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REVERSE COWGIRL

McKenzie Wark

semiotext(e)

Contents

Part One: Orpheus Speaks	9
Trauma Monsters	11
Call Me	14
Sherwood Forest	15
Western Boot	18
Resistance Through Rituals	21
Men	27
Comrades	29
Preferences	32
Locker Room Talk	38
Circle Jerk	39
A Spy in the House	45
The Gas-Lighter	47
The Girl	51
(How to) Get Yourself Fucked	56
User Manual	61
Slut Pride	63

What Does Not Make Us Stronger Kills Us	66
Afterbirth of the Clinic	67
Transaction Costs	69
Love and Money; Sex and Death	71
My Calling	76
Injector Seat	79
The Ecstasy Years	81
Penetration	83
Perverting the Space-Time Continuum	84
Watching You Watch Him Fuck Me	88
Mardi Gras	90
Feminine	93
The Discreet Disgust of the Bourgeoisie	97
Skins and Signs	99
The Narrative of Decline	102
Libidinal Ecology	104
Trust	108
What Are You Doing After the Orgy?	110
Gay Society	114
Downstream	117
Class Analysis	122
Service Work	126
Straight Llife	128
The Other Side of Seduction	132

Miranda's Movie	136
Retooling	140
Dick-Tech	142
The Return of Non-Existence	144
You Are Your Attention	145
Queen Bitch	146
Unidentified Flying Chicken	153
Women in Clothes	157
Purple Reign	161
The Art of Circlusion	163
Closure	171
Latent Destiny	172
Part Two: Eurydice Speaks	175
Lakehouse	177
Orphée et Eurydice et les autres	181
Gender Euphoria	185
Girdick	189
Check, Please!	193
Chorus	195
Acknowledgements	199

Part One: Orpheus Speaks

Trauma Monsters

My father asks me to come and sit on his lap. This is unusual, as he is not big on physical contact. I am only six, but even so I suspect something is up. We are sitting on the black vinyl sofa, big and square like the bench seat of a sixties car. He holds me and he tells me that my mother is dead.

My mother is dead, he tells me. The world vibrates in a slow rhythm, waves of static alternating with waves of clear nothing. The black vinyl of the sofa, the gray wool of his trousers, my own flesh, the air, the walls all have a woozy complicity. There's a sucking sound but I don't hear anything. There is a subtraction, like a cut in a movie. For a moment I am not there at all.

And then I was back. I don't remember what happens after that. I don't remember much at all. Maybe there's another kind of memory. A memory not of an event but of a kind of non-event. A memory of nothing. A blankness. There are moments when I don't exist. I both want and fear those moments.

I had a boyfriend once who could make that happen. "Fuck me 'til I don't exist." That was what I wanted from him. "You treat me like shit," he would say. "It's not me, it's the non-existing," I would say in my defense. "I want you to fuck me 'til I don't exist. I want and fear those moments." Those moments when the world vibrates in a

slow rhythm. Your body, and mine, blood, spit, the torn wallpaper, all in a smeared amalgam.

So I left him. I had a girlfriend who also had those moments, moments when she did not exist. She both wanted and feared those moments. It worked so long as at least one of us existed at any given time. It was a matter of synchronization. But sometimes neither of us existed. Or worse: sometimes both of us existed at the same time. We could not both be in the world. Somebody had to not be a human thing.

So it didn't work out. So I got another boyfriend. "Fuck me 'til I don't exist," I asked. So he fucked me in my sleep. Maybe he misheard me. He fucked me when I wasn't there. I don't remember giving him permission to do that. But then I don't remember a lot of things.

One day he told me: "My grandmother just died. Now I am the last person left alive who speaks our language." It was an ancient language. And now it was dead. With his grandmother dead there was nobody left for him to talk to in it. So his grandmother was dead. His language was dead. But he was still alive. The world slops and gurgles with a nauseating lurch. The bed, the lamp, his freckled skin, everything loses definition.

Only now I am where my father was. I'm witness to a subtraction, to a person yanked from the world. Only this time it is worse than that. It is not a person it is a people, cut from the world.

It is shameful, this witnessing. I wanted to flee the scene. I think my father wanted to flee the scene. You can't be present while another

person stops being a person. If even for a moment that other person is just shivering meat. I think that other boyfriend was ashamed. Even though this was not the absence I feared but the one I desired. That state where random hunks of flesh, wood, steel, air, whatever just lie athwart each other, a heap of palpating stuff.

