

The Researcher's Book of Her/mes

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Abstract

The Researcher's Book of Her/mes

Laura Burgher

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Associate Professor Ted Hiebert
Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences

I will not reveal my secrets. I'll leave that to the Trickster who rips the curtains away and delights in exposure. I want the mystery to remain. Can there be transparency without revelation? The more I discover, the more the questions persist. The more I write, the more my words break down, disintegrate. I want to find something to hold onto but as soon as I grasp what has solidified it turns to liquid and runs through my fingers. There is a desire to find fascination within the obsession. And to know that whatever is sought will always evade.

THE RESEARCHER'S BOOK OF HER / MES

BY L. BURGHER



PART ONE



The researcher begins

tells the same story

over

again



circles

back

and

back

and

Liber librum aperit
"One book opens another"

*a rock ricochets
the reflection
a ruse
a step lost
on the uptake*

what I read comes back to me in my sleep

The researcher wakes into dream

Enter:

mercury in retrograde

Understanding Me

[astrology.about.com](#) › .

The wonky, revelatory an
Mercury Retrograde, wi

How To Survive M

[galadarling.com/article/](#)

Oct 3, 2014 - Oh, Mercur
collective doorsteps in all

Mercury Retrogra

[astrostyle.com/learn-as](#)

To top it off, Mercury ret
explain in this post about

Mercury Retrogra

[darkstarastrology.com](#)

Mercury Retrograde Ma
warriors, be inspired, rec



Mercury Retrograde - Astrology - About.com

Mercury Retrograde › Mercury Retrograde ▾

sometimes high strangeness of the phenomenon known as
dates for the current year.

Mercury Retrograde! | Gala Darling

How-to-survive-mercury-retrograde/ ▾

retrograde. You are here, AGAIN. You have arrived on our
our messy glory. You are our dreaded but ...

Explained | Astrostyle: Where Astrology ...

ology/mercury-retrograde/ ▾

grade also has what's called a "shadow period" (which we
Mercury's shadow), so you may feel the retrograde ...

January 2015 ~ Re-invention

Astrology Articles ▾

18 to June 11 between 4° and 13° Gemini. Go flame-haired
m your spiritual fire, dance around maypoles ...

Space Time Astrology @AstroSpaceTime · Mar 2

We'll be out of the shadow of **#MercuryRetrograde** in just a few days (MAR 3rd). Be ready to hit the ground running! #astro

👍 5 🌟 4 ...

Robert Ohotto @RobertOhotto · Mar 2

VLOG: The **#MercuryRetrograde** in #Aquarius Integration [/video.php?v=10...](#) the phase ends tomorrow, #astrology

👍 2 🌟 ...

Lizzette Rulon @Lizzettevf204 · Mar 2

Understand **#Mercuryretrograde** in all 12 zodiac signs

futuresobright.com/article/322-me...

👍 15 🌟 ...

Raw Goddess @RawGoddessinc · Mar 1

@starsmoonandsun Yeah this **#MercuryRetrograde** shadow is stronger! Feels like it's gonna keep building up til the #full

👍 2 🌟 2 ...

Raw Goddess @RawGoddessinc · Mar 1

@starsmoonandsun that's that **#mercuryretrograde** shadow is stronger! Feels like it's gonna keep building up til the #fullmoon in a couple of days!

👍 1 🌟 ...

Parents of OMM @ParentsofOMM · Mar 1

Best way to deal with **#mercuryretrograde** is to go WITH it instead of against it j.mp/15MxGrF #vortex #sourceenergy #align

*I do not believe
in astrology*

Enter: longitude
Enter: latitude

*I was born under
the planet Mercury*

Enter: time
Enter: date

*Ruling: travel, commerce
communication*

Enter: sex
Enter: name

**Your opinions are
very strong**

**you are an
independent thinker**

The researcher leans
over sink
stares at
reflection
glint of metal
around the molars

*Is the metal in my teeth
responsible for these changes?
Vaccinations?*

Up until the late 90's mercury was still being used in the amalgams to fill cavities. Various reports state the amount as too small to cause any adverse health effects.

Mercury in vaccinations has
been listed as a cause of autism.

The researcher faces screen

Input: ---

Input: ---

Input: ---

*Reports piled and tipping
over reaching for
Close catch and saved
Made mistake of shifting
Keyboard crashing Cord
caught on Backwards
maneuver put together
again I am messing it all
I am missing*

(How to Survive) Mercury Retrograde

Expect:

- miscommunication
- long delays
- technological meltdowns
- the return of ex lovers or old flames

Survival tips:

- back up your hard drive
- avoid travel
- refrain from decision-making
- double-check, edit, proofread
- don't take anything too seriously
- connect with people from the past
- avoid signing contracts
- don't hire anyone new
- don't begin new relationships

Strange bedfellow. Blinks and lacks. A heart beats.
Breathing in sleep. Close the screen. Does everything begin
at the wake or before it. The transition space. Roll and roll
again.

*As a child I pressed beetles
between sheets. The crunch
of hard shell. Liquid shimmer.*

The beetle busts
itself against the bulb.
Repeatedly.

Type: Mercury

Are these charts
scientific?

Pull the legs apart and spin on the hinge - the needle
digging in

Circles upon circles upon

Is this how I will find him?

Most of the mercury on this planet is found as vapor.
I take a deep breath and wonder

Charts with arrows
I am trying to understand

Volatilization of mercury from the alloys contained in amalgam tooth fillings during cremation of human bodies is a potential source of mercury air emissions.

In the library the researcher glances over to SELF HELP.
The book on the shelf:

Finding Your Element

Library Resources | Course Reserves

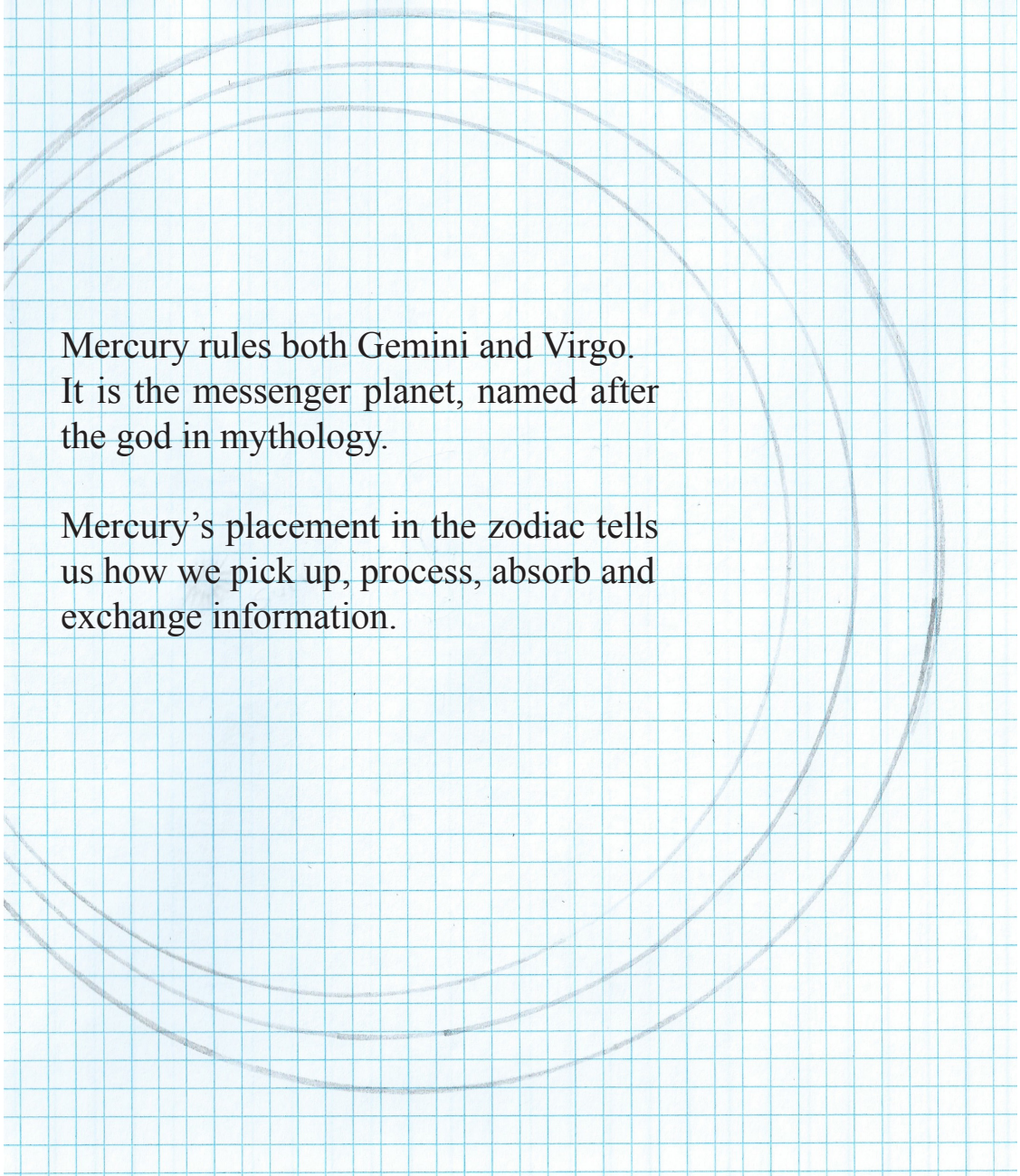
Any	contains	mercury	AND
Any	contains	retrograde	AND
Any	contains		

Search | Clear | Simple Search

0 Results for Articles, Books, and More

Suggestions:

- Make sure all words are spelled correctly.
- Try different keywords.
- Try more general keywords.
- Try fewer keywords.



