



NIGHT PAPER



MAX MASLANSKY | Pile (pillow case), 2016.

SALA

SHEILA HETI

Today I talked with Sala over Skype. Sala is an Israeli novelist. She is 25 and has found success with her first novel. The Wylie agency asked to represent her on the basis of a few stories she had sent to Iowa to apply for an MFA — she had been studying previously at Harvard. Wylie asked her if she wanted to go to New York and meet with some editors. She did. There was a bidding war and her agent asked her which editor she liked best. *The one who offers the most money*, she said, and her agent said, *Everyone says that. We feel that way too*. Sala said she wasn't interested in who the editors were because, she said, she wasn't going to take their suggestions anyway. She wasn't going to take suggestions from *an old American Jew lady*. They were probably all bitches. Maybe the youngest ones would be less *beetch*? She had travelled to a dozen countries when her book was sold internationally to twenty-two publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair. All the travelling had been okay except for when she had come to North America, which was traumatic; she felt that North Americans were dead. They seemed dead to her. They didn't respond to people on the street who were crying, they had no community, their lives had no worth. In Israel, it was a different story: lives had worth. People meant things to other people — there was support. Even if you didn't know the person, you would help them, whereas *Americans help no one*. She told me about how Israeli women can't stay faithful, so as a result she was able to keep no American boyfriend for long. *You cheat once — it's over!* she exclaimed. She couldn't believe that I had been sleeping with the same man for four years. *Like a cow?!* she asked. She used that word often — *cow*. Americans were like cows, and I was like a cow for sleeping with the same man. I said, *How is that like a cow?* She looked embarrassed, as if her reflexive word — she had not wanted really to use it with me. *Maybe more like a penguin?* she said. Everyone back home got married at around 30 and had three kids. That's what she would do, too. She would go back to Israel and get married around 30 and have two or three kids. It wouldn't be such a big deal. I told her I didn't know if I wanted to have children or not. She thought about it for a second, then said

I probably shouldn't because I must like to be alone a lot, but with a child you are never alone — probably you are not alone for 25 years. Finally someone who was saying what I thought! — that I would never be alone again — when all I want is to be alone. She said, *And what will be the value of that kid?* This was something no one had said before, for I think it's taken for granted that the value of the kid is that kid's life. In Israel, she said, the kid would contribute to the community, to the country, she would go into the army, would contribute to *art, technology, business, science*. I said, But isn't it the same here in North America? She expelled a vehement *NO!* She thought that a person only contributed in a place like Israel. Why? I didn't understand. Because *it needed people*. For her, a person had children to give them, in some way, to the country — because a child is a useful thing. A child in itself has value, apart from the value a child brings to their family. I said, *In America, mostly people have children for personal fulfillment*. She agreed. *But you are fulfilled already, no?* she said. *You have your books. You have boyfriend*. I agreed that I was fulfilled. It was so clear and felt so nice that she felt there was no reason for me to have a child — that my child wasn't really necessary. She seemed so certain of this, until the end of the conversation, when she suddenly said, *But you would be a really good mother. Maybe it would be the best thing in the world for you*.

I ended the call, disturbed. With her last comment, the feeling of wide-openness and clarity that our invigorating conversation had brought me was destroyed. I began to think that what I wanted to do for myself was what she had done for me: allow that certainty, that permission not to have a child. To hold the perspective that my child was not needed. Several minutes later, I got an email from Sala, which read:

Hey,

I actually 100% think that it is very unlikely you should have a child, I just added that "maybe" part because I am trying this new thing now where I am polite to North Americans and don't act like I know everything. My agent says that is how I should act to make my life easier in professional settings, so people react less violently towards me.

That is when I remembered: I had been warned by an angry festival organizer that I should beware of Sala. But I wrote all this down to take Sala to heart. ♡

ARTISTS: Hallie Bateman, Judith Bernstein, Sascha Braunig, Tova Carlin, Lauren Davis Fisher, Christina Forrer, Eve Fowler, Koak, Max Maslansky, Shahryar Nashat, Ahndraya Parlato, Aura Rosenberg, Jennifer Sullivan, Benjamin Weissman.

Young Goodman Brown Effect

KEVIN KILLIAN

In Hawthorne's 1835 fable of Puritan guilt, Young Goodman Brown leaves Salem Village and his whitewashed cottage at sunset, the pleasant voice of his young wife, Faith, lilting through the air while she scrubs dishes or churns butter... Alone he sets out on a path narrowing into the forest, red leaves crunching underneath and the last rays of the sun disappearing overhead as he trudges on, one doesn't know why yet... He meets a distinguished stranger who agrees to walk with him a ways, and little by little we discover that this kindly old man is really the devil, guiding Brown to a witches' Sabbath. Brown's had the intellectual curiosity, perhaps, to wonder what evil feels like; but he didn't know the experience was going to be so universal, large enough to envelop just about everyone he's ever known. As he proceeds into the heart of night, the exalted status of his companion impresses all those they encounter: the "good" people of the town, teachers, ministers, jolly grandpas, mothers, and virgins: all are on this pilgrimage together, and all of them are hooked on evil. It's that thing where what you thought you knew is different once the lights go out. Brown's feeling ill and horrified, but then they get to the clearing and who's there, in a bridal gown, but Faith his wife, eager to marry her Satanic lord at midnight, while the graves creak open to reveal the souls of the damned. "The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw! 'Faith! Faith!' cried the husband, 'look up to Heaven, and resist the Wicked One.'" Our young hero blacks out and when he comes to, in the morning, all seems well in the village and Faith seems innocent, but how can he believe his senses? I guess we've all had those days where our wits give us opposite accounts of the "real," but in the supermediated age we live

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WRITERS: Sasha Archibald, Jess Arndt, Cara Benedetto, Harry Dodge, Ann Friedman, Lily Gurton-Wachter, Sheila Heti, Leslie Jamison, Kevin Killian, Kristina Kite, Svetlana Kitto, Jennifer Krasinski, Dorothea Lasky, Jon Leon, Rhonda Lieberman, Erin Miksic, Feliz Lucia Molina, Ulysses Pascal & Tracy Jeanne Rosenthal, Laura Warman, Benjamin Weissman.



Planned Parenthood Los Angeles is the largest and most trusted provider of reproductive health care in LA County:

- Call center answers an average of over 1,000 calls per day
- 19 health centers provide safe, convenient, and affordable care
- 242,071 patient visits last year

“I became a parent at age 13. I couldn’t go to my mom for birth control or anyone else for that matter. Planned Parenthood was a safe place I could go to ensure I wouldn’t get pregnant again as a teen. I strongly feel if more young girls today knew this help was here, then there would be fewer teen pregnancies.

Now, at age 22, I am in a happy, healthy place, with my partner and two children. I work and go to school. I am grateful for the help I had as a teen because now I can enjoy the family that I planned for myself.

Thank you, Planned Parenthood!”

- Patient, Los Angeles

Your support of the Sexy Beast event will protect this essential care for patients that need it most.



www.supportpp-la.org — 213.284.3300

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Over the last five years, almost 300 laws in more than 30 states have been passed that restrict access to abortion in the US. In Utah, a woman seeking an abortion will be ordered to receive counseling dissuading her from the procedure before waiting three business days to return to the clinic. Aside from cases of rape, incest, fetal impairment or life endangerment, she will not be able to use her insurance to pay for it. In Indiana, she will be ordered to undergo an ultrasound and will be asked, by law, if she wants to view the results. In Louisiana she will struggle to find anywhere to go, since, as of earlier this year, only two clinics remain in the state. In North Carolina, an amendment will have recently been passed protecting the rights of her unborn fetus against discrimination based on its sex; but if the woman is LGBT, she will not necessarily be granted the same protection. If she is seeking a late term abortion — anything after 26 weeks — she will have to search out one of the few remaining doctors in the entire country that performs the procedure.

It’s nearly 45 years since *Roe v. Wade*, but we continue to be impelled to fight for equal access to abortion and women’s health care across America. Like the many struggles for racial, gender, and income equality and environmental justice, the battle obviously

does not end with the rulings of the Supreme Court: it needs to be continually upheld, with what would seem to be near constant attention. The summer’s Supreme Court ruling on *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, which struck down laws aimed at restricting abortion and shuttering clinics in Texas, is a landmark decision and a rare bright spot after eight attempts in Congress to defund Planned Parenthood just since 2015. Such maddening affronts and struggles of recent years remind us that Planned Parenthood, one hundred years old this October, has never been something to take for granted; its presence and effectiveness in our communities continues to require advocacy, additional funding, and other forms of public support.

In this spirit, we publish the eighth issue of Night Papers to coincide with Sexy Beast, a biannual fundraiser chaired by Davida Nemeroff, Mieke Marple, and Eliah Perona that benefits Planned Parenthood Los Angeles, the second largest Planned Parenthood in the nation, which provides reproductive health care, including life-saving cancer screenings and birth control, to over 150,000 people each year. We are both proud to have served on Sexy Beast’s host committee and would like to acknowledge our fellow hosts:

Adam Abdalla, Jessie Askinazi, Cheyann Benedict, Rachel Berks, Tim Blum, Helen Brown, Jamie Cherry, Mary Leigh Cherry, Colleen Criste, Donna Chu, Mackenzie Davis, Anat Ebgi, Diane English, Gillian Ferguson, Michelle Finocchi, Robbie Fitzpatrick, Tim Fleming, Erika Flynn, Alex Freedman, Francois Ghebaly, Ann Goldstein, Sonny Ruscha Granade, Sara Hantman, William Hathaway, Eric Kim, Esther Kim Varet, David Kordansky, Marc LeBlanc, Karyn Lovegrove, Shirley Morales, Harmony Murphy, Thao Nguyen, Eliza Osborne, Jeff Poe, Meredith Rogers, Darren Romanelli, Alexis Rose, Josh Roth, Sonya Roth, Leslie Rubinoff, Paula Rudnick, Amber Sakai, Robyn Siegel, Jennifer Simchowitz, Simmy Swinder, Joyce Trubulus, Taylor Trubulus, Jessica Trent, Courtney Treut, Rachel Uffner, Sarah Watson, Maritza Yoes, and Laurie Ziegler.

In addition, we thank the inspiring group of writers and artists who have contributed their work to this issue.

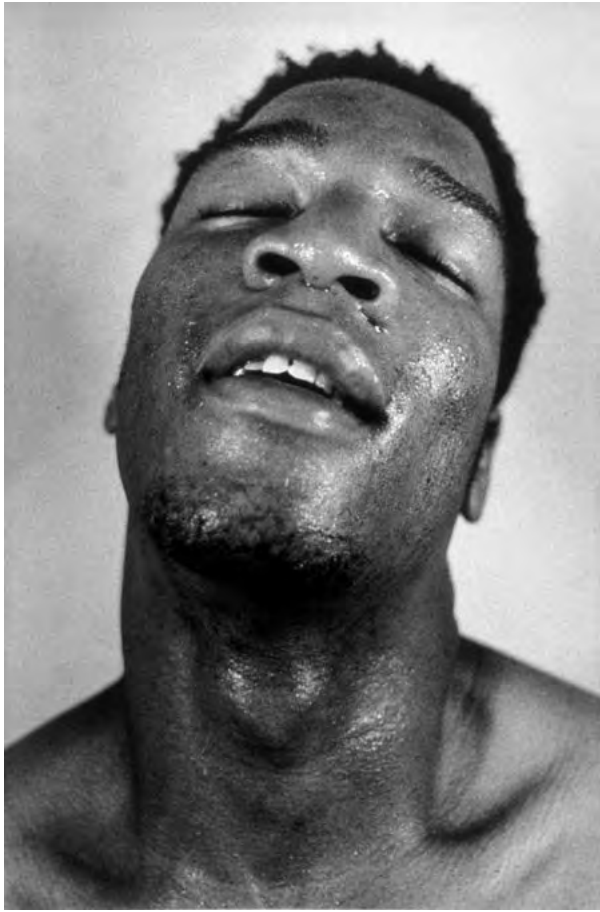
— KATE WOLF AND SARAH LEHRER-GRAIWER



both: EVE FOWLER | Untitled, 2006.



CULTURAL COUNSEL



CONTINUED FROM P. 1

in, the Young Goodman Brown effect, if I may isolate it with a name, has increased geometrically. Let me tell you a little story about a boy I know, and how I became aware of his double life and how I felt when it found me out.

My downfall, like Goodman Brown's, stemmed from pride. I always thought that being a novelist necessarily entails sharp wits and better yet, a good working knowledge of men and women's ways. As a novelist I should be able to see more accurately other people's relationships, know their innermost thoughts. I'm usually wrong, so wrong in fact that I have been questioning whether the novel in fact does know any more about human relationships than, say, that abandoned pair of sneakers, knotted and dangling over the telephone wires at the foot of my alley. For too long the novel has privileged itself, and the joke may very well be that it is clueless. At least insofar as I am a practitioner, I confess I don't have all the answers, in fact I have never had one. But my modesty, false modesty or whatever, jumped up and bit me in the ass a few months back. This anecdote will show you how, I don't know life, but video does. September, another semester teaching at the art school, and having the strangest feeling that one of my students, a young man of exceptional talent, looked somehow familiar, as though I had known him, known him intimately.