This is the problem with being human. We exist for each other only when we don't exist; and we don't exist for each other only in those moments of raw existing. We are monsters of existence, and non-existence. That is all.

Call Me

Call me.... Oh I don't know. I don't know the names. I never knew the names. In those days there weren't any names, or weren't any sweet ones. I was a child of the sixties, teenager with the seventies, university in the eighties. Ways to be human were being born, but not always well named.

And now there are names but they feel too proper, like things you could put on your profile. I got used to not existing as anything proper. I got used to existing as improper, on the lip of falling in to not existing at all. As if I had no proper name but only improper names. I didn't know my own name or even my own number. An unlisted number. I didn't know who to call to find out.

Call me... Call me any time. If only I was a number that you could call. I want you to call. I want you to want me. So I can exist in your wanting. But it is not possible as I'm unlisted. Have to get on the list. Have to get on the door. Entrée to the world. Eat me, world. Come in, world.

Have to make up a being so as not to not exist. It took a while to even start. If you don't know what you want, if there is nothing you can name to want, you're not there. You're not even home even when they call.

Sherwood Forest

It was a provincial time, in a provincial town. Newcastle was a port and coal and steel town, a hundred miles up the coast from Sydney, Australia. Gradually, the hunch grew that I had to leave it.

The whole town dwelt in the shadow of the steelworks. Its layout and tempo dictated by that crucible heat, key to its corporate body, where fired coal got the iron hot enough to mix with the carbon or more exotic elements, to give it the works. By the river, unseen by all but its shifts of workers, midnight shift to dawn shift.

Dymphna Cusak: “The rod pierced the tap-hole. Flame burst out with a dull roar. Sparks filled the teeming bay. The cascade of white-hot steel gushed forth. This was the moment for which the whole vast complex of the works existed. This was the thing for which you studied, planned, worked. Here, Keir exulted, here is the dazzling flood that lit the whole building, showing up the girders of the crane tracks, filling the high roof with leaping light and shadow, silhouetting the dark figure of the helper in an aura like the sun—here was the source of world-power today. Steel, his steel. The gush of molten metal ceased.”

Here is the family romance: My mother died when I was six. My father was an okay dad. Sat me on his knee and read me the tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Left me mostly in the care of my older brother and

sister. I was raised by teenagers. Raised by wolves. They really did their best. Licked me clean. Picked me up from school on time. Even took me to the opera. Rock opera: I saw *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *The Rocky Horror Show*, which in their histrionic way blew my sheltered mind.

But really, like most everyone born into the overdeveloped world, in the second half of the twentieth century, raised by television. Stick this in your psychoanalytic blunt and smoke it: my father appeared on television once. On the local news. I saw him, here on the screen, and sitting there, at the table, at the same time. He became real to me, on television.

Raised, more particularly, by Robin Hood and Emma Peel. In sixties Australia, they were the best thing to be found in the thicket of television. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was actually made in the fifties, but we got a lot of reruns out in the provinces of global Anglophilia. Richard Greene as Robin was so handsome and suave in his Lincoln green tights. (The green is imaginary; it was all in black and white.) Later I learned that the show had been made by blacklisted, exiled, American commies and fellow travelers, decamped to London to stay in work and liquor. Every episode was an allegory for the popular front. I imagined such shows emanating from some glamorous metropolitan world.

Doris Lessing: “Now my social life changed, because for a time I was part of a group of Canadian and American writers. Most were in London as exiles from McCarthy. This ‘group’ was in rapid change. For one thing, marriages and liaisons were breaking up. The wives or girlfriends who had shared early hard times and acted as agents

and counsellors, even earners—out. It was a hard drinking crowd. The jokes were mostly about which of them was a CIA agent.”

The Avengers, the other show that I loved, was a late-sixties swinging London confection, with Diana Rigg as Emma Peel and Patrick Macnee as John Steed. They are secret agents foiling surrealist plots against good taste and good manners. In the opening credits, John Steed holds a bottle of champagne from which Ema Peel shoots the cork, sending spumes of froth into the air.

By day: a provincial schoolboy with clubfoot. Clubfeet, actually. Both feet deformed, turned in, hobbling about, always a few wonky steps behind and out of sight of the peerage of boys. There was no such thing as Crip Pride, yet.

