

EuterpErato

by David Herrle

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*For my Silk,
Gwenest Gwen,
SoftSoftest,
EuterpErato.*

**Dream Bridge:
Chase**

For, suddenly, I saw you there...
"Chelsea Bridge"

'Cause I just caught the wave,
I just caught the wave in your eyes.
Colouring, "The Wave"

I kicked the door shut and she flowed into my arms, her mouth a wild little
volcano trying to pull me into its core.
The Body Lovers, Mickey Spillane

That unhappy mirror, which can capture her image but not her...
The Seducer's Diary, Kierkegaard

only always your kiss will grasp me quite.
E.E. Cummings

Where the Fuck?

Where the fuck did you come from?

Only fog around me –
and then there
you *are*:
all I see
whenever you're near,
a permanent afterimage
when gone.

Who the fuck are you?
You song without music,
you uninspiring inspiration,
you blindsiding *coup*,
you hubristic-lexicon
ruination.

At the foot of a new bridge
with probably nothing
(maybe a ghost or worse)
at its end, I, a restless tiger
driven by a dream of you,
take the first step.

Can my hands-turned-paws handle you?
Where the fuck will I end up?

Her Teeth, The Death of Death

Her teeth, the death of Death.
Her chin treasured in my breath-gentle fingers.

Her teeth, the death of Death.
Her unfurled hair's subversive waves.

*They trap
my bottom lip
in a tar/saliva
pincer.*

*They could rip,
but instead
slake my soul's
sugar-ache.*

Her teeth, the death of Death.
Her voice's voice, love enamelized.

I swore my sword to
her infinite teeth.

Her Teeth Are Roaring Infinities

The *sight* of them bites;
the *taste* of them devours.

If they were shoes,
they'd be go-go boots.

If they were a song,
they'd be The Cult's
"Love Removal Machine."

If they were a historical era,
they'd be the Roaring Infinities.

The plaque on them is sugar;
the tar on them is treasure.

They are the merciless gates
to her drunk-odalisque tongue.

They are holyfucking cosmic;
their precision is subatomic.

Their *clair de lunacy*,
their atavistic criminality.

Her teeth are the solid silence
of her bottomless appetite.

Your Smile Needed to Be Kissed Today

Because it exists.
For its long reach.
To adore its teeth
that stand in it
like manic, deadly
animals.

Because it tastes
like new rain,
cigarettes, medicine.
For its cool heat.
To measure its
infinite expanse.

Because it's mine
for those minutes.
For its tiger-taming
imperialism.
To tongue its song,
purloin its germs,
learn its language.

To thank it for being,
to let it take everything
for several countless seconds.

Thinnestfattest Licksucks

*Your teeth taste
like the first time
I smelled lightning.*

I've sampled many Earth angels'
mouths, yet if only your tongue
remained, it'd be a blessed destiny.
Now and forever, as Hall and Oates sing,
"your kiss is on my list."

Your Name Gives Voice to Your Braided Hair

Since my linguistic puberty I've fixated
on sonorous names, finding in their sounds
and tongue/lip/teeth pronunciation combinations
a mystical experience, almost a reverential ritual.

Your name, that erotic affricate confection,
though common, is rendered uncommon
and absolutely singular by my myopic regard:
the initial unvoiced consonant a hatchet-whisper,
then the jaws part and the vocal tract must delay
its air until the voiceless alveolar sibilant's icy release.

When pulled up and braided, your hair exults
your name in its austere but lilting latticework,
its in/out, its infinite verbal tapestry, syllables
overlapping syllables overlapping syllables,
over, under, in, out, under, over, out, in:

Chel. Sea.

Chel. Sea.

Chel. Sea.

My mantra-like plea repeating in the braids,
over, under, in, out, under, over, out, in again:

Tell, say.

Tell, say.

Tell, say.

Nocturne in Pink and Silver

Girl of pink and creature of silver,
aloof, inert model, a gaze-absorbent
glacier-sculpture, soft edifice, supple metal,
barbed-wire butterfly, passive-aggressive killer.

*You are pink,
you are silver,
you are night,
never daytime.*

Nocturne in Pink and Silver, named for
my iconoclast-totem James Whistler,
whose Hiroshigean whispers essentialize
ephemeral affairs and river drifters' starry blues.
I am entigered by your pinksilver breath.

Dream Bridge, Softest Sweetestheart

Dream Bridge, softest
sweetestheart, I kick at
the piers of What Is,
like the James Dean-like
suitor in a-ha's "Take on Me"
ramming against the comic-book
frames, eager to break
into his Lady's reality.

Opaque ice-glass,
supple stone, Melpemone,
Softest Sweetestheart,
scorching glacier, your steel
face surpasses Edward Hopper's
desolate visages.

Foam-born like Aphrodite,
you're both pure and profane,
here and not here:
Seashell Girl, iPhone Siren
turned tiger-crooner's Muse:
EuterpErato.

EuterpErato

Vestigial of and vibrating
like my pet Greek Muses,
of lyrical and erotic poetry,
of flute and lyre:
Euterpe and Erato.

Expert flautist, Euterpe-Chelsea,
filling in bottomless hot holes,
your long, lazy fingers strumming
the lyre: a exalted arrogant clit.

Sing through your death-murdering
teeth, devour decay, Erato-Chelsea.

I name you EuterpErato (since Sussudio
was already taken by songster Phil Collins.)
"Wherefore art thou, Romeo?" Juliet Capulet
called out, so, every bit as intensely, I say:
"Hereafter thou art art."

Lyric/erotic, flute/lyre: ambrosial you.
Romeo-smiting Juliet, pick of the literature,
host of surely the most ferocious clit,
my artifying of you has wrested control
from both you and me.

Your Eyes are Genie Bottles

Your eyes bottle up shadows.
Your eyes are bottled-up emotion.
Your eyes kill all emotion.

Your eyes are statues' eyes.
Your eyes are sadists' eyes.
Your eyes are wooing shallows.

Fructus Dentata

Cannibal Girl, you're primordial,
irreducible: a singularly-minted coin.

Mouth unlike all other mouths, teeth
without end: *fructus dentata*.

Only in its atavistic teeth-nakedness
is your smile done justice.

*Khione-white, bone structure
of dendritic crystals, volition-
obliterating natural laugh-curls
uplift whether pleased or pissed.*

Call it sublimated castration fear or
perverse turn-on by carnivorism,
but as connoisseur, I claim your
mouth as pinnacle without hesitation.

