

*Root*

*Also by Linda Black:*

Inventory

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**Root**

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**Root**



*For my family – past, present and future*



I.

*Conception*



## The Onlooker: Encounter

*Excuse me?* She might say, but this would be later, this would be hindsight:

A disembodied voice, up and to the left, roughly in the same vicinity as her tinnitus. She is climbing the stairs, her stairs. Owned then: part carpeted, part extended, temporary nevertheless. A short journey, open to curtailment. She has chosen on this occasion for the walls either side paint with a slight sheen – harder, less susceptible. She is desirous of replacing the carpet, thinks; *the rolled up carpet* (100% wool, made in Belgium, Louis de B— predominately blue, beige, a bit of red – wasn't there a flood once? – part of it got so wet it wouldn't lie flat) *and other rugs*, hoping it will lead further. Yank it up. Start at the top and pull. Wisdom is external, floating slightly below the ceiling. *Speak to me then!* (If only she would listen.)

## In order that she might complete what she had begun

Before what came next, she would have liked that it be a little earlier, say by an hour or so. What came next? (From the kitchen, the scraping of a spoon.) She cannot sit without thinking how to be better. She cannot abide. What she wants is that it may seem, when she leaves, she were never there. Nought to naught. No disturbance of cloth, no crease, no disarray. How inviting the plumped up cushions. Let them stay that way. Senses come unbidden, as does light, the importance of rhythm – and here a thought is strength, a desire a subordinate clause. Her need is for length: a thigh boot, an evening glove (each tiny button fastened tight), a scarf wending its way.

The kitchen is reached via a small flight of stone steps. The kitchen is below. She dips her fingers in a jug of water, splashes droplets purposefully across the fabric with a flick of her wrist.



## A bow will do

This is not a new thought. Though it has specificity. Gold, or gilt, some cheap metal (which is not to devalue it) with its own particularity of shape, its own deception – beguiling, perfectly plausible. There are markings, patternings, an illusion of cloth or ribbon; something soft made hard. Entirely satisfying – in what? – in *suggestion*. More so than the real thing. From one illusion to another. Knowledge is in theory transferable. Knowledge in kind. Here she is, with a bow, a pre-existing bow about to be reinvented, again. The origin of a bow – is it possible to trace? This is about purity she thinks – or could be – or conception. Struggle and pleasure. How much she *wanted* to tie that shoelace. And then she could. Now she is misleading. She wants to get back to the bow. The flat, transitional bow. She could go downstairs right now, rummage and find it, but she doesn't want to. It isn't about a bow then, however you pronounce it.

## **She is unravelling a ball of cotton wool**

This way it will go further. She peers over the top of her sewing glasses and her life is cut in half, allows her gaze to drift and soften. Light forms in wheels, legs on the chairs multiply.

## She watches the other woman

The dark haired woman (she can't tell who came first) who is mending a blouse, thinks *I too have a blouse to mend*:

I am opening/to continue opening/to further open-up the side seam to add a zip, removing first the inadequate one, otherwise I can't get it over my head without a struggle, thus off. Mine is similar in shape and form, as is the one from which she snatches jet beads the size of knuckles, placed at regular intervals around the yoke. Transference. Why this endeavour? For a party I'm going to, replies the other woman. *Her party and I am not invited.*

## Bringing out and putting away

Five times taken out and back un-done, many more in thought. Lay it ready on the bed – as time runs, put it again away. A failing hem, a pulled thread, a moth-hole on the flap of a pocket. A missing button somewhere saved for a rainy day.