Bathroom Songs: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as a Poet

Jason Edwards

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Another Poem from the Creaking Bed (1969–1971)

When the first white man rolled into Owens Valley
before Los Angeles needed the water, it was very green;
and even within memory you drove by yourself
in a truck over Westguard Pass from Bishop
back to Deep Springs.
We can never, in the future, enter the valleys like that.
Although we are certainly a godly image,
it is only when we cross to the window like giraffes
in the dark
that the absent curtain will not rustle sexually
between
what we are and what we want.

And so shiver together your massy brow
and make your five hot fingers be five cities
across my chin, shoulders, bottom,
and the bay area.
So if you cannot wake me, hold me, and surround
my quaking, hollow dreams:
networks of communication and transportation stringing
along the suburbs carrying a senseless voice
from my head, motion without muscle
tone — trying, like the molten, magnetic earth,
to waken and go on.

Between what we are and
what we want, runs like electricity
poetry.
We are more than this. But we desire certain
words; we love shame, and need the embarrassment
of a nerveless, unlovely communication:
we hear our hearts creaking in
mysterious leather straps.
So let us take the wanderlust and go
to Ames, Bliss, Provo, Olmstead:
names from a bitterer, firmer age.
Forget to me both what
we are, and what we want, and come
to me bundling passion, with a giraffe’s legs.