Edifice Complexion

Snowflakes,
diamonds.
Your sounds
are both eternal
and ephemeral.

Sugar, silk.
Your mouth
takes *everything*.

Titanium, ice.
Your loveliest face
is an enigmatic edifice,
your mouth the iciest crucible.

Lips, nape.
"My sounds," you said.
"Little fuckers escape."

"Think of Me!" "Dream of Me!"

"Think of me!"

"Dream of me!"

Your wishes,
your edicts.
My commands,
my can't-help-its.

Oh, leash of my life,
how could I *not* think
and dream of you?

You shouldn't be
thought and dreamed.
You're an asshole, dear,
one of finest caramel.

"Think of me!"

"Dream of me!"

As long as I can think,
as long as I can dream,

**Mid-Bridge:
Leash**

*"Face it, Tiger...You just hit the jackpot."
Mary Jane, Amazing Spider-Man #42*

*"What has Chloe's kiss done to me?...Her mouth is sweeter than a
honeycomb, but her kiss is sharper than the sting of a bee."
Daphnis and Chloe, Longus*

*Her smile broadened and it was like throwing a handful of beauty in her face.
The Girl Hunters, Mickey Spillane*

*One face looks out from all his canvases...
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.
Christina Rossetti, "In an Artist's Studio"*

*"I did not intend it to be a 'correct' portrait of the bridge."
James Whistler in his 1878 libel trial*

Daphnis, Chloe, Da__, Ch__

You looked like condensation
on the verge of evaporation,
a precious post-chrysalis thing
with wings just for the hell of it
rather than for flight.

*Daphnis to your Chloe,
David to your Chelsea,
sweaty to your snowy.*

Honey-/bee-sting Chloe,
lyrical as sharp grass blade,
so much littler than ever before,
breath-glass to this Daphnis.

I want to smell your curly secret.
I want to taste your bad holes,
your honeycomb, your clit,
your moonbeam teeth,
your weightless chin,
cutestfuckingthing.

Cutestfuckingthing!

I've tasted cutenesses of the nth degree,
pleased the pussies of other eager tigresses,
so trust my assessment, sweetest-mouthed Siren:
Right now, you're the cutestfuckingthing.

Your kiss rough and then silken.

Cutestfuckingthing.

Your infinite teeth.

Cutestfuckingthing.

Your "uhh."

CUTESTFUCKINGTHING.

Sky-Like Absence, Given Earring

*Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything.
C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed*

John Hughes' cinematic oeuvre could be only funny, affecting *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, if not for a pair of affectionate exchanges between an unlikely couple in *The Breakfast Club*: rebel Bender and prudish "princess" Claire.

The first is when Claire, after coarse flirtation from Bender, goes to him in his solitary penance in a cluttered janitor's closet: "You lost?" he asks, suavely rhetorical in his recognition of what the gaze of this loosening girl belies - and then she kisses his neck, right below his unkempt mop.

Bender: "Why'd you do that?"

Claire: "Cause I knew you wouldn't."

I remember that day when you ran to me
and initiated a volcanic kiss, unleashing my
suppressed thirst for your silken smell
and the citric spirits of our smiles' spit.

Me: "What brought that on?"

You: "I missed you."

After the redemptive crucible of Saturday detention,
Claire places a diamond earring into Bender's hand
- then they join mouths in a tiger/tamer kiss.

*That earring's worn in my heart; it sparkles
in your sky-like absence.*

Falling Farther, Silken Silk

I'm falling farther, silken Silk.
My morning hair sums me up:
all over the place, astir, agitated.

Only your fingers calm me down;
only your voice relaxes my manic locks.
Your tongue is wiser than millennia of intellect.

Madden my hair with your wild, doomful pomade.
Spin me into the best sort of restlessness,
the sanest lunacy, a hunger-pacing,
a bottomless appetite for silk.

__able You

I hold back an ocean
when our unison bodies
rhythmize and race against
the temporal and practical.

Your body little and allowing,
those soul-undoing eyes closing,
I hear the noise you hold in,
taste the noises that escape
(those little anarchic fuckers).
I incrementalize my touch
and take in stride your mouth's
go/stop signals.

I hold back an ocean
in the loveliestness of,
in the vision-clearing darkness of,
in the Muse-gaze of

fuckable/
lovable
you.

Therein Lie the Chase and Leash

My all-time favorite partial anagrams:
the "chase" and "leash" in "Chelsea."

My favorite chase: Chelsea.

My favorite leash: Chelsea.

I will chase only so long;
my leash is only so long.

Tamer, Tiger

A tiger's not a tiger
without its leash.
The restraint is what
catalyzes its aggressive rush.
But more "leash" leads to *less* leash,
a tauter bond, so give me more leash
so that there'll be less leash.

I want to soothe and baby you,
I want to please and bathe you,
crush those who mess with you,
erase those who disgrace you.
(Tiger protects his tamer.)

Tiger, tiger, burning brute,
panting, loose on Chelsea Bridge,
what cool-/hot-mouthed Muse
could tame your feral anxiety?

Oh, this fucking leash of silk!

Meantime, Your Ass

Curvilinear bells ring
when your ass carries you by.

Your ass locomotes you.
Left cheek lifts, right cheek falls,
right cheek lifts, left cheek falls.

(No matter what, you always
churn the other cheek.)

Your ass, eternity's
soft drum, absurdizes
Greenwich Universal Time,
stops all clocks and bumps out
the cosmic booty-beat.

T-Shirt Apotheosizer

You apotheosize my T-shirts
by wearing them to bed.
You re-form them.
You're littler in them.
You your-smell them.

They're yours to warm,
yours to apotheosize,
yours to wear when
you're worn out.

"It smells like you."
"Is that a good thing?"
"It is."

Chelsea Bridge (1)

Chelsea Bridge, formerly Victoria Bridge, better called Chelsea, provided convenient flight from London's cloying congestion and suffocation to refulgent Battersea Park: a "breathing space," escape from urban inanity.

No wonder Billy Strayhorn hailed it via music, and Bill Comstock lyricized it to further capture the mystical bridge as the ideal locus of romance, redemption of weary lovelorns, regal bling for Womankind's lyrical fingers.

Comstock presents Chelsea Bridge as erotic salvation, from London gloom to sunshine's bloom from his beloved woman. But fuck that.

