I work, the 'province' and 'country' that I occupy—these places were all built after cascades of sickness.[31] I am reminded that, for some, death pays.

28. Before it was paved in 1910, 'South Granville' was known as "a 'mud wallow'," according to a City of Vancouver historic plaque on my block. Images of the tall, dense trees that used to live here make my heart ache ("CVA 677-755").

29. Bob Joseph, hereditary chief of the Gayaxala clan and member of the Gwawa'enuk Nation, provides a detailed account of smallpox's effect on West Coast First Nations' populations (Joseph).

30. Carmen Roberston explains that Canadian landscape paintings by the likes of the Group of Seven have entrenched "settler myths of an empty and wild land awaiting civilizing" (Robertson 109). Good for a settler's swollen conscience, but entirely inacurate.

31. Likely by ommission and design, colonial records do not definitively prove that smallpox was intentionally spread to Indigenous populations by settlers. But this method of biological warfare has been used for centuries by European warmongers (Native Voices; Riedel). Regardless, the second wave of smallpox in (what is now known as) British Columbia was certainly, if nothing else, *allowed* to spread through First Nations communities by patronizing colonial settlers (Van Rijn 543).

In *I awoke to find my spirit had returned* (1999), Métis artist Rosalie Favell subverts histories of the inconic Hudson's Bay blanket. Covered by the blanket, Favell wakes within a film still from *The Wizard of Oz*—including a cameo by Louis Riel (Favell). The blanket's presence, which holds connotations of colonial trade and disease, asserts Indigenous experiences typically ignored by colonial archives (Cram).

Though I tenderly interpret my very existence as the careful result of countless generations' acts of preservation, on these lands, those efforts taste like unripe Himalayan blackberries.[32] Colonial histories demonstrate that an individualist and mechanical drive for safe-keeping can breed concern for the self before others, with sometimes deadly consequences.[33] In spite of this and because I am being asked to do so, I lie motionless and ferment. As fragile as the old mortuary, I feel my body succumb to isolation.[34] So, to ease into the passage of time, I watch ice cream melt and ruminate on the preservative capacities and limitations of various materials.[35]

32. Himalayan Blackberries are a highly invasive species in Vancouver. They grow everywhere, choke out native plantlife, and erode the land (Metro Vancouver).

In 2015, Keg de Souza was a Contemporary Art Gallery artist in residence at the Burrard Marina Field House (Vancouver). She invited Métis herbalist Lori Snyder to host a workshop on blackberries and lead a group-picking afternoon, which culminated in a large vat of blackberry jam (CAG). Snyder taught participants how to responsibly forage the land, and to give a gift to the land in return. Each summer since, and regardless of their spread, I've given the blackberries a few strands of my hair.

33. Individualist societies have borne far more death in the pandemic than collectivist ones (Mickiewicz). An obsession with preserving a particular flavour of 'freedom' bears a high cost.

34. I want to wrap myself in Louise Bourgeois' *She Lost It* (1992), so that I can look the way I feel. I can attest that "THE COLD OF ANXIETY IS VERY REAL" and that fear does make "THE WORLD GO ROUND" (Bourgeois). These garments would make a very cute and honest pandemic outfit, I think.

35. Reflecting on Wallace Stevens' 1922 poem "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," Austin Allen suggests that by "linking the chill of death with a frozen dessert, Stevens seems to imply that death and the sensuous pleasures of life have something in common: detachment or isolation, perhaps" (Allen). The metaphor is apt; in the end, we all pool and puddle, though we're still made of the same stuff as before.

And I allow for stained
glass to stain visions of
various potential futures,
where we engage with
past and place, breathe
inside the losses we've
delayed and spawned,
and reflect on the costs
of keeping.

An attempt to preserve is just an attempt, after all.[36]

36. "All values must remain vulnerable, and those that do not are dead" (Bachelard 59).

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