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VIVID
A Little Introduction

I remember being inside my mother's womb.

My childhood memories stretch back to a time before I was born.

My friend Amy tells me that she finds my childhood memories to be surprisingly vivid. ("Vivid," is derived from the Latin *vividus*: living, animated, lively.) She claims her own childhood memories are more faded, less accessible. I wonder if this is true? Or is it simply my willingness to make them up? Do I tell my stories over and over again (if only to myself) so as to force feed my memory, replace what really happened? Like Maria, the character in Javier Mariás' *The Infatuations*, I find that *everything becomes a story and ends up drifting about in the same sphere, and then it's hard to differentiate between what really happened and what is pure invention.*

I think it is because I am so afraid of forgetting my childhood memories of California's Lake Tahoe that I remember its glacial waters as too blue. I think I am so afraid of forgetting my father that I turn his love for red into a color so deep that I can

find it only with my imagination—and not in this world—now that he is gone. I am sure I remember my mother's penchant for a world of cream, oyster, eggshell as too white. As too, too white.

Like Roland Barthes, the great mythographer, I work against *the frenzy to become adult too quickly and for a very long time*. I believe in the imagination of childhood as wise.

Lao-tzu: meditated for eighty years in the uterus of his mother: he was born an old man of eighty.

The childish notes that make up *A Magpie and an Envelope*—verge on synesthesia. (Or is this my desire acting up again?) I see the black and blue bruises on my father's skin (paper thin with age), which flower purple and yellow with healing. I see the tangerine flowers on my mother's swimsuit on the beach in Santa Cruz. I see the mouth of a yellow snapdragon flower in our backyard in California, which I slip my finger into. All are richly sensate, beyond vivid color. I feel as if I can hold in my hand the smooth glass bottle of my mother's perfume, *L'Air du Temps*, crowned by two crystal doves of peace. I can hear the faint branch-cracking sounds of my mother's bones, which I listened to while in her womb. The hard-knocking timbre of my father's polished wing-tips on hard, polished wooden floors is unforgettable, pleasurable and vaguely threatening.

At play is the imaginary and the real. As D. W. Winnicott has theorized: transitional objects, which include transitional phenomena (like immaterial sounds), are our first creative thoughts (before language)—when we begin to make something out of nothing. Like focusing on the feel of the satin trim on a blanket—or how a piece of string can be used to connect things—or how a song of noises (not words) resonates when we are alone in the crib. Transitional objects give way to independence, so that we can handle the absence of the mother (or father or caregiver). When we make up our own things, we can be weaned.

Transitional objects do not care to differentiate between what is inside and outside, what is imaginary and real. For Winnicott, transitional objects are a part of a lifetime of making, which enables creative living... spiritual life.

Nevertheless, I am not fully on board. I cannot behave as a well-weaned subject. I don't want to handle the absence of my dead father, my dead mother. That would be unfaithful.

I dream of my father.

I wait for my mother.

I play.

I play.

I play.

(Notes → p.45)