Mercury rules both Gemini and Virgo.
It is the messenger planet, named after
the god in mythology.

Mercury's placement in the zodiac tells
us how we pick up, process, absorb and
exchange information.

the researcher pulls
plates off a revolving belt

the researcher wonders
prods at pink flesh

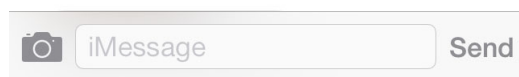
the researcher discovers
a Methylmercury Chart

“it’s just like counting calories”

The researcher wakes to glowing
turns it over



Today 1:40 AM



*I want to be obsessed with
something meaningless
turn
the page to iron
immediately
see in advance
words that come
next
am I you
reincarnate*

*when did you die
how did you live
you take for granted*

*is it always like this
and I failed
to notice*

*find my notebook
afterwards*

lines crossed off

“Mercury, as in, thermometers?”

A friend of the researcher calls to say:

I have found another

I heard it on the radio

They are mining for gold

Poisoning the rivers

with

minuscule globules

in their search to find

infinitesimal

hope for

a future

it is a danger for the
researcher to identify
too strongly with
their subject

Mercury says
Follow me

I'm going
back

I was born
a Gypsy

Mercury is
an absence
a tomorrow
a bridge

take for occasional
blockages
take to lose your
brains

swallow
pill after pill
blue to make you blue
to make you blue



Early risers may mistake Mercury for a star in the morning twilight. Mercury is a planet of orbital peculiarities.

The researcher shuts the book.

Pull out the compass. Spread the legs. Draw the diagram. Around and around.

How many times will I find you?

*We sent a shipment of grain seed dyed pink overseas
with symbols unintelligible to the local populations.*

Pull out the commas. Combine. Combine
again. Divide. The liquid. Take out
the periods.

I have overdone you.

*Whose memory is this? Breaking thin
sheaths of glass, beads leaking out. Poke
it. Poke. The stick stuck. Sun glare glint.
Amphibious.*

Invented by Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit in 1714. The scale was calibrated to the human body, which was believed to be 100 degrees.

No less than ten names are mentioned in the invention of the mercury thermometer.

For many years even Fahrenheit kept his methods secret.

*how does the brain sift
and flutter
information*

silence a distraction

*the researcher edges the pages
apophenia*

*studying these things
obsession*

the researcher sits
in the cold room
waiting



how had I never noticed before



the talaria

swift as any bird

as the researcher turns
the pigeon drops

mis

carries

At the show
crooked-tooth grin
Image across
forearm



The researcher stared

Ensnared

*Fishing wire alive
sliding back into the wall*

I wake

With my tongue
in hand
I beseech you

Strong arm me
into believing

*I wake up backwards
the sound of fluttering*

In India, Quicksilver was believed to be the semen of Shiva. The Tantric adept achieved a mercurial body by systematically imbibing the liquid and inhaling the air of its preparation. Once mercurialized he was assured long life and healing prowess.

Mercury was the Roman equivalent of the Greek god Hermes. He was born to be a Trickster, stealing his brother Apollo's cattle and hiding in a cave. He was born to be a musician, crafting a lyre to pacify his brother's rage. With serpent-entwined staff in hand, he led souls to the Underworld, or back out again.

The association of elements with their planets and symbols appears to have been adopted from Arab cultures during the Middle Ages. Mercury, moving most rapidly across the sky, was associated with the wing-footed messenger. His trickster nature aligned with quicksilver's volatility.

His most common appearance was on the road. Square pillars which bore only his head and phallus were erected on trails and crossways. Food was occasionally left here to satiate needy travelers.

And all of this, before midmorning, would take twenty-two Earth days. If you were to observe the sun's motions from Mercury, you would notice some very strange things. The orbital speed conflicts with the rotational speed in such a way that observers east, climbing slowly for the duration of one and a half Earth months, until it reached noon on Mercury. Just before noon, the Sun would appear to perform a loop in the sky, slowing, set, and then rise once more. Jumping to 270 degrees longitude, the sun would set, rise again, and then set once more. westward at this rate for another half Earth month, and this would signal half a Mercurian year had passed.

I can't stop

everything

intrigues

me I can't

stop can't

stop can I

become what

I seek I

*fill in the gaps but chasms can't teeth
your ancestors you'll forget
the mirror a stilted green
grin the walls in lace
find enough to shroud*

Mercury I am sick

of you I cover

my eyes I cover

my ears when

I take my hands

all I hear

is whispering

the researcher forgot
to leave dusk
descended glow
in artificial bulbs

I am not a poet I'm a thief

I meant to say

we are trying new ways

*I can't take credit
I can only take*

joined at the mouth
begets

*ibis
egret
weasel*

your way into words

*my tongue has always
rested heavy on my teeth*

don't you speak
 don't you girl

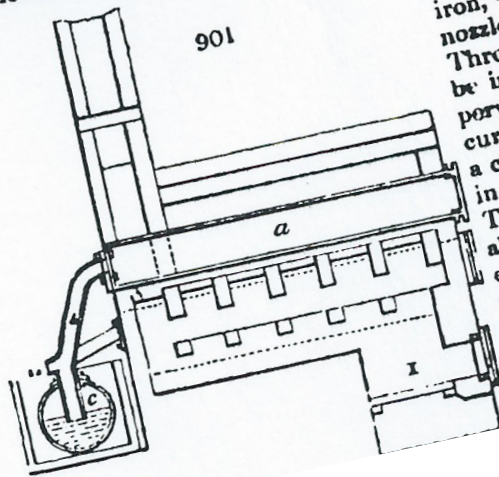
*the researcher has lost
her voice*

she can't even call in sick

MERCURY

them. The bottom of the uppermost retort is protected from the direct impulse of the flame by fire-tiles. The dotted lines $\kappa \kappa$, show the paths of the chimneys which rise at the back ends of the retorts.

In the section, *fig. 901.*, a is the body of the retort; its mouth at the right hand end



is shut, as usual, by a luted iron lid, secured with a cross-bar and screw-bolts; its other end is prolonged by a sloping pipe of cast iron, 4 inches in diameter, furnished with a nozzle hole at L , closed with a screw plug. Through this hole a wire rammer may be introduced, to ascertain that the tube is porous, and to cleanse it from the mercurial soot, when thought necessary. c , is a cross section of the main condenser, shown in a longitudinal section at $c c$, *fig. 902.* This pipe is 18 inches in diameter, and about 20 feet long. At $a a$, &c., the back ends of the retorts are seen, with the slanting tubes $b b$, &c., descending through orifices in the upper surface of the condenser pipe, and dipping their ends just below the water-line $h i$. g , is the cap of a water valve, which removes all risk from

