

Vers la Flamme

(Lines Written to Accompany the Art of Mary Anne Bartley)

I. The Consultation

Nothing
It was nothing
(I whispered to myself)
A little twinge
What nerve my body had to speak like this!

It came and went
This little nothing
Came and went and came again
To stay

I grew accustomed to its voice
The rise and fall and rise again
And always there

I danced attendance secretly
An upstart improvising choreographer

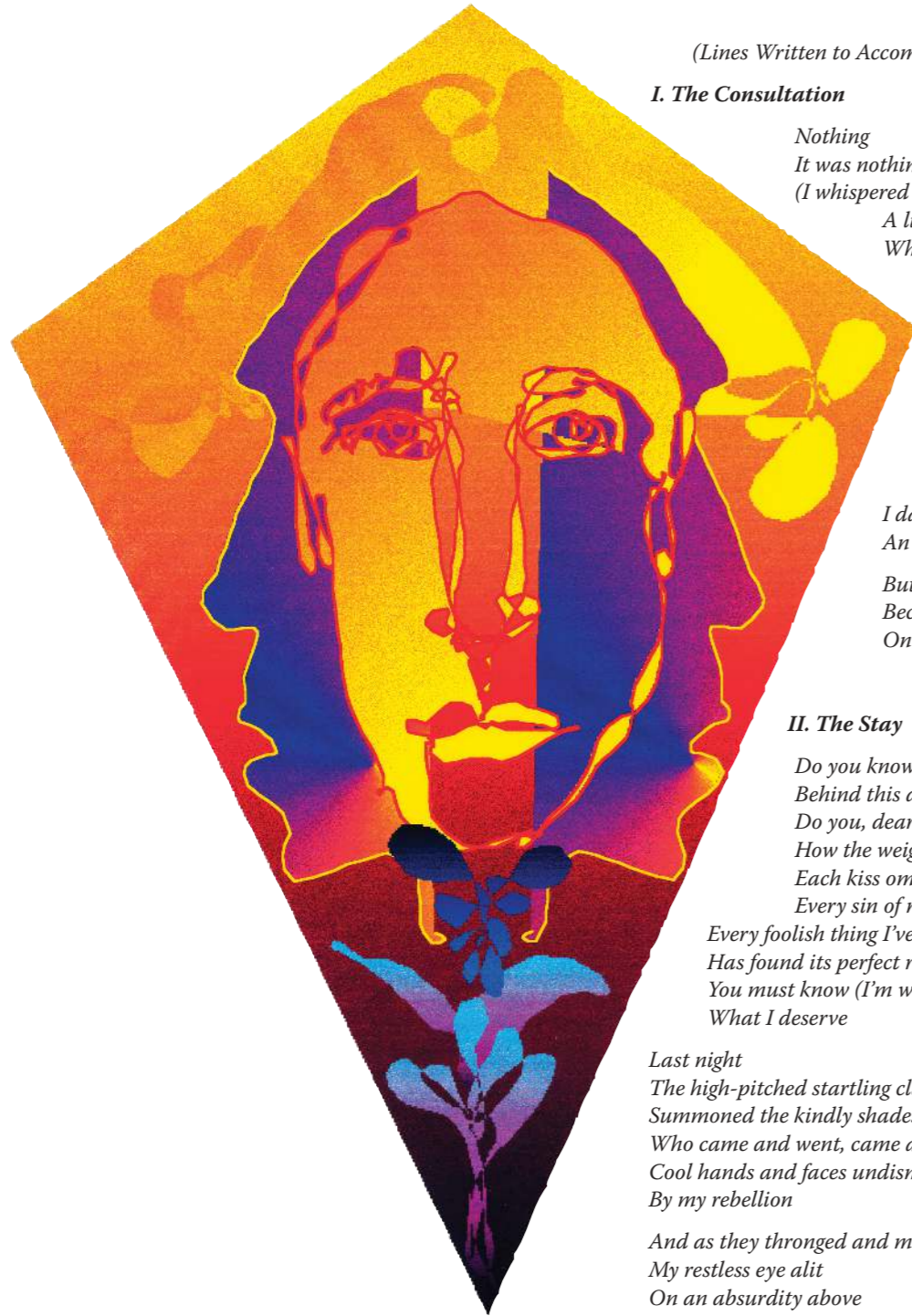
But when this foreign aria of my flesh
Became atonally grotesque
On you I called

II. The Stay

Do you know how scared I am
Behind this dancer's mask
Do you, dear Doctor?
How the weight of every graceless step
Each kiss omitted
Every sin of my imperfect life
Every foolish thing I've ever done
Has found its perfect resting place?
You must know (I'm whispering again!)
What I deserve

Last night
The high-pitched startling clamor of your instruments
Summoned the kindly shades
Who came and went, came and went
Cool hands and faces undismayed
By my rebellion

And as they thronged and ministered
My restless eye alit
On an absurdity above
So like a kite in buoyancy and shape
I couldn't help but laugh
And fumble for its string
To tether me



III. The Cure

Success!
Statistically speaking I'm a cure
I've graduated, I will be a
Dot
Among a bunch of other dots
All clustered round a line on some important doctor's graph
So straight and true and upward sloping toward the heavens
(My sense of humor has returned, you see)

You tell me that the odds are stacked
Against my visitor's return
And in the narrow sense you may be right—
I hope you're right!

Eventually though a relative will pay a call
And then I will most courteously receive

But meantime I aspire to the state of trees
Root, trunk and branch
Sunlight and wind and the flashing pirouettes of topmost leaves
Whose music when they fall
Remains unbound by rules of harmony

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Dr. Garcia (AQA, University of Pennsylvania, 1986) is a psychoanalyst and psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of the creative and performing artist. He has recently published psychological investigations of Gustav Mahler, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Alexander Scriabin. His address is: 1616 Walnut Street, Suite 710, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103. E-mail: emanuelegarcia@verizon.net.