Keep the gloom, shun the sunlight and loaf with me on this transitional shadow-structure, blind in night-rays fogging reason's garish order: only we two enjoying the insanest moony clarity.

Chelsea Bridge (2)

I pass under you, Chelsea Bridge,
a drifting raftsman, an embodied
contemplation of the bridgeness
of foggy you, the from-A-to-B of you,
how you just have to *be there*,
a fixture around which rivery me
must circle perpetually to effect
a presence in your presence –
before you, paradoxically, drift away,
ever away, quite transient, riverlike,
non-bridgelike: you, an iron-shimmering
river of bridges, and I, a standstill rafter.

Blue and Gold

I'm blue, you're gold.
I tell, you're told.
You're aground,
I swim La La Land.
(Romance is a fool's errand.)

I'm adrift, you're a bridge.
Overhead, far above.
You: piered, me: pissed off.
I goodbye and goodnight.
(You go by, then you're not.)

I'm straight gin, you're liqueur.
I'm in the present, you were.
You're fucking silent,
I'm fucking speechless.
(There's a difference.)

In speechlessness there's so much to gush.
There's either much or nothing in silence.

**Ghost Bridge:
Heal**

*Then the lips that you have kissed
Turn to frost and fire
Robert Graves, "The Kiss"*

*Don't run, don't leave me alone.
Don't hide, don't hide away, love.
Colouring, "The Wave"*

*Where can I take the risk I took with you?
Send this kiss to someone new?
Metric, "Risk"*

*Kisses, can you
come back
like ghosts?*

Carl Sandburg, Honey and Salt

*A terrible sorrow entered him, because he was dreaming and because he
was awake.
Another Country, James Baldwin*

*You loved the times I sang.
Your loss was mine.
Beirut, "Gibraltar"*

Tiger Without a Tamer

Only a few "portraits" were intended at first.
At first, in our mutual flirtatious mindset,
she sat as my model, wore the Muse role.

Today I found the chair empty,
my Muse gone, the model flown.

Ronin Kisses

Like afterthoughts
or epilogues.
Our leftover
kisses.

A surplus of songs
and poems lament
insufficient words
as romance doomers.
Word loss is never
my intimate error.

My language's failure
is its fall on deaf
or obtuse ears.
But sometimes only
flesh-touch makes sense.

Our lips together is all
that I can articulate.
Your mouth is an archive
of unsaid wisdom.

Away Roads

These roads are absurd now.
Your heart used to pave and shape them,
but without it they seem to wind insanely,
going on and on, down and down, away, away.

Once I believed that you wanted
these roads to lead to you, whenever
I desired your existence's warmth,
or whenever the lonely dormancy
of your relationship hearththrobbed
you to the point of needing my arms.

*(Me: "I wish this road led to you."
You: "Same here.")*

These roads sadden me now.
They delight in their isolating power,
grim mile after grim mile after grim mile.
But there are new bridges ahead,
so I drive on.

Our (Well, My) *Chasing Amy* Moment

*"[P]lease know that I'm forever changed
because of you and what you've meant to me..."*
Holden to Alyssa, *Chasing Amy*

I think Ben Affleck's finest role to date is Holden in Kevin Smith's *Chasing Amy*, just for the rainy love-declaration monologue, which is on par with such in *Broadcast News*, *Jerry Maguire*, *When Harry Met Sally*, and Han Solo's "I know" in reply to Leia's "I love you."

I've had many *Chasing Amy* moments in my life, but my favorite might be the evening I pulled you over in that empty church parking lot, with neither slick rehearsal nor plan, only an impulse and sincere, too-bare, cumulative fucking *affection* for you.

All that mattered, the only thing that made any sense whatsoever, was only kissing only you, chimerical Mine who was never mine, my tiger-leash, my chased, charmed and slipped-away Amy.

Even maestro Smith couldn't have dreamed the dream that drove me to drive to you and lift up your chin, to taste your teeth, to snap that tension and let out our suppressed affection's anarchy.

To think that it all sprung from one dream of you, a half-assed-spun involuntary fantasy gone haywire. I treasure that dream, Dream, and I'd never hesitate to dare and repeat it all: to chase and pull you over and lift your chin that evening again.

Where the Fuck? (2)

Where the fuck have you gone?
You're so pervasive,
you're nowhere;
you're so nowhere,
you're pervasive.

I've lost my footing in the troubled
water flooding the foggy bridge,
and I wonder: What the fuck made
me take that first step?

Why did this tiger
mistake ecstasy
for hunter-stamina
drawn from fantasy?

Ghost Bridge (1)

I rationalized ominous obscurity
at the end of the bridge ahead
as promising, non-ominous fog.

Never in a million years would
I have bothered to condescend
to any level of interest in someone
of your generation, but the "ever"
in "never" bubbled to the surface
of my unconscious affection.

A bridge is the central symbol
of this diatribe because this romantic
episode was a sort of rebirth that took
me back in time to my mid-twenties,
when I'd left a long relationship
and was unleashed on the hunting
field, in a similar heart-transition:
uncertain on a foggy bridge.

Ghost Bridge (2)

Billy Joel surpasses gender dissertations with the lyrics of "She's Always a Woman," in which he captures Western Civilization's truest paradox and my own guilt in this clusterfuck of short-lived affection: "Blame it all on yourself."

The futility of our situations' imprisonment of our attractions should have been enough to deter me from daring even a second glance, let alone a first kiss.

But, despite my romantic promiscuity, my trollop-heart, I wrote and wooed sincerely, the only goal being unlikely connection between two individuals from two distant universes, from too-soon sundered dreams.

I lack the *lack* required to even imagine any kind of substantial romance with you, and obligations press on us, a huge surplus of "if only" floods the space where intimacy should flourish, but you've a lot of life to live, a life that will be empty of the memory of the fool you once teased as Tiger.

Nicknames Can Never Surpass Your Actual Name

I'm a lifelong nicknamer.

If God had made me Adam, all animals would have different names.

Except tigers.

"Tiger" is perfect for them.

Hands down, you've inspired the most nicknames than any all my crushes/loves in my entire life have. So, here are my favorite ones for my Favorite One:

Silksugar, Titanium-Ice.

SnowflakeDiamond, Tiger Tamer.

Anima-Galatea, DelicateFace.

Insecure Narcissa, Soft Softest.

