

An Act

Pretending — a tendency tense with presence,
tenderness,
an end in it:
to be slim, slick, with skin like skim milk,
only secretly
sick. It started with the heart, startling it
into being a part,
not apart — the art of that
host of close-woven
defenses, the in-
discernible curtain of fictions drawn to shield
the girl I killed.
Still the taint in my certainty
surfaces churlishly, states
that if I'm to be held, it will help
to spill only bits of myself,
to let slip
a courteous hint
to convince with my intimacy, or else
for the sake of a detail I've saved
to succor me.
& if ever a lavish
fact comes untucked, it must be latched
in the black of a past I can't
unpack, an ache in the *each* I reach
for endlessly. The
faintest fracture in integrity spreads,
unmendable. Best hold still
and plunge the needle in — let the chemical pen
cross each *x*
out and scribble *y* in. Don't
look down
on doubt: the no, the now, the ledge
at the edge
of knowledge. No one had made any promises I
would turn out to be someone
I liked.