

## Each and Every Need

*Work doesn't work.*  
- Laura Kipnis

1

Each and every need she said is its own  
Zeno's paradox, either because  
meeting one reanimates another

or because each has its own half-life  
which has its own half-life and so on  
or maybe just because love itself

can't and doesn't ever completely fill  
the constitutive lack it's called upon  
to fix, no matter how hard it tries.

And so here we are she said consigned  
to pursue illusory completeness  
obviously impossible to attain,

beset by unfillable longings with our mates  
sentenced as after-the-fact scapegoats  
for absurdities not of their own making.

2

Having mastered mutuality  
you may now proceed to advanced intimacy

which will she said involve inviting your partner  
into your own most interior self

(belief in our own interiority having  
become a fundamental premise of our era

a doctrine assuming a quasi-medical  
authority, along with our attendant

belief that whatever it is that's in there  
is clamoring to get out).

Though leeches and bleeding served a similar purpose  
in previous models, now we express our feelings

instead of fluids because everyone knows

those who don't are more disease-prone.

3

So love is our favorite patent medicine  
she said, prescribed for every ill as well

as for helping us OPEN UP!  
(Exercise One for relationship health)

to treat our other great obsession, longevity, in quest of  
either of which we will submit to the most arcane procedures.

4

Conscious loving loving itself  
being conscious of consciousness

the silliness of it all: belief  
faith hope probability

hedging bets down on our knees  
hands out begging for it.

5

Let us not, Love, buy into  
a labor theory of love

contracting to work at it, trying  
to make it work when everyone knows

to try in matters of love is to try  
too hard, happiness

as submission, terms of engagement  
turning what was vital into

the routine the boring the never-enough  
unsatisfying unhappiness.

## From Bad to Worse

*You are a fucking bore* he said  
*And you* she said *are a boring fuck*  
- Joan Collins

Things go from bad to worse:  
divorce a permanent dissolution  
of vows a prurient state of affairs

serial monogamy  
a montage of fast footage  
flickering satisfactions

the bonfire of vanities  
a miniature holocaust  
to chthonic gods and goddesses

the street of dreams a construction zone  
in constant disruption and disrepair  
a site that can't be accessed now

the natural urge of cell and ego  
to live forever in harmony  
morphed into reason's thirst for knowledge

capital's cancerous hunger for growth  
our sense of ethics and justice lost  
in pursuit of unhappiness

our love of language corrected by  
political whips our Muse debauched  
by well-intentioned theory

masked and well-heeled in terrific  
rhetoric meant to give pleasure  
by flogging liberal guilt again.