(Ghostest with the Mostest.)

ModelMuse, Dirge-Bloom.

Chelsea Bridge, Ghost Bridge.

Chloe, Khione, Chel Sea.

T-Shirt Apotheosizer.

Nocturne in Pink and Silver.

Barbed-wire butterfly,

Iron moonray.

Seashell Girl,

Sweetestheart.

iPhone Siren,

Gwenest Gwen.

Cutest

fucking

thing.

Anima-Galatea

My perception of her is a web of busy highways of archetypal symbols, all circling the Matrix Minx, the murder-maternal Minotaur, the GarboProm QueenPrimaDonnaCheerleader*FemmeFatale*Gun Moll InstagramDame, for whom art and war are slavishly generated for all history.

I know for a fact that she's *not* fact but figment in my spasmodic heart's eye, which perceives in her the thrall-consuming Her-her: bone-grinding, mind-binding, man-ending, blood sacrifice-demanding Blank Widow, Whorey Godmother, Venereal Vexer, Nightmarilyn Monroe, the NoThereThere of *jouissance*, the absurdity behind Reason.

What I must do is back up my gaze, recalibrate it so that it focuses on the concrete identity rather than the apparent entity: a flawed, fickle, fucked-up, flaky, rarely affectionate contradiction made flesh who's opaque and see-through. To this I echo Faith No More's aptest lyric: "*You're perfect, yes, it's true, but without me you're only you.*"

Anima-Galatea, the longest bridge runs between who you are and who I think you are/can be.

Gwenest Gwen

Back in gradeschool I fell for Kate Calora, who wore a shiny pink and silver jacket, way before I met and fell for my shiniest pinkest, silverest *Nocturne in Pink and Silver*. From then/her on, I fixated on the attention from only females, preferring them over males in everything, desiring their scent and sensibility.

I really did – and do! – wish I were Spider-Man loving and protecting girlfriend Gwen Stacy, but, unlike Spidey in the story, preventing her doom, just as I wish I could bless you, Gwenest Gwen, and protect you from the storm and stress of capricious existence, spin webs for you, lift and thrust up steel girders for you, kick villains' asses for you, reveal my identity to only you.

All my postpubescent life I've lacked trouble attracting females, and, honestly, I'm *used to* being crushed on, sometimes obsessed over, many Kate Caloras having come and gone, more than several Muses have ensnared my portraitist's eye and heart, and a special few, such as you, Gwenest Gwen, have upside-downed me.

In high school I fell until I broke every bone in my heart for a smoker named Stacy, whose eyes filled her rearview mirror, whose smell would linger in my hair when I'd return home after rolling around with her – and the coincidence that you're a smoker too isn't lost on me in the least.

I'm a sort of Spider-Man, regretting the snapped neck of our brief connection, a Muse-splashed wall-crawler who likes you more than you like yourself.

Art Tames the Tamer

An art colleague of mine
once warned me to never
become attached to any Muse,
to keep the relationship terminal,
for only the duration of composition.

I know you *as art*.
Fitting that "art" hides in "tamer" itself.
You as art makes me *auteur*, your creator.

Joanna to my Whistler,
Liz Siddal to my Rossetti,
Simonetta to my Botticelli,
Danielle Caneel to my Delvaux,
Victorine Meurent to my Manet.

As you-artifying maestro, this tiger
tames its tamer, turns the tables,
subverts pedestals: I, the tamer,
you, the art-entrapped tigress.

A Way Roads

I'm so genuinely joyous as I drive this morning.
The Away Roads are taking me somewhere,
becoming A Way Roads, coalescing destiny.
There's a smile in the rearview mirror,
and the sky is full of sky.

Partly from the music's cloudbursts,
but mostly thanks to the Cool
from The Shadow of Light
that visits rarely, haphazardly –
luckily, I'm reinvigorated
and returning
to myself again,
regenerating
my intermittent but immortal Chill
that births the charm, humor
and wisdom that form
my personality's arsenal
and sustain my lifelong
game with ferocious females.

As Ride sings, "dreams burn down,"
but they spring *back up*, stronger
for the wild cycle of combustion,
dissolution and rebirth, freeing
Mused writers from linear entropy
and veering them to roads of no roads,
to rivers with no bridges (with no tigers
to tread them) and to bridges with no ends.

To Be or Not to Dream

1.

Many things are not meant to be.
The not-meants outnumber the means,
and the past outweighs the present.
And "what is" puts to sleep most dreams.

2.

I've crossed and learned on your braid-bridges.
Brunette-blond, ice-faced, brown-eyed demiurge,
beginning-ender, anima-Galatea Chel Sea.

3.

You're street-smart, I'm heart-smart.
What a quaint pair of smarty-pants!

4.

Big up to e.e. c when I say this:
I carry you as art with me(I carry you as art in my heart).

5.

Who could agonize to maintain the dream
of two briefly tied (in a tick of time) butterflies?
You are the metaphor erotophile Anais Nin
used to describe the nature of sexlives:
"a veiled woman, half-dreamed."

Dream Her

By now, you know
my knack for words
and my esteem for names.
I've said so many words;
I've adored so many names.
But I can't pass your name
through my heart-system,
can't stop the repetition.

You're so soft, so tough and little.
"Jeez, you said my full name,"
you once marvelously marvelled.

I thought Phil Collins
achieved nominal nexus
with his "Sussudio."
(Or I did with "EuterpeErato.")
But that shit's all noise
compared to your name,
your name that is numen,
your name that is noumenon,
your name that is nausea to miss,
the name that's nirvana to say:

Chel. Sea.

Chill, see.

She'll stay?

(She'll sleep.)

Tell, say.

Chase,

leash,

heal.

"Dream of me,"
says Chelsea.

*"That's it. I'm yours."
"You've been mine. My tiger."*

Afterword (Metaphorward?): The Dulcinean Shimmer

"O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!"
– York, Henry VI

Tiger Maker

A couple months ago, I completed a 26-piece chapbook called *The Timelessest Water of the Littlest Mouth of the Lightface*, which is a brief testament of both foolish infatuation and cosmic-proportioned soliloquy amidst the Lack, the Absence, the Unquenchable, the Her-lessness. Superior to the manuscript it precedes, *Timelessest* is the most important thing I've created to date, and it's my expiatory final statement on the Lightface with the Littlest Mouth, the deluginous (not delusional) song of Don Davidus to his shimmering Dulcinea. However, I choose to expedite it via self-printing, before anything can develop for the longer, denser work, which makes it into a prequel: a prequel that's really a conclusion. What was written before, but will follow after, is a book called *EuterpErato*.

