

Geometries



Janet Snell & Cheryl Snell

GEOMETRIES



**art by Janet Snell,
poems by Cheryl Snell**

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LINE

Where there was nothing
here comes a line. Call it
possibility, which is simply a mark
drawing down an urge known
as imagination. An image occurs
revealing two kinds of space:
name them intuition and experience.
One may lose the original image
in its own smudges, but ink stains
itself spontaneous, and here
the image lost then found
lives in the space made for it—
in angles of embrace or pulled apart
elbows on knees, hands palming cheeks
sometimes with head bowed, glance askance
at the unknowns still to be etched
on the paper's long expanse.



FUNNEL

After a tornado hits, a girl may notice
what's missing: the arm of a Tiny Tears,
her plastic Barbie's plastic Ken. And if
she has no dolls, she may content herself
with teacups. If not cups, then saucers broken
on the tracks of a train rumbling through.
If not a train, a set of wheels trying to reach
full potential. Something crucial is yet to be
driven off in the darkened next-door:
her father's heartbeat, a sister's equilibrium.
Rails made porous and fluid as tap water—
a glimpse of the ghost in the hall.
If there is no ghost, a premonition
that someone will throw its words back
in its face. If not words, then gestures
behind the newspaper from which
conclusions jump. These are bad weather years.
Each one finds its own terror touching down.



TWIST

A head twists
on its neck.
Why does it insist
on swivel?

It wants to see
what else, what else.

When I nod, I bob
like a balloon
string tethered to my finger.

I look up when I want to float away.

What next, what next.



NONCONVEXITY

The man has
 a suck to his gut
 a swing to his hinges
 an angle to his strategy
 a sculpture to his stone
 a collapse to his tunnel
 a slip to his shoe
 a stoop to his shoulders—
objects of desire passing through



CIRCLE

We wait for the guests to leave
and consider the table they are leaving:
bodies leaning to and away, empty
chairs displaced.

What remains is a lull full of longing,
its breath a deep sigh. Before we shape it
with words, we'll reach across the wood
with fingers as hinged as wings.

We'll close the distance between us.
We'll consider the circle, its endless turn.

.



CLASP

Being unfinished, they arrive
with no story to unpack. Being
without opinion, nothing fuels their flux.

To view crosshatch through gloss of glass
reveals a world not to be trusted. Look—
do the hands reach out or pull away?

They pantomime puzzles to be solved.
Mimic small subterfuges. Erase all
preconceptions by the time the air hits.

This is the room in which the figures
must breathe. They must be made homesick
for what they never see coming.

Crumbling erasers. The mathematics of forever.
Dust flaring into story.



BRAID

It is a means of control when
there is nothing else to be done
with the strands, when there is
no other way but through weaving:
my fingers hold your hair moving
hand over hand until I reach the split ends.
When I bind them with a rubber band
I feel as if I'm gathering wheat against
the coming winter. The urge to collect
itself a version of loss. This is the anxiety
of the tangle. The relief when it loosens.



CASSINI OVALS

We go shopping for shoes
that may never be broken in
much less worn out. We can't dwell
on that. Too much reality
and our thoughts will go
to whimsy: a sudden desire
to learn the guitar or a dead language,
hours spent poring over swatches
for curtains built to last. There's the conviction
that once committed to a big project
the time we need to complete it
will unroll like fresh turf under our feet.
Who knows how long that grass will grow?
There's always someone to tamp it down
with the old soft shoe and the explanation
that rescue works best under a dark sky
getting darker, the forecast filling with rain.



DEFECT

There's a hole
on the page. The air
going through it
seems empty, too.
Some see a blank space.
To others it's wide
open, ready to be
filled with erasers.
Designed to crumble alphabets

once thought permanent,
the gum rubs each mark raw.
This can't help but leave a stain
the color of fog and smoke—
so before you set out into a world
of black and white, learn your grays.
They will tell you all you need
to know about absence.