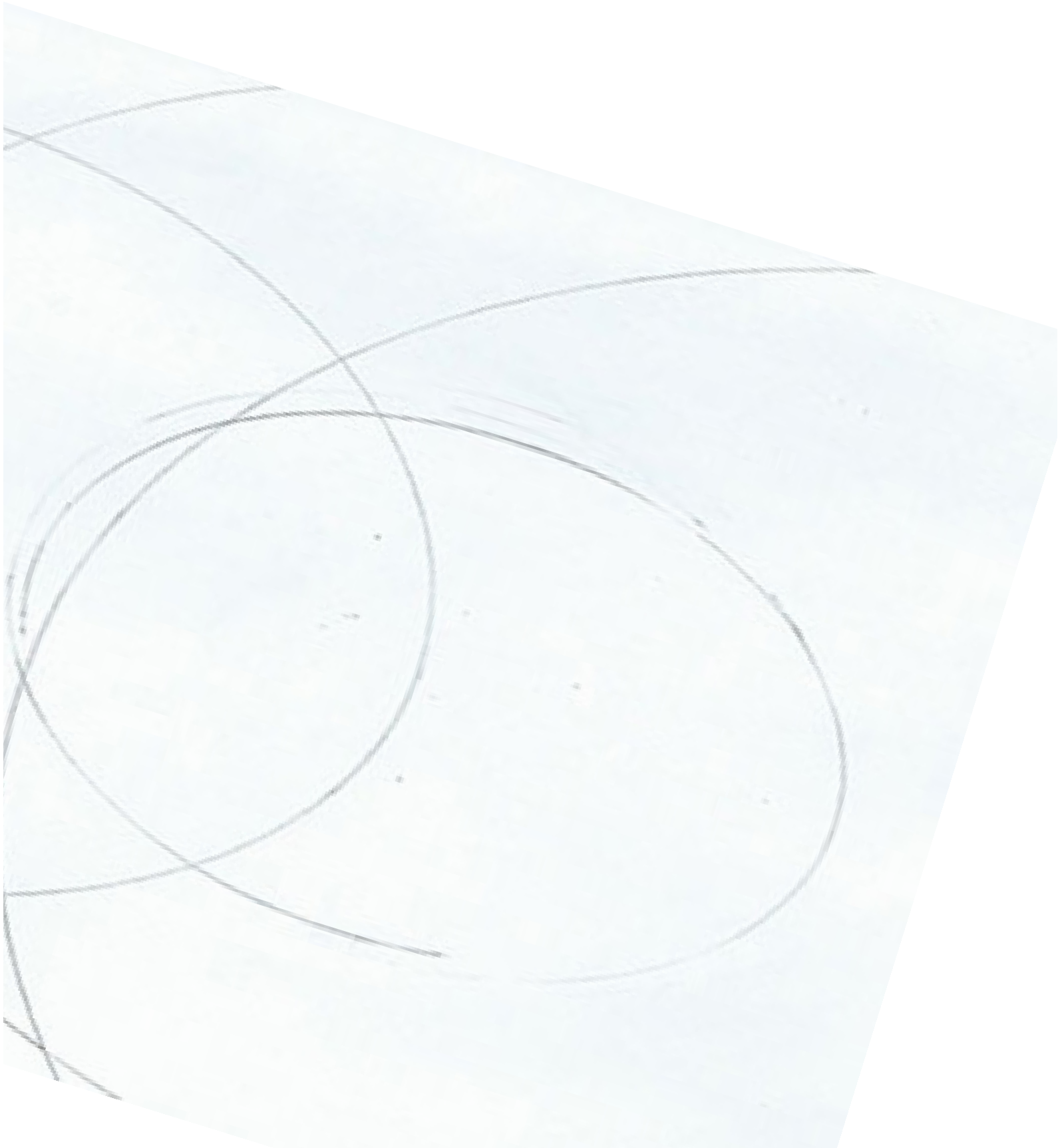
I meant to say

The researcher seeks an analog:

scienti
Stockh
1744.
Euro
cond
Am
lan
lif
hi
P
h
ta
mi
then
nated
of the
the oth
Mercury
or the n
named be
cation of t
cury withou



PART TWO



Ancient alchemical texts were dispersed throughout several books. This required the alchemist to search multiple sources to find all the information they sought. Some say this was a purposeful esoteric practice; one would prove their worthiness of receiving by enduring the difficulties of discovering. Some say it allowed for new material to be added after a book was complete. Many believe this process hid the multiple authorship of these texts. Regardless, this practice allowed for the constant writing and revision of new editions.

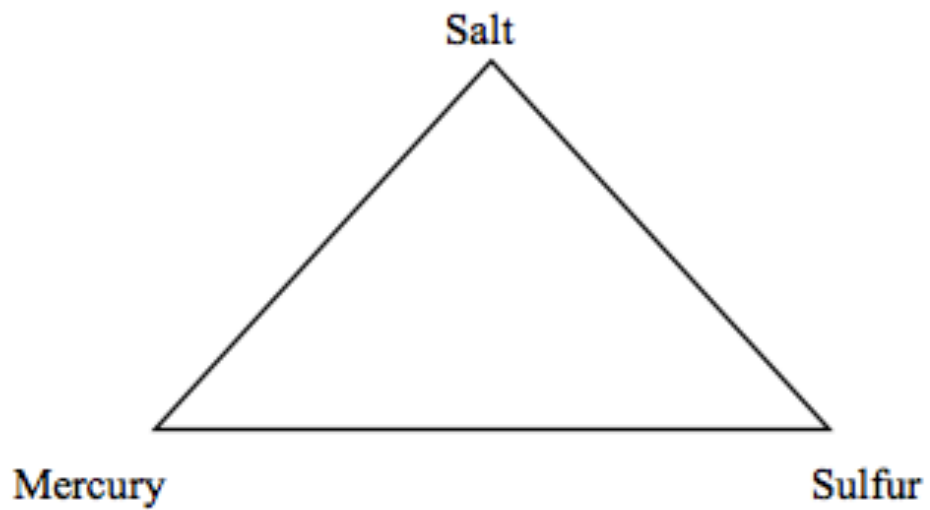
The researcher begins
Tells the same story
over again

Circles back
and back
and back

According to early sixteenth-century physician and alchemist Paracelsus (born Philipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim), three elements make up all matter in the universe; Sulfur, Mercury, and Salt, combined in various proportions.

Sulfur represents the Soul,
Salt the Material Body, and
Mercury, Spirit.

In ancient alchemical texts, the relationship is frequently depicted as the *tria prima*:



The researcher wakes
into dream

*hours spent hunched
over acrid fumes billow
imbibe and still be
followed by shudders*

*best to return before
the dark lumbers
in on hairy paws*

Johann Joachim Becher, in the mid-seventeenth century, believed that all metals contained quicksilver.

One can imagine the sordid history of Mercury (reputed to play male, female, and hermaphroditic roles), traces showing up in combined samples of other metals and gold.

In the words of Professor Kavey: “Mercury is a bit of a slut...”

I follow you back

*wander feverish
pallid streets lit
copious corrugated
trail heads back
to beginning of
ring making
time outside
broken glass
slip through grease
fingers you told me
to shut and I lost
it a rope of bed
clothes hanging
down the brick*

HERMAPHRODITE. [*Ἑρμῆς*, Hermes, and *ἄφροδιτη*, Venus, Gr.] *In sculpture.* "This being," says Millin, "must be considered as a fiction of the imagination, produced by a people who possessed the art of embellishing every thing—the Greeks; who designed, in the hermaphrodite, to represent a union of all the excellencies peculiar to either sex." In point of taste, we must beg leave to differ from the intelligent Frenchman. Although in theory this combination may be exceedingly fine, yet when an attempt is made to place it visibly before us, the result is certainly, to our apprehension at least, any thing but ornamental—it is, indeed, offensive. In ancient mythology the hermaphrodite is said to have proceeded from an amour between Mercury and Venus, as is indicated by the etymology of the name. Venus was esteemed the queen of all beauty; and Mercury, to his personal accomplishments, added wit, knowledge, and, in short, talent of every kind. These blended qualities are then to be supposed to descend upon their common offspring, who thus becomes the representative of all imaginable human perfection*. The painters of the Greek vases, who, by the by, were not at all scrupulous as to the nature of their delineations, made no small use of this ideal personage; and M. Millin speaks of a crouching statue of the same kind in the sculpture gallery of the Louvre, which

Robert Boyle, the father of modern chemistry, spent years ardently pursuing the Philosopher's Stone.

Some alchemists became obsessed. Bernard of Treves sought the Philosopher's Stone from age 14 to 85. He built a lab, travelled the world, squandered his family's fortune, spent a lifetime in pursuit.

Was this a life wasted?

Isaac Newton compiled *Index chemicus*
in an attempt to solve the secrets of alchemy.

*wait until you see the peacock's
tail then you'll know you've got it
right.*

Is this
the real life?

through an observation of disconnected knowledge of which is chaotic and remains because no *principle* of action is discovered, and how many of us know what life is, except precisely in this way? We see it everywhere, "the birds in the air fly with it, the fishes of the sea swim with it, we carry it about with us everywhere," yet we know not what it is.

Let it be merely supposed now, that a recluse proposes to himself the problem, What is Life?—but, as this word is common and is imagined to carry some meaning with it, while yet the student enters upon the study confessing his ignorance, it is thought convenient to assume another name. Let it then be called Mercury, from some remote analogy of this sort; that, if a small portion of this mineral be dashed upon a smooth extended surface, it will separate into an infinity of little globules, each one of which has the entire properties of the whole.

so many that the
cal, not to say
have lived u
I propo
problem,
which I
also th
two
tha
of

few who escape delusion
mythical, beings who are supposed
in dreams.

now, without pretending to solve the
suggest the true difficulty in the study,
take to be this, that the *Alpha* in the art is
Omega, and the *Omega* the *Alpha*, and the
one. Hence the difficulty is something like

of finding the commencement of a circle. An-
er mode of suggesting the difficulty is by saying
at the object is analogous to an attempt to discover
ne place of that force in nature called gravity or
gravitation. In mechanical calculations this force or
power is referred to a certain centre, called the centre
of gravity; yet every one knows that the absolute
centre is a mere point and physically nothing at all,
yet there is no particle of matter free from the influ-
ence of this power, and every, the most infinitesimal
particle, has its own centre. So is it with what the
Hermetic philosophers call their *Mercury*, which they
say is everywhere seen in action, but nowhere in
essence.

I am aware of the fact that some speculative
spiritualists of the present day have much to say of
what they call *imponderables*, but I am not as yet
convinced that any actual thing in the universe can

*He wakes me
in the middle*

singing

the cattle home

*Is this
just fantasy?*

*fear of alacrity
perspicacity
quick
silver begins
feminine
transformative
muscle memory
sharpness of sight*

*why the insistence on lions
when the main point
is obscured*

*green to keep
red to remember*

*alchemy a marriage
between warring factions*

*the staff of snakes
the clash of claw*

*Under the bridge
train*

*look at me
lacking*

*the dog follows
smells sweat*

*I am delirious
think of
self splayed*

*no one recognizes me
as he
thought eyes dull*

*The wind cold blowing
prehistoric leaves*

details lag behind trails

*compare me to the
moon but I can't help
my erratic
rhythms*

I have forgotten
my shoes

winged
with movement

I want to break free
from your lies

*Our brains primed
for obsession
a survival defense
mechanism I come
home back scratched
my face a shade of guilt*

*we know every time
the poison is the panacea
sexually transmitted
the relationship*

*I imagine the word dirt etched
in the bottom of the door*

I want to break free

the ultimate peacock, [Mercury] seduced us all

I know I have to strut

In Waynesboro, environmental contamination from nearby factories has been altering the songs of sparrows and wrens. The birds are recorded singing simpler, shorter, lower-pitched songs. Wrens and sparrows learn their songs from their fathers - a “feat of memory, mimicry, and advanced brain development.” A correlate may exist with the language-function of human brains. The same troubles birds have in learning to sing, children have in learning to speak. Methylmercury exposure, whether in womb or egg, reduces cognitive ability.

