

by EWA CHRUSCIEL

*These two paragraphs belong to a bigger project of thirty-three paragraphs entitled "A Life." It started as a polemic with Lyn Hejinian's "My Life" but then "A Life" took on its own life and is still writing itself. It is a hybrid text incorporating letters, poems, as well as investigating the issues of identity, mediation, protest, the politics of the Eastern Block, and the sublime.*

*from A LIFE*

*death most reveals itself  
by single shoes.*

Scattered on the street. All the tracks covered. Only the sole still lurks. And there gaping pits. A shoelace still shivers. As a child I would sit in the room and crave for some accident. To be an onlooker. A voyeur. In the face of no ailment, my father would ask me to spit and catch. Here shoes are hung on electricity poles. My American students tell me it used to be a sign that somebody died. Or a secret sign for drug dealers. When we were little we would drive with our parents to the beach in Bulgaria. People would stop us and try to buy lipsticks, chewing-gums, medicines. There is no life without a reimbursement. Once when we were crossing the borders, my father woke me up - there was a dead body on the road. Big moment yellow. I am just on the other side of the mirror. Everything preserved under the glass wall. Every summer when I go to visit Poland the shoes are always there on the road. A veritable ontomania. Reproduction of being. Non-bodily here in relation to an already known there or set of theres. There is no there there. Things break in order to reveal. A shoe would like to burst forth. Find uncertain whole. When my grandma died, I refused to take a photograph with her. Only after the funeral, at the cemetery, my face resurrected. With a serenity. I saw her in a white wedding dress with my grandfather. What a wedding feast! Next day she woke me up at four in the morning and I wrote my first poem.

## *Pentecost 1*

You wrote: that explains a lot. This morning I woke up clapping! Luigi thought it was for him but after about half an hour of non-stop clapping even he thought it was a little weird. I thought that it meant I'd come down with Turret's syndrome or some other mental illness that results in uncontrollable behavior. Thank goodness it was merely the Holy Spirit descending on me in great waves of applause on Whitsuntide.

Miss you, P. PS I've done some preliminary drawings of our villa in rural Poland. The garden is in the shape of a Chopin Nocturne, if you can imagine that. I'm thinking we won't actually need a house. We'll be like Lear and Tom the fool (I can be the fool, it's okay) walking around on the heath saying, "Blow wind and crack your cheeks." Doesn't that sound nice? I hope that being a deranged patriarch will work for you. Actually for some reason the left hand stopped clapping suddenly last night around 10:30, which is pretty damned awkward. The right hand continues but because the left hand isn't meeting it I think I've destroyed my right elbow. At any rate, the whole forearm and hand now dangles sort of uselessly from my damaged elbow and flaps back and forth still desperately trying to clap. I mean, this is some determined (and painful!) Holy Spirit. I wish it would back off for a day or so because this can't be good for my tennis game. You said: I take you so much to heart that your soul is causing large growths on my body where your abundance of spirit exceeds my capacity. It's as if I need to imagine that I'm in love with you in order to maintain a certain energy or feeling to keep me moving forward toward something that has nothing to do with you. You're more like a midwife than a mistress. I say: I am a landscape that you just managed to incarnate. Or a landscape where all orphaned chances take on unabated meaning. So it is perhaps more than just making me or you less lonely. I wade from *kairos* to *kairos*. We crave for seasons, for red-letter days. We wish they took off like cranes, beating electric letters in the air. *We would like only for once to get where we are already.* If we go down into ourselves we find that we possess exactly what we desire. It is not your face that I desire. It is not your body that I desire. Something inside it. Something where I cannot get.