Her Various Scalpels
Also by Sophie Mayer:

(as Sophie Levy)
Marsh Fear/Fen Tiger (2002, with Leo Mellor)
These Are the Licks (2003)
junkmaildays (2004)

Forthcoming
The Cinema of Sally Potter: A Politics of Love (2009)
The Private Parts of Girls (2010)

There She Goes: Feminist Filmmaking and Beyond
(Ed., with Corinn Columpar) (2009)
Sophie Mayer

Her Various Scalpels

Shearsman Books
Exeter
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Her Various Scalpels</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the star poems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Portrait as Supernova</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Dating</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rearranging the Stars</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Power</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuff for Making the Shapes of Stars</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lampyridae</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell Like</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Tinguette</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Day Antonioni Died</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import/Export</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Such Thing</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Scenarios for Short Films</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je Suis Ici</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Are Here</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lèche Vitrine</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleepside</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackouts</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwing</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Burning Girls: A Novel</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the cock poems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument / mouth</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine / arm</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bliss / skin</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourgeois / foreskin</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promises / eye</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity/Dance Style / Part of Body</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody Knows / ankles</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Fashion Week / pelvis</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero degrees / navel</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pieuvres / lèvres (lilies / lips)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For all the stargazers – friends and strangers – who’ve shared the dark.
HER VARIOUS SCALPELS

I tell you: I was born
like a knife—all folded—

the rest—I learned. What
you call surface is

space—slotted—with blades.
Its sense of—retractable—its edge

imperceptible. We live by—prepositions
& are mineral—the talent of smoke

in an era of shine. And if I
run a current—

and if I run
a gauntlet—and if red appears

upon it—that is

the flick—and
silver—

over. My trick
blade.
the star poems
Self-Portrait as Supernova

after Lynne Stopkewich’s Kissed

I have been so many things: girl, book, bird-bone, soft fur. All blood

and cotton packing: life marks death at fingertip. What little we know a trap

admitting no light. Or spring: a tulip, slender as rain, unshrugs burlap.

Petals against my thigh. He died, yes, and what was cold in him called

through me, always opening without end in luminescence. What cannot be held

happens whitely from skin and eye: heat death, dense at the core, iron heart

imploding. Wave after white wave repeating evacuation. I am down to parts:

palms, lips, voice. A nerve cluster trembling, pulsing at the edge of seen. Bang

they name this: this imperceptible furling of light against light. Blaze what longs,

like comets trailing night’s black minute, scars of gas and flame, so determined

and so free. And in the after, nothing much. My little art—
release, light as laughter.
Echoes all that last.
Carbon Dating

after Michael Winterbottom’s 9 Songs

1.
Nothing much remains.
Carbon, trace of her

burn in me, is all. Exhale once,
twice, again, and it is gone

almost, hanging before my
furred mouth, a cloud

in which I see our residue,
entwining.

2.
That thing a star does with itself
is night. Is irising against

the night in swirls of blaze,
mirror of the watching eye

below it, cast into frigid awe
and molten want, as gaze

coils between open and
open.
3.
Rock. Star. Elements
in any form, coming
together. Small talk like
radiation, reaction, the fight
against gravity. Her fingers
are glowsticks, their length
tastes of sweat, smoke, iron:
heavy metals.

4.
And in her, a universe and
an age. Why range only in
space? Whorled. Mine, she is,
and striated, so I trace her
history, bury myself in her—
take the tarnish off these
phrases in our translucent
newness.
5.  
Unknown quantities. In close proximity: circle, attract, approach, implode. Reform. A haze about her—something undiscovered, off the chart. Under the table. Against the wall. Everywhere we can enter each other, gaseous, nebulous.

6.  
And in our orbit, our stately, violent passing, our horizontal pas-de-deux, the music of the spheres. Aurora australis, the rending of the sky: cold lightning in widescreen, some shaking. Handheld.
7.
History is littered with fools following their stars. Disasters. Burnings and explosions, distress flares that lead searchers to skeletons. And in the bones a spark that speaks, in tongues—concentric, lapping, porous—of the heart.

8.
What chokes us, too, is carbon. Hides the night sky, blurs outlines. Cigarettes and cars. Our fault, then. Here, where all is white, I’ve come to see clearly: her million points of light, scintillating silver knives, rushing past.
9.
Or from the past. Look up,
see memory: the universe
swishing slow in its developing
tray, brilliant chemical bath
for sore eyes. Click. What was
between us, between us forever.

Frozen moments moving, warmed
by breath.