

Touchy

we say, when someone's
sensitive. So touchy. So
dangerous & delicate &
ready to tip. *Touching*,
though, is sweet. And we
are *touched* by the gift,
the thought. Moved
into knowledge of care
if not love. Touched, too,
means crazy. God-kissed.
The brain lit otherwise. I hope
we've all known someone
who has *got the touch*, able
to ease a knot, make any machine
hum true, tune a string. And
Touch me, says Stanley, in
the poem that always
chokes me up. As if the hand
of a wife would bring me back
to myself or to the selves
we both once were. *Don't
touch*: first warning.
The stove, the open socket's
shock, the body unknown
to you and all the bodies
it, in turn, has, willfully
or not, allowed such
intimacy. When I first
felt yearning for the skin
I always kept hidden
to touch another's
hidden skin, it was
the early decade of a different
terrible virus. The danger
was known and unknown
both and, in some small
way, the risk of infection
not unlike the risk
of intimacy. *In touch*, when
we know how someone
is faring. *Touch-and-go*,
when we're not sure
how things will turn out.

Plastic: A Personal History

How can I find a way to praise
it? Do the early inventors & embracers
churn with regret? I don't think my parents
—born in the swing toward ubiquity—chew
& chew & chew on plastic. But of course they
do. Bits in water, food-flesh, air.
And their parents? I remember Dad
mocking his mother's drawer of saved
rubber bands and his father-in-law's red,
corroded jerry can, patched and patched,
never replaced for new, for never-
rusting.

Cash or plastic? Plastic. Even
for gum. We hate the \$5 minimum.
Bills paperless, automatic, almost
unreal.

My toys were plastic, castle
and circus train and yo-yo. Did my lunches
ever get wrapped in waxed paper or
was it all Saran, Saran, Saran?

Sarah's mom
was given, in Girl Scouts, a blue sheet
of plastic to cut, sew, and trim with white piping
into pouches for camping. Sarah has it still,
brittle but useful. Merit badge for waterproofing.
For everlasting.

You, too, must have heard stories,
now quaint as carriages, of first plastic, pre-plastic.
Eras of glass, waxed cloth, and tin.
Of shared syringes.

All our grocery bags, growing up,
were paper. Bottom hefted on forearm, top
crunched into grab. We used them
to line the kitchen garbage pail.

Not that long
ago, maybe a decade, I made purses for my sisters
out of putty-colored, red-lettered plastic Safeway
bags. I'd snag a stack each time I went, then fold
and sew, quilt with bright thread, line with thrift store
blouses. They were sturdy and beautiful. Rainproof
and light. Clever. So clever.

I regret them.

And the plastic toothpicks, folders, shoes that seemed
so cheap, so easy, so use-again and thus
less wasteful, then. What did we do before
to-go lids? Things must have just spilled
and spilled.

Do you know
what I mean? I mean, what pearl forms
around a grain of plastic in an oyster?
Is it as beautiful? Would you wear it?
Would you buy it for your daughter
so she in turn could pass it down and
pass it down and pass it down?