The newborn idea of *EuterpErato* began with a metaphorical bridge, and that bridge was intended as a transitional part of a wider-scoped book: a connection between two other thematic parts, an interlude dedicated to a silken/titanium Muse. But the idea effloresced, and the bridge lengthened; the metaphor outgrew itself, and the idea roared and became a tiger, then the tiger prowled the bridge. The bridge led to her and *was her* at the same time. Such things are possible in dreams. What else could this dreamer do but dream her? And what other sorceress could turn a dreamer into a tiger?

The moment that Muse of silk and titanium called me "my tiger," the capacity of only a single section ceased to be

tenable. The fog rolled in, the other end of the bridge became invisible, and the Muse's tiger-taming intensified. The abrasive beast had met the soft Softest; the snowy had cooled the sweaty; Muse-teeth pinned my bottom lip and nullified my incisors. Parallels, echoes, mirror images, rhyming shadows overflowed. The Muse couldn't be relegated to one part of a composition; the bridge and tiger demanded their own book. Furthermore, despite my preference for doomed girlfriend Gwen Stacy, I recalled Mary Jane's introductory lines to Peter Parker in *Amazing Spider-Man* #42: "Face it, Tiger...You just hit the jackpot." I needed no other auspice to compel me forward across that bridge.

EuterpeErato is an overlong (emo?) song (or a little monument to a remarkably brief, half-assed "us"), a quixotic, ultimately futile paean for a blindsiding Muse (what Dali would call "the idiot-making archetype"), a pretty phantasm who made this smart person pretty dumb – in the best way possible. "A restless eye across a weary room," goes the opening of Pink Floyd's "One Slip," "a glazed look and I was on the road to ruin." That's almost exactly how this tiger got its stripes. And it's how the tiger became both bound and abandoned. I'd warned myself about falling for what began as a curiosity and swelled into admiration, but I also foresaw – and welcomed – my ensnarement.

Fundamentally, *EuterpeErato* is a purgation/expiation/scream into a pillow – what neurotic art-Titan Man Ray might consider, as extreme as it sounds, an exorcism. After Lee Miller, Ray's radiant, genius-artist-in-her-own-right mistress/Muse, eventually backed out, Ray's heart, needless to say, was obliterated, but his obliteration big-banged much paradoxical – exorcizing – creativity. As art historian Phillip Prodger points out, *Object to Be Destroyed*, a metronome with a cut-out photo of one of Lee's eyes paperclipped to its pendulum, represents panic-striking fixation on a beloved Earth angel until the enslaving fixation itself must be smashed to pieces.

In the theme of art inspired by heartsickness, Prodger also draws special attention to Man Ray's isomorphic *Observatory Time/The Lovers*, which features Miller's lips dominating a lonely sky and horizon. Not only are her lips giantized to a divine/cosmic proportion, but they subtly double as two fuck-close bodies, monumentalizing the vaporized desire and intimacy that the two lovers once shared. Because of the work's apothecic nature, Prodger believes that "Lee Miller's lips have now become the most famous lips in the history of art." (They're certainly up there with Warhol's obsessive-compulsive *Marilyn's Lips*, Dali's *Mae West's Lips Sofa* and John Pasche's logo for the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* album.)

Maybe *Observatory Time/The Lovers* was amidst my subconscious iconography when I decided to apotheosize my own Muse's remarkable teeth (which rival those of, say, Annie Lennox or Kate McKinnon), since she, a force of wilderness and atavism armed with carnivorous sharpness, is adept at swift devourment of human hearts. And, to a minusculely lesser degree, her ego-destroying eyes also are infinitely iconic: founts of fantasy, transcendent dazzlers that embellish and abstract the real human of flaw and folly, urine and feces.

Susie Asado, Sussudio, Del Toboso, EuterpErato

As an aphoristic creative creature I tend to home in on particulars rather than wholes, and this tendency applies to my comprehension of desired bodies: The parts emanate from the person, the person emanates from the parts. Just as a film's best scenes outperform the overall film, so a jugular notch or a buttock dimple can aurify a woman. Her unique genetic happenstances are notes, marginalia, lists, blurbs, epigrams. In Walt Whitman's eyes, a poet's greatness involves the dilation of so-called diminutive things to a grand, universal scale. Likewise, atomized physical features have the magnitude and momentum to penetrate to the existential depths more than romantic declarations or dedicative vows. "As waves drown the

reeds/In the aftermath of a storm," writes Boris Pasternak's Yuri Zhivago, "So her forms and features/Sank to the bottom of his soul."

Aesthetic/erotic atomization can be as radical as adoring even the love object's/subject's embodiment of a name. Though the name itself may be shared by hundreds of thousands of people, affection and attraction transcend the name, make it itself and her- or himself. Sooner or later the focal person becomes the *only* one with that name. The name becomes an incantation or a mantra, so that the very utterance of it sparks mystical energy, inspires, invigorates – not to mention its ecstatic repetition.

Consider the sonorous name in Gertrude Stein's "Susie Asado" poem and how the name's nature seems to deserve infinite recital: "Sweet sweet sweet sweet sweet tea./Susie Asado." Everything in me cries out with insistence that songster Phil Collins had Stein's creation in his veins when he wrote and sang "Su-Sussudio,/Just say the word, oh,/Su-Sussudio" in the 1985 *Billboard* charts-topping single. All one must do is "say the word" – the word that goes from throat to cosmos, that becomes verbally and aurally talismanic, that is somehow omnipresent. "There's this girl that's been on my mind all the time," Collins sings on.

I've sworn my sword to the lady fair and exalted her somewhat commonplace name with a new tongue, dramatized and unique-ized it with courtly-love verse. Don Quixote changed "Aldonzo Lorenzo," the name of an ordinary prostitute, to "Dulcinea del Toboso," turned dull to doll – to Dulcinea, because he sought for her "a name, to his mind, musical, uncommon, and significant." ("Just say the word, oh.") Though Aldonzo Lorenzo is just as sonorous as its replacement, and though the title of my Aldonzo/Dulcinea is much more familiar, to my defensive reverence I apply words Ezra Pound unwittingly articulated in "Francesca": "I who have seen you

amid the primal things/Was angry when they spoke your name/In ordinary places.”

