

PLAINCLOTHES

Brooklyn. Spring or early summer. There had been a crime, committed perhaps by a serialist. A rape, near the condominium grounds. Maybe out in the open. The police sent plainclothes to investigate. They strolled into the laundry room, chewing gum and tapping their badges. Her wash was done. She was folding clothes at the aluminum table facing the door. She preferred washing here because it was always clean, almost sterile. And she rarely encountered anyone even though the condo boasted over thirty units. At first she had been afraid, sneaking her laundry in off the street but now it was a matter of course. They said they had a few questions. It wouldn't take long. One was short, bulky, and black, all eyes. The other was lean, pale, over six feet, flipping through the facts. What had she seen? Where had she been today? Did she work? Why was she doing laundry in the middle of the afternoon? They liked her underwear, they said, and fingered the waistbands as they went out.

DURIEL E. HARRIS

PLATYPUS

Oviparous. Each spring, he sits up on the bureau and screams. I assume he's calling for a mate.

Ambivalent. Platypus lurks in low waters, being an indistinctly categorized animal. "Maybe it's the categories that need revision," he dreams, learning how to breathe. One paw on this bed of sand, one paw ever-wayfaring. One day he receives a note in a cheap Chardonnay bottle—"Wait for me here. Six minutes,"—collapsing past and future, reverse-engineering mystique.

CHRISTINE CHOI

PLEASURE

ON THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT

Once I said "Yes" for an entire year.

And I kept walking toward him.

Crossing bright pavement waving in the heat, across the dark bar's floors studded with the crunch of peanut shells, into the café where he waited over coffee, I kept walking toward him.

"Yes," I said and made myself meet his stare.

"You're blushing," he said, blushing.

And it was like writing a sentence for the pleasure of handling grammar, parsing it into clause and phrase, paying attention first to participles, how present, how active they make us—flirting, touching—before prepositions lead us down, on, into, after....

I said "Yes" into his ear's parenthetical, put my tongue into it

(like so.

And I kept walking toward him, thinking this one in jeans, this one in a shirt that snaps, this one in fatigues, this one in nothing, this one in chaps, this one holding a pillow over his crotch.

Thinking to myself in the simplest terms: dark bar, small bed, fast taxi, rough blanket, parked car, wet grass.

"Yes," I said, and—his lips against my cheek, his breath in my hair, his hand on the back of my skull.

What I meant: I would love each detail as it was—lips, cheek, breath, hair, hand, back, skull.

I meant I would love a list: against, in, on, of.

And it was like writing a sentence in order to undress grammar unsnapping the