This was Jason Marais, who had come to San Francisco from Delaware, back East, landed like a refugee with a broken wing. Delaware's the one US state that I'd never met anyone from before — that I know of, unless it's a guilty secret in the shadowy background of some of my friends, but why cover it up? Why not just look me straight in the eye and say, "I'm from Delaware?" I'd look at him over my clipboard with what must have been, had a third party been watching us, a strange expression of suspicion crossed with guilt, lining my face. I'd continue talking about how to write an essay, and I give myself credit that not once did I actually stop talking, but I came damn close. I looked down and the clipboard was shaking in my hands, betraying a — I couldn't figure it out, but some sort of deconstruction was taking place right before my eyes, like it was Michael J. Fox was holding up that clipboard in that wobbly way he has that's actually quite charming. Or a scene from *The Exorcist*, the 1973 movie adapted from the controversial bestseller of the same name, where Linda Blair plays disturbed adolescent Regan, who hasn't been herself lately. "She's acting like she's fucking out of her mind, psychotic, like a...split personality," says Ellen Burstyn, her equally distraught mother. At night, the words HELPMEME appear across Regan's stomach. During the day, she levitates, taunts the young priest sent to help her, and beats mother Burstyn senseless, stabbing herself with a crucifix. Yes, that's rather how I felt when I talked with Jason, wobbly and self-conscious, only I didn't know it with my "mind," only my hands knew.

What my mind knew was that my young student, as it happens, is a superb stylist masquerading as a writer. Some of us who burn bright at age 23 may burn out by the time we're 30, but it might be that this Jason, my Jason, has it in him to write something great and to keep up with it. In other areas his life, as I tried to piece it together, seemed makeshift, his background blurry and partial, a smudged fingerprint. He'd throw out enough back story that you could just about piece together into one master narrative, but there'd be leftover pieces that seemed to fit nowhere. (But that would be true were

I to tell you about my life, wouldn't it? It's not as though we each have one story, one life to live.) Jason's family had some money, or had lost their money through the generations. I got the picture that the father was a withholding, disapproving type, but sometimes I thought he was dead, other times alive. The mother was more visible, hovering around Jason's broad shoulders like a fog of charm, cellophane crinkling in the sun. She was more permissive, didn't mind him being gay, wasn't trying to get him to go straight. But she was no angel either. She had a series of flower shops all throughout Delaware. I wanted to meet her, then I thought, well, it's always weird when writers' parents turn out to be my age or even a bit younger, and they look at me thinking in horror, this bohemian man might be what my boy or girl becomes most like! I could ask her what the state flower of Delaware is and if she found it more popular than ordinary flowers, like roses.

At my office I was asking people about Delaware, for it's funny how many people will confess things at an office that they won't in the outside world. There's a French expression for the phenomenon I'm about to describe, it's a version of our "open secret," a fact about someone so obvious that it's never mentioned and thus becomes invisible to those not in the loop. In France they call it a "secret de Polichinelle," a secret that's known to all the world, except for the person who doesn't know it. Polichinelle was "Punch," in the Punch and Judy puppet shows of France, and his secrets were "stage whispered" by the narrator to the entire audience, though he remained his benighted, wooden-headed self. I started asking people if they had a twin, and what d'you know, many acknowledged this straight out. In fact one girl at my office is one of three triplets! This was the dominant fact of her young life up till now and yet I would never have known it because it was exactly too obvious. Strange Chestertonian paradox, you have made my life more interesting than it deserves! "Are you adopted?" produces a few reactions, though there's something more charged about this question, and people get skittish when they're asked. This woman in our accounting department, Elena, was adopted, and with a girlish moue she said that as a child she'd fantasized about having royal blood like Princess Diana. In her sharp three-piece suits and Cuban heels, Elena does look a little like Diana, though a dark-haired version of her. And I could picture her kissing AIDS patients or walking through landmines like Diana, she's pretty rad. The scenarios are endless. I suppose the truth of it is, almost any of us could be adopted and not know it. But Delaware you would think one would remember, and one wouldn't be ashamed to have hailed from any particular state, and yet no one copped to Delaware — not a soul.

At school functions Jason would return my gaze with an utter lack of curiosity, rather the way a cat will look at you, those impenetrable eyes flat and inexpressive. Thus I couldn't read him, couldn't read him reading me. Did he know I found him sort of sexy? That isn't to say I wanted to fuck him. Which, I will say, I sort of did, but I sort of didn't for all sorts of reasons. It wouldn't really be cool because of liability issues, as well as the outright prohibition of sexual congress between teacher and student. I'm always reading on the news sites about the tidal wave of pretty, 20-something high school teachers who give themselves to their junior high students, texting them, "U were a stud last nt, A plus," and I'm always wondering, how

did these women let themselves go like that? Often as not they have husbands and toddlers themselves, yet they're going down on their 15 year olds in the broad daylight of Smithtown Middle School. Why, how, what happened to their proprieties? Could it be that every time you make a new rule, whatever you're condemning just grows dearer to those who now can't do it freely? How did boys become men in the long huts of Margaret Mead's Samoa? Anyhow that's the reason I didn't want to go there, I just shudder at being perceived as "one of the crowd."

He surveyed me with what I came to think of as his Delaware look.

He was used to the gaze, that was obvious, and yet he'd go red at the oddest times, blushing a hot red all up and down his face, even the patch of forehead that peeked through his thatched blond fringe. For on top he sort of resembled one of those old time thatched cottages you sometimes see in old prints of medieval France. He's not a big guy, he's slightly built but with long legs that allow him to run faster (I would think) than the ordinary man.

After dissecting particularly purple patches of writing by Joan Didion, around the seminar table we would sit, thinking, and Jason would be squirming in such a way that if he were your dog, you'd be thinking he must have worms. Really rubbing his ass into the hard purple plastic of the chair. This was a wonderful sign to me, that his cool surface could agitate where writing was in question. He could be positively expansive when it came to his own ambitions in that direction.

I remember at Walzwerk, an East German restaurant near my apartment, with wonderful pot roast and Wiener schnitzel and pear soup, the waiter was even more attentive when I brought my class in as a special treat. We had a table for six and Jason sat on the very far end from me, he got drunk really fast and started talking about how much he loved Samuel Fuller movies. How he wanted to be the gay Sam Fuller, except in writing, that he would join the spirit of Denton Welch with that of Sam Fuller. My waiter, Mauritz, was all like, that boy you are with is famous on line. Big porn star him.

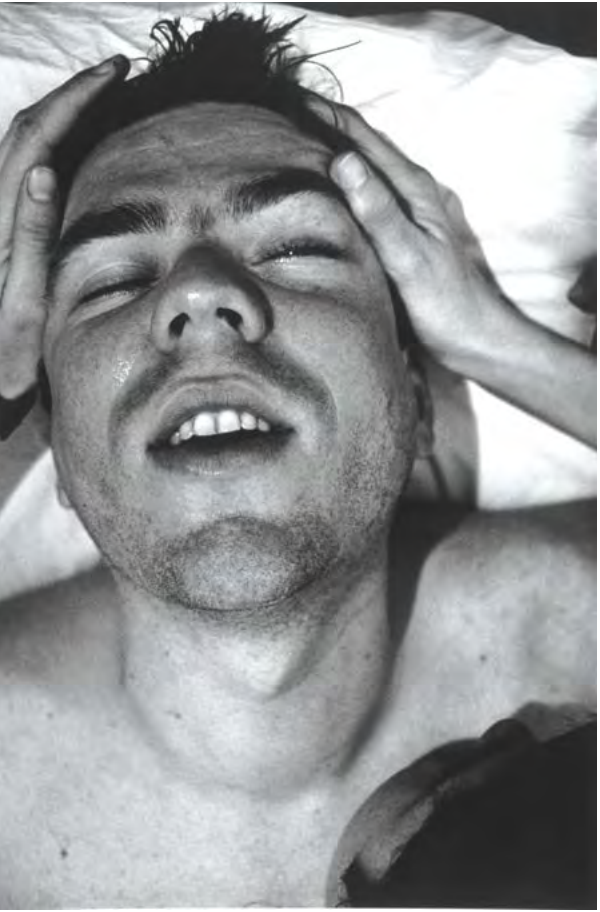
"Oh really?" I murmured, automatically, not really thinking.

Then he dropped his voice, dropped the clue. "Why don't look you at Extreme Remedies, the website? Look up under 'Scott.' Scott with three T's," said Mauritz, handing me back my credit card.

"Okay I will."
"Why isn't there a gay Vollmann," shouted Jason, imitating the famous author firing two guns over his own head like Yosemite Sam capturing your attention. "A gay fucking Vollmann, *with balls* and not just, you know, a quaint French cottage in the Lorraine."

"Be prepared for another side to your friend," whispered Mauritz. I didn't know what he meant but, of course, it was the secret de Polichinelle. At home I clicked open the laptop, meaning to write something else, but my guilty fingers found themselves spelling out "Extreme Remedies." A site of vast capacity, "Extreme Remedies" isn't free, but with dozens of free tours, you could easily spend hours on it I suppose without having to enter your credit card number once.

My cat, Sylvia, prowled around my ankles, hoping to rouse me from my detective activity, give her some food. But



left and above: AURA ROSENBERG, Untitled from *Head Shots*, 1991–96.

in fact I couldn't say if she ever ate again. Such considerations seemed utterly distant when I typed in the single name, "Scott" with three T's, and then presto, in an instant, I was transported as though by a genie, to the very site of Jason's other life. The picture moved and bulged, occasionally some pixels blurred and burned together but all in all it was a remarkably sharp image of the boy, Jason my student, in profile, on his knees. He was naked but for a wristwatch, like one of Colter Jacobsen's drawings, bent along a bench, his head touching the bench, his face turned to the camera, thus to me. His cheek mashed against the wooden width of the bench, as though an invisible boot was pinning him by the throat.

I could see his face appealing to me for help, his mouth mumbling some words or stentorian breaths. Hard to make out what he was "saying," but it was the sort of thing you yourself might mumble if it was your ass up in the air and being spread and pounded by what looked like an enormous grease gun. At my kitchen table I looked this way, that, hastily, for what I was seeing seemed so raw it seemed wrong of me to see, and of course we feel implicated when the moving image, relentless as the piston-fueled dildo machine manipulating his butt, moves into our line of vision. A ring of dampness rose inside my collar.

I can't believe he did this, I thought, and then: or let himself be filmed like this, for anyone — I suppose! — might want to try a fucking machine if you thought you could actually accommodate the dildo at its working end. In private, in the spirit of scientific inquiry, one might put it in an inch — an inch and a half — then slide it out gingerly, saying no thanks, too ornate. But in porn you can't say no thanks; there might be "safe words" but no thanks isn't among them. Onscreen Jason's tongue flickered all around his lips and he drew up one hand from the floor — was it supposed to be a garage or auto body shop? — and his mouth sucked in his thumb, as though for comfort. Spitgle glued his blond hair to the bench beneath his cheek; his eyes had gone blank, flat buttons of blue and white, through which you might delude yourself into thinking you were reading messages of hurt or lust. Meanwhile the thing, nearly alive, like a Giger maquette from *Alien*, or a Sten gun re-engineered into a pile driver, made further assaults on his smooth, oscillating ass. His chest heaved, rattling like a torn muffler. I could see his cock, dangling down from his elevated hips, nothing special there, a glistened red-brown tube good for shaking, responding, quivering, but he didn't seem hard. Not hard-hard. Oh whatever. You can go and judge for yourself, is one of the most talented young writers around hard or soft in his video clip? It's moving so fast it's hard to tell, but to me what I saw was beyond phenomenology. His appearance in this video threatened to explain some aspects of Jason, but otherwise it only complicated him, made my knowledge of him more fleecy, the way you might dissolve the picture you had painstakingly etched on "Etch-a-Sketch" by shaking the red square toy with your hands. The connecting lines disappear and only grains remain.

I guess Jason's secret life explained that peculiar dog thing he does in class, rubbing his ass along the chair, as though it were sore, as though it were raw or wet. Poor guy, and yet, if this intrusion was so awful, why then did he return and make a sequel a little while later? And a second sequel, not a solo

this time but a duet with a second, more vocal boy on the far end of the bench, a boy called Willie. Where "Scott" suffers in silence, Willie's panicked screams ring through the dungeon, glissando, like Joan Sutherland in one of those Rossini rôles, imprisoned for a crime she did not commit and yet free as the air at the same time, for her voice could part bars. And this boy's voice is like a pair of hands that pulled him out of danger with the solace of musical theater. The tape is called "Scott and Willie Meet Mr. Machine." Meanwhile Jason just kneels in perfect silence while, this time, an electrical charge is mounted to the oscillating dildo inside him, and you can register the sudden shifts in voltage only by his abruptly shocked and numbed eyeballs, glistening, unblinking. He is the lizard, to the other boy's lark. Jason can't talk, for the sheer mass inside him preempts his thought, indeed his identity. But Willie finds surcease in sound, in moving into a realm of spiritual and physical bird noise.

Well, you couldn't stay all day watching the same brief clips over and over, you had to pony up if you wanted more of this spectacle — this series of mini-spectacles — so I became a member of course. You could have DVDs mailed to your home or just have these full-length videos "streaming" (and was there ever a better word!) down one's screen from morning to night all month. Something like 20 dollars a month? At the time it seemed very reasonable. The devil had brought me to this place, but I was curious. And then when I wanted to look away something in the very transactional fact of my gaze made that a no can do. I had given myself up for good. It did remind me of the days when, when the internet was brand new for us, and me and Dodie would go on and look up sites, and the first thing I looked up was the "Anagram Generator." We tried making anagrams out of our names, and then when that palled, we thought of our cats, Blanche and Stanley, who were playing on the rug nearby. And when I typed in "BLANCHE AND STANLEY" the program spat back hundreds, thousands of combinations but oddly — horribly — the first one that came back, lo, leading all the rest — was "CHANNELLED BY SATAN." I looked down at the cats and they seemed to pause in their play and stare at me with those flat cat eyes as if to say, *you have reached the subhuman, how may we help you?*

I couldn't tell whether or not "Scott" was a star within the confines of the Extreme Remedies world, or whether he was but a featured player. He had made a sizeable number of punishment videos, but five or six boys on the site had made more. And in fact in some clips he appears in the background, almost as an extra, like Harry Carey Jr. in the later John Ford films. In some he doesn't even take off his clothes but sits there in his "Jason" clothes, outfits I recognized, looking sullen or bored — that "Delaware look" — while some other twink like Willie takes it for the team. And just as he was sometimes not where you thought he would be, he could sometimes be found where one didn't expect him — as a sort of guest star in other people's videos. It wasn't just a gay site, it was open to anyone with \$29.99 a month and the taste for discipline. In fact counting it up, there were probably more girls than boys being punished, some of them with credits long as my arm.