EuterpErato is my Sussudio, despite the former’s plosive (sweet sweet sweet sweet sweet) *ts* clashing with the sibilant tripled *s* of the latter. She’s also my Del Toboso.

Tiger Tamer

Life is full of honeymoons. Our ecstasies are interludial, parenthetical, ignitions rather than conflagrations. A piece of ripe fruit has a longer shelf-life than the intense rushes of joy and adoration. Sooner or later, for whatever reason, the Mused artist must descend from the clouds, slide down the rainbow, run aground on dry Ararats after topsy-turvy floods of purgative fancy. After surfing sensual surreality for a spell, there comes a time when the flown Muse must be emotionally – not destructively – exorcized. Often, it’s a process of heart-purgation rather than *her*-purgation. Via this process the artist turns the affection subject *into art*, which spits out the bees and preserves the honey. It’s a reverse-Galatea transformation: sculpturizing flesh and blood rather than making a sculpture mortal. The subject is truly objectified, and her formerly exponential, unchecked power is genie-bottled to a safer degree. Far from humanization, *EuterpErato* has been a process of increased Muse-making. Mine has been further fictionalized and hybridized as composite iterations of both lyrical Euterpe and erotic Erato.

Naming is taming, which makes the sense of *EuterpErato’s* central (fluctuant) tiger metaphor make sense. Sure, metaphorizing a tiger in erotic/romantic matters is far from rare and basically rather common. How *couldn’t* the tenderer-fleshed female soothing the savage breast of the (uncouth/errant/ill-tempered/cocksure/beastly) male come to mind? This Muse is tamer to my tiger, without a doubt, but she also is a tiger herself, one with a tail I’ve chased and tried to grasp long enough to stop her perpetual flight. Oh, the tiger

has eluded the tiger, perhaps by having never been there in the first place, and the tail for which I fumble might be my own. Consider these extracts from Jorge Borges' "The Other Tiger" poem:

*...the tiger invoked in my verse
Is a ghost of a tiger, a symbol...*

*...To the symbolic tiger I have opposed
The real thing, with its warm blood...*

*...already the fact of naming it
And conjecturing its circumstances
Makes it a figment of art and no creature
Living among those that walk the earth...*

Borges posits a huge chasm between art and real life. "[T]he moment I write about the tiger, the tiger isn't the tiger, he becomes a set of words in the poem," he told Richard Burgin in an interview, and Burgin replied: "You'll always be trying to capture the tiger." Borges: "Yes, because the tiger will always be..." Burgin: "...outside of art."

Though exorcismic artifying of Muses involves an obsessive-repetitive meticulousness, it doesn't necessarily involve a deep knowledge of the subject. "The 'loved' person becomes as well known as oneself," says Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving*. "Or, perhaps I should better say as little known." *Little known* indeed. My pain isn't from knowledge of this particular Muse, but from *lack* of it. My heart-froth bubbles from imagination and curiosity rather than from evidence and familiarity. "[W]hen we really worship anything, we love not only its clearness but its obscurity," says G.K. Chesterton. "We exult in its very invisibility."

Since it's self-evident (to the self-honest), a very large part of each self is inscrutable, perhaps abysmal, so extensive

knowledge of *other* selves is that much more evasive. Worship isn't necessarily love, and, often, love doesn't involve worship. Nor is love necessarily a thing or force or state (or virtual reality) of long duration, of substantial chronology.

Maybe "a love for" is the mode of love I'm addressing here. And maybe this mode needs to be explained as much as possible, in order to prevent readers from mistaking my dramatics as "being in love" and pining incongruently to a relatively minor meeting of two mouths. If anything, this Muse whom I've dubbed EuterpErato has inspired thoughts and feelings beyond the thoughts and feelings I've had for her. And this is an opportunity to update my outlook on the trips and traps of the heart and sex drive.

"And Don't Write About It!"

The term "love" may frighten or mystify you, or seem inapplicable to "lesser" relationships or couplings, unless you expand the concept, as I have. Love isn't necessarily a gradual, fallen-into state, a result or product of familiarity and mutual exposure. There *is* love at first sight, first hearing, first smell, first touch – with nothing more required. Sometimes *you* don't hit the jackpot, but the jackpot hits *you*. The term "love" can be applied to the flings of strangers in the night, the brief but profound fructification of mutual attraction via entwining tongues, even impulsively revealing apparently superficial crushes. And worshipful love thrives more in ignorant mystery than factual acclimation. Love is stratified, nuanced, a rainbow. It's so much larger than lifelong monogamous pairings, than "soulmates," than legal documents and shared surnames. Yes, Rose's cherishment of the few-days fling with vagrant Jack in James Cameron's *Titanic* is entirely justified as more precious than decades of marriage and progeny. Even episodes without sexual consummation can outweigh years of fucking, lovemaking and fuckmaking. (Those episodes often have much more impact.) Love *happens* (or *can* happen, if allowed) more often and more frequently and more widely than many of us

dare to perceive or admit. Try this: Think of someone and imagine their non-existence. Does the thought choke you up? If so, you love that person, to whatever degree. Hate to break it to you.

I think many of us tend to dish out more and more of our own secrets and emotions and vulnerabilities in hopes of eliciting them in return from too-trusted others. This barter rarely results in mutuality, sadly. One's self-revelation is either exploited or starved of reciprocal communication, leaving the hasty gusher feeling foolish. Joyce Carol Oates distills this absolutely in "Don't Bare Your Soul!":

Don't bare your soul to anyone...

Don't do it!

And if you do it, don't talk about it!

Not even to yourself!

And don't write about it!

Especially not that!

Well, I committed all three sins (soul-baring, talking, writing), with flying colors (no: dolors!). Not for the first time, and, I hope, nor for the last. Our current realities, hers and mine, made this particular deviation untenable, and though I've had more realities than she's had and should've known better, almost every ounce of stoicism in me evaporated, leaving her to be the reality-checker, the sensible resetter. I flew up, beyond the stratosphere, clinging to a feather, knowing that it wasn't a wing, let alone equipped with a parachute, and that a plummet was destined sooner or later. The pages of my Muse-portraits became fast-ascending steps to a sheerly destined cliff. Oh, what a glorious way to shatter one's skeleton!

