

Not Editable

Chrystos

September 3, 1983

Gloria, dear sister,

I begin to write a little typed snatches I ask myself if they
are "Art" I have lost shreds of myself my confidence and my
judgement No coherence my past work came from someone I
can't be anymore I'm changing don't know where I'm going no
anchors no bag to stay inside of form makes me restless I
am not editable

This one [woman] thinks I'm a Real Artist (WHAT is a real
artist? I don't do enough work to be one myself) I have soul she says
yeah I think you wanna buy some?

I am so afraid always under my tough exterior I don't really
believe I have anything unique to say I've always written from some
compulsion, the necessity to make some damn sense somewhere a
tool of survival never been art to me Colors are different I
am going to start to cry and I don't know why even the dahlias hurt
that gave me such joy a few hours ago I've never been here before
always circumvented it with drug overdoses or hospital stays
from suicide attempts anything to distract me from this uncon-
nected anguish these letters are masks you know it is my journal
that is my best self if there is a best self I am still trying to find
it find my way to bone honesty

September 5, 1983

I want a world to be like the dahlias this morning that shock me as
I pass by them with handfuls of dirty clothes they pulse with life
they sing it they are coming right out of their skins with it I
retreat inside myself and wonder what I am supposed to do here I
keep returning to the same answer make some dahlia beauty
force it down their throats wake them up the sun comes over
the edge of the building and shines down on my wet face the rainbows
in my eyelashes the music hammered dulcimer and celtic harp
the wild roses are so still and the boat hulls gleam with dew I am
lonely because I am pierced with life and so much is dead there must
be some place for me I've been taught so well that functioning is the
appearance of knowing what one is doing at the dahlia farm I
belonged I was at home in those tall fat flowers blazing profuse and
generous and full I want to plant myself in her field and die back in
the fall

I am sure that if I knew others who wrote or painted or SOMETHING I would feel much differently but those I know are ordinary folks I used to seek them out afraid I would get a big head if I didn't thought it was so snobbish to only want other creative geniuses for friends now I feel that anyone else will literally drive me mad I have decided to open more deeply in letters because I don't have to hold back anything or be correct or any of that shit and your power is equal to mine, different, very different but you are not afraid of me that is such a relief

I do want very much to be a good writer but I am tired of the conventions of poems I don't know what to do about form the only "form" that doesn't feel restrictive is letters I'm afraid I don't make "sense" when I try to move that immediacy to other forms I'll always write poems of course, but I want to make something else, something new a joint dialogue or a chorus or something that is very definitely not a "novel" because they aren't novel anymore

August 21, 1983

I've been calling myself "Captain C" to bring home the fact that I'm in charge of my life and if I don't make manifest the beauty I carry in my heart, use my gifts—the regret and anger will poison me.

I am beginning to understand the idea of marrying the work. I am wondering why I obsessively save scraps of paper and everyone's letters. I know why. They prove my existence, that I'm cared for a little. That has always seemed necessary to verify through accumulation. Knowing why doesn't stop me.

I ache to belong somewhere, to some place, to some compassionate fellow travelers, to an idea larger than myself. But I make a lousy true believer. Authority is the worst tyranny. Why are we so dependent and rebellious with it?

I vaguely think of churning out art to support myself instead of cleaning toilets but I'll never be interested in success. I want something vastly more difficult—spiritual release, inner and world peace, a body of work I can heal myself through. My materialism is spiritual.

I am a hole rather than a whole. Change screams through me yet I cannot close that gaping wound. It is only when I work that I seem to have a core. I want to be an artist. I fight so many ghost demons just to say that. As the wind blows these papers, I wonder if my life has any meaning. I feel so random.

Writing has always been my blanket to pull me through.

Always written to *survive*. A desperation to it. Naming my version of truth to preserve my "sanity" because they are so very busy trying to snatch it away. I'm more sure of my drawings. I go into another state when I draw. Maybe I don't love words as much as I do colors. It's words I'm unsure of. Words are mushy. A line feels so *there*.

I want to spend the next *three* weeks sitting in this chair continuing this letter for you with breaks to eat and piss. *Then* I might begin to find the root...writing is mostly discarding fear *isn't it?* Trusting that one's private voice can give voice for others. Is it necessary to publish though? That's *my* current dilemma.

Yours,
Boca Caliente