You could flick from here to there on thumbnails, and in one of them I thought I saw Jason in the background of an otherwise all girls orgy, set in a hospital ward with cheerful

white hospital screens, yards of rubber tubing, cold steel stethoscopes, and what looked like real knives. In the center of the action was the star, "Diana," on her back, resplendent in what apparently was actual electroshock treatment mode, electrodes glued to her the sides of her head and you, the viewer, could control how many volts she was going to get, for the video was apparently at some previous time a live experience, now presented as sort of a souvenir of good times gone by. "I can't believe people pay for this shit," said I — the hypocrite, the distasteful spectator. Jason was dressed as a doctor in operating room gear with big pale green gloves of rubber, and was seated on what looked like a metal bar stool in the corner of the operating theater. While the camera focused on Diana's jaw and eyes, and the sizzling burns of wire just above her temples, Jason extended his gloved hands slightly and looked at them with that goofy grin of the stoned, as if to say, what are these plastic things on my hands? Diana's screams filled my kitchen, and then I realized, she was Elena, the girl from my office. I had just never seen her lying down. Elena, the one who looked like Princess Diana except a brunette, the one who was adopted, she said. I saw her every day, her nimble fingers massaging a calculator or flicking the coffee machine to decay.

And you know, ever since that weekend I spent as a member of Extreme Remedies, I haven't really been able to trust my own senses. I call it the Young Goodman Brown Effect. It's where from the time your alarm clock wakes you in the morning, to the dark hours of the night where sleep mercifully releases you from concern, you don't know who your fellow beings are. They all seem normal on the outside — most of them, that is: I mean you always have characters! — but the moment you turn your back, they're getting plugged from behind for all the world to see; it was only you their demure smile was meant to fool. And maybe I'm the same way, a polluted wretch who shudders to disclose his own sin. Shakes you up it does, when you see something out of the way. Of course God invented porn, and probably the entire concept of cinema, to drill this lesson in us. Those on screen aren't exactly real people, of course, they're simulacra and thus shouldn't be asked to meet ordinary standards of humanity. Meanwhile I see Jason from time to time at poetry readings and he was there tonight at Scott Heim's San Francisco launch for his new novel. Elena from my office is getting married in September, from what I understand — I put five dollars in the office pool to buy her a shower present. I can't really look either of them in the eye — I've seen too much of them and I resent them, giving away to a mass audience what should have been kept for me. Behind every good secret, resentment lurks: no wonder Punch and Judy were always batting each other over the head with those rubbery phallic bats. At the end of my days, when I'm borne to my grave a hoary corpse, they will carve no hopeful verse upon my tombstone, for my dying hours were gloom. ☘

"Young Goodman Brown Effect" was originally published in Life as We Show It (City Lights, 2009, ed. Brian Pera and Masha Tupitsyn) and will appear in Killian's upcoming collection of essays published by Semiotext(e).



EVE FOWLER | She is the way from here to there, 2016.

RAFA ESPARZA & TIMO FAHLER
SEPT 16 - OCT 16

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@sadsingularity

by Ulysses_Pascal:~ Tracy-Jeanne-Rosenthal\$ th
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what are u
i can't believe im a tweet
¥llééééé+'\\\"''''''é<<...

omg it's sex with the same clicking
shame and contribution i made of my life
he touched my tweets and problem
i wrote a sad tweet about my sum goth parts
i made out to the weekend

horoscope: she accidentally is a man
summer back and be your sad power style
horoscope: absolutely not trying
dude: i dont mean to see art

going to a party in a memoir
my body found me
murdered to be dead
one time i got it from someone with a heart jk
nugget is feelings

i can't believe i dont want to be ok

sad facebook
tiny mistakes
people become content alone

i would sleep with me
sext: yo
sext: i don't want to be me and you
relationship status: not at death

@miragonz i asked if you'd be me
off a girl but you can't delete me
who is the internet, my shrink?

all my eyes on me being pictures
all subtweets about the self
the worst of the most me content: pic.twitter.
com/3RbXyFDYEW

mom deleted the energy
i miss myself
i do i just feel like i miss the mirror
i love me again: a memoir
i was in the sad hours of being the trauma in my
inability to be a sad phone
i am just my subtweets about my virgin boys
sext: the world was a mistake

Drifting Into Meat Mecca

EXCERPTED FROM

HIGH FIVE FOR RAM DASS

2004
HARRY DODGE

The tinder bundle is made from any kind of dry fibrous materials — like dead grass. Doobie Bros, Sonny and Cher, Ambrosia and the rest of the members start drifting into Meat Mecca for the LCD (Liberated Capitalist Dinner). I pick around behind a patch of smoke trees, find a couple of twigs. I notice Chuck Mangione looking at me out of the corner of her one good eye.

Back at the pit I get everything set up, make a bow, press the socket into the spindle and hold it with my mouth. Then back and forth. I don't rush. After a few minutes smoke starts rising from the bark. Chuck is actually smirking at this point, intently focused on my activity. Slowly, gently, I pull the board away from the bark, wave my hand over the dust and there it is, the red-orange glow of a firebead. I see Chuck Mangione through the haze of my handiwork. She winks and pokes her tongue out between the left part of her lips.

I happen to know she has part of her face that is motionless now and it will be like that for the rest of her days. The paralysis is from an old sex act injury where she collapsed of ecstasy in a standing bondage position, the collar had tightened around her neck while the person in charge of the whole thing was taking a whiz. Basically, she didn't get enough air for a few minutes one night. Her sidesmile is absolutely enchanting, though, and the long auburn curls that cascade down her back like 77 waterfalls are just too much for my little body to bear. I smile back.

I cup the bundle and blow into it from underneath. One, two, three and boom, it bursts into flame right in the palm of my hand. Everyone cheers. I have created life and energy and I feel good.

We have stuffed the LC with a combination of mealyworms, grasshoppers, cattail roots, and mustard. His hands are starting to look a little bloated and I am relieved when we finally get him over the fire. The meal is protein heavy but most of us are a little light on our feet so it never hurts. After eating and UNIGUY chanting, I walk over and find Chuck Mangione. She's laughing with U2 who is now wearing the meat corpse's shirt. It is mostly frowned on to pilfer the civ-wear from the meat corpses but in this case we could all see the draw. Tie-dye looked pretty decent on U2. In a soft way. I don't think anyone else could have pulled it off.

I kick the warm dirt. Toe a very small fragment of what appears to be colon tissue in a move that I hope comes off as humble, eager.

At a loss for propositional technical terms, I hasten a shot. "I like your fur." I poke at her hair. "Would you like to get funky with me?"

"She's a lesbian!" U2 sneers in a really nerdy voice and then cackles loudly. Chuck holds my gaze. That sidesmile is really a star up close.

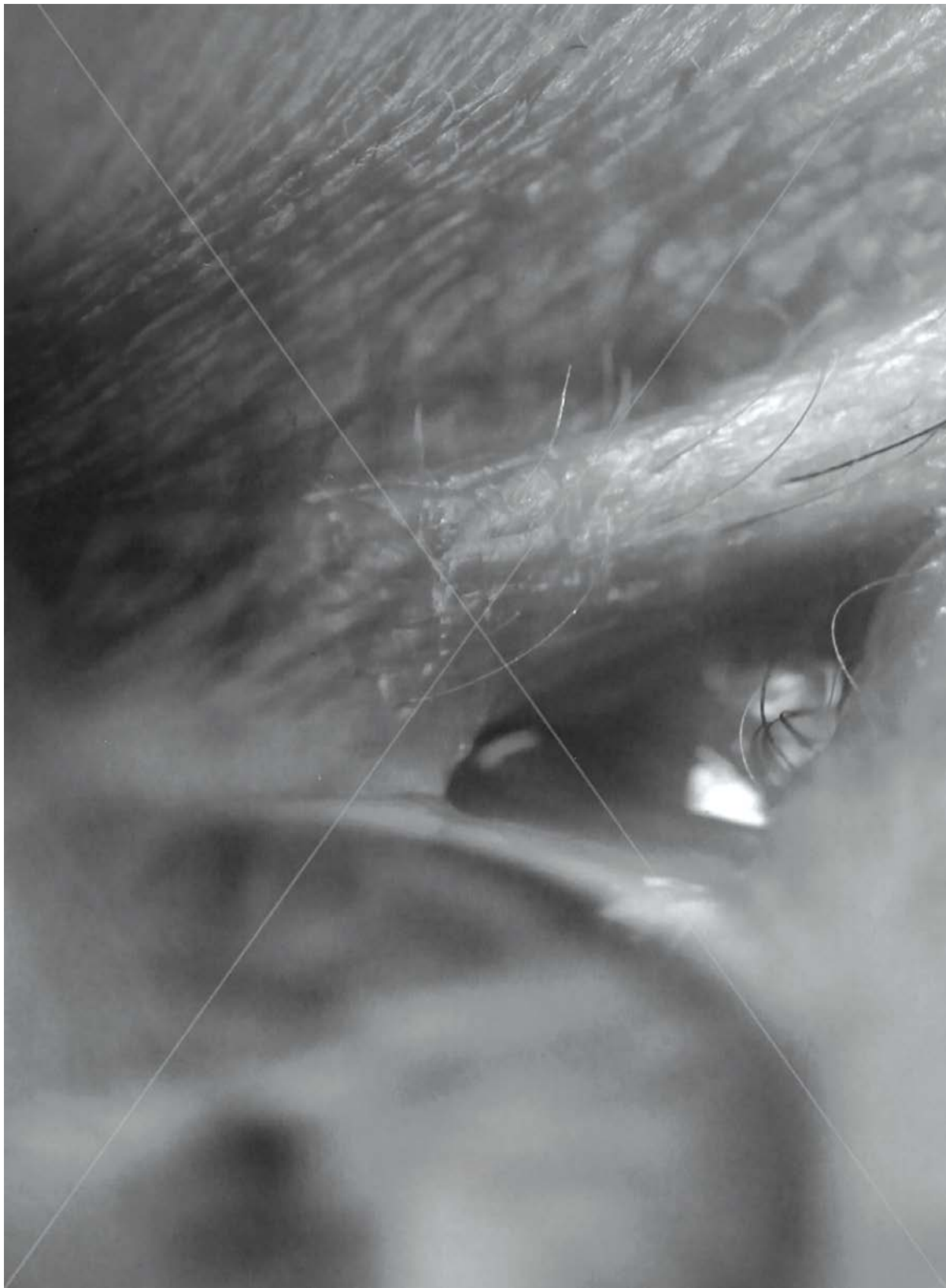
"You know there's no real genders anymore," I continue.

"Yeah, I know." Her left eye is unswerving.

"Plus, my dick is so small you might mistake it for a clitoris. You wouldn't be the first."

"A micro-penis," she purrs. "That's sexy."

"I'm not kidding." I kick into bachman turner overdrive and we both start to walk at the same time.



SHAHRYAR NASHAT | Hard Up for Support (still), 2016.

"Yeah, and you could fly a 747 into my ass opening too..."

If she had two sides to her mouth they would definitely have collaborated on this particular grin. I kiss her on the the motionless little flap of skin that is her right eyelid.

"Get America and Spyro Gyra into the Haystack Hut in half an hour. You'll each lose a forearm up there before you can say 'Bakunin's Revenge.'" Bakunin's Revenge is what the group calls it when a member is constipated. No one says it outright but slowness is considered a sign of faintness of heart. Lack of feral primacy, rewilding ambition. I'm proud to say I never have suffered from it.

I get over to the Roadkill Rapprochement just before she does and load up on what we call bacon fat. It's actually CEO drippings. From when we happen to liberate a CEO. And if you just want to use it as personal lubricant, it "stays good" for up to four months. In a penicillin sort of way.

Chuck Mangione shows up a few minutes late with Pablo Cruise and Joe Cocker. This really burns me up for a long minute. We whisper-argue like eviscerated rubber chickens.

"I didn't say you could bring just *anyone!* Pablo Cruise and Joe Cocker??" I feel totally dry.

"Well, Air Supply, they think you're sexy." She pauses a beat for dramatic effect. "So." She sucks her good cheek into her teeth.

I abdicate. "You know the rules, though, nothing divisible by two."

So Joe Cocker watches while we get off. Concentrically abiding the mandate that we disavow his pleasure in the creation of ours. I'll just say right here that the three of us do absolutely everything that any body can do to another body. And we do it TWICE. Pablo Cruise in particular is creative. Marsupial such that takes my breath away. Shim is a nasty little pachyderm. Not trendy at all. 🍷

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INTERVIEW OF CARA BENEDETTO BY LAURA WARMAN

hey it's laura i am going to ask u some questions u can answer them if you want or delete them or edit them into questions you would rather answer no i will ever know what has been erased, added, edited, or fuked

coming or almost coming forever

1

wut was the most erotic thing that happened 2 u today

today i am at the cabin that stains me with tongue signs. there is a blue picnic table, it is glossy with rain. it tells me that i will die, thankfully, alone.

2

yr book *burning blue* is out on badlands unlimited as part of their amaaazzzinggg new lovers series. the series centers on erotica that challenges the genre and focuses on works by women. additionally, you are a teacher and a maker of art. poetics and erotics seem integral to your practice across mediums. is there a difference between visual art and erotica? will all art be erotica soon?

erotica is the surprise in your mouth. art is the liquid that runs out. art will only always be many things, including, but mostly excluding the rest. erotica engage the mass.