Romantic invertebrates, sexual zeroes and erotic unfortunates lack the capacity to appreciate the profundity of sudden enthrallment by blindsiding Muses. My own cumulative insight into and natural harmonization with women inform and justify

my crush. Rather than rare sugar on a sweet tooth's tongue, it's a favored artifact under substantive appraisal. As I age, however, I fear that every song could be a swan song, and I'm certain that time itself is a wounder rather than a healer – a killer, not a lover. Of course, in *Agon* wisdom-fountain Harold Bloom correctly said that "only Eros or figuration is a true revenge against time," at least as far as human action goes. So: I literarily combust in perpetual sensual magma. So: This book. According to Berlioz, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony mirrors the composer's "innermost thoughts, his hidden grief, his pent-up anger, his reveries full of misery, his nocturnal visions, his moments of bliss...." The same goes for this book, my go-to go-to, my carnal sanctuary, since I know that despair is bottomless, so if the nihilist on one shoulder pulls a Cain-and-Abel on the Mister Rogers on my other shoulder, I'm done for.

Dull to Doll to Dulcinea

An insightful colleague/friend of mine previewed *EuterpErato*, and one of his best adjectives for it is "Klimtian." Right on! This book's language is in the spirit of similar sensual excess, all of its gold being mental rather than metal, secretion rather than solid. Like the imagery of Klimt's works, it's dreamy and fanciful and metaphorical (maybe meta-metaphorical).

Though dream and fancy compel, the so-called ordinary is often extraordinary and preferable to flimsy fictions, and the natural (the asymmetrical, the cellulite dimple) can intoxicate despite lucidity. Idealization builds on worthy raw materials. I do deny that most idealizers of Muses are unwittingly mistaken about the worthiness of their obsessions. Rather, they play with forced perspective, which produces such optical illusions as the apparent sizes of the buildings at Disneyland and Disney World. Mental/emotional Photoshop is conscious, methodical; it's deliberate intoxication by neurotransmitters and endorphins, voluntary indenture to surreality and rose-colored *glosses*, willing addiction to cocktails of affection and lust. "For

the romantic-minded artist everything hinges on this give-and-take between appearance and reality," writes art historian Gert Schiff in *Picasso in Perspective*, "thus many have succumbed to [the] lure of finding in it a justification for insisting on appearances."

Under attraction's, affection's, love's spell the rudest aspect can be material for limitless exaggerations and the most outrageous metaphorizations. "Whenever I start thinking of my love for a person," says Nabokov in *Speak, Memory*, "I am in the habit of immediately drawing radii from my love – from my heart, from the tender nucleus of a personal matter – to monstrously remote points of the universe." I liken my self-conscious game of cosmical proportioning and artistic enhancement of Dulcinea to what Erle Loran saw as the from-within (*ab intus*) nature in the chromatic power of Cezanne:

Cezanne's color creates light that emanates from the picture itself and bears only incidental relation to light and shade in nature. It is an abstract orchestration of warm and cool, light and heavy, saturated and neutral elements of color, transcending the appearances of the objective world and giving us a new vision, a new reality.

Despite the traditional characterization of Quixote as myopic and delusional, and aside from the Chaucerian/Shakespearean diagnosis of love as blind, poetic courtly love doesn't necessarily turn a man slavish, but, rather, usually *aggrandizes* him, crowns him with the importance of wooing, occupying and sustaining the Muse's attention. A healthy courtly lover doesn't debase or devalue himself, but, rather, broadcasts: "I *deserve* her!" Though she's been pedestaled, it's to show off her awesomeness, not to emphasize his lowliness. If the courtly lover (writer, painter, sculptor, whatever) is of low value – or, worse, a worm, then why would any Muse accept his

adoration? I've had little problem in attracting and getting intimates, which provides me with the know-how and latitude to discern and pursue worthy prospects. Simps and egregious incels lack the comprehension and skill to even step foot on the playing field.

Really, what's happening when an artist portraitizes a human Muse and elevates (reverse-Galateas) her to the level of a more durable – and controllable – abstract work of art is a radical revision, an absurd absolution: impassive, manipulative, egotistical, an emotional/erotic Manifest Destiny. This isn't ignorant whitewashing, nor is it loveblindness. In fact, the portraitist works with *in* the facts, fully aware of flaw, foible, fallenness. Despite the contradictory, miasmatic depths, the portraitist treads his subject's water dauntlessly. "He saw my complications," Joni Mitchell sings, "and he mirrored me back simplified." Artist, dispense with the pesky complexity of warm-bloodedness and exalt in the non-living figment! Also, poetic portraitization is completely incontinent on how the subject/object views herself. This is why in *EuterpErato* I referred to myself as "a Muse-splashed observer who likes you more than you like yourself." And it's why I quoted Faith No More's "Midlife Crisis": "You're perfect, yes, it's true, but without me you're only you."

Whatever, just as all blissful dreams are perishable and at the mercy of the dreamer's impending awakening, the illusion of courtly love's poetry isn't indefinite (nor does it ever survive matrimony, which is the antidote, to put it politely, to such rapture). Then all the metaphors and similes of elusive love erupt forth: the futility of holding water in a sieve, the vanishment of Eurydice every time Orpheus looks back at her, the mistaken desire of Kant's Gallow's Man, Lacanian/Zizekian *jouissance*, the paradoxical pull and push of women and men. A group of singing philosophers called The Delfonics put it best in "She Said Don't Love Me": "Don't try to hold me, 'cause I'll only run." Dreams, like ecstasy, are episodes rather than epics.

They come and go, and the only way to savor them for more than a spell is to abandon waking life and the process of one's existence. Endymion must remain in infinite slumber to be close to and loved by moon-goddess Selene. Gloomy Phantom of the Opera must let go of radiant Christine. We must awaken sooner or later; all grooves must be disturbed. The music's temptation and rapture give in to "the garish light of day" of the surface world.

The following spiel by ingenious relationship counselor/author Susan Winter conceptualizes this splendidly:

Why do you get hurt? Because none of this is actually about them...[A]ll the love that you have, it's your love. It involves them, but it's not about them. They have bumped into you, your love spills out of you, it falls onto this person, and this beautiful dream is created of how you'd love to see this scenario played out. But in reality it is you looking at the reflection of another person and how you are participating in this incredible design...And this beautiful gift that you've been given, whether it's for a minute or for a decade, it's your experience...The person is the bait, the experience is the catalyst, for our growth, and in the end what we are experiencing is our self experiencing life.