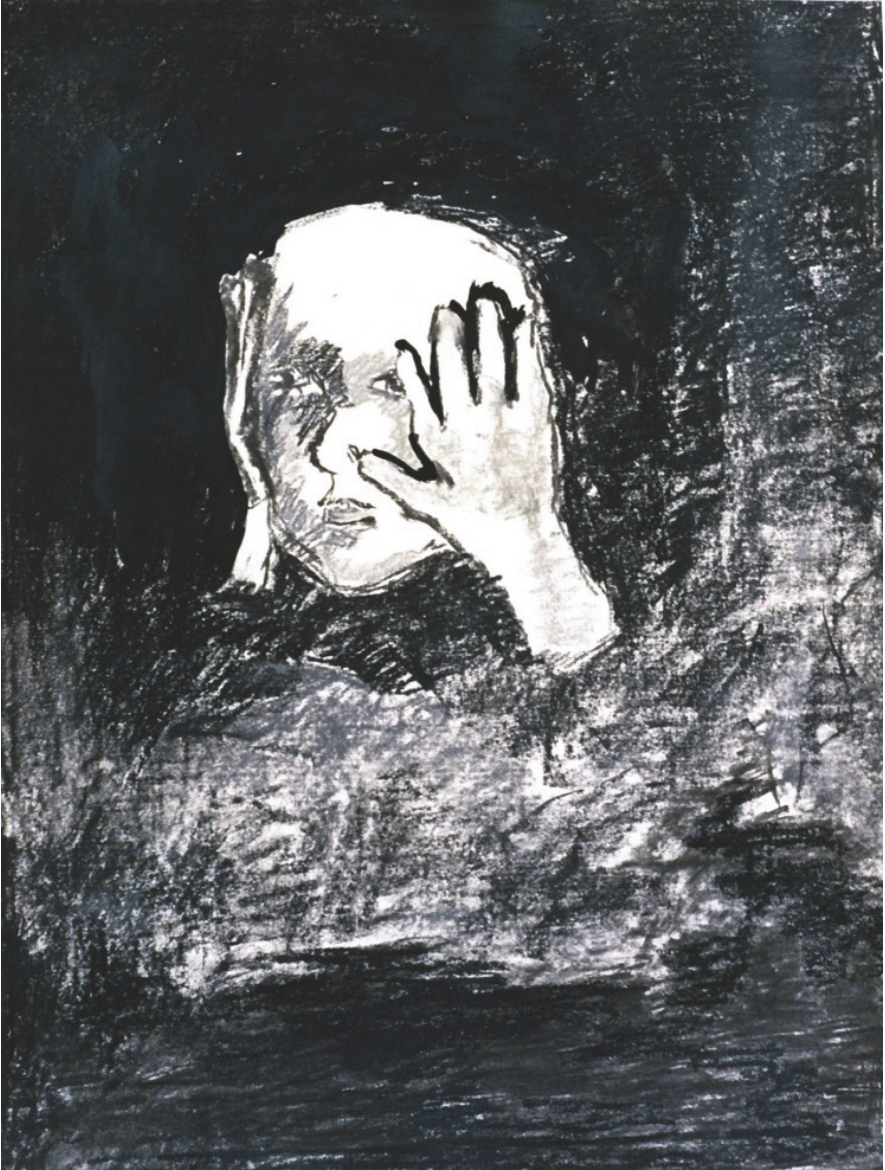
ELLIPSE

My before followed your after
your down and out your without within.

Despite or because, you moved around and about.
I wanted you behind, with me inside among.

How to get beyond? If became when
and then right now --

the present was where I moved past you.







STREAMER

To cry
one's eyes out
the base
of the socket
must hollow: where
the nerves pinch
imagine ribbons
dancing
in the presence

of a sunken sun;
and as the river below
overflows
its cracked and
shallow bed
imagine the stars
watching you
as you come to
the end of all
your human grief.





HYPHER OVAL

It's not like you'd think,
all abyss and crying. Last night
we held hands for hours—it's possible
to tune out thunder if the lightning is legible.
Under a ceiling strapped down with stars
you told me about luck—how it can
brush the edges of fate with change. I don't believe
in all that. We are made of death and dying—
stardust squeezed from the cosmos' vacuum
which is not so empty after all. Fluctuations
teem with possibilities—but I want you
to stop talking now. Let something come
from nothing. Let me tell you the truth
about absence.



TRIANGLE

It shrapnels you where you stand
a hard arrow centering
the skull. It multiplies with movement
a series of *the same*: a coronation, a halo
the pain writhing the dark and the heat—
and at daybreak, while the damaged hide
it explodes in endless incarnation.



BOUND

She'd lost hope and faith.
Of the two things
one anticipated
and one insisted.
Now they were gone
but not gone—
they were with someone else
who had them and not
lost them yet—
unlike the woman
they had abandoned
but who remained
the only one able to sense
light where the dawn was
still dark.



CONTINUUM

The man came to be emptied,
drawn to the bottom of some sea
but there was only a stream
and his two floating feet.

Unless—and we have no proof of this—
the water, dried from the sun's writhe
inside a man filled only with moon
had already leapt at the chance
to pull him under.