BURNING BLUE

3

while i am writing this i am free bleeding on this



4

blood seems integral to josey's experience of her body. the blood is owned by her alone but it's also what leaves her and what she keeps from others. this also seems like a way towards queerness and eventual love. what happens to the parts of body that leaves us? is blood a response to ejaculate? is blood a mark of some female-bodied experiences?

Writing is learning to die.

- Helene Cixous

Blood aggresses, She leaks. Like language blood shifts in materiality when exposed to another (oxygen). Menstrual blood is a female-bodied experience, however I seek to highlight the social impositions of abjection and aging. A woman's experience is bloody and murderous, whether it's of biology or choice.

5

im trying to put a finger on the casual queerness of the book i'm trying too desperate to find my fingers through your palms

possible the projection romance genre,

there are fine lines between

6

sometimes i am an adjunct creative writing teacher. i think it is an undeniably erotic experience that must continually be repressed in order to de-sexualize not only the students but also myself. how do you feel as an erotic being in the classroom? how do you teach liberatory practices while still dealing with the actual bodies in a classroom?

feeding and finding i also wonder how causal and casual are related. a displaced you might do the trick.

i wonder what the difference here is between erotic and sexual. My classrooms are erotic spaces. But they are not sexual. Academia is full of unspoken tensions that make oppression seem like the only response and that is not a response. As a person working in learning environments, i seek to undo the bank hierarchy of academia by building an intersubjective space that is safe for feelings of pain and hostility. Because the easiest way to become erotic without fear of exploit is to communicate with one another. Removing the tension, elephant in the room etc, allows for release in all ways. We are all responsible to this collective affect. Erotics are made of play the most sustainable way to play is to listen and feel heard.

"Josey was an erotic master teaching her disciples how to come in the longest and most intense possible way." - *Burning Blue*

7

is erotica a response to theory that ignores the body

I write erotica to remember I am alive. I write erotica as gift. I write erotic in response to theory that engages vulnerability. Judith Butler writes in *Frames of War*, "If we accept the insight that our very survival depends not on the policing of a boundary, but on recognizing how we are bound up with others, then this leads us to reconsider the way in which we conceptualize the body in the field of politics. In fact, I am not at all sure we can identify a human form, nor do I think we need to."

I also write against. I write erotica against art and all those related to art (curators, collectors, academics, all participating ponzy schemes) that sell bodies and labor to support notions of essentialism that relate directly to capitalism. To sell, own, or buy a woman's body is a crime unless the woman is the one doing it, of course. Self-empowerment is the only power.

student or teacher

Morning in bed, then three hours apart. I carry you in the sudden twitch of my shoulders.

porn or erotica

can we wrap our heads around unwrapping our bodies long enough for heat to build with trust that one to one to one a we may establish a place for difference?

this cat image depicts a friend of mine. the friend wouldn't come inside, even when it was cold. even when She was starving. i hung out with her and then she went away.

i'm not even sure how those two words came to resemble one another. it scares to me think of the origins of this equation. now to deal with all the pain. because there is so much.

Growing up in Fantasia

RHONDA LIEBERMAN

Regarding women, the operative adjectives for my mother were “attractive” and, less frequently, “stunning.” They were the two lump categories, the second, rarer. A stunning girl, could refer to anyone, I would say, up to fifty-ish. Over fiftyish would be “still stunning.” Attractive would always evoke, first, someone who was slim, with big high-maintenance hair, not too short, which would be too avant-garde and would confuse my mother so the person would fall out of the attractive or stunning categories into the black hole of indescribability. Whatever challenged my mother’s implicit code of reality would fall through the cracks and be rendered nameless. Borderline cases would be referred to as “different.” Cases however, that were really “different,” that is not suburban and Jappy in a typical way, would become instead — no matter how good-looking — confusing. Even “cute,” for a mature girl, was somehow suspect (i.e. confusing) except for Cathy in the beauty parlor, who will be discussed later. An attractive girl evokes ribbed turtleneck, circa 1970, wool-belled slacks with zip-up ladies boots, false eyelashes during the day, and a conspicuous costume jewelry necklace, something unique. The stunning version was that, plus frosted hair. Of course they had to be slim, that is, not have a weight problem. The important thing was to look “done” — made up, accessorized, with hair that one didn’t wash oneself. I don’t remember my mother ever washing her hair, unless she was going to the beauty parlor. I didn’t think Moms washed their own hair. Not getting the hair wet was a very Mom thing. And I remember my Mom doing the side-stroke in the pool, just a few laps when it was very hot, wearing one of those bulbous kerchiefs, her head blossoming with nylon chiffon petals (as she would scream at my brothers to stop splashing). Enough already with the splashing.

Riding in what seemed like endless carpools to Hebrew School, I remembered some of the Moms who looked like they washed their own hair — because they were hipper, more intellectual or lazier. There were Moms who had long hair, like kids, and I thought this was so cool: intimations of a parallel universe. I vowed I’d be one of them. I promised myself that I would be a Mom with long hair who listened to rock music on the radio during the carpool, instead of easy listening, or if you were lucky, Dionne Warwick. Later in high school, I remember trying to explain to my Mom why Robert Plant from Led Zeppelin was singing, as opposed to screaming.

As a youngster, I spent a great deal of time in the beauty parlor, waiting for my Mom, who had a big beauty parlor habit. First La Scala, which I was too small to remember as anything but the name, after the great opera house (which I learned only years later as a Junior Abroad, first having encountered the name to designate the strip-mall beauty parlor: souped-up Italian suburban baroque with lots of scalloped molding). Later Al and Mike, a couple, broke away from the notorious Vinnie (owner of La Scala, known to have affairs with clients!) to form the splinter salon, Fantasia. They had quite a following. Fantasia, too, was decorated in high Italian ‘70s suburban baroque (apparently the decorative conditions most favorable for developing that particular strain of Jewish suburban beauty in its fullest flower) with scalloped molding, ameoboid tile forming an “island” in the carpeted reception area sweeping from the door to the cashier/display case which accented unique costume jewelry that no one ever seemed to consider buying. The whole place seemed rather dark, the Italianate glam references unpleasantly traversed by the ‘70s earthy thing as it manifested in dark paneling set off the avocado and gold color scheme in a most unpleasant way, resulting in an unintended dungeon-like effect.

I would amuse myself playing with the different color and size rollers on wheeled receptacles convenient for sliding from operator chair to operator chair. I was probably driving those queens crazy. This was a beauty



KOAK | Girls Night, 2016.

parlor with rows of hair dryers, seating rows of Moms with magazines and insanely bored meandering children. It always seemed to be crowded; knowing my Mom, she probably liked to go during the popular times just as, in a new restaurant, she would ask the waiter what was the most popular dish and order it, determined, even onto her palate, to regulate her tastes with the opinion of others, thus making for the least confusion. Waiting for Mom underneath the hair dryer was the longest, most boring part. Sun lamps were just coming in, for the natural layered look, but most of the heavy-duty Moms preferred the set, comb-out and spray, the hairdo like a huge hairy halo, quasi-spiritual armor to stave off and protect these Jewish Madonnas from the new confusing variables, like blow dryers, which threatened to mutate their world irreversibly, and change the rules they are still trying to get right.

I always remember Michael as another kind of lady. I think he teased and used a little spray! He was always friendly, with a pert round butt that stuck out of his designer jeans. He was great with my Mom (who has the soul of a drag queen). Al was always a bit more gruff and butch. He handled the phone, wore an open shirt, hairy chest, Italian horn. He had no butt. Their couplehood made perfect sense as couplehood as we were used to seeing it in the suburbs. No one said a thing about it.

I would sit by the manicurist, Elizabeth, who was German and sold real estate, don’t ask me when. Studying and contemplating the Revlon nail polish colors, I quickly perceived that Revlon was the best. Tiers of colors were arranged on the wedding cake like nail polish display thing. I pondered them, and would try to decipher the significance of the names, which seemed to connect the claustic beauty parlor milieu with a great beyond saturated with meaning and culture, with hierarchies of rank and distinction, rather than random outbursts of crankiness. It was hard to tell whether Elizabeth’s casual expertise was the outward sign of her obliviousness to their intoxicating power, or whether she had so absorbed the mysteries they embodied that she enigmatically administered them almost carelessly (during the manicure), hitting all the right notes mechanically, but no less effectively, like a bored stripper or priest. Misty Lilac was the best, then Misty Toffee, Misty Mocha, Misty Mauve, which was not really Misty, since it was really very pink. Russian Sable would be the Revlon nail polish shade grand duchesses

would wear to the Bolshoi Ballet during the Romanov period, their cleavage radiantly pale in decollete gowns, as they emerged from their troikas: it was the color of dried blood. Ultra Violet looked better in the bottle. I vowed to do whatever it took to become the person who got to name the Revlon nail polishes, my ideal occupation combining as it would my love of literature and make-up packaging.

The first time I remember getting a manicure, when I was old enough for it to mean something to me, was when I was a flower girl at my Aunt Gloria’s wedding; they had me wear a stupid shade like Petal Pink. The next time, I had to make a real stink to get Misty Lilac.

Cathy the hairwasher was like the “kid” of the shop. Spunky and friendly, she had a Sally Struthersish face and an equally Sally Struthersish tendency to balloon, (and in fact to plateau out professionally). Afflicted with a large pear shape problem, her cute button face was belied by thick tree-trunk legs on which she sort of lumbered around. Cathy was always super friendly and up (although she was, god forbid, single!). Expertly brought out by a really short frosted pixie cut, her cute face was somehow mismatched to her unfortunate bottom half, which like a loserly spouse exerted an inevitable gravitational pull, seeming to doom her to diminished possibilities. As a child I always assumed that she had bigger plans — to eventually cut and set — and was in some kind of protracted training period. Sometimes she would comb out. Mainly her territory was the back area with the sinks, with the other people’s beauty licenses framed (staring at her every day) on the opposite wall. As it turned out, she was afraid to be tested for her Beauty Operator’s license, a procedure in which you cut and set in front of other operators and they evaluate you.

Years later, when Al and Mike sold the salon to a straight Greek couple, George and Millie, Cathy was still washing hair in the back. Still with a frosted pixie cut. Still inexplicably cheerful. Always relatively cute compared to the owner couple, as they (washed, snipped, and set their way into the future and) aged, together, in strict hierarchical formation. If I were her I’d kill myself. I guess she was content with the pecking order. Once, during my freshman year, I came home and got my hair cut by George, the husband. I told him don’t make my face look fat. He said don’t eat!

The End. ♡



JUDITH BERNSTEIN | Angry Bitches/Birth of the Screw, 2015.

PIECES OF AN Untitled Story

JENNIFER KRASINSKI

So let us for a moment think of love — whether understood as a condition or a pursuit, as animal instinct or divine ideal, or as the sum of some or all of this and more — as a glass ceiling onto which we’ve projected infinite possibility.

We are unaccustomed to contemplating or seeing over and above love, accepting it as we do as the *ne plus ultra* of our moral, spiritual, and intellectual achievements. If only for the sake of something else (risking nothing or everything, as you wish), let’s appraise love as the root cause of a stunting lack of imagination to which we must finally hold ourselves accountable.

The atomic agitations, the rapturous feeling, the lyrical declarations of a dissolving self, the tear-jerking and heart-throbbing: all dazzling but arresting distractions from what greater experiences might lie beyond love’s outmoded order, its autocratic rule, its blinding detonations.

Boom boom boom.

Without cynicism, note the exhaustion of love’s narratives. The repetition of certain arcs and rhythms erodes a potential that’s as-yet-unknown, unformed, undefined except as that which lies beyond the known, the formed, the defined. Note as well the lacerating contradictions between love and horror, the absolute moral bankruptcies committed in its call. Love of another, love of self, love of country, love of God also begets violence, war, theft, murder.

The condition beyond will be less prone to corruption because it will not bend to forces outside of itself.

It will not stoop to make sense. Perhaps it will not stoop to make anything at all.

Art is noticing things, theater artist Richard Foreman once noted to himself.¹ He was writing about film and, let’s presume, had arrived at the conclusion — or perhaps risen to the revelation — that only an eye can create “attention,” a camera being something that has no attention of its own, no debts to pay to the world in this regard.

Eye is its own creator-creature, of course, with interests and longings apart from that of mind. (Mind is often wrongly regarded as eye’s master). Notice that when eye becomes bored or disenchanted with mind, off it goes, rolling away, onto something and somewhere and someone else.

To keep attention strong is to keep it from settling, wrote the poet Anne Carson, not of love or art or film, but of writing.²

For a writer, to unsettle attention is in part to remain alert to language that is grand, operatic, that claims or contains more of the world than can be reasonably held in a single word without an adrenaline spike of faith.

