

# STAGE POEMS

The title 'STAGE POEMS' is rendered in a large, white, serif font. The letters are filled with intricate, hand-drawn decorative patterns in white and light green. The 'S' features a floral motif. The 'T' has vertical lines. The 'A' is filled with horizontal lines. The 'G' and 'E' are filled with dense, swirling patterns. The 'P' has vertical lines. The 'O' is filled with wavy lines. The 'E' and 'M' are filled with dense, swirling patterns. The 'S' is filled with dense, swirling patterns. The background is a dark, textured blue.

e.a. glassie (G)

# STAGE POEMS

// THIS LIFE DENIES US

// EATING VERSE

// THANKS-GIVING IN THE THEATRECHURCH

// PARADOX

// WORLD PREMIERE

## THIS LIFE DENIES US

This life denies us  
even perfect sadness.  
The rock remains uncut,  
the gem of many facets  
submerged within the roughness.

Sometimes it seems alleviation,  
life's comedy continually intruding  
to help out those who feel.

This dichotomy is life's truth predominant,  
as the master playwright knew,  
the Clown who carries in the asp,  
the Capulets' servants who don't know  
they're blundering among youth's fatal fireworks,  
Falstaff popping up beside the noble Percy slain.

I am trying to construct the final couplet  
that you dropped,  
trying not to break up my lines to weep,  
but finding that life's text  
is often just its sobs,  
no iambs but the heart's relentless hammering,  
no rhymes besides the mirror held  
to a monarchic line of disappointments.

## EATING VERSE

You must throw yourself upon it like a sword  
of air and secret fire, and die  
for a while, more rapidly.

You must launch yourself into the approaching wave  
and incorporate into the ocean.  
Your gut must be the fireblanket

for the detonating word, your eyes the wells  
into which God drops  
the reflected moon.

## THANKS-GIVING IN THE THEATRECHURCH

I am so Godblest blessed  
in this pack of lives  
the theatre gives me  
that I could ask no greater destiny  
than a future where this bounty luck  
does not make me pay it back  
with misfortune's equal sum.

But I know I am not the cause of my success.  
You ancient wheel, if you'll spare your turning,  
I will ride up with a humble heart  
and teeter at the zenith.

## PARADOX

### *i. Thought*

If I could think myself  
into a revelation,  
I would sit upon a stone  
and set my stonelike skull  
into the basin of my hands  
until my hair caught fire  
or my forehead bloomed.

But our capability unlaces  
if too much thought is fixed upon  
the mechanics of the acting plane.  
To think is death  
upon the stage's battlefield,  
where nothing but a vulnerable helmet  
will save us in the end.

*ii. Joy*

If I could weep myself  
into a consolation,  
I'd plant my eyes into the earth  
like tulip bulbs, and wait for them  
to spring up with a recompense for loss.

But all things fade, all  
lovely things large enough  
to found the heart on  
derive half their loveliness  
from their unwakable mortality.

## WORLD PREMIERE

### *i. Metaphors of First*

1.

Like stout Cortez

I gaze upon the script's horizon line—  
the native author foraged here before me,  
the director made a survey of the coast.

But still the wild wavecaps  
daze me. Still my body  
carves an unknown shape  
above the untouched beach.

2.

I am the first to walk into this temple.  
Not that the paving stones leap up  
from non-existence where my toe touches down,  
or the pillars collapse upwards out of air—  
this building was constructed by a master architect,  
so that such a one as I  
might enter it.

But I am accustomed  
to following a floor worn smooth  
by centuries of feet, to lead me

where I lay down my last lit leastlight candle  
at an altar that is a prairie made of flame.

Yet still it smells of stone here,  
like a cave. My gradual feet  
shuffle on the pearly flagstone  
to place a solitary incense stick  
into the gleaming golden bowl.

Its smoke winds up to where the sculpture's face  
is still draped inside the darkness.

*ii. Relationships*

1.

The first few days  
we both walk

with lambwobbly  
coltjointed legs,

and I feel as eggfresh  
as you, not sure how to hold

the softnecked head  
of anything so modern.



2.

You accepted me because I was your first.

A young girl shown affection  
cannot tell if it is clumsy, undeserving.

You came so faithfully  
it shamed me. Every day  
you came with fingers like Persephone

before she was ever swooped into the dark.  
I whispered, 'I love you'  
in the pitch behind the curtain

and you came, each time,  
your eyes flung open, your skull  
quivering with light.

I did  
love you, but I shuddered  
at your innocence, that you did not

know I'd loved many  
before you, and many  
more than you.

*iii. Evolution*

1.

Because you can never be worthy  
of being First,  
there is no ample preparation.

The First is a creature  
that in the night's middle  
spontaneously evolves a skeleton  
out of the bare air's natural selection.

The First is God with a cape of stars.  
The First is a purple explosion,  
lizards vaulting out of the sea.  
How can one descended from an endless line  
of life, be First in anything?

2.

I fumbled for you  
like a person in an unlit bedroom  
fumbles for glasses on the nightstand.

Like the foot looks for the next step  
and finds air.

Like a surgical procedure with no light.

But I fell asleep with these glasses on.  
One who runs out of stairs

arrives in Heaven. And when  
I operate from within my body,  
no light slices up the warm-sweet dark.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR // **E. A. GLASSIE** has performed in over forty professional theatrical productions Off-Broadway, regionally, and touring the country, as well as numerous television shows, independent films, and webseries. She is Artistic Director of Happy Few Theatre Company, and lives in Queens with her husband and their so-called dog, Mabel. Her acting life is chronicled at [www.ellenadair.com](http://www.ellenadair.com). Her collection *Curtain Speech* is forthcoming from Pen & Anvil. //

Frances Gossen, writing in *Clarion* magazine: “Glassie’s poems trace the connection between actor and character, the invisibility of the director, and every other part of the theater with a grace and elegance that draws the reader into the world behind the curtain, right before the spotlight turns on.”



“Acting is a matter  
of giving away secrets.”

ellen barkin // actor

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published in 2016

cover illustration by valentine hugo (1887-1968), “portrait double de  
jeune fille.” // design by zachary bos

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