By night: fleet-footed Emma Peel, in Robin Hood’s band of merry men, fighting for truth, justice and the common people in a leather cat-suit, tearing about in eyelash extensions and a convertible sports-car. Fighting alongside Steed and Robin, who always treated me like perfect English gentlemen.

In some dark recess in the morning, we would all regroup in Sherwood Forest, or Emma’s Swinging London apartment, which really was the same thing, for sherry and innuendo that I both got and didn’t get. Somewhere else, there is a forest of dreams, of longings, for love and style and communism. But not in this town. Not in the sixties.

Western Boot

The seventies: what a time to be a teenager, when all the world seems to dress like one.

I wanted to open this body to that world. But which world? Which body? Maybe the way needs to be marked by skins, by signs. Maybe this is the story of that marking, a marking again of that marking.

Jordy Rosenberg: “Writing the self is, at its root, a question of marking with language the places where history touches us. And reader, it touches us *everywhere*.”

In the school locker-room, getting changed. The sweat of their teenage bodies wicking into the humid void, flavoring it with flowering boy. They were boisterous, but didn't pick on me much as I had the right brand of underwear. Out on the run they would just push me out of the way, hobbling along.

A boy put his thumb and fore-finger around my ankle. A girl's ankle, he called it. More like a cripple ankle. I didn't correct him. It was not clear to me that being girly was a bad thing if girls were what boys were supposed to want.

Being that other nonentity—a “middle class” kid—I could get the right brand of underwear, but the gray King Gee workman's shorts

that were in vogue did not come in a size small enough for my little waist. Neither did Levis, the only acceptable brand of jeans. These were the ways you signaled your existence as a boy-man. You turned your pocket-money into the look that meant you existed, in this moment, this fashion. Your body had to come wrapped in the skin and signs of the season. Otherwise you were nobody.

So I went shopping for girl's jeans. Since I was awkward about any public interaction whatsoever, it did not occur to me that this was weird. They fit pretty well, just a little snug in the waist.

Otto von Busch: "When fashion works on us, it changes our posture. We feel seen and on top of things. We expand emotionally, socially and bodily, opening up our sensibilities toward the world. We feel a plasmatic pulse of energy streaming along the spine and through our limbs. At its best, fashion is more than a wearable signifier: it is a seamless alloplastic extension of pure flesh."

And I got boots. Western style with Cuban heels. That was the thing. Outlaw signs from fabled Americas. The heels were high for my cripp feet, but the hips came magically into play when walking.

There was a stretch of the seventies when clothes, hair, style—all of those things could be unisex. All through that time, I dressed like a girl: the colors, the cuts, the long hair. Strangers would sometimes insist that they had to know: are you a boy or a girl? As if the fabric of the space-time continuum hinged on me being decidedly one or the other.

I laughed it off. What appeared of me, as me, in the world was some slight femme thing, transmitting and receiving rays of girlness. Except that in the seventies, everything went unisex, so nobody noticed—not even me.

The cowboy boots survived the end of the unisex hippie look and on into a glam brightening of the gendery signs. But then came the fork in the road: punk or disco? I had to ditch the boots. They were tan. And too hard to walk in after too many drinks.

Resistance Through Rituals

In my provincial town, where everything revolved around the work of steel and the factory claxon, leisure time was where the young and restless staked their claims to another life. And since this was a harbor town in a temperate climate, endowed with a twisting coast, leisure time was beach time. There was nothing much for a boy to do but surf.

William Finnegan: “I cruised the point line-up, constantly paddling, unable to sit still. When a wave finally came to me, I took it. The floodlights switched on in the middle of my first turn. I tried to look ahead, tried to see what the wave had in store down the line and plan accordingly, but I was surrounded by turquoise light. I felt some rapture of the deep. I looked upward. There was a silver, sparkling ceiling. I seemed to be riding a cushion of air. Then the lights went out.”

In those days, girls were supposed to sun themselves on the beach in bikinis and watch their boys surf. Perhaps down in more sophisticated Sydney, down in The Big Smoke as we called it, girls might surf, but in provincial Newcastle this would attract unwanted attention. Who knows what no-good a surfer girl might get up to?