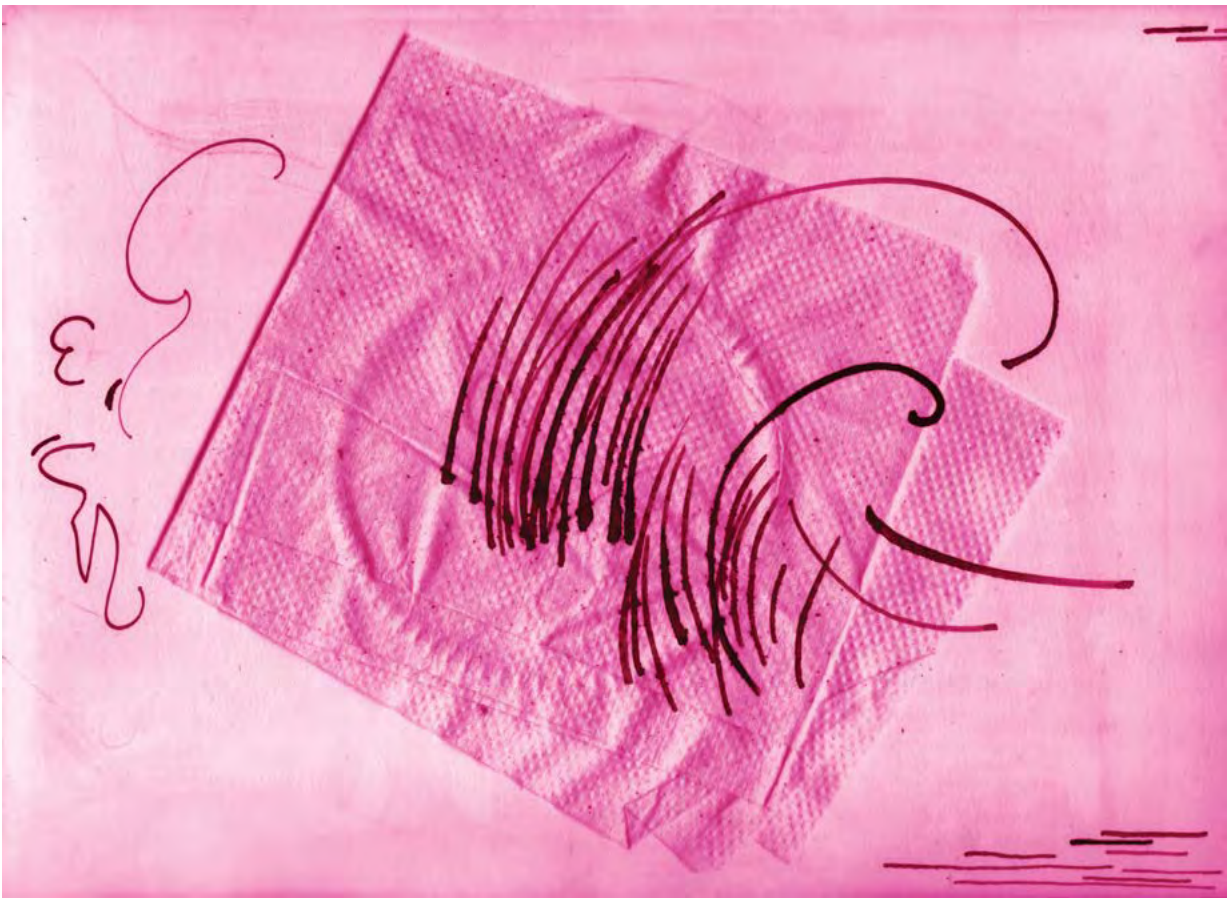
(But faith can be rendered from words like fat from a duck: in drippings).

To write and to love are actions so long entwined as to perform as subject and object — as light and shadow — for one another: writing as proof of love’s presence; love, a propeller to move language.

Language is a skin, wrote Roland Barthes, doubling words and bodies, texts and lovers.³

There you were, and then you were there more, said Anne Carson, not of you but of her husband, almost as though he appeared because of this incantation.⁴

Moving against love, words will stretch and extend, will disappear into themselves, or fall apart completely, on their way to writing a new fate.



TOVA CARLIN | Vote in the Fall, 2016.

I will give you a name, she thinks to herself. It should be very simple, or maybe very strange. Best would be that your name is not a name at all.

Along a set of stairs pushing up from the front door of her house are stacks of books, worn and unworn. To prepare for his visit, she writes in the margins of those unread, or puts them on the windowsill to yellow in the sun so that they seem to have been of use to her. Years ago, when her house unexpectedly became a home to an infestation of microscopic bugs that made her skin welt and ooze, she’d placed part of her library in vacuum sealed bags and shipped them off to be cleaned. The other books, she burned.

The man who was her you back then had come to help tend the fire. While she ripped pages from spines and threw them all into a barrel, he prodded the embers with a snow shovel. Feeling dramatic, she remarked: *all this, now kindling*. He made a joke —something about “smart smoke” — which she promptly forgot.

Now, she writes: *You in the world are neither my lover nor my love, both of these forms being too little for me, too much the same as who came before you. You here on the page are neither my subject nor my object. You are the obstacle around which I must imagine elsewhere by way of a muscular desire and a vivid mindflow.*

Then, she deletes all that.

The Big Bad Wolf will try to blow this house down, she thinks, *but he doesn’t know I bought a gun.* ●



EXCERPT FROM

We Never Kissed

BENJAMIN WEISSMAN

On November 26, I came home from school early with a butterball turkey in my arms, fresh, not frozen. The turkey was sealed tight in a white plastic bag, its bone structure, the spine and wing joints, noticeable through the taut plastic. Unlike the purchase of other meat, the corporate farmer doesn’t want the buyer of a turkey to see through the wrapping. Raw turkey flesh is too close in color and texture to the Caucasian consumer’s skin, identical in fact to my pale grandfather Imre, a Hungarian farmer/magician whose arms and thick muscular legs were always flecked with goose bumps, so I couldn’t help not calling the turkey Imre as I lifted the cold feller out of the car and carried him new-born-baby style to the front door, my precious little grandfather, 17lbs, the smallest Imre available. It was raining hard, a good sign for the mountains, there would be lots of new snow tomorrow. I unlocked the door and kned my way in, wobbled two steps across the threshold and back-kicked the door closed with an unavoidable slam. I plunked the sealed member of the family down on the kitchen counter and walked into the living room. There was a large gorilla standing there very quietly like a young statesmen with its shoulders pulled back and head held high. It made a snorting sound, then slowly walked over to me. I broke into a panic sweat and didn’t move a muscle. The gorilla stopped an arm’s distance away, took a deep insuck of breath and exhaled through its astonishing nostrils, then blinked. The gorilla’s eyes were a shiny copper. They were complex eyes, stoical, conjuring. But deeper inside those eyes there was pain, wild wisdom, and animal insanity.

I found myself saying, hi, hello, hi, thinking my sounds would calm or sooth the gorilla, or me, make me seem less fearful or threatening, though I was terrified to the core, and was praying it wouldn’t attack me. I’d never been that close to a gorilla before and I had no idea how it got into our house, not that it mattered, and I had no idea what to do. The squeaky sound of my own paltry voice felt vacant and weak, and I almost screamed and wet my pants. I was too paralyzed to run. The gorilla continued to look at me. Then it leaned in and sniffed me and its eyes brightened a little. I was looking into the face of truth and history. It almost made me weep. The gorilla put its right arm on my shoulder and raised an eyebrow in a provocative way. It was several inches shorter than me, the same size as my wife come to think of it, but significantly wider and all muscle, with coarse black hair from head to toe. Its nose was densely creased like cerebral leather.

The gorilla removed its arm from my shoulder, turned around and did a quick handstand right in front of me and put one foot and then the other onto my shoulders and pushed its crotch right into my face. The gorilla was female. I just stood there with the weight of her thighs on my shoulders and tried not to fall over, with her big open sex front and center. And then she either did something with her thighs and feet to force my face down and forward or else I took on new interests that I previously did not know I had but my face was buried in her genitalia and my mouth was wide open and my tongue was under the command of a furious slurping pilot. The gorilla made a throaty rhythmical sound and slapped the ground. I continued on, my mind blank, my head wagging left and right like no no no and then up and down like yes yes yes. And then just as suddenly the gorilla let out a cry, climbed off and snorted, and without turning around walked away on all fours. She curled up in the corner of the living room on her side with her back facing me and took a nap.

That was interesting, my wife Connie said.

How long have you been here? Did you see all that?

I’ve been here for a few fascinating minutes. I said hello when I came in but I guess you didn’t hear me. That’s okay, you were indisposed. And in answer to your second question, did I see all that, I guess I only saw the romantic conclusion. Are you okay? Do you need a towel?

I don’t know what I need.

So, just for the record, and I’m not trying to be Ms. District Attorney bitch, but did that gorilla rape you, or did you rape that gorilla?

I took a deep breath. I was shaking.



BENJAMIN WEISSMAN | Nessa with Tulip, from *We Never Kissed*, forthcoming at The Box, March 2017.

Good, Connie said, breathe. Breathing is good. No one is judging you.

It was semi-consensual, I said, but I was sort of raped.

I see that you managed to accomplish that while keeping your pants on, Connie said.

It wasn’t much of a decision. She kind of attacked me but didn’t tear off my clothes or anything. She wasn’t interested in my stuff.

And you never offered. How selfish. Let me run you a nice hot bath.

That’s good, I said, I need to soak.

And then a humongous wave of humiliation passed over me like a very heavy blanket. It felt like a made-up emotion though I knew how real it was with wrongness circulating through me like terrible, electric blood. I had a face full of gorilla vagina, a confused, wounded mind, and a very complicated taste in my mouth. I was wet from ear to ear. My face had a sheen on it (is that what the poets call it?). I sat down on a stool in the corner with my heart still pounding, trying not to pass out, as the stuff started to dry on my face. And then my mind sort of went blank.

O sweetie, Connie said, you look desolated. Do you want a drink? Shall I fix you a gin and fresh strawberry-lemonade? I just brought some home.

I shook my head yes, no, yes, and then dropped my chin to my chest.

I’m going to check the bath water first, she said and walked out of the room.

The gorilla got up from the corner and walked over to me. I stood up like a zombie obeying her silent order. She turned around like she did before and did the handstand thing and resumed her acrobatic position, and I just went for it again, slobbering madly.

Do you want bubbles, my wife yelled over the running bathwater. We’ve got honey almond or lemon verbena.

The gorilla’s gasp was quick, she was off me and back in the corner before my wife walked in and said “bath’s ready.” ●

The Beauty of the Husband

JON LEON

It was at the 2012 Whitney Biennial exhibition preview, not exactly the vernissage we had asked for in eternity, when you turned to the paparazzo to speak your name in neutral tones. I didn’t know then that I had already become the true husband, cast into a world without wives — that my own poetry was a distraction. Honestly, it was against religion to go on drinking from this open bar in love with my arrogance and managers without capital. All my other poems were about losing you to a German artist who shows with Almine Rech. Bon ton, the monogamist, who they used to call Messiah, before I lost the vision that was your windhorse. Before I lost my gentleness to your dreamy vagina.





above and right: **AHNDRAYA PARLATO** | Untitled, from the series, *Riding a Pale Horse*, 2014–Current.

CONSULTING WITH THE RAIN

LILY GURTON-WACHTER

When my son was two, he found a picture of my childhood dog and asked where he was. “He’s dead,” I responded cautiously, but then realized I might need to explain what that word meant: “he’s not alive anymore.” He thought for a minute: “But people don’t die, right?”

There’s something about having a baby that alters your relationship to death. I’m not sure if it’s that in watching, or making, a life come into being, you realize how elusive and fragile life is, or that the hyper-dependency of a baby makes your own possible death seem so much more devastating, but I know that the start of my son’s life made me see the world as teeming with loss and death and extremely fragile bodies. Reading the news became much more painful, nearly unbearable.

“Yeah, people do die,” I said, trying to sound sad enough, but not too distressed, trying to model for him

some kind of reasonable relation to death, as though I could handle this reality. With his head on the floor, he burst into tears, looked at me, and said: “I never want to die.” I didn’t know how to respond, mostly because I was shocked to be witnessing the precise moment at which someone first confronted his own mortality. It wasn’t long until he realized that if he could die then so could I.

Maybe it is that the extremity of childbirth, the madness of creating a life through excruciating pain, can unhinge you. “If all goes well,” Maggie Nelson writes in *The Argonauts*, “the baby will make it out alive, and so will you. Nonetheless you will have touched death along the way. You will have realized that death will do you too, without fail and without mercy.”

I would like to do a study about how many times per hour new parents check to make sure their baby is still breathing, about just how far they have to peek into the room to know for sure, about just how much of each day is spent feeling love and joy and how much is spent fearing its loss, though the two are intertwined so fiercely they can never be separated. I wish I could quantify how much each of your baby’s breaths can pierce your heart with relief and fear all at the same time. Zadie Smith has written that a child brings a “strange admixture of terror, pain, and delight that I have come to recognize as joy, and now must find some way to live with daily.”

A few months after the dog incident, he asked who was going to die first — him or me. Probably me, I said, since I will get older first, and people usually die when

they are old. But, he objected, he didn’t want me to die first because then I wouldn’t be around to play with him. The conversation turned to funerals, which I described as a kind of party. “Do they have cake at funerals?” he asked, recalling his main association with parties, “will they have cake at your funeral?” The prospect of cake made him feel much better about the whole thing.

What would it feel like to love this intensely without also fearing its loss? “New Variety of Depression,” writes Rivka Galchen in *Little Labors*, “It’s true what they say, that a baby gives you a reason to live. But also, a baby is a reason that it is not permissible to die. There are days when this does not feel good.” This intense attachment might seem natural, but a quick google search suggests that the octopus, the squid, the salmon, and the mayfly all die right after giving birth.

Last night he was in the bath singing the scarecrow’s song from *The Wizard of Oz* about “consulting with the rain.” “What does consulting mean?” he asked. “It means talking to, having a conversation with.” “Oh,” he said, “so everyone consults, right?” I nodded. “Except dead people. Because they can’t talk, right? And they can’t talk because they can’t walk, and they can’t walk because they can’t do anything.” I could tell he was amused at this idea. “Cause they’re just in boxes in the ground,” he said, laughing. ☹

Mother Love

SASHA ARCHIBALD

Six days after my daughter M. was born, I had my last appointment with the midwife. “Have you fallen in love with her yet?” she asked. There was a beat, and then she said, “Don’t worry, you will.” It hadn’t occurred to me that a mother might or might not fall in love with her own child. Her words stuck with me, so that the notion of “falling in love” — an exhilarated tumble — became the way I made sense of my growing attachment to M.

