Bathroom Songs: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as a Poet

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Saul at Jeshimon [Second Variant] (1967)

1 Samuel 26

Over the seductive sand
from the lid of a curving hill
David drops on the plain
traverses the furrowed valley
thinking himself unseen.
David thinks that I sleep

couched in the savage camp
among the unmoving shadows;
but I know them better than sleep
and have listened, as well, wakeful
to every ranting infusion
between frail well and wall

of the dim aortic river.
David comes with such grace
I would think him a she-lion;
asleep in the tent beside
lies Jonathan who dreams
that David has come from the mountain

among the guardian shadows.
The loose and muscled boy
having killed his tens of thousands
comes within my curtains
troubled by my slack power.
He is a hunted lion child

and looking for water here,
but caught like a lone balloonist
in a contracting skin
the desert drawing around him
David forbears to kill.
I lie. I watch him.

He takes the water bottle
and smooths the distended skin,
and pumps the water from it
upon the patient sand.
Sweet Jonathan beside me
dreams that it plumbs the sand.

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Spilled water. Two men in my dream, lovestruck,
lie with an ancient tome between their hands,
passion an animal, haughty and fierce —
but turn again to the desired book,
and all our vain desires fall like tears
upon the dumb and multitudinous sand.