*I wake to feathers
box of tiled patterns
snowflake ache
I needed an escape an open
alley paved with popcorn
seeds a bird can't remember
brains it's seen along the dark night
lock us out of our own
rooms for forgetting how
we should try that
again when I've got my
tongue on straight strewn
across the possibilities
of misspeak I can't
remember saying
goodbye how did the night
end without beginning
did I give that away
what have I failed to conceal
paint splattered on drawing
boards*

When dosed with mercury, songbirds seem to change their
choice of mates

*she moves the furniture
around the room she moves
(do you love him does he love you)
chairs and desks pile up
corner boxes overflow*

*she moves around
and around
the room*

With his rod
he charms men
to sleep and

wakes them.

any way the wind blows

doesn't really matter
to me

Come nights
the heat doesn't turn
on
I sleep with sugar
coated
speech

They found us
sticky paw
whisker licked

I'm not a poet
I'm a thief

Black rimmed
white lidded

smoky bones

just throw my remains in the lake when I go

14	6	C Carbon 12.011	7	N Nitrogen 14.007	8	O Oxygen 15.999	17	Cl Chlorine 35.453	18	Ar Argon 39.948
13	5	B Boron 10.811	14	Si Silicon 28.086	15	P Phosphorus 30.974	16	S Sulfur 32.066	35	Br Bromine 79.904
12	13	Al Aluminum 26.982	31	Ga Gallium 69.723	32	Ge Germanium 72.631	33	As Arsenic 74.922	34	Se Selenium 78.971
11	30	Zn Zinc 65.38	49	In Indium 114.818	50	Sn Tin 118.710	51	Sb Antimony 121.760	52	Te Tellurium 127.6
10	47	Ag Silver 107.868	80	Hg Mercury 200.592	82	Pb Lead 207.2	83	Bi Bismuth 208.980	84	Po Polonium [208.982]
9	78	Pt Platinum 195.085	111	Rg Roentgenium [272]	113	Cn Copernicium [277]	114	Fl Flerovium [289]	115	Uup Ununpentium unknown
8	109	Mt Meitnerium [268]	110	Ds Darmstadtium [269]	112	Cu Ununtrium unknown	114	Fl Flerovium [289]	116	Lv Livermorium [298]
7	62	Sm Samarium 150.36	63	Eu Europium 151.964	64	Gd Gadolinium 157.25	65	Tb Terbium 158.925	66	Dy Dysprosium 162.500
6	93	Np Neptunium 237.048	94	Pu Plutonium 244.064	95	Am Americium 243.061	96	Cm Curium 247.070	97	Bk Berkelium 247.070
5	91	Pa Protactinium 231.036	92	U Uranium 238.029	93	Np Neptunium 237.048	94	Pu Plutonium 244.064	95	Am Americium 243.061
4	89	Ac Actinium 227.028	90	Th Thorium 232.0377	91	Pa Protactinium 231.036	92	U Uranium 238.029	93	Np Neptunium 237.048
3	87	Fr Francium [223]	88	Ra Radium [226]	89	Ac Actinium [227]	90	Th Thorium [232]	91	Pa Protactinium [231]
2	85	At Astatine [210]	86	Rn Radon [222]	87	Fr Francium [223]	88	Ra Radium [226]	89	Ac Actinium [227]
1	83	Bi Bismuth [208.980]	84	Po Polonium [209]	85	At Astatine [210]	86	Rn Radon [222]	87	Fr Francium [223]
0	81	Tl Thallium [204.38]	82	Pb Lead [207.2]	83	Bi Bismuth [208.980]	84	Po Polonium [209]	85	At Astatine [210]
0	79	Au Gold [196.966569]	80	Hg Mercury [200.59]	81	Tl Thallium [204.38]	82	Pb Lead [207.2]	83	Bi Bismuth [208.980]
0	77	Ir Iridium [192.222]	78	Pt Platinum [195.084]	79	Au Gold [196.966569]	80	Hg Mercury [200.59]	81	Tl Thallium [204.38]
0	75	Re Rhenium [186.207]	76	Os Osmium [190.234]	77	Ir Iridium [192.222]	78	Pt Platinum [195.084]	79	Au Gold [196.966569]
0	73	Ta Tantalum [180.94788]	74	Hf Hafnium [178.49]	75	Re Rhenium [186.207]	76	Os Osmium [190.234]	77	Ir Iridium [192.222]
0	71	Sc Scandium [44.955912]	72	Ti Titanium [47.88]	73	V Vanadium [50.9415]	74	Cr Chromium [51.9961]	75	Mn Manganese [54.938044]
0	69	Tm Thulium [168.934]	70	Yb Ytterbium [173.055]	71	Lu Lutetium [174.967]	72	Ti Titanium [47.88]	73	V Vanadium [50.9415]
0	67	Ho Holmium [164.930]	68	Er Erbium [167.259]	69	Tm Thulium [168.934]	70	Yb Ytterbium [173.055]	71	Lu Lutetium [174.967]
0	65	Tb Terbium [158.925]	66	Dy Dysprosium [162.500]	67	Ho Holmium [164.930]	68	Er Erbium [167.259]	69	Tm Thulium [168.934]
0	63	Eu Europium [151.964]	64	Gd Gadolinium [157.25]	65	Tb Terbium [158.925]	66	Dy Dysprosium [162.500]	67	Ho Holmium [164.930]
0	61	Pm Promethium [144.913]	62	Sm Samarium [150.36]	63	Eu Europium [151.964]	64	Gd Gadolinium [157.25]	65	Tb Terbium [158.925]
0	59	Pr Praseodymium [140.90765]	60	Nd Neodymium [144.242]	61	Pm Promethium [144.913]	62	Sm Samarium [150.36]	63	Eu Europium [151.964]
0	57	La Lanthanum [138.90547]	58	Ce Cerium [140.12]	59	Pr Praseodymium [140.90765]	60	Nd Neodymium [144.242]	61	Pm Promethium [144.913]
0	55	Cs Cesium [132.90545196]	56	Ba Barium [137.327]	57	La Lanthanum [138.90547]	58	Ce Cerium [140.12]	59	Pr Praseodymium [140.90765]
0	53	I Iodine [126.90547]	54	Xe Xenon [131.29]	55	Cs Cesium [132.90545196]	56	Ba Barium [137.327]	57	La Lanthanum [138.90547]
0	51	Sb Antimony [121.760]	52	Te Tellurium [127.6]	53	I Iodine [126.90547]	54	Xe Xenon [131.29]	55	Cs Cesium [132.90545196]
0	49	In Indium [114.818]	50	Sn Tin [118.710]	51	Sb Antimony [121.760]	52	Te Tellurium [127.6]	53	I Iodine [126.90547]
0	47	Ag Silver [107.8682]	48	Cd Cadmium [112.411]	49	In Indium [114.818]	50	Sn Tin [118.710]	51	Sb Antimony [121.760]
0	45	Rh Rhodium [101.072]	46	Pd Palladium [106.42]	47	Ag Silver [107.8682]	48	Cd Cadmium [112.411]	49	In Indium [114.818]
0	43	V Vanadium [50.9415]	44	Cr Chromium [51.9961]	45	Rh Rhodium [101.072]	46	Pd Palladium [106.42]	47	Ag Silver [107.8682]
0	41	Sc Scandium [44.955912]	42	Ti Titanium [47.88]	43	V Vanadium [50.9415]	44	Cr Chromium [51.9961]	45	Rh Rhodium [101.072]
0	39	K Potassium [39.0983]	40	Ca Calcium [40.078]	41	Sc Scandium [44.955912]	42	Ti Titanium [47.88]	43	V Vanadium [50.9415]
0	37	Rb Rubidium [85.4678]	38	Kr Krypton [83.9048]	39	K Potassium [39.0983]	40	Ca Calcium [40.078]	41	Sc Scandium [44.955912]
0	35	Br Bromine [79.904]	36	Kr Krypton [83.9048]	37	Rb Rubidium [85.4678]	38	Kr Krypton [83.9048]	39	K Potassium [39.0983]
0	33	As Arsenic [74.9216]	34	Se Selenium [78.9718]	35	Br Bromine [79.904]	36	Kr Krypton [83.9048]	37	Rb Rubidium [85.4678]
0	31	Ga Gallium [69.723]	32	Ge Germanium [72.6305]	33	As Arsenic [74.9216]	34	Se Selenium [78.9718]	35	Br Bromine [79.904]
0	29	Cu Copper [63.546]	30	Zn Zinc [65.38]	31	Ga Gallium [69.723]	32	Ge Germanium [72.6305]	33	As Arsenic [74.9216]
0	27	Co Cobalt [58.933195]	28	Ni Nickel [58.6934]	29	Cu Copper [63.546]	30	Zn Zinc [65.38]	31	Ga Gallium [69.723]
0	25	Mn Manganese [54.938044]	26	Fe Iron [55.845]	27	Co Cobalt [58.933195]	28	Ni Nickel [58.6934]	29	Cu Copper [63.546]
0	23	V Vanadium [50.9415]	24	Cr Chromium [51.9961]	25	Mn Manganese [54.938044]	26	Fe Iron [55.845]	27	Co Cobalt [58.933195]
0	21	Sc Scandium [44.955912]	22	Ti Titanium [47.88]	23	V Vanadium [50.9415]	24	Cr Chromium [51.9961]	25	Mn Manganese [54.938044]
0	19	K Potassium [39.0983]	20	Ca Calcium [40.078]	21	Sc Scandium [44.955912]	22	Ti Titanium [47.88]	23	V Vanadium [50.9415]
0	17	Cl Chlorine [35.453]	18	Ar Argon [39.948]	19	K Potassium [39.0983]	20	Ca Calcium [40.078]	21	Sc Scandium [44.955912]
0	15	P Phosphorus [30.973762]	16	S Sulfur [32.065]	17	Cl Chlorine [35.453]	18	Ar Argon [39.948]	19	K Potassium [39.0983]
0	13	Al Aluminum [26.9815386]	14	Si Silicon [28.0855836]	15	P Phosphorus [30.973762]	16	S Sulfur [32.065]	17	Cl Chlorine [35.453]
0	11	B Boron [10.811]	12	Mg Magnesium [24.304]	13	Al Aluminum [26.9815386]	14	Si Silicon [28.0855836]	15	P Phosphorus [30.973762]
0	9	F Fluorine [18.9984032]	10	Ne Neon [20.1797]	11	B Boron [10.811]	12	Mg Magnesium [24.304]	13	Al Aluminum [26.9815386]
0	7	N Nitrogen [14.00643]	8	O Oxygen [15.999]	9	F Fluorine [18.9984032]	10	Ne Neon [20.1797]	11	B Boron [10.811]
0	5	B Boron [10.811]	6	C Carbon [12.011]	7	N Nitrogen [14.00643]	8	O Oxygen [15.999]	9	F Fluorine [18.9984032]
0	3	Li Lithium [6.941]	4	Be Beryllium [9.0122]	5	B Boron [10.811]	6	C Carbon [12.011]	7	N Nitrogen [14.00643]
0	1	H Hydrogen [1.00794]	2	He Helium [4.002602]	3	Li Lithium [6.941]	4	Be Beryllium [9.0122]	5	B Boron [10.811]