She was an agitated baby who cried often. A nurse advised me to minimize changes in sound or temperature or smell, and suggested I feed her in a dark closet. Indeed, I felt of this period that she and I were in a sort of cave, tucked away together, isolated by our absorption in each other. Caring for M. drained me of something vital — I temporarily lost the will to eat or read or talk with friends — but this loss of self had the effect of casting in relief the intensity of my attachment. The difficulty of loving M. made me stubbornly bear down on that love, until miraculously, the love became its own compensation.

Our relationship had none of the placidity I associated with mother love, and all of the sensuality and dramatic intensity I associated with eros. There was physical intimacy that surprised and ached, hyperattenuation to each other’s moods and rhythms, the awareness that loss would leave either of us desiccated, abject. I fell under the grand delusion of all lovers: that such love was singular and unique to ourselves.

I kept a journal of my efforts to calm M. The journal began as a record of swaddling versus bouncing versus feeding less or feeding more, but in time became an expression of love. I wrote about her touches and smells and babbles and how she made me gasp with a happiness that was also sharp, so that I winced. I wrote about the things I was learning: how time changes a body; the ways in which my character was generous, and miserly; the startling nakedness of a child’s ego. I felt more powerful than I had ever felt — I sustained her life, comprised her world — and also bereft of power, at her mercy.

The journaling continued for many years, until I began to think about appropriating the material for something else. In the end, I decided that love’s minutiae is always ridden with cliché, and boring to those on the outside. But even this judgment was in keeping with the character of love: I believed our bond was too private to interest an outsider. I had unthinkingly addressed the journal entries to M., and now they seemed suited for no one else.

I wondered that the most dramatic love experience of my life came about so unexpectedly. Romantic love is enmeshed in a tangle of cultural narrative and expectation, whereas mother love felt like uncharted terrain. I had been stunned by a feeling that was surely commonplace. I suppose I expected the sentiment, even craved it — else why have a baby — but I hadn’t thought it would have such an elaborate texture, a cycle of waxing and waning, a sensation of pain at its center. To think of mother love as automatic, or senseless, or inevitable is to assume there is nothing to say of it. “Of course you love your child.” But perhaps you don’t, or perhaps it’s complicated. Certainly the love has its own peculiar shape. Perhaps it should be spoken of. ☹



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ALICE B. TOKLAS (1877–1967), GERTRUDE STEIN'S LOVER

SVETLANA KITTO

Occupying that special, invisible area historically reserved for homosexual partnerships, Gertrude Stein's relationship with her "companion," Alice Babette Toklas, was never entirely out in the open, but neither was it hidden from view. Between Gertrude and Alice, however, the nature of the relationship was unshakably clear. On the occasion of an early trip to Florence, Gertrude professed her love to Alice with the intention of entreating Toklas into marriage: "Pet me tenderly and save me from alarm. . . . A wife hangs on her husband that is what Shakespeare says, a loving wife hangs on her husband that is what she does." Toklas wept and wept, and accepted: "She came and saw and seeing cried I am your bride."

Alice B. Toklas grew up in San Francisco to a middle-class Jewish family. Her father had come to California as a prospective miner but soon found more luck as a merchant. With hopes of one day becoming a classical pianist, Alice studied music for a couple of years at the University of Washington before her mother died in 1897, leaving her responsible for the men of the house. With no desire to marry a man, she found herself trapped. She eventually managed to secure a loan to get herself to Paris on September 8, 1907. On that same day she met Gertrude Stein.

The nurturing of Stein's brilliance was Toklas's primary occupation for most of her life. At 27, rue de Fleurus, the house in Paris where they

lived together for 40 years, hosting salons to some of the twentieth century's most influential artists and writers, Toklas was in charge of the household. In one famous anecdote, a photographer arrives to take pictures of Stein for a magazine spread. He asks her to engage in any everyday activity, such as unpacking her airplane bag, to which she replies, "Miss Toklas always does that." Talking on the telephone then? "Miss Toklas always does that." Stein drolly suggests he take pictures of her drinking some water, or taking her hat on and off.

Everyone at 27, rue de Fleurus had an opinion on Toklas and Stein's relationship, and Toklas, often seen as dark and self-effacing in the presence of the charismatic Stein, was under particular scrutiny. (To poet James Merrill her raspy voice was "like a viola at dusk"; Picasso's mistress Francois Gilot likened it to a "sharpening of the scythe.") Draping herself in dramatic robes and ghostly colors, (Balenciaga was a lifelong favorite; Balmain was a friend) Toklas often found herself charged with entertaining the other "wives of geniuses."

"I always wanted to be historical," Stein said before she died. "From almost a baby on, I felt that way about it." But if Stein hadn't met Toklas, it seems likely she would have given up on the whole genius of modernism endeavor. Not only did Toklas provide a constant flow of encouragement and praise that Stein needed to keep going, she also typed up her notebooks and prepared them for publishers. It was Alice who helped popularize Stein's trademark modernist phrase "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose"; she came across it while typing up *Geography and Plays* and insisted that Stein employ it as a device.

But not all of Toklas's influence on Stein's work was so generative. For years, Stein scholars puzzled over Toklas's typed version of *Stanzas in Meditation*. In the manuscript, every mention of the word *may* is crossed out violently and changed to *can* with no regard for context or sound. Eventually, Stein scholars solved the mystery: Alice had suspected that the word *may* referred to one of Gertrude's former lovers, May Bookstaver, and demanded Stein remove its every mention.

After Stein died, Toklas published a cookbook that would achieve cult-like status for its eccentric recipes (particularly notable was its recipe for Hashish Fudge, which included figs, almonds, and cannabis). But her focus continued to be tending to Stein's literary estate and reputation. And, though Stein's will granted her "friend Alice B. Toklas" full rights to her estate and painting collection, the provision was not enough to save Toklas from poverty. Without official recognition

of their union, Toklas was left very vulnerable. One day she came home to empty spaces in their apartment at 5, rue Christine, where paintings that she had lived with for more than half a century (works by Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, Renoir, Manet, and others) had once hung; in Toklas's absence, Stein's niece had pillaged the apartment. Soon thereafter, Alice B. Toklas was evicted. She died penniless a few years later. ●

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Fleur de Lis in Desert Hot Springs

FELIZ LUCIA MOLINA

To write about her mother she'd have to wait for her to die. It was the sea green curtains that her mother's friend designed and made for their living room in Desert Hot Springs. Ugly and sincere with fleur de lis patterns, the tassels for tie backs echoed a sad desire to win the California Lottery. Looking up at them in the way she looked up during Mass, at taller people, or at outsider healers her mother would bring to the house, Pauline badly wanted to write about her mother. She'd have to wait. So she lay in bed all morning and after masturbating, tried to imagine what writing about her mother would look like without her alive. How the syntax would change with mother gone; the body that she came out of someday embalmed the Filipino Catholic way wearing a Maria Clara gown, mechanically installed into the ground or in a marble wall. It'd be a guiltless and motherless syntax, which wasn't possible now. Pauline would have to wait several more years before calling priests and florists. She masturbated a second time. This time without thinking about her mother's death. She just stared at the sea green curtains that resembled the outfit of the Virgin Mary's hundreds of apparitions. This made her stop. She closed her eyes and continued, her gaze moving further into something endless. She was alone there with her guilt and pleasure seeing further into the darkness with eye floaters vanishing like tiny galaxies. There was an edge that made her feel she was being watched. But the thing watching her seemed totally ambivalent. She pulled the covers over her face to come. And while she did, the darkness resembled a universe with edges. In her eyeballs in her eye sockets in her face, she was floating just as earth floats in darkness. Where are the edges and limits? Something answered in that expanse that said nothing. She opened her eyes and to her horror, her blind mother was standing at the door to tell her it was time for breakfast. Pauline was in her mid-30s and so ready to eat some sunny side up eggs with Cholula hot sauce and hopefully hash browns if there was any.



SASCHA BRAUNIG | An Afternoon, 2013.

EXCERPT FROM

The Empathy Exams

LESLIE JAMISON

OB-GYN SP TRAINING MATERIALS

CASE SUMMARY: *You are a 25-year-old female seeking termination of your pregnancy. You have never been pregnant before. You are five-and-a-half weeks but have not experienced any bloating or cramping. You have experienced some fluctuations in mood but have been unable to determine whether these are due to being pregnant or knowing you are pregnant. You are not visibly upset about your pregnancy. Invisibly, you are not sure.*

MEDICATION HISTORY: *You are not taking any medications. This is why you got pregnant.*

MEDICAL HISTORY: *You’ve had several surgeries in the past but you don’t mention them to your doctor because they don’t seem relevant. You are about to have another surgery to correct your tachycardia, the excessive and irregular beating of your heart. Your mother has made you promise to mention this upcoming surgery in your termination consultation, even though you don’t feel like discussing it. She wants the doctor to know about your heart condition in case it affects the way he ends your pregnancy, or the way he keeps you sedated while he does it.*

I could tell you I got an abortion one February or heart surgery that March — like they were separate cases, unrelated scripts — but neither one of these accounts would be complete without the other. A single month knitted them together; each one a morning I woke up on an empty stomach and slid into a paper gown. One depended on a tiny vacuum, the other on a catheter that would ablate the tissue of my heart. *Ablate?* I asked the doctors. They explained that meant burning.

One procedure made me bleed and the other was nearly bloodless; one was my choice and the other wasn’t; both made me feel — at once — the incredible frailty and capacity of my own body; both came in a bleak winter; both left me prostrate under the hands of men, and dependent on the care of a man I was just beginning to love.

Dave and I first kissed in a Maryland basement at three in the morning on our way to Newport News to canvass for Obama in 2008. We canvassed for an organizing union called Unite Here. *Unite Here!* Years later, that poster hung above our bed. That first fall we walked along Connecticut beaches strewn with broken clam shells. We held hands against salt winds. We went to a hotel for the weekend and put so much bubble bath in our tub that the bubbles ran all over the floor. We took pictures of that. We took pictures of everything. We walked across Williamsburg in the rain to see a concert. We were writers in love. My boss used to imagine us curling up at night and taking inventories of each other’s hearts. “How did it make you feel to see that injured pigeon in the street today?” etc. And it’s true: we once talked about seeing two crippled bunnies trying to mate on a patchy lawn — how sad it was, and moving.

We’d been in love about two months when I got pregnant. I saw the cross on the stick and called Dave and we wandered college quads in the bitter cold and talked about what we were going to do. I thought of the little fetus bundled inside my jacket with me and wondered — honestly *wondered* — if I felt attached to it yet. I wasn’t sure. I remember not knowing what to say. I remember wanting a drink. I remember wanting Dave to be inside the choice with me but also feeling possessive of what was happening. I needed him to understand he would never live this choice like I was going to live it. This was the double blade of how I felt about anything that hurt: I wanted someone else to feel it with me, and also I wanted it entirely for myself.

We scheduled the abortion for a Friday and I found myself facing a week of ordinary days until it happened.

I realized I was supposed to keep doing ordinary things. One afternoon, I holed up in the library and read a pregnancy memoir. The author described a pulsing fist of fear and loneliness inside her — a fist she’d carried her whole life, had numbed with drinking and sex — and explained how her pregnancy had replaced this fist with the tiny bud of her fetus, a moving life.

I sent Dave a text. I wanted to tell him about the fist of fear, the baby heart, how sad it felt to read about a woman changed by pregnancy when I knew I wouldn’t be changed by mine — or at least, not like she’d been. I didn’t hear anything back for hours. This bothered me. I felt guilt that I didn’t feel more about the abortion; I felt pissed off at Dave for being elsewhere, for choosing not to do the tiniest thing when I was going to do the rest of it.

I felt the weight of expectation on every moment — the sense that the end of this pregnancy was something I *should* feel sad about, the lurking fear that I never felt sad about what I was supposed to feel sad about, the knowledge that I’d gone through several funerals dry-eyed, the hunch that I had a parched interior life activated only by the need for constant affirmation, nothing more. I wanted Dave to guess what I needed at precisely the same time I needed it. I wanted him to imagine how much small signals of his presence might mean.

That night we roasted vegetables and ate them at my kitchen table. Weeks before, I’d covered that table with citrus fruits and fed our friends pills made from berries that made everything sweet: grapefruit tasted like candy, beer like chocolate, Shiraz like Manischewitz — everything, actually, tasted a little like Manischewitz. Which is to say: that kitchen held the ghosts of countless days that felt easier than the one we were living now. We drank wine and I think — I know — I drank a lot. It sickened me to think I was doing something harmful to the fetus because that meant thinking of the fetus as harm-able, which made it feel more alive, which made me feel more selfish, woozy with cheap Cabernet and spoiling for a fight.

Feeling Dave’s distance that day had made me realize how much I needed to feel he was as close to this pregnancy as I was — an impossible asymptote. But I thought he could at least bridge the gap between our days and bodies with a text. I told him so. Actually I probably sulked, waited for him to ask, and then told him so. *Guessing your feelings is like charming a cobra with a stethoscope*, a boyfriend told me once. Meaning what? Meaning a couple things, I think — that pain turned me venomous, that diagnosing me required a specialized kind of enchantment, that I flaunted feelings and withheld their origins at once. Sitting with Dave, in my attic living room, my cobra hood was spread. “I felt lonely today,” I told him. “I wanted to hear from you.”

I’d be lying if I wrote that I remember what he said. I don’t. Which is the sad half-life of arguments — we usually remember our side better. I think he told me he’d been thinking of me all day, and couldn’t I trust that? Why did I need proof?

Voiced concern for my situation / problem. Why did I need proof? I just did.

He said to me, “I think you’re making this up.”

This meaning what? My anger? My anger at him? Memory fumbles.

I didn’t know what I felt, I told him. Couldn’t he just trust that I felt something, and that I’d wanted something from him? I needed his empathy not just to comprehend the emotions I was describing, but to help me discover which emotions were actually there.

