talking about it in analysis that it just petered out. My last daddy replacement. My last savior. My last attempt at seduction. I was done.

Hue

In *Flowers for Algernon*, a book by Daniel Keyes that I read as a teenager, the main character, an intellectually disabled man, is given an experimental drug that raises his mental capacities. He reads and loves a little blue copy of *Paradise Lost*. When the medication stops working, he relapses into his former state. He looks at the cover of the book, and knows that it gave him joy, but when he opens it, he can’t understand it anymore.

Even though I’ve never reread it, this story has stayed with me. It begins with the limited language that the character has accessible to him, and moves from this unknowing to an increased awareness. He learns about himself, his relation to the world, his status and capacities, his sexual preferences, and his intellectual interests. And then he loses it again, and it seems like it was so tenuous to begin with, that foray into self-knowledge and connection with the world around him. What is actually changed by the experiment? Does he revert totally to his prior state, or has he been irrevocably changed? What is the status of “I,” if it can be so radically erased or changed? If there are so many factors over which we do not have control?

What am I able to say about myself after the five years of psychoanalysis? In the slow process of bringing a demand, a symptom, an affect, into language, what emerged were not blinding moments of clarity, but rather what felt like a change in the hue of my memories and feelings. The many changes in my life over that period happened gradually, and it is only in retrospect that I can see the different coloration. But even beyond the discoveries or non-discoveries that I made, I experienced something else in that diurnal speaking. It was something about the form of tell-
ing stories, of listening to echoes and truths that could be heard if attended to with a free-floating attention.

Lacan says, “I don’t discover the truth—I invent it.”\textsuperscript{56} We make our realities through the speaking of them. Psychoanalysis isn’t, despite popular belief, about the uncovering of the past, but rather about the subjectification of one’s own existence through language. Freud describes this as “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden,” which Lacan translates as, “Where it was, I must come into being.”\textsuperscript{57} Where before there had been desperate actions and unconscious motivations, now I was beginning to be able to speak my story into being. Where before I had imagined that there was an authority that dictated my desires, now I was putting into words the beliefs and assumptions that shaped my actions.

In \textit{On Revolution}, Hannah Arendt talks about how our lives and memories can only be understood through narration. This involves a reworking and rethinking that situates events within a larger context and structure:

Experiences and even the stories which grow out of what men do and endure, of happenings and events, sink back into the futility inherent in the living world and the living deed unless they are talked about over and over and over again. What saves the affairs of mortal men from their inherent futility is nothing but this incessant talk about them, which in its turn remains futile unless certain concepts, certain guideposts for future remembrance, and even for sheer reference, arise out of it.\textsuperscript{58}

Where before I had told stories about my life, in analysis I became more able to see those stories as part of a larger framework of fear of abandonment, bicultural contradiction, internalized misogyny, sexual trauma, and class guilt.

In analysis, I spoke both the audible and the inaudible, and learned to listen to it. There was no shortcut for this. I couldn’t have done it faster or better. I just had to do it. I learned how to speak only by speaking.
Towards the end of the analysis, before I knew it was the end, I wondered if what I had learned would endure beyond the scope of the sessions. When the narrator in *Flowers for Algernon* stops being able to speak himself as an intellectual, he stops being one. “I” is never irrevocable, it is always being shaped and transformed and injured by the sticky work of being human.

I hoped that when I terminated, I would continue to make time to think about things, analyze my dreams, or attend to the slips of the tongue and the moments of resistance that emerged in my daily life. But of course I haven’t. I wake up with a half-remembered dream and instead of lying there trying to capture it, the way I did in analysis, I get up and do yoga, or make coffee, or walk the dog.

The repercussions of analysis have to be, I think, like the analysis itself. There, things flashed and disappeared. I half understood them, or I followed them for a bit and then dropped them, or I experienced them without full comprehension.

I learned a lot of things in analysis, and a lot changed. A lot didn’t. A lot was lost, as was *Paradise Lost* for the character in *Flowers*. There are so many stories about which I gained knowledge, but there will always be another version, another way of bringing a truth into language.

_Five Years In_

We had often spent time together, me and David and the boys, Imre and his wife and their son. The two families took holidays together, and walked and cooked and drank beer and talked and talked. There’s a Facebook photo of us two couples. It was taken at their going-away party. David is on one edge, Imre’s wife on the other. Imre and I lean lightly with our arms around each other, slightly uncomfortable to be touching even though we are such old friends. My caption says, “We’re going to miss you guys!” I didn’t see them again after that, though they sent me their condolences when we divorced. They had tried to be