Cross double
cross over cross
out
~~Leave~~
~~Linger~~

Resist and release

An urge to

Report on Research

forget line and space
sentence between song
frantic rhythm

forgo thorough
examination

flag
dogear

The researcher turns

off kilter
off place
out of

twinge

An opening

which
suggests

sameness

notate
marginate

secondary to mercury poisoning. We have found that a psychostimulant such as methylphenidate, starting at 10 mg bid and titrating to therapeutic effect, can help treat mercury-related apathy.

We did not give Mr. F a psychostimulant, however, fearing it would worsen his impulsive behavior and disordered sleep. Also, more effectively managing Mr. F's diabetes should improve his depression.

DISCHARGE CHELATION CHALLENGE

Mr. F's suicidal thoughts continued intermittently. Chelation was tried again with succimer, 1,000 mg tid for 5 days and bid for 5 more days, but the agent caused severe nausea without significantly decreasing serum mercury. He declined outpatient chelation.

After 2 weeks, Mr. F denied suicidal thoughts and said he felt physically better. He was discharged on venlafaxine, 300 mg/d, for his depressive symptoms; and metformin, 1,000 mg/d, glipizide, 10 mg bid, and rosiglitazone, 4 mg/d, to control his blood glucose. We arranged for medication management at a community mental health center. Mr. F was also told to visit the hospital's outpatient clinic for endocrine follow-up but has not returned for 18 months.

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How would you have handled this case?

Visit www.CurrentPsychiatry.com to input your answers and compare them with those of other readers.

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Related resources

► Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Information about toxic substances and diseases they may cause. www.atsdr.cdc.gov

DRUG BRAND NAME
Dimercaprol • BAL-1
Glipizide • Glucotrol
Metformin • Glucophage
Methylphenidate • Ritalin

DISCLOSURE

Dr. Mathews
is a fellow in
Dr. Hauser
Hoffman I
Alkhatib L
Co., Chicago

CASES THAT TEST YOUR SKILLS A suicidal injection obsession

- Mr. F's presenting symptoms suggest:
- depression
- a psychotic disorder
- another medical condition

The authors' observations

Mr. F's depressed mood, hopelessness, concentration problems, psychomotor retardation, and suicidal thoughts suggest major depressive disorder. Depression or a delirium secondary to diabetes may account for his referential ideas.

FURTHER HISTORY ONE SHOT AT SATISFACTION

Over the following week, Mr. F becomes more talkative as the psychiatry staff develops a therapeutic rapport. He tells his treatment team that he feels urges to self-inject liquids he finds in his hospital room, such as shower gel and beverages. Mr. F tells us that approximately 2 years ago, he tried to kill himself by swallowing boric acid. After 6 weeks in intensive care, he dislodged a effects resolved and he no longer appeared suicidal. The staff at that time prepared to discharge Mr. F when, while left alone in his room, he disassembled a wall-mounted sphygmomanometer, disassembled it, and broke open the mercury tube. He then injected about 3 mL of mercury into his intravenous port and swallowed another 3 mL.

A nurse who checked on Mr. F minutes after the

incident did not notice the sphygmomanometer was missing. He showed the broken device to the nurse, saying, "Look what I did." When the nurse responded, "I was just sitting here alone, the thing on the wall I thought to myself, I tried to do that." The hospital viewed the episode as another suicide attempt. Staff immediately began chelation therapy with dimercaprol, 10 mg/kg every 8 hours for 5 days, then 10 mg/kg every 12 hours for 2 weeks. Within 24 hours of ingesting mercury, Mr. F developed shortness of breath, tachycardia (104 BPM), a fever (101.8°F), and had GI complaints. Increased blood urea nitrogen, increased creatinine, and decreased urination suggested declining renal function. He developed a pruritic rash over his back and mid skin loss on his soles.

Mr. F's mercury levels were 20.8 mg/dL (serum) and 216 mg/dL (urine) 36 hours after ingestion, and 24.8 mg/dL (serum) and 397 mg/dL (urine) after chelation. Serum mercury >5 mg/dL is usually symptomatic. Approximately 72 hours after the incident, most pulmonary, renal, and dermal manifestations of mercury toxicity began to improve. Mr. F was discharged after 21 days. He was diagnosed with major depression and started on sertraline, 150 mg/d. **The best feeling.** Two years later, Mr. F tells us he has attempted suicide at least six times. He has injected mercury throughout his lung vasculature and a 9.6 mg/dL serum mercury reading confirms he has injected mercury. His penile urethra is ulcerated to check for mercury deposits, but he ultimately is diagnosed with gout. During our evaluation, Mr. F admits that "the calmest, best feeling I have ever had" was while injecting mercury, yet he fears the incident has caused permanent physical and mental damage. He describes his desire to self-inject liquids as "impulses" triggered by twice-daily subcutaneous insulin use. For this reason, he has stopped taking insulin against his doctor's advice.

*he broke the glass
upon the nurse leaving
in seconds he smashed
the glass hypodermic
he raised the needle
to face
intoxicate
raised metallic
to integrate into
muscle
into matter
into mind
don't*

*would you diagnose?
mental*

Paracelsus advocated treating disease with doses of mercury. This became the standard treatment for syphilis until 1909. The entire time it was known to be a poison.

*what if the revision
resisted*

*what if the revision
resided
in two homes*

*what if the revision
outlasted
the original*

*when we lose
nothing lives*

to know you resist

mark my mercurial words

Lengthwise

What can a single human contain

*Once mercury crosses the blood barrier
There's no escaping the brain*

Box 1
Neurocognitive symptoms that may suggest mercury poisoning

- Emotional lability
- Excessive shyness
- Headaches
- Hearing loss
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Lack of ambition
- Lack of sexual desire
- Loss of confidence
- Memory loss
- Nervousness
- Neuromuscular changes (including weakness, muscle atrophy, muscle twitching)
- Performance deficits in cognitive function tests
- Polyneuropathy
- Tremor of hands
- Visual field defects

Source: Reference 1

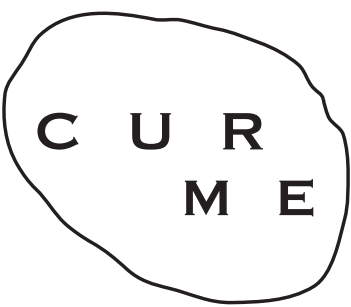
From Page 72
actions suggest:
ive, self-destructive behavior
ance use disorder
ne personality disorder

ations
changes and serum mercury
ing. He shows numerous
symptoms (Box 1) as well
can result from heavy-
insulin shots bring on
pulsive and repeti-
ia, and transient
nality disorder.
long-term per-
s neurotoxic
g behaviors
disorders.

