

Claire Bateman

*Ten Small Stitches*

1. Artisans of Lyons Relocated to the Ocean Floor

Outcasts of the Industrial Revolution, they embroider the tides, adorning each wave with lace.

2. Parachute

How freakish is nylon, all flop and fluster; I extol the aerial fluency of lace!

3. So You Aspire to Become a Perseid!

You must harbor no hint of aesthetic hesitation over shredding the radiant darkness into lace.

4. Narrative Theory

Situation, conflict, rising action--isn't a story the opposite of lace?

5. The Interred Brides of History Surface Through the Earth's Crust at the Sound of the Last Trumpet as the World Goes Up in Flames

Drenched with the violent gold of exhumation, they ascend in ream upon ream of molten lace.

6. Local Waterfall

We churn our silk into foam, then pour it over. Would the tourists clear out if they learned that it's nothing but lace?

7. Curtain

Between the fictitious and the misremembered: merely the peekaboo privacy of lace.

8. Again the Aliens from Advanced Civilizations Vote Against Obliterating Us, Though With No Less Narrow a Margin Than on the Previous Occasions

We may not turn out to be wholly devoid of potential; we've invented piano jazz, video poker, and lace!

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9. Forensic Study

Only the holes could be preserved intact from the grisly autopsy of lace.

10. Requesting Baptism by Immersion, the White Map Speaks of the Longed-for Vita Nuova

"I will arise from the font reconstituted, an illegible geography of lace."

## *The “Introduction”*

Though there must have been a specific point  
when it was first inserted into the universe  
as some person or persons became aware  
that a particular entity or occasion needed  
or warranted  
“something” about  
(though significantly smaller and less prestigious than)  
itself  
to set the mood, pave the way, and provide build-up  
or at least context),  
and thus we have  
the appetizer, the epigraph, the drum roll, the phrase The  
envelope, please!,  
the foreword, the overture, the prologue, the red carpet, the  
lead-in,  
the lead-up-to, the tykes strewing rose petals, the cover band,  
the frontispiece,  
the herald, the prolegomenon, the fanfare, the vanguard;  
we have the prefix, preamble, the preface, the prelude, pre-  
prom, the pre-game,  
we have, in fact, “pre” itself  
(occupying a surprising amount of what used to be  
“empty” space),  
all of this showed up,  
by definition,  
“after the fact,”  
since “before” the beginning  
there was no prelude  
to ease us into  
the event in question  
which turned out to be  
existence itself:

no preliminaries,  
no gradually sloping ontological shallow end,  
no throat-clearing on the part of the announcer--  
in fact, no announcer  
or announcement--  
only the unmediated shock of  
LET THERE BE.  
Yet if we were all going to  
so unprecedentedly  
occur,  
don't you think we might have benefited  
from an introduction  
(nothing too formal or overwrought)?—  
but there was nothing of the kind —  
not even that one goofy guy  
ever unable to keep himself from yelling  
SURPRISE!  
just before the lights flick on.

*Pommes de Terre*

Let chandeliers blossom,  
the fountains of the ceiling  
while beehives smolder,  
the lanterns of the grove;  
& coffins cascade,  
the luges of the dead;  
& horses billow,  
the high tides of the prairie;  
& sunsets fester,  
the heat rashes of heaven;  
& twilight tear loose,  
the unraveling hem of darkness;  
& trances boil over,  
the cumuli of the brain;  
& pearls effulge,  
the onions of the sea.  
Let this directive  
be chronicled in snow,  
the far-flung sawdust  
of the solstice,  
on leaves,  
the scattered analects of trees.

*To the Night*

Spun home at dawn  
rock-pitted, grit-embedded,  
wracked and gouged and gorged,  
again you must endure  
the sieving and churnings,  
the palpations and wringings-out  
to be once more poured forth  
as smoothness upon the earth.  
Cyanic angel, all splendidous  
and ever uncomplaining,  
how finely you suffer  
for your fluency.