

Unpacking Sentences

by Cherise Wolas

This is what I do for a living: I unpack sentences. An odd livelihood, but there you have it. There are very few people who know how to unpack a sentence; is it not like unrolling a sausaged dog.

I unpack sentences written by known writers about the lives of their living subjects. In order to find the gold, I unpack those sentences, phrase by phrase, until I get down to the word for word, from the first capitalized letter to the last black-dot period.

When I get down there, I lay out those other writers' words. I lay them out like kidney beans or diamonds, like bits of 17th century Spanish gold or scrabble tiles.

I unpack everything. I unpack it all. I unpack until I hear the screams, the cries, the laughter, the oohs and ahs, the truth of abandoned childhood, the angst of teen years, the desire for matricide, or patricide, the shouts in a child's bedroom, walls reverberating with incestual screams.

I parse and parse the words of others, words written by those others, and spoken by others, still.

I listen to the words of those others, until I feel coursing through me, all of them. I listen until I feel their drugs in me, my veins smacked, filled, filtering all that I have ingested, snorted, inhaled second-hand, sometimes third-hand, from those others. I almost nod away.

I unpack everything. I unpack stories, chapters, sentences, word constructs, until I feel the fucking. When I feel the fucking, the down to the core truth of it all, I let the truth rinse me clean. That rinse makes me feel that certain sense, an intuition from deeper than the core. Then all I feel is what I know and what I know is true.