Serum mercury $> 2 \text{ mg/dL}$ can cause subtle, enduring neurotoxic effects, including tremor, dizziness, shortness of breath, blurry vision, decreased visual fields, depression, memory loss, and irritability.³ Serum mercury rarely exceeds 1.5 mg/dL without direct exposure. Irritability, depressive symptoms, and renal manifestations emerge when urine mercury reaches 200 to $1,000 \text{ mg/dL}$. Renal, respiratory, and GI effects are seen at $1,000$ to $2,000 \text{ mg/dL}$.
Means of exposure. Vapor inhalation is the most common means of elemental mercury exposure.⁴ Elemental mercury used in manufacturing vaporizes at room temperature. Orally ingested elemental mercury is poorly absorbed from the GI tract, mostly passes unabsorbed, and is toxic only at high doses. Injected elemental mercury is poorly absorbed but can cause minimal and immunologic effects. The psychiatric literature describes some 200 cases of mercury poisoning,⁴ but offers little information on effects or long-term follow-up.
heavy-metal poisoning in the differ-

Mercury contains the cure.
It has all along.

M E R C U R Y
M E R C U R Y



Those infected by mercury experience a narrowing of the field of vision.

Children affected with Minamata Disease have difficulty speaking.

The animal effects were severe enough in cats that they came to be called “dancing cat fever.”

I am starting to lose my tongue.

What I meant to say was

*The researcher knows
to solve
to hold*

texts are transmissions

when the “hatters” returned home
they carried a “paternal influence”

Mercury must die before they can live

maybe mercurial
but not an excuse
to vacillate
one to the other

time to find
direction
indiscrete

On the Vapors

swing below lower than the bridge
to avoid

when the Trickster steps across
the border

Synchronicity begins

*I must come
to grips with this
attraction*



it goes both ways



(I wasn't looking)

Similitude sanctions
irrevocable advances
disregarding time
lost in contemplation
frame this argument
as indecent to deny (identity)(identify)
any harboring effects
of regurgitation

later this will
surface

trans
mutated

to turn one
into another
takes the right
mental state

do you have it
in you

Imagine him
cold in the
hole knowing
he will catch
the glimpse
of elusiveness
not the planet
so much as
the possibility

We are all
looking for
the glimpse
we swore we
saw from
the corner
and can never
shake

plan to place
this stack here
and look away
dragged
daggered

I am

trying to capture

*trying to make
whole*

If you built a bath of mercury and jumped in,
you would break all your bones.

What if every word could come
sullied, fully formed, whole
in my large sticky mouth

Have your lips ripped?
Dis-figured?

poetry stares blankly
at blinking screen

researcher in tact
in tow

Rob
for “female complaints”

no one will know
your glittering
secret

a fluid self that is constantly forgetting

Her/Me

a fluid self that is constantly shifting

the burden of esoteric theories

Mercury bleeds

the researcher:
an instrument of mixing

the barometer:
teasing into imagination
the pressure of the atmosphere

if enough mercury is added
the air around us is discovered

uncover the air
uncover your ears
open your eyes,

look up to the skies

and see

Mercury's eccentricities in orbit prompted the creation of a fake planet, a ghost sibling, Vulcan.

In 1878, James C. Watson, a renowned astronomer from the University of Michigan, fell victim to its grasp. After believing he had spotted the planet, zipping through the sky during a total solar eclipse, he became obsessed in his pursuit to verify its existence.

He literally became a man with tunnel vision, and built a shaft, 24 feet deep, to house a telescope he planned to use to track Vulcan in broad daylight, during the frigid Midwest winter.

In November 1880, James C. Watson died from complications of pneumonia.

In November 1915, while sitting at his desk in Berlin, Albert Einstein explained Vulcan away. The apparition was merely caused by a warping in the fabric of space-time.

It was Mercury all along.

Officer (EHO) at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted an investigation to find the missing mercury in the chlor-alkali industry [7].

The path of the investigation

An employee of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggested that the EHO contact the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for information on Vulcan Chemicals' mercury balance sheet. Vulcan Chemical was the only chemical company to find its missing mercury. Upon request, the Wisconsin DNR provided the EHO with Vulcan Chemical's annual mercury balance sheet that reported their mercury losses in their production for the year that the mercury balance was done. Wisconsin DNR in 2003 with their wastewater permit re-issuance application. This information the realization that mercury residue may be in products produced by the mercury cell chlor-alkali process. A representative of the Chlorine in mercury cell chlor-alkali process in a telephone interview that the manufacturing process mercury grade caustic soda production sheets [8].

According to an...
duced by Vulc...
and hydroch...
tose corn...
conduc...
high...
th...

Background

Chlorine and caustic soda are produced at chlor-alkali plants using mercury cells that is mercury free and more energy-efficient. Worldwide there are approximately fifty mercury cell chlor-alkali plants in operation [1]. Of those there are eight in the United States (US) [2]. In 2003 the EPA reported in the Federal Register that on average approximately seven tons of mercury were missing from each plant in the year 2000 [3]. These chlor-alkali plants

...
the...
ener by...
enhance pr...
from a corn w...
steps in a produ...
starch products, and...
are required to make H...
chloric acid, alpha-amylase...
ter aid, powdered carbon...
magnesium sulfate [11]. The ca...
ric acid are used throughout the m...
the pH of the product line. The pro...
corn and the comstarch molecule is then...
ferent products by various methods that...
bases, sodium hypochlorite and enzymes [1...
mercury grade caustic soda, hydrochloric acid, or...
hypochlorite (derived from mercury grade chor...
chemicals) be used in the milling process, it seemed plau...
sible to the EHO that mercury may well end up in the final...
product - HFCS. A limited screening of HFCS samples for

mercury was initiated...
found low levels of

To determine...
ucts, the EH...
to collect...
collabr...
mer...
sh

http://www

Me...
Produ...
Renee Dufault
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Abstract

Mercury cell chlor-alkali products are used to produce thousands of other products including food ingredients such as citric acid, sodium benzoate, and high fructose corn syrup. High fructose corn syrup is used in food products to enhance shelf life. A pilot study was conducted to determine if high fructose corn syrup samples were found to contain levels of mercury ranging from below a detection limit of 0.005 to 0.570 micrograms mercury per gram of high fructose corn syrup. Average daily consumption of high fructose corn syrup is about 50 grams per person in the United States. With respect to total mercury exposure, it may be necessary to account for this source of mercury in the diet of children and sensitive populations.

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Every year

Mercury goes missing

The Researcher's Notes

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- p.18** United States Environmental Protection Agency
Mercury Study Report to Congress
- p.32** Strom, Robert G. and Ann L. Sprague *Exploring Mercury*
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Through the Mouth of Mercury
A queer, liminal, alchemical poetics

L. Burgher

Part 1: Liminality, or, the hypnagogic imagination

Poetic language allows for a multiplicitous and liminal sense of a self in transit.
– Ely Shipley

I think poems are born out of all the interstices and liminal spaces, large and small. I'm always writing in airports. My poems are born out of borderlands. The spaces between. Obviously between gender, but other betweenities too – the moment a relationship shifts from one thing to another, or when something that used to be called this is now called this. – Oliver Bendorf

Hear the context. Context my life. Context my body. The way I fall asleep at night. It often begins in the liminal space before dreams. Or when dreams wear slowly into reality. The images in this space: hypnagogic. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, “we do not contemplate the hypnagogic image but are fascinated by it,” (63). The hypnagogic overlays the world of senses, intersperses dream into reality. In these liminal spaces, before consciousness disappears, I hear voices. Startling and strange, these lines and phrases are enough to shake me awake. Moments of pure fascination, I do not consciously seek these words. They settle upon me in the liminal zone. At times I wonder how much control I have over these hypnagogic voices. If hypnagogic phenomena, similarly to dreams, are a compendium of processing, could I subject myself to sounds, images, and ideas throughout the day, specifically with the aim of affecting what I may hear?

Liminal spaces have always fascinated me. I frequently write in moments of literal transit. On buses, in airports, walking. The act of travel invites a deep excitement reserved for little else.

I am writing towards a liminal poetics. Towards, because I can never arrive. By the nature of its liminality I can only ever pass through. Briefly. Momentarily. A liminal poetics allows for a queer discourse. An in-between space. A neither here nor there. A restriction of borders and an elusion of binary.

The liminal zone is a queer zone. In transit. Always traveling. A movement without settling. An elliptical orbit. An irregular orbit. Not the traditional predictability of seasons. A space the Trickster sneaks through. Plays with expectations. Disrupts with images like hallucinations. A visual display that twists and turns and unsettles. Vertigo. I write to circle aimlessly around something that cannot be pinned down. My aim is not apparent but it is there. Shrouded.

Sleep evades me in the liminal space of insomnia. Peter Schwenger sees insomnia as both evocation and invitation to write, “if sleeplessness comes with writing, writing also demands sleeplessness” (63). As an insomniac child I lived in liminal spaces of imagination. In the absence of dream, I enacted scenes from my bed. Many nights I dreamt awake that I sat in the cabin of a boat traversing a vast body of water. I frequently played games of travel, existing doubly in the liminal space of transit within imagination. Similarly to Anzaldúa, “I preferred the world of the imagination to the death of sleep...” (87).