Skin of a Dog, Hide of a Tiger

Lord Tennyson says the lacerate loss of love should be preferable to the safe absence of love – and he's right on. A special kind of bravery is required in matters of Eros and love. Only a brave person can be chicken enough to *chicken out* of aborting growing affection. Only a spiritual adventurer can suppress the dread of exponentialized romantic emotion toward and for another person. Actual lily-livers prefer being wallflowers to braving the gnarled jungle; milksops and milquetoasts and mediocrities are afraid of the volatility and risk of daring heart-connection. However, such emotional

cowards have a reasonable reason for their recoil: the radical mortality of love. There's guaranteed risk and injury, and veneers and idealizations are bound to dissolve, disappoint and douse lifegiving auras. "You are in no danger," says the Opera Ghost, "so long as you do not touch the mask." Also, love isn't durable, as many poets and songsters claim. It's frail, wispy, fickle, futile, a shamefully fallible force. As Rhye sings, "love is terminal, not built to last, burn bright, burn fast." Predating that lyric by about sixty years, Carl Sandburg says in *Honey and Salt*: "Love is a clock and the works wear out./Love is a violin and the wood rots.../This is the end, there is always an end."

I've had to face that roads that once led to tender, ecstatic destinations eventually become the same roads that lead us away from them. Thankfully, sooner or later, as they should, some Away Roads become A Way Roads that lead to different bridges and other rainbow arcs. Pining is a masochistic Mobius strip; rumination leaves no room for salvation. The exorcism must be complete; what's gone is gone; what's flown has flown. Be fair, author. Play nice, painter. Sculptor, step back and allow the work to breathe. Her teeth left your flesh and her eyes closed long ago. "And I need you to let me go," says Samantha in Spike Jonze's *Her*. "As much as I want to, I can't live in your book anymore."

What sadistic irony: The starlight must be separated from the star; the portraitists' chairs must be devoid of models. The bridge has crossed itself and taken the other end with it. Remember that Borges and Burgin concluded that "the other tiger, the one not found in verse" is "outside of art." The minute you write her, author, the minute you paint her, painter, the minute you sculpt her, sculptor, you release her, lover. Naming may be taming, but it's also, in a weird sense, erasing. She can't live in your art any more than she could breathe underwater. She was never yours; you can claim only her transfigured image, which is really a preserved afterimage (for

all that remains is *after-her*). This transfiguration might be the saddest fucking thing a Mused artist ever faces. Artist, you've packed your heart with so much of your Muse, yet she is nowhere to be seen. The famous lyric "somewhere over the rainbow" must be modified to essentialize your situation: "It's over, the rainbow."

If she can't live in a book anymore, where the fuck does a flown Muse go? Who knows. Wherever she is, it's now none of my business. Euterpe and Erato have sundered into two again and returned to the timeless, amorphous pool of metaphors. The dream itself has awakened me from the dream. I've fallen from the paradise of her kiss, fell off of the foggy bridge, tumbled down the other end of the rainbow, but I'm left alive, whole, still confident and thankful for having had the blessed momentary disruption, getting closer to accepting that two situations can't always mesh, that disparate ages are more frictionous than lubricative, that sworn responsibilities tend to squash transcendence.

Did I, do I love her? Surely I have a love *for* her, a love whose definition is indefinite, a love founded on a shimmer, "a glazed look," a flashing vision, which makes sense in the senseless realm of crushing quickly on someone: Epiphanies are epiphanic, shimmers shimmer and flashing visions flash. Such peek-a-boos compel more than the protracted and epic. Aphrodisiacal illusion relies on brevity, and, weirdly, the Muse-crowned love object/subject is both 100-percent unreal and 100-percent real, not "all that," but all *That*. Though my EuterpeErato emanates much lovable actuality, I agree with Susan Winter that the shortlived sweet spot is primarily about me, because "in me," as poet Siegfried Sassoon writes, "the tiger sniffs the rose." *My* heart lacerated itself; the claw marks are my own. "[I]t is a tiger that mangles me," says Borges, "but I am the tiger..." Mauled, bleeding, smiling, grateful, I'm left with and appreciate only an afterimage, a ghost, the

Dulcinean shimmer that further obscures her illegible heart-text.

De-Mused and untamed, I, a *rōnin*, a Rodin sculpture of perplexion within my untenable reality rather than iconic pensiveness, must wistfully allow the sediment to settle and my bones to loaf for a spell at bridge's end. Metaphorical tigers work much harder for sustenance than their biological counterparts, so nourishing naps are necessary before next prowls begin. Though you may feel more like a stray dog, tiger, move forward, ever forward, farther and farther from her, the taming tiger, the ghost tiger, the artist-dreamed tiger. Lingering too long can ruin the hunt's thrill, so I, like Borges' narrator, advance in search of "the other tiger" beyond my book, bolstering my composure, sveltling my posture: "inside the skin of a dog," as the *Hagakure* goes, "outside the hide of a tiger."

EuterpErato's Playlist

Contextual epigraphs were gathered after the writing, as echoes rather than prefigurations. Also, my process was saturated with serendipitously pertinent songs, some of which are listed below.

Colouring's "The Wave"
Tame Impala's "Tomorrow's Dust"
Future Islands' "Seasons," "A Dream of You and Me" and "For Sure"
Human Touch's "Promise Not to Fall"
Rhye's "Open" and "The Fall"
The System's "Don't Disturb This Groove"
Metric's "Risk" and "No Lights on the Horizon"
Moorcheeba's "Riverbed"
The Strokes' "Eternal Summer" and "Happy Ending"
Swervedriver's "Autodidact," "MM Abduction," "Golden Remedy" and "I Wonder?"
Lana Del Rey's "Ride" and "Love Song"
Charli XCX's "Thoughts"
Ride's "Leave Them All Behind"
Nick Leng's "Walking Home to You"
Wan Santo Condo's "Undone"
The Smiths' entire catalog
Me'Shell Ndegeocello's cover of "Nite and Day"
"All I Can Think About is You" by Coldplay
"Blinding Lights" by The Weeknd
"No Ordinary" by Labrinth
The Ocean Blue's "Fast Forward Reverse" and "A Separate Reality"
The Cure's *Disintegration* album
"Sundown" by Bruce Springsteen