INTERFACE

A woman wonders
if it's her daydream
keeping her awake at night.
It goads and it nags
with *what-if* and *if-only*.
How can she shut it off?
Perhaps she could think of her head
as a soundproof room. Does it have
an affinity for silence? She does,
despite her loud weeping
every time the dream changes
but remains the same. Oh
for fluctuation like that. To sleep
with one eye open.



SQUARE

The woman had them in many sizes, that one shape—
shoe boxes, chocolates, pairs of dice. The thing
she didn't have was somewhere to put them. Not
in the medicine chest, not on the windowsill, not
under the bed, not between the sheets.

Would an oblong in a rectangle be the best place
to keep the squares? Or would it be better to balance
an oblong on a square for revelation and for solace?

She tore the door off her closet to see. Lying on the floor,
she arrayed the squares around her. Much better, she said
in her melancholy way.



PERFORATION

She can't get her thought out
of its skull. The thought is stuck
in its own wires. It is bound
by holes too small to let it out
or to let other thoughts in.
She remembers a time when
her thoughts chased one another
in circles, but that was long before
meaning began to wither in the blue
of the brain's blood vessels and the silence
rising out of the ruin became the silence
that's forgotten everything.



BISECTED OVAL

She enters a room
as if it's an undiscovered island.
Where is my other house? I want to go home.
For her loss, I grieve. I cannot bear
to watch her wander, lost
in her small places. I remember how
she loved the panoramic—
the prairie she was born to,
the lake rocking our boat,
the cathedral ceilings in the living
room. Space made her feel safe.
Now she tells me she doesn't know
how to leave it; even as she steps
her small feet into my brother's big shoes
and slides them forward as a child might,
each one a boat to glide away in.



COLUMN

I wake at the edge
of the garden in a cloud-
colored nightgown.

This was not my idea
but since there is no one here
I gather the dark to my face.

Since there is no one,
I toss the pall from
one moment to the next.

Soon I'll turn my face away.
The moon has a blank stare
but it blinks, tearing
the night I carry inside me.
When I lived in the light,
I had all the shadow I needed.



CURVE

It slips in, a paring of light
carrying the ragged sky on its back.

I stand here full of fire & ash, awake
in the world, watching the curtain pull
from thoughts harsh enough to have
scratched my lucid dream.

I dreamed a snake full of moon
had swallowed the edge of the world.

I know the language of shadow and I don't
much care for snakes. When I listen for
their slither, their quiet slide reminds me of
what must not happen in the dark. And yet

all my life the moon has led me to believe
I could grab it in my fist if I wanted.



SPOKES

A wheel rides into a man's back.
It's painful but will make traveling simpler.
Inseparable as scars from skin
the man and his wheel roll into town.

The man cannot see behind him where
the wheel's spokes are shredding clouds.

The spokes pierce light until darkness falls.
With all the lightning bugs severed from
their little bulbs, how will the man/ machine
find his way home now?



CORONA

Below the lamp I lie with my chest spread
hamstrung by surgical tools.

I want to see what's beyond the light
cast in oblongs on the walls of the lost room.

I rise up with my open heart and watch
the beams fan out like a search party

pressing on into the night which
would have us all believe is endless.

Bio:

Cheryl and Janet Snell are sisters whose books include poetry, art, and fiction. Cheryl is a three time Pushcart nominee, and her work has been chosen for a Sundress Best of the Net Anthology .Janet is a graduate of MICA and has shown her work widely. FLYTRAP, her collection of drawings and poetry, was a winner in a Cleveland State University Poetry Center competition. The sisters' collaboration on game theory, PRISONER'S DILEMMA, won the Lopside Press Chapbook Competition. Both sisters regularly publish in the literary journals such as Mixitini Matrix, PANK, and Hermenuetic Chaos Literary Review. They also keep a blog called Scattered Light.

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The e-books/books can be found at
<http://www.moriapoetry.com>.

POETRY

A series of charcoal drawings that go darkly anywhere via an expressionism that reminds me of Egon Schiele and Francis Bacon. Snell provides poems for her illustrations that generally extend rather than just rephrase them...Macabre, comic, mysterious, and subtly erotic, these fascinating drawings constantly flirt with disgust -- a perfect example of graphic black humor.

--Bob Grumman, on *Flytrap*

Both Snells' (author and painter) works soar in this lovely book. It was interesting to watch the movement of fear between the poems...A nervous and wonderful collection of art fused with poetry.

-- Andrew Demcak, on *Multiverse*

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