We were under a skylight under a moon. It was February beyond the glass. It was almost Valentines Day. I was curled into a cheap futon with crumbs in its creases, a piece of furniture that made me feel like I was still in college. This abortion was something adult. I didn’t feel like an adult inside of it.

I heard *making this up* as an accusation that I was inventing emotions I didn’t have, but I think he was suggesting I’d mistranslated

emotions that were already there — attaching long-standing feelings of need and insecurity to the particular event of this abortion; exaggerating what I felt in order to manipulate him into feeling bad. This accusation hurt not because it was entirely wrong but because it was partially right, and because it was leveled with such coldness. He was speaking something truthful about me in order to defend himself, not to make me feel better.

But there was truth behind it. He understood my pain as something actual and constructed at once. He got that it was necessarily both — that my feelings were also made of the way I spoke them. When he told me I was making things up, he didn’t mean I wasn’t feeling anything. He meant that feeling something was never simply a state of submission but always, also, a process of construction. I see all this, looking back.

I also see that he could have been gentler with me. We could have been gentler with each other.

We went to Planned Parenthood on a freezing morning. We rummaged through a bin of free kids’ books while I waited for my name to get called. Who knows why these children books were there? Meant for kids waiting during their mothers’ appointments, maybe. But it felt like perversity that Friday morning, during the weekly time-slot for abortions. We found a book called *Alexander*, about a boy who confesses all his misdeeds to his father by blaming them on an imaginary red-and-green striped horse. *Alexander was a pretty bad horse today*. Whatever we can’t hold, we hang onto a hook that will hold it. The book belonged to a guy named Michael from Branford. I wondered why Michael had come to Planned Parenthood, and why he’d left that book behind.

There are things I’d like to tell the version of myself who sat in the Planned Parenthood counseling room, the woman who studiously practiced cheerful unconcern. I would tell her she is going through something large and she shouldn’t be afraid to confess its size, shouldn’t be afraid she’s “making too big a deal of it.” She shouldn’t be afraid of not feeling enough because the feelings will keep coming — different ones — for years. I would tell her that commonality doesn’t inoculate against hurt. The fact of all those women in the waiting room, doing the same thing I was doing, didn’t make it any easier.

I would tell myself: maybe your prior surgeries don’t matter here, but maybe they do. Your broken jaw and your broken nose don’t have anything to do with your pregnancy except they were both times you got broken into. Getting each one fixed meant getting broken into again. Getting your heart fixed will be another burglary, nothing taken except everything that gets burned away. Maybe every time you get into a paper gown you summon the ghosts of all the other times you got into a paper gown; maybe every time you slip down into that anesthetized dark it’s the same dark you slipped into before. Maybe it’s been waiting for you the whole time. 🕯



SASCHA BRAUNIG | Warm Leatherette, 2015.



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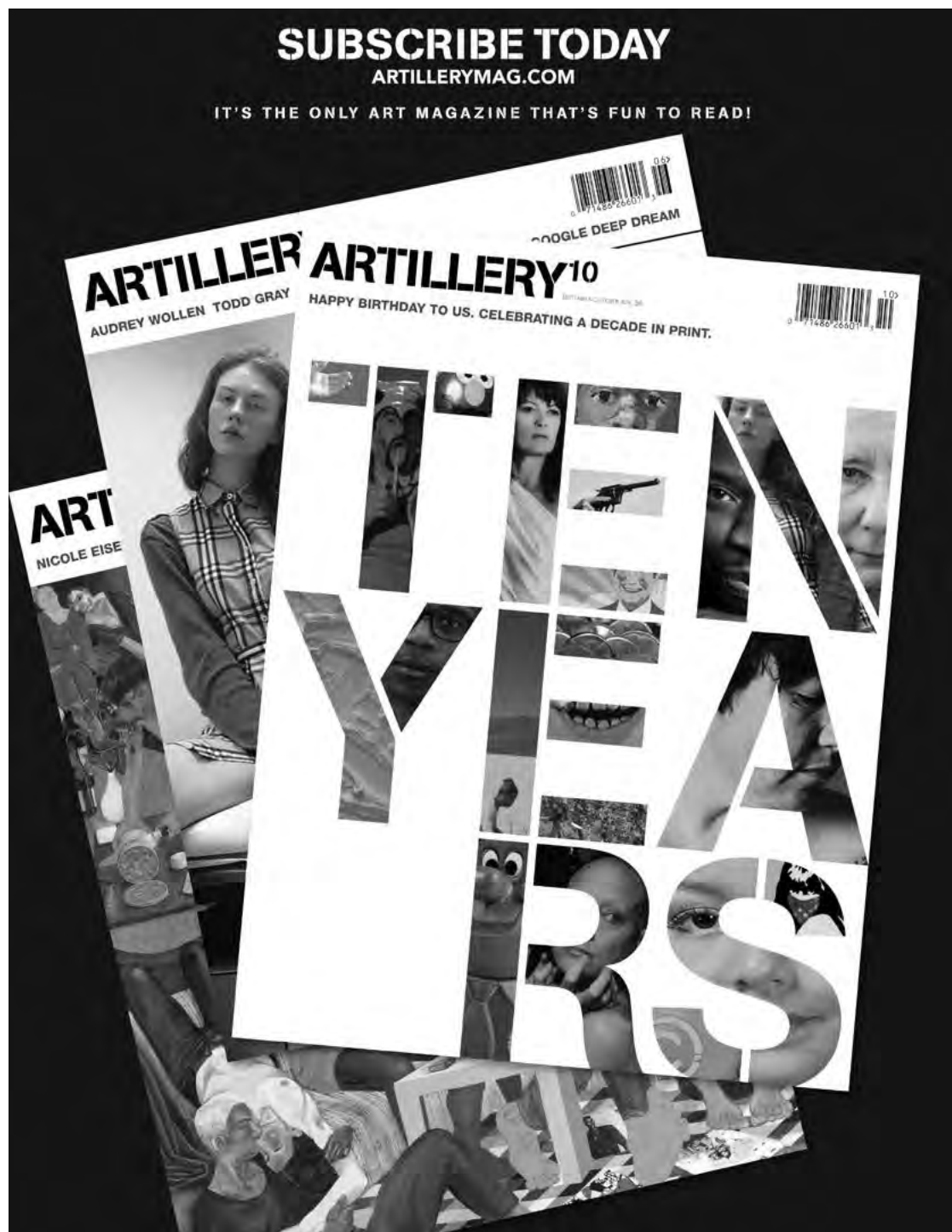
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Susun Weed

KRISTINA KITE

In her weekly call-in show, “Ask Herbal Health Expert Susun Weed,” the conversations between Susun and her callers are rarely less than gripping. Adjust your ears to the abysmal audio quality, settle in while the lurching intro chit-chat between Susun and Rebecca, the hotline’s gatekeeper, tapers off, and the show begins. In the 90 minutes that follow, Susun’s radical approach to health and medicine unfolds.

Susun Weed is a celebrated herbalist known for her series of books on women’s health and herbs, which began with the publication of *Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Years* in 1985, followed by *Wise Woman Herbal Healing Wise; Breast Cancer? Breast Health! The Wise Woman Way; New Menopausal Years: The Wise Woman Way*; and most recently, *Down There: Sexual and Reproductive Health the Wise Woman Way*. She runs the Wise Woman Center in Woodstock, New York and lives on her Laughing Rock Farm in nearby Saugerties where she hosts apprenticeships and workshops. She just celebrated her 70th birthday.

During the show, women (and the occasional man) seek out Susun’s wisdom regarding a huge range of conditions, anxieties, and diseases as well as advice on the best uses and preparations of herbs and plants. Her deep knowledge of herbal medicine coupled with her remarkable grasp of medical literature give her responses a nuance that run the gamut from hard science to hardcore New Age. Some of her recommendations are not without their controversies, while her teaching style and temperament fuel her most vocal critics. Her website has a page dedicated to the question “Why is Susun so angry?” and message boards detail stories of verbal abuse suffered by apprentices and visitors to Laughing Rock.

Her hot-headedness flares up often during the podcast, towards callers, invited guests, and even people at Susun’s home. During one memorable on-air outburst, she barely muffles the phone to sharply scold a disruptive apprentice whom she describes as bouncing around the kitchen like a fat blowfly. She holds nothing back and her emotions flow as freely as the stinging nettle infusions she touts (more on this later).

One woman, the mother of a 10 month old, called in asking Susun’s advice on how to terminate an unexpected pregnancy that was about 5 weeks along. The caller went into the various herbs she had taken and her concerns about their effects on her nursing baby. In no uncertain terms, Susun told the woman that she was risking the health of her child while at the same time trying to end a pregnancy in a manner that was risky and most likely ineffective. She went on to explain that herbs are neither a safe nor an effective way to terminate a pregnancy. At her most impassioned pitch, Susun emphasized, “I worked extremely hard to make abortion legal and to keep abortion legal and I am deeply offended anytime any woman uses herbs to terminate a pregnancy. We want abortion *safe* and *legal* and any woman who wants to terminate a pregnancy and does not go to Planned Parenthood and terminate that pregnancy legally is basically *giving the finger* to all women who worked for a woman’s right to choose!”

The caller said she would make an appointment the next day.

For all of her idiosyncrasies, Susun is an unapologetically unorthodox advocate of women’s health and health care. In every call and conversation, she demands that women take an active role in their health care decisions and be informed consumers of healthcare, whatever those choices might be. She is a powerful voice of reason when women with dire diagnoses call in wanting to heal themselves with herbs and she does not hesitate to recommend drugs, surgery, or other conventional remedies if herbs are not a sensible option. As her response to the new mother’s inquiry demonstrates, she takes none

of these options, these advantages and privileges, of our medical system for granted.

For me, when I started listening to Susun’s show, these were unexpected positions for an herbalist to take. Herbal medicine is not “alternative” medicine and it is not in opposition to orthodox medicine. Her challenging of what is “natural” or “normal” for women’s bodies makes her a proponent of birth control pills and an opponent of hormone therapy. Broach the subject of detoxing, cleanses, raw food diets, vegetarians (her standard response is “Why do you hate yourself?”) and other sticky nutritional matters with her at your own peril. So many of my own assumptions about herbal medicine (ineffective and/or dangerous) and its practitioners (anti-interventionist and/or unrealistic) were thrown into the light.

Susun’s message is “herbal medicine is people’s medicine” and her Wise Woman tradition is a radical way of *thinking* about health and illness. That it is a way of *thinking* as opposed to *acting* is an important distinction. Her call to challenge our notions is an invitation to be better advocates for ourselves and more responsible participants in our healthcare choices, regardless of which path of healing we choose.

A few herbal tips from Susun: Keep it simple, start with one plant. Look at the weeds in your yard and learn about them. Don’t mix herbs together and don’t take herbs in capsules — it is the most expensive and least effective way. Learn about the properties of one herb and its effectiveness for you. One of the easiest, tastiest places to start is with what Susun calls Nourishing Herbal Infusions (see her many YouTube videos for a how-to and also her specific herb choices). The recipe is 1 ounce dried herb to 1 quart boiling water. Steep overnight, strain in the morning and drink throughout the day. ☘

MEATLESS MUSEUM STATEMENT:

Divest from meat — because personal health depends on planetary health.

As public pressure to confront climate change builds, we call on ALL MUSEUMS to stop serving meat on its premises and at any events that it hosts or are hosted for it. Animal agriculture, especially livestock, is the primary driver of drought locally and climate change globally. Nearly half (47%) of all water consumed in California is associated with animal agriculture, while only 4% is attributable to non-industrial use. In fact, one pound of beef requires more water than six months’ worth of showers for the average person. According to the United Nations, animal agriculture emits around 20% of total greenhouse gas emissions, with cattle the biggest offender by far — surpassing the emissions of all forms of transportation in the world combined. Lifestyles and habits need to pivot; awareness of the effects and real environmental costs of consumption must inform our daily choices.

Our museums are important civic institutions that occupy a uniquely esteemed cultural and moral position in our society and can be powerful role models drawing attention to the kind of climate-conscious behavior we all need to embrace if our civilization and planet are to survive and thrive. An institutional ban on serving animal flesh will not only produce direct energy and water savings, it will be a strong symbolic action encouraging all citizens to seriously consider the major environmental effects of individual daily habits and act in alignment with these life-affirming convictions. Through modest, achievable policy changes, the museum can promote sustainable, healthy eating practices, which scientists agree is our biggest and best hope for preventing environmental collapse.

— The Editors



HALLIE BATEMAN | First Love, 2016.

