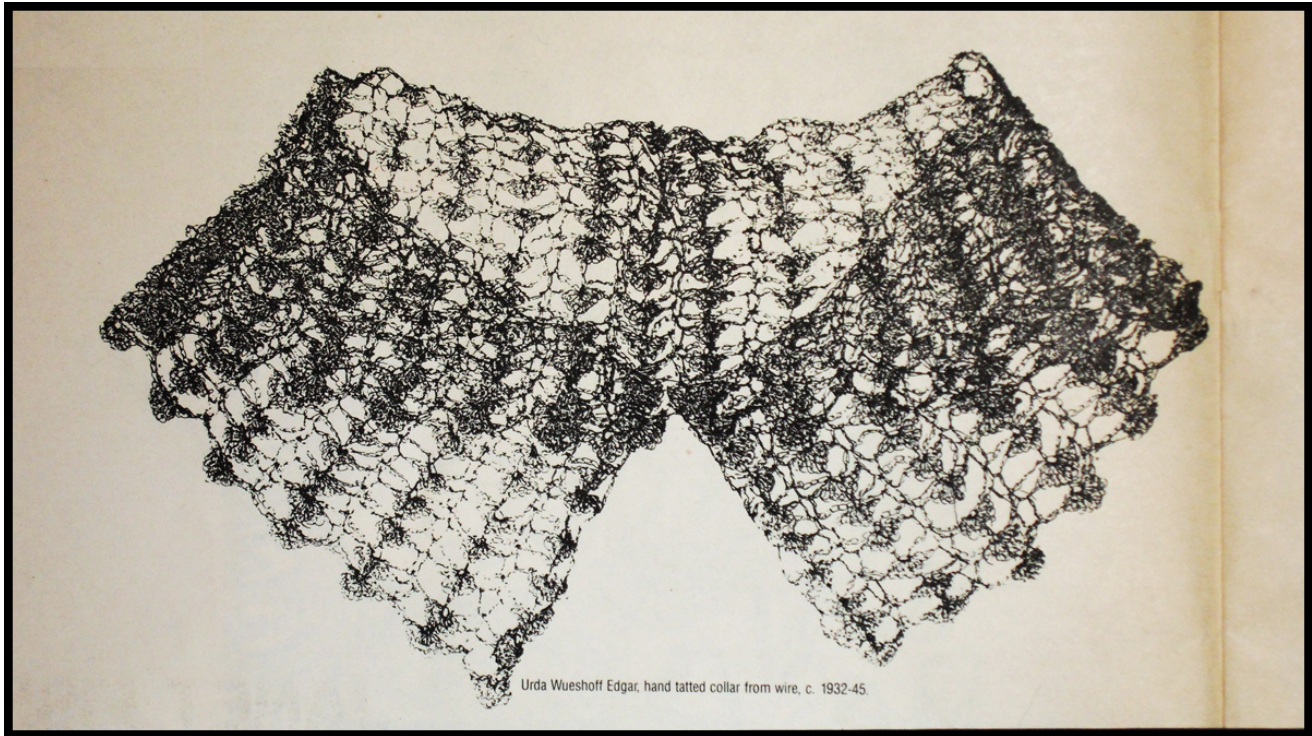


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My mother, Urda Wuesthoff Edgar, was an artist and educator. My father, Robert Benson Edgar, was an electrical engineer. My mother's mother taught the deaf. My father's father used to lock himself in his smokehouse, chew on a cigar and work for hours on an intricate, ball-bearing based perpetual motion machine.

When I left college, my mother gave me a copy of Goethe's Italian Journey. Wittgenstein remarks that Goethe never had a theory of color, because his formulated structures could not be tested, and an untestable theory is not a theory. Dad once saw me reading the King James Bible, and asked me why I, an adamant atheist, was reading it. I said I was studying the metaphors it painted. "I thought the problems was to avoid metaphors" he said. In fact I had told him exactly that.

When I was in seventh grade, Dad bought a Heathkit guitar amplifier for me, which I built under his supervision. We painted the bottom of the boat with copper; we repaired the dock with wood soaked in creosote; we patched the hurricane-torn roof with tar and terrazzo pebbles; we replaced a sewer line with PVC pipe; we traced silvered circuits with volt-ohm meters. But his cold-blue steel martinis were out of my league.

For a while, my father worked for a public utility. Manufacturing companies would send samples of their products for evaluation. My mother asked for some of the wire samples that the utility would otherwise throw away. She stripped the plastic from them and wove it into a collar and cuffs.

The wire was produced as an attempt to do only one thing: provide a slightly resistive path through which electricity might shiver and flow. A small department of engineers and chemists

providing the lowest resistance at the lowest price available offered this effort to the world for its judgment in this humorless competition.

My mother grasps this straight line, this striving vector, wraps her hands around it and folds it, weaves it into itself until the live becomes a fabric, and fastens it to form a circle. She repeats this to create three circles, circles that take the form of vestments. These are to be worn at those areas which receive the most friction against the warm, living, moving body. Those elements that, while bearing names that confirm their existence as objects of ornamentation, also withstand friction, hold up against resistance. And in weaving the wire into the fabric of a cultural form, she tests it for additional non-linear and non-parallel meanings, noting how its metal contains references to shackles. How its loose weave reminds one of the filigree of an angel's hair. How its foreign feel reminds her son of a gentle electrical current—a cool, floating cloud of soft voltage like that given off the huge old Zenith he watched early on Saturday mornings, before even the Farmer's Almanac came on, sometimes running his hands over the edges of the greenish tube and feeling its static response, or of his garage band's microphones grazing his lips. Weaving the wire in-to itself, allowing it to be both force and ground, creating a semiological field that combs the codes of any additional clothing worn with them into alignment with their own.

Metal collar and cuffs: shackles. They limit meaning, they restrict knowing, they suggest the incarceration that existence imposes on the soul, and the method by which culture inhibits otherwise unfettered senses. Without such formatting, the soul could be free to comprehend, beyond the jailhouse of residence.

or/but/and

Woven collar and cuffs: vestments. They allow meaning by providing form, they grant knowledge by structuring codes. They are the stuff of the soul, which knows through their cultural forms and social uses. Without such use, without the creative gesture that invests such meaning, without the format, there is no knowing, there is no comprehension: there is only the abyss.

Almost all of my mother's weaves are loose like this—more space than material. If this weren't wire it might float off your shoulders, or perhaps lift you lightly, allowing you to walk like an astronaut.

I called my parents the day after the space shuttle exploded. My dad told me he and two nurses who were looking after Mom saw it explode in the back yard. Then he brightened and said the at Mom was there in the Florida room, and he put her on. I told her that my Memory Theatre was being warmly received, that things were going well. She was happy for me, and she was happy to be out of bed, and it was a beautiful day out. She spoke weakly, but her head was clear. It was the last time I spoke with her. She died shortly afterwards in her sleep, in Wuesthoff hospital, on her birthday.

In Cocoa Beach at the time of her funeral, the entire island was in mourning for the astronauts.

About eight months ago, after an intensive series of chemotherapy treatments, Mom's doctors told her she was cured. Visiting her during this happy time, I asked her if she had learned anything from all of this. She put on a scornful mask and said she was happy it was over. Later, she remarked that no doctor should ever tell a cancer patient she has been cured.

Her loom waits in the Florida room, for one of her grandchildren to warp and woof, to create threads of whatever world is presence for them. The paraphrase Joys: Fall if you but will, rise you must. And none so soon either shall the farce for the nuance come to a setdown secular phoenish.