

## *Sarah Manguso*

### TWO VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY STEVENS

First there is the thing and then there is  
the account of the thing, bent into new  
alphabets. Living your life twice is no feat.  
Or there is what happens to you, as if  
to you only, the yes of no comparison,  
until finally, or secretly, the yes  
repeats. So a vine with grapes enough  
to persuade it to the ground may be a line  
with one grape repeated. All love's sighs  
are this, simply: an inhalation, an  
exhalation, something in between that  
is imagined. The final word is the first word  
reiterated with gray hair.

Much like mine, your delight.  
No discrete evidence of the new  
is invented. For the other suns are  
our sun surrounded similarly and not seen  
together. Some uncertain planet is  
what one wants it to be, until found,  
when it is the earth. The documents  
of genius are nightmares with the sentences  
rearranged. Your aspirations  
to magnificence are already done  
and recorded as the memoirs of sad kings.