There was another level to my liminal existence: I was always somebody else. I played games with embodiment. With identity. Changing names, ages, and genders. I was fascinated with androgyny. Memories of my false identities almost overshadow memories of my bodily lived experience. They all coexist within the same liminal space.

The act of my imagination brought all manner of people, places, and stories into my world. Sartre finds incantatory powers within the act of the imagination. By imagining the object of one's desire, there is an ability to take possession of it (177). I ached to inhabit these other bodies and places and held the bizarre belief that through my imagination I could do so. I read books in an attempt to find myself between the words.

As I grew older my imaginative play was translated to the page. To write then, was always to write an autobiography of an imagined self. The book is "at once a reality of the virtual and a virtuality of the real" (Bachelard *Reverie* 24). Writing allowed me to seamlessly embody other characters and identities and write with their voices.

Bachelard's imagination is essential to poetry, in which "...it is impossible to receive the psychic benefit of poetry unless these two functions of the human psyche – the function of the real and the function of the unreal – are made to co-operate" (*Poetics of Space* xxxv). My imaginary life was real in more ways than my lived one. In a lack of sleep I wrote, and this writing served to awaken.

Writing is also shifting states of consciousness. I write in delirium, dreaming into realities, fueled by emotion. According to Bert States and his poetics of dreaming, dreams work from a point of emotion, the dream then makes associations, and acts as "metaphor in motion" (30). One image leads to the next, and the loose narrative that emerges is an associative one. The emotion precedes the images and the visible portion of the dream is the manifestation of these images (26). The visible portion on the page, a manifestation of the emotion.

Part 2: Silence, or, speaking through someone else's mouth

Poetry increasingly seems to be a village full of explainers so today I will hide myself in public in this impossible embrace. — Eileen Myles

my ambiguous embodiment requires readings and re-readings, and invites misreadings and rewritings... to be queer is to be queried. — Gr Keer

Writing allowed me to be silent and heard simultaneously. As a child I found it difficult to communicate, especially in regards to strong emotions. My lack of coherent speech was often problematic, misconstrued. I stood, body stretched so my toes wouldn't cross the carpet line of my bedroom, to drop explanatory notes in articulated prose to the floor below. I was a well-behaved child but for small rebellions, namely directed at an insistence to socialize me as 'girl.' I would return home with pond-mucked tennis shoes. The make-up kit became clown face paint, an unintentional mockery of gender presentation.

Identity was always a space of resistance to expectations. I never wanted to be "read" a certain way and have an identity imposed upon me from outside. I came up with strategies to confuse readings, dressing in clothing that did not represent me in any meaningful way. I wanted control over the ways I was being misread. I wanted to define how my body was viewed by the world. I spent so much time in trying to claim my own readings that I lost all energy towards claiming my own sense of how I wanted to exist in the world. I was always in a liminal space between expectations and reality. I incited the viewer to a double take. Circle back. Look again. I am resistant to a single reading.

Space is important for my poems. White space. Emptiness. Silence. Poetry makes sense as dispersed fragments. Silence, combined with secrecy becomes a strategy. In *Opacity of the Closet*, de Villiers looks at Barthes's "Silence" as a tactic to outplay the "oppressions, intimidations, the dangers of speaking" (82). de Villiers describes the conflation of Barthes's "boy loving" and writing. One does not exist without the other (69). What would it look like to map this on to any type of desire? To the desire of an expressed identity? Or to the conflicting desires to be read and unreadable? de Villiers sees Barthes's desire for the "Neutral" as a queer desire, "to give imprecise answers to precise questions... an indirect way of demystifying the question... every question can be read as a situation of questions, of power, of inquisition" (87). If, as Keer asserts, "to be queer is to be queried," how might secret-keeping be a response? Baudrillard takes up the political and economic implications of sharing secrets, when he looks at the power inherent in the withheld secret:

Everything that can be revealed lies outside the secret. For it is not a hidden signified, nor the key to something; it circulates through and traverses everything that can be said, just as seduction flows beneath the obscenity of speech. It is the opposite of communication and yet shares something with it. Only at the cost of remaining unspoken does it maintain power, just as seduction functions from never being spoken or desired (159).

For Baudrillard, it is this unspeakable, incommunicable quality of the secret that provides its "ritual power of exchange" (159). When the secret becomes secrecy it is no longer containable. A secret creates a space in opposition. An unknowable. Writing is a

form of secrecy – whether or not it contains any secrets in their finite forms. The content of the secret does not matter as much as the essence of secrecy. In some ways, the secret is in response to a culture of confession. Foucault asserts that one is always called on to confess, particularly in regards to sexuality.

One confesses in public and in private, to one's parents, one's educators, one's doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell to anyone else, the things people write books about.

One confesses – or is forced to confess (59).

How to write in such a way that doesn't confess, but rather creates a space for the awareness of a knowledge purposefully being withheld? Can silence work as a tactic in written form? Is there a way to purposefully withhold information in a world that demands full disclosure at all times? Can one write in such a way to honor the secret and the mysterious, and not give in to the impulse of confession? Foucault believes that there are multiple silences, "there is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say... There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses" (27).

Utilizing Foucault's many silences, Sedgwick explores the notion of an "open-secret structure" (22) and how "'closetedness' is itself a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence...In the vicinity of the closet, even what *counts* as a speech act is problematized on a perfectly routine basis" (3). Freddie Mercury, who "had a twinkle in his eye and a mischievous streak... secretive and shy" (Jones 32), frequently used this tactic of an "open-secret." His lack of open disclosure of sexuality was given an

excessive amount of page-space in a recent biography. But I find his response to certain assertions about his lyrics performing a 'coming out' maneuver, brilliant in a sassy sort of way. Mercury said, "Does it mean this, does it mean that is all anybody wants to know. Fuck them, darling. I will say no more than what any decent poet would tell you if you dared ask him to analyze his work: If you see it, dear, then it's there" (Jones 146).

But of course there is a difference between silence as strategy and letting others speak for you. If though, we are to constantly be defined by those who read us, if our identities, and gendering and genre-ing is forever out of the hands of the writer, then must we let the reader speak for us? Whose mouth do I speak with? Who speaks 'me' through them? Poetry can be a way for me to remain silent *between* what can be read, is read, is allowed to be read in all of those spaces.

Part 3: Mercury, or, alchemy, synchronicity, ubiquity, and obsession

*We are now come to treat of mercury and having looked up and down
for him... we quickly discovered him, and then we found he was
everywhere. — Nicholas Culpepper*

In "Mercury Falling," Allison B. Kavey's descriptions of ancient alchemical mercury dismantles sex and gender binaries. Kavey explains that,

Mercury is essential to undermining... these binaries because of its refusal to remain on only one side of each divide, and its capacity to be on both at the same time. It thoroughly destabilizes the validity of a world model that depends upon adherence to categories defined by opposing characteristics to achieve balance

through the creation of pairs (229).

Ancient texts use the examples of a chemical marriage to explain the processes of alchemy. These texts use wide-reaching metaphors to draw connections with the natural world and the processes of the alchemist. All of the elements are gendered, and mercury is the only one that can switch its gender to accommodate certain chemical reactions.

Examination of binary opposition thus becomes central to the alchemical process; rather than avoiding mercury, or relegating it to the ranks of the freakish and the powerless as if its hermaphroditic nature were monstrous, alchemy assigns it the starring role in the creation of the stone (Kavey 223).

Kavey is careful to mention that this world-view was in the process of shifting to accommodate fixed ideas of gender as more of the human body was scientifically accounted for. During this period, mercury was elevated and looked at as an important element for its effect on the other elements.

Consequently, mercury “is not the end product, but instead the agent that allows other metals to engage with and reveal their true natures” (Kavey 229). This sentiment aligns well with the idea of the mythological Trickster. According to Thomassen, “Tricksters are trained in upsetting the social order by reversing values” and perform a “socially didactic function” (105). In their process of acting as mirror, the Trickster steps in to teach lessons in what may appear as some of the cruelest, most mischievous and deceptive ways. But while Tricksters “play with words and images, they disregard the real nature of their own acts” (104). Tricksters enjoy the game, but aren’t really in it for

themselves. They don't always understand their own repercussions. Words and images fall where they may.

The Trickster is also the mythological personification of synchronicity: those moments of coincidence that hold such a strong personal resonance as to no longer feel like pure chance. When the same word or image appears in uncanny ways, that's said to be the realm of The Trickster. The Trickster, also imagined as Hermes or Mercury, granted the power of speech, and took it away. Additionally, "Mercury was given the name 'Nebo,' Mesopotamian God of wisdom and writing —Nebo was the scribe who kept the book of fate" (Strom and Sprague 2). I have succumbed to this mythology.