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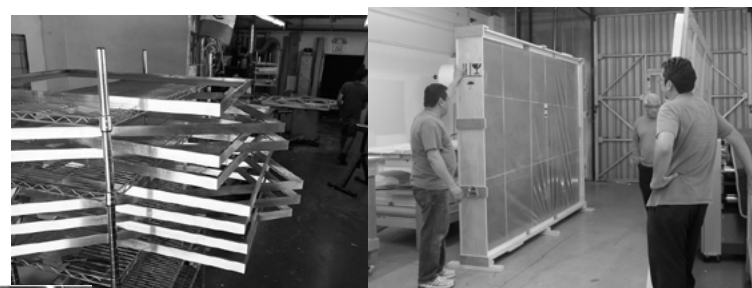


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SEX BEAST

A BENEFIT FOR PLANNED PARENTHOOD LOS ANGELES

THEATRE AT ACE HOTEL DTLA
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 6:30-10:30PM
#SEXYBEAST2016 @SEXYBEASTLA
WWW.SEXYBEASTFORPLANNEDPARENTHOOD.COM

HOST, COMEDIAN ANDY RICHTER
ILLUSORY PERFORMANCE by WIFE
WORLD-RENOWNED DJ RASHIDA
and BARF QUEEN
ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE of MUTANT SALON and VIVECA PAULIN-FERRELL
LIVE ART AUCTION by VIVECA PAULIN-FERRELL
SILENT and LIVE AUCTION of 42 WORKS DONATED
by ICONIC and CELEBRATED ARTISTS
SEXY BEAST AWARD to DAWN PORTER
for HER DOCUMENTARY FILM, TRAPPED
LIMITED EDITION AUCTION PADDLES by MATH BASS
FLORAL INSTALLATION by MAURICE HARRIS/BLOOM & PLUME

METRO PICTURES, NEW YORK
MITCHELL-INNES & NASH, NEW YORK
MORAN BONDAROFF, LOS ANGELES
NIGHT GALLERY, LOS ANGELES
RACHEL UFFNER, NEW YORK
REGEN PROJECTS, LOS ANGELES
SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY, CHICAGO
SPRÜTH MAGERS, LOS ANGELES

SUPPORTING GALLERIES
1301PE, LOS ANGELES
47 CANAL, NEW YORK
ALTMAN SIEGEL, SAN FRANCISCO
ANAT EGGI, LOS ANGELES
ANDREW KREPS GALLERY, NEW YORK
ANTON KERN GALLERY, NEW YORK
BLUM & POE, LOS ANGELES
BODEGA, NEW YORK
CANADA, NEW YORK
CHERRY & MARTIN, LOS ANGELES

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TIPS FROM THE MIDWIFE

ERIN MIKSIC, CNM

Often when we hear the word midwife we think of women giving birth and babies. But Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs) are also trained to care for women throughout their lifetime and specialize in gynecologic care. Midwives can even act as primary care providers for women. While my motto before becoming a midwife — “don’t do too many drugs, have safe(ish) sex, drink plenty of water, and of course eat good (mostly nutritious) food” — kept me healthy throughout my 20s, I attribute this mostly to good luck and I wouldn’t recommend it. Here are some tips on how to stay healthy, including some recommended screenings.

A few things that have been scientifically studied to help maintain good health are:

Annual well women check-ups including Cervical cancer screening and testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs or STIs). A note about cervical cancer screening: We know that most cervical cancer is caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). However we also know that the human body has remarkable qualities of healing itself. For women in their 20s, we only screen for HPV if their pap smear comes back abnormal. If your pap smear is normal you only need a pap every three years. At age 30 we start co-testing. If you are tested HPV-negative and have a normal pap, you may only need a pap every three to five years. YAY! But if your pap does come back abnormal or if you are told you have HPV, DO NOT PANIC! Cervical cancer is very preventable and very slow progressing. HPV does not equal cancer. If you follow the recommendations provided your risks are very low. SO get a follow-up. And drinking plenty of water helps with this one!

Cholesterol and blood pressure check starting at age 20.

Daily folic acid for all women of childbearing age prevents spinal cord disorders in newborns.

Mammograms every one to two years starting at age 40–45 (and sometimes earlier depending on risk factors: ask your provider about the BRCA gene).

Colorectal Health/ colon cancer screening starting at age



KOAK | Cat Lady, 2016.

50 (unless other risk factors apply; talk to your doctor or midwife!).

Skin health and mole checks.

Ask your provider about blood sugar/diabetes screening depending on risk factors starting at age 40.

Bone mineral density testing.

Dental check-ups, especially if planning pregnancy. Pregnancy is not a great time to get dental work done and yet dental/oral infections can be very dangerous for a pregnancy, so being proactive and maintaining oral hygiene/ health is critical for women of childbearing age.

Vitamin D. When I trained as a midwife in Austin, Texas we would test everyone for Vitamin D deficiency. And in a city with very little rain, hot weather, and a super active and sporty population that loves being outside, I was completely

astonished that I did not see a single result “within normal limits” — everyone was low. If it can happen in a city with so much sun, I’m inclined to think EVERYONE is Vitamin D deficient. This has proven true in my practice thus far. Vitamin D is critical for bone health, but also plays a part in immune function, the endocrine system, and cardiovascular system. Low levels are associated with cognitive deterioration, risk for type 2 diabetes, autoimmune disorders, depression, many types of cancer, heart disease, and some pregnancy problems such as preeclampsia and preterm labor.

Thyroid (thyroid-stimulating hormone or TSH) test starting at age 35 and then every five years. As midwives we are often seeing women for the first time during their first pregnancy. For women who have been relatively healthy this may be the first time they’ve really gone to a “doctor” and therefore it is often the first time they discover things about their health. I have found that thyroid issues are quite prevalent and very easy to treat, but can be a real game changer in quality of life once stabilized. Thyroid disorders can cause hair loss, depression, weight instability, fatigue, chills, anxiety, and many more symptoms depending on the type of thyroid disorder.

Omega-3 fatty acids have been heavily studied for their strong health benefits. In our practice we ask women taking Omega-3 fatty acids or Fish oil to discontinue at 36

weeks gestation, as these supplements can have a blood thinning effect, which could potentially increase a women’s risk for bleeding during childbirth. The same consideration should be made if you are planning a surgery or procedure where blood loss is a risk factor.

Exercise and staying active can help you have more energy, sleep better, enjoy sex more, relieve stress, and clear the mind, lower chances for heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes, strengthens your bones and muscles, and around menopause, less hot flashes.

More thorough information, including handouts “Share with Women,” published by ACNM (American College of Nurse Midwives) can be found here at <http://www.midwife.org/Share-With-Women>. 🗝

Hot Pink Summer Titty Tassels

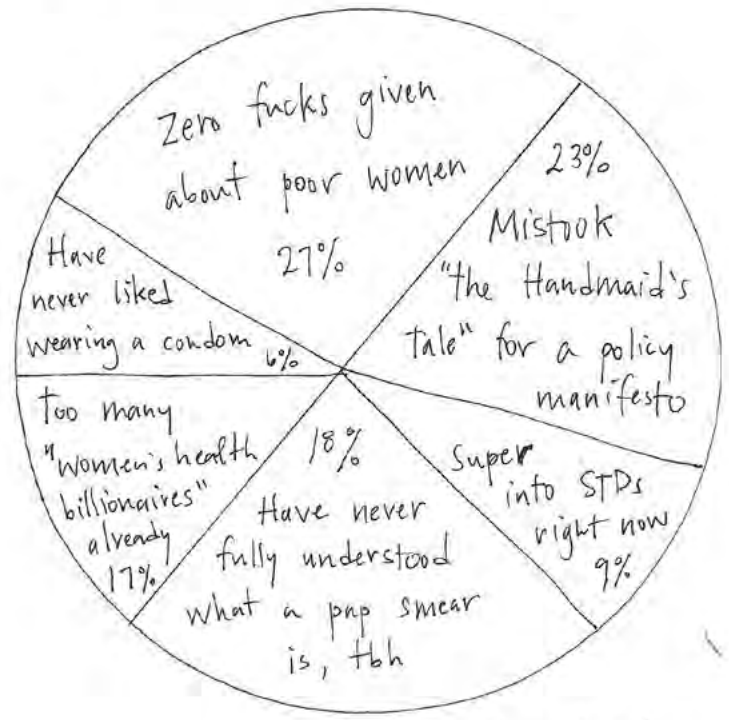
DOROTHEA LASKY

Everyone wants to negate the work of women
And yet we are all here
Cause some woman held us in her abdomen
For some ungodly amount of time
And then pushed us out
Or had them slice her pussy into bits
Or even cut her open and leave her to die
While a group of people sucked and smoothed
Our ever lying countenance
You say in your adolescent nightmares
Well then I wish you never had me
But isn't it too late for that
You're here
And you look at things
And forward that to what you say
Still the books by women about women
Don't win awards
If anything put a cigarette in there
A martini
Pretend to be a man
I like vagina jewelry not only on my vagina
But things made out of resin
And wood
That look like the unearthly glow
He told me I like those hot green booby fringes
I said you do but would you wear them
He said no but make me a ring
Of that hot pussy and I will wear it
All the day long
So I did
And he did
Nice vagina man
Wearing my pussy on his finger
You know sometimes
Sometimes
You win

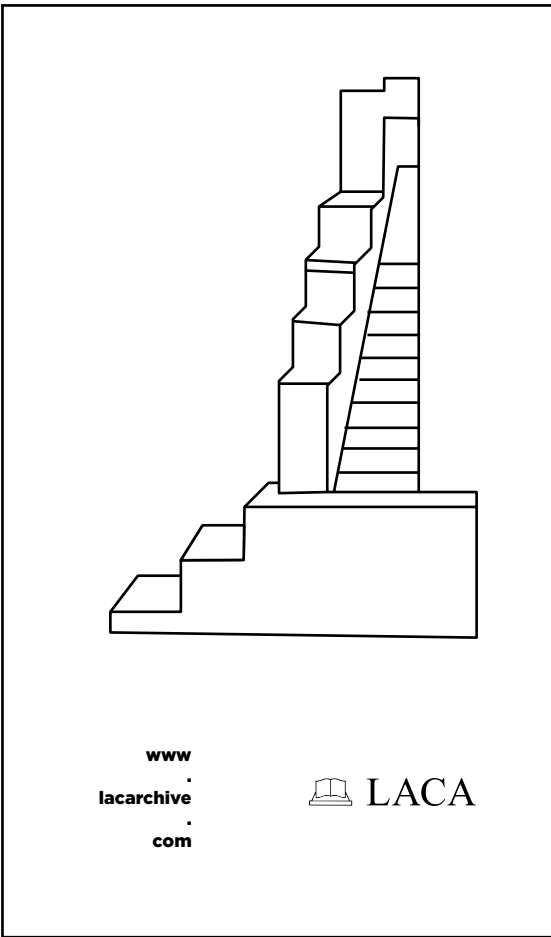


MAX MASLANSKY | Rolled Lovers (Half Twin), 2015.

WHY ARE THEY SO EAGER TO
DE-FUND PLANNED PARENTHOOD?

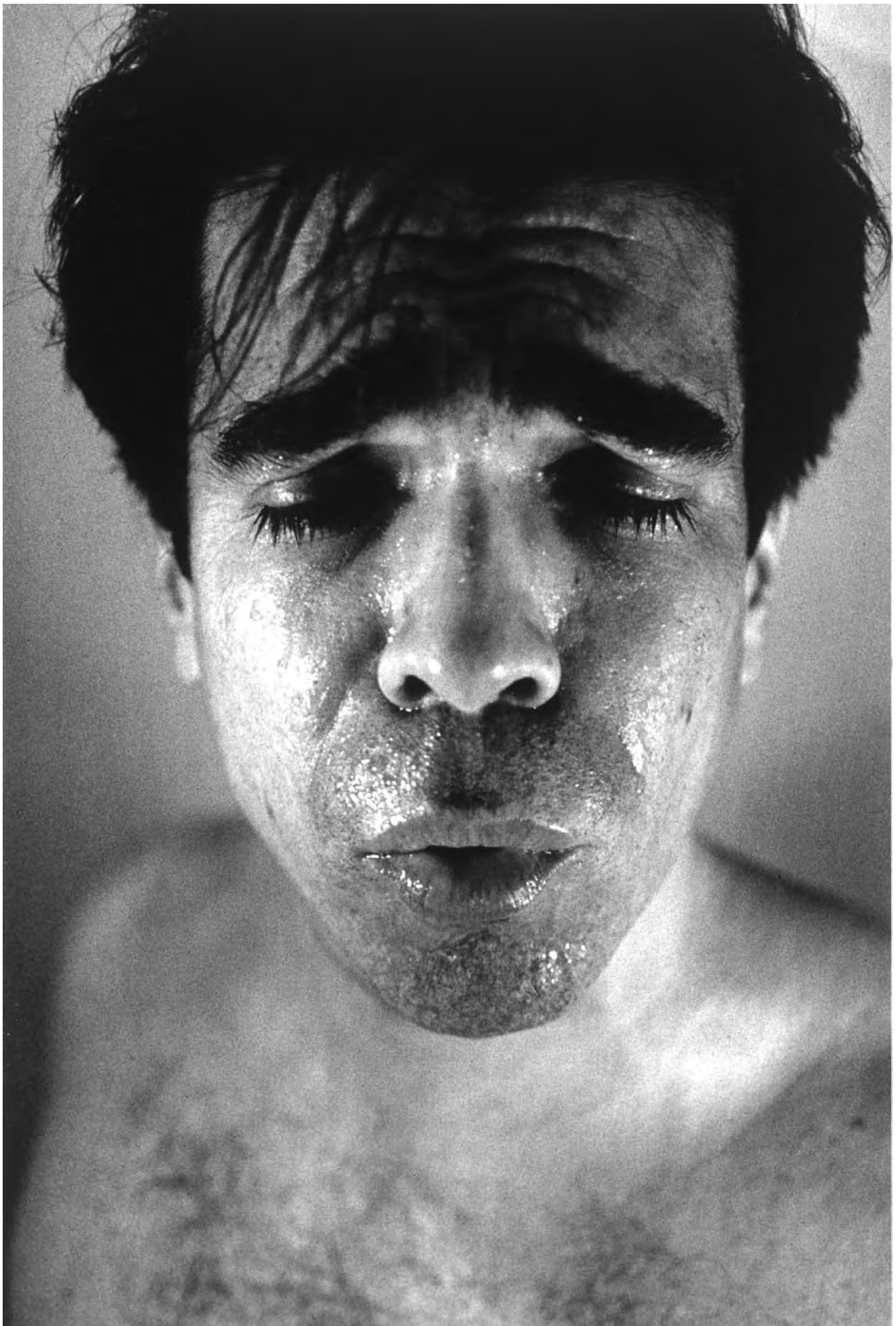


Ann Friedman



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AURA ROSENBERG, Untitled from *Head Shots*, 1991–96.

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This issue is edited by Kate Wolf, guest editor Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, Davida Nemeroff, and Mieke Marple; with special thanks to Milena Grgas for her work. Designed by Elizabeth Knafo.