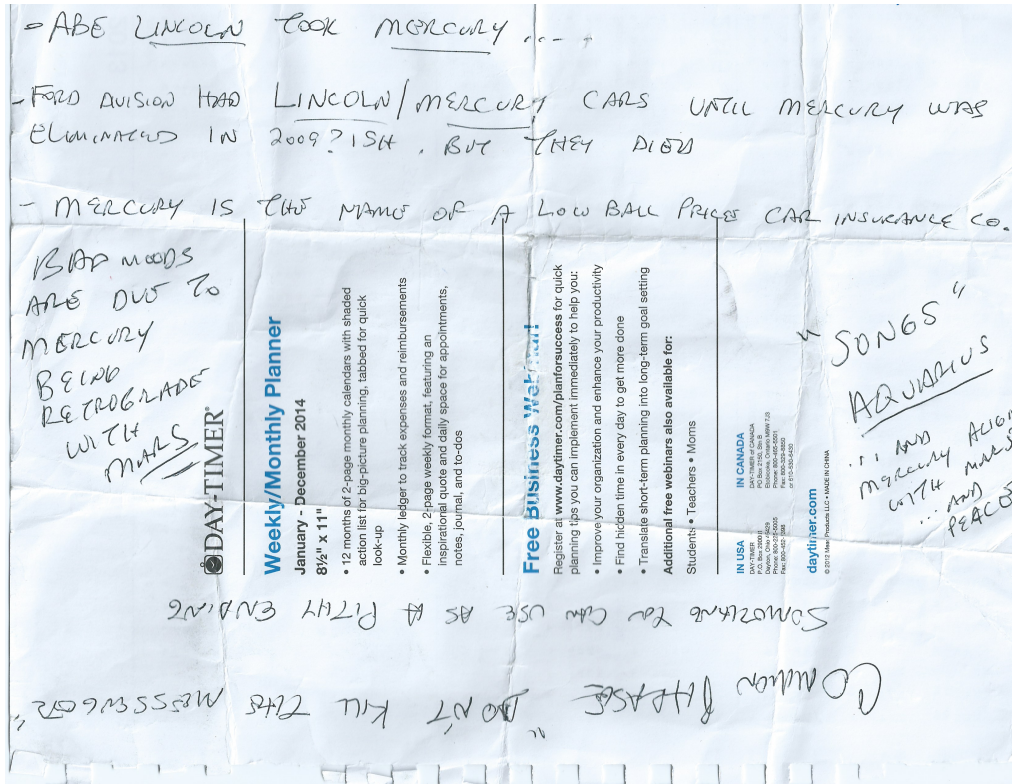
"Mercury turning retrograde" a belief in astrology that has seeped into the popular imagination, is a common phenomenon in which mercury's orbit appears to reverse. Mercury reigns supreme over communication, so any failure is blamed on this reversal, from breaking computers to break-ups. The thought occurred to me, contrary to what most believe, could mercury turning retrograde benefit poets?

As I began to research this phenomenon, mercury in all its forms started to grab hold. I became an investigator, trying to follow each line of mercury as far as it held my interest. Could I inundate myself so thoroughly with mercury that it would infiltrate my dreams? Would mercury cross the blood-brain barrier and start to poison me? This was as much an exercise in research as one in obsession. As a child who had suffered from unwilled and uncontrolled obsessions, and an adult bewildered by synchronicity, I wondered if I could create an obsession. Could I become a researcher of my own

circling mind? Could this inundation reveal something about the clinging brain? Could I imbibe the poison to distill the cure?

Humans have been fascinated by all of the mercuries since their discovery, so it didn't take long. Mercury was suddenly everywhere and everything. I found connections cropping up between all of the mercuries. And as I started to talk to people about mercury, they started to bring mercury back to me. I received text messages and links. Posts to my Facebook wall. Pictures. The more I wrote about mercury, the more it appeared in my life. My fictional existence was starting to encroach on my lived one. The trickster sought me out, in the only way the trickster does, unexpectedly. My life became so imbued with the essence of this project, it began to feel redundant to write about it.

Mercury became an odd and unanticipated way of connecting with people in the world. I became acutely aware of the possibilities of writing as an art of lived experience. People began to contribute to my project and their images and ideas were incorporated into the text. In one meeting with my father, while explaining what I was working on, he held his finger to his lips while he removed a paper from his bag and started scribbling furiously.



One evening, a friend and I left from a tense and awkward encounter in a karaoke bar. We both felt more sullen than anyone should ever feel after just leaving karaoke, but we had been dissatisfied with both the musical selection and the company. We got into my car, feeling the frustration of having been moved by the spirit of karaoke with no release. I wanted a song to come on the radio that would lift our spirits. As soon as I turned on the radio, "Bohemian Rhapsody" began to play, right at the beginning. We held air microphones to our faces and screamed the lyrics until we were grinning.

Many of these moments didn't make it into the actual manuscript but I see them

instead as functioning as a living document, along and beside the one in print. These moments became just as much the project, if not more so. Writing is not only an embodied experience, but a lived one. I anticipate the project of mercury will persist after I have finished the manuscript, and will continue to surprise me.

This is a history that lingers on the liminal. That vibrates above or next to the history we regard as our own. Akin to a hologram. The dream that overlays the room as hypnagogic images surface before the eyes. This is a research that does not wait passively to be found, to be discovered, like the lover in wait. This is a history that forces itself upon lived existence. Makes itself known repeatedly. Takes a step off the page, out of the imagination, into the bodily, lived experience. This history seduces the historian. "At times when we believe we are studying something, we are only being receptive to a kind of day-dreaming" (Bachelard *Poetics of Space* xxxviii).

At times I have become a compulsive researcher. I don't even know what it is I am really trying to seek. I scour the shelves of the library, following footnotes to endnotes to the library catalog to interlibrary loans. Books pile up in the corners of my bedroom and still I don't really know *why*. Perhaps it ties into the juvenile desire to find myself in a book. To find an identity, claim a voice. But in the obsessive pursuit, I seem to lose more of myself in every page.

It got to a point where I became exhausted and overwhelmed with this exercise in mercury obsession. I no longer wanted to follow, forever running to catch a glimpse of the winged sandals. Could I stop the synchronicity by willing it so? Would the

mysterious appearance of Mercury cease? In the library, when searching for something completely unrelated, my hand still reached for a book off the shelf: *The Ears of Hermes*.

On the first page I turned to:

if someone wished to ask something of Hermes, he was to come at evening, burn incense on the altar, fill the lamps with oil and light them. Leaving a coin on the altar on the right side of the statue, he was to whisper his question into the god's ears. He was then to quit the square, holding his hands over his ears. Once outside, he was to remove his hands from his ears, and whatever voice he heard in that instant he was to interpret prophetically.

On the second page I turned to:

Hermes' function as the disseminator of fortuitous messages is not surprising. As the god of chance discovery, anything that anyone happened upon by accident could be referred to in Greek as "a gift of Hermes" (*hermaion*),⁹ and Hermes also played a role in the ancient practice of casting lots, where meaningful "randomness" was of central importance.¹⁰

And on the third:

Hermes stands at the very center of discourse. The entire process of communication—speaking and hearing, the mouth and the ear—constellates around him. Above all, he is at the center of the most delicate part of the linguistic operation: interpretation. To use Aelian's imagery, Hermes has the ability to turn the ibis' black feathers white, to make explicit what was implicit, and to bring "out" what might otherwise have remained "in."

When I turned the page and read:

Hermes, then, was also the god of research and investigation.

and:

Hermes, in short, was the god of circulation and everything circulated around him:

I shut the book.

Perhaps, apophenia is a *desire* to see these things. A desire for a world that feels connected in some fragmentary fashion. A way for art and writing to tangibly reach out into the world. A way to notice and pay attention to what would otherwise be filtered out by an already overloaded sensory system.

Mercury becomes a cipher for desire. For the desire to speak and remain silent. For the desire to be unreadable and yet read. For the desire to shift and morph and never remain still in identity. For the desire of both completion and fragmentation. The desire for a published work on the page and one which continues to live and breathe, morph and change.

I will not reveal my secrets. I'll leave that to the Trickster who rips the curtains away and delights in exposure. I want the mystery to remain. Can there be transparency without revelation? The more I discover, the more the questions persist. The more I write, the more my words break down, disintegrate. I want to find something to hold onto but as soon as I grasp what has solidified it turns to liquid and runs through my fingers. There is a desire to find fascination within the obsession. And to know that whatever is sought will always evade.

In the way that gender feels insufficient for describing my physical body, genre feels insufficient for describing my textual body. To some extent I both worry and rejoice at the possibility of creating an unreadable text. Not in the literal sense, that it

can't be read, but in the sense that it tries to sneak its way out of labeling. This book resists others genre-ing it. In part because this book doesn't know what it is, a mercurial book that keeps changing its mind. This writing is multiple and fluid and feminine and genderqueer. And in those senses it tends to fail the traditional expectations of writing. But Judith Halberstam offers a "Queer Art of Failure," where "failure allows us to escape punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods"(3). My writing then tries to occupy a space between unruly childhood and orderly adulthood. A zone where the transition hasn't quite manifested and the identity has yet to solidify. Writing is about entering a non-space to construct identities that can never be pinned down.

To live in the imagined space is to reject those overarching controlling norms. The power and structures that determine our identities for us and bring ourselves into being. I am letting the slipperiness of identity slide through my fingers. The "...post-structuralist figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions" (Jagose 3). I have made Mercury that liminal space. Or rather, the one who, arms open wide, holds that space where all of these questions can be played with, investigated, or wrestled with.

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