Justine Ettler: “This story about Marilyn doesn’t start with her moderately immaculate conception or with her depraved adolescence with its idle daydreams about becoming a movie star and

moving to Hollywood or with that summer she spent clinging to a bobbing beyond-the-breakers surfboard off Australia's most famous beach and squeezed orgasm after orgasm from between her tanned teenager's thighs."

Our Mark Richards would go on to be surfing world champion four times in a row, but that was later. In the mid-seventies, we all bought our skateboards from his dad's surf shop. If you didn't want to surf, you could skate. It was fake surfing, but with much more realistic wipeouts.

But what to do when not skating? What to do when cut from the life of the surfer boys and the girls that (in braggart boy-lore stories at least) they surfed? There was nothing for it but to hang out with queers, communists, poets. And to cultivate some delinquent style.

Mid-seventies: Before the great schism between punk and disco, the delinquent style was glam. And in my provincial, antipodean world, glam swam into my awareness via the two Davids. The two Davids who would enable me to exist in the mid-seventies.

The local David was the poet. Slight, bespectacled, long haired like me, but blonder. He wrote poems about the spiders from mars. When they invaded we would betray the humans and welcome them. It was David the poet who had introduced me to global David, David Bowie, and glam. This was when I started buying op-shop clothes and modifying them. Embroidering little patterns in the denim like I had seen in a magazine. Those feminine hippy flourishes would have to go when punk happened.

When David Bowie died, everyone seemed to recall having loved him. That is not what I remember at all. It was just us, David and me. Maybe the others loved him in secret. They never showed that side of themselves. Even a hint. I was hidden in plain sight. Hidden even from me.

David Bowie called us, David and me, if not by name then by nature. By unnamable feeling. We got the call-sign. Answered the call, addressed ourselves back. Or tried to. Return to gender, address unknown.

Late seventies: The awkward late teen years. Rather than punk, I went mod revival. Copied from record album sleeves by *The Jam* and memories from sixties television. I shop-lifted second hand clothes and altered them. Taking in the legs and collars. Cut my long hair off. A substitute Paul Weller.

The mod look erased the brief moment of the girly look. Both more or less went with a body with a slim waist, slim wrists, slight and fey. The phantasmagoria of skins and images called to me with its models of what one could be and become to exist. Once again I chose things that were a little off-brand.

Otto von Busch: “Fashion is *feral*, it is of the animal. Even if the culture industries and ‘techniques of the self’ attempt to domesticate, control and commoditize the forces of fashion, in essence fashion remains a living thing, always with the potential of breaking free of its commodity form. Fashion is not a thing, it is not bound to clothes or goods, but it is a place you can go, an emotional space you enter inside yourself and another.”

Looking back, it seems as though mod was a way of finessing the problem of genres and genders, skins and signs. After glam came not just punk but the whole fashion dilemma of the late seventies: punk or disco? The world of teenage consumption, that part of it that paid any attention to skins and signs, divided into these two irreconcilable camps.

Kodwo Eshun: “Disco is audibly where the twenty-first century begins.”

The music of disco promised something. A world of love and style, of flesh and machines that could touch each other. Light and skin and beats and strings all attuned in pulsating dark. Sweat and sweet glitter gleams in the flick of light. An outlaw America, a utopia of Black glamour. Everything comes undone and becomes a part of everything else: bodies, beats, sounds, genders.

Actual disco, in this steel surf town, was not like that. The surf boys all wore the same Golden Breed brand t-shirts and zodiac pendants. A standard product in twelve models. And the girls in their tight jeans, their beautiful asses looked so much better than mine. That left punk. That was the place for ugly feelings. The ones without names.

Sianne Ngai: “As a whole, the book approaches emotions as unusually knotted or condensed ‘interpretations of predicaments.’ The evidence here would suggest that the very effort of thinking the aesthetic and political together—a task whose urgency seems to increase in proportion to its difficulty in an increasingly anti-utopian and functionally differentiated society—is a prime occasion for ugly feelings.”

There was only one punk pub and only one punk band. The band was called Pel Mel. Jude McGee fronted the band, sang, played clarinet and sax. She was my history teacher's daughter. He tried to set us up once. Recently, I heard on Facebook that Pel Mel had a reunion. I am always happy to hear that certain people are still alive.

Jude McGee: "Singing with silence, when I wanted music. Lighting my cigarette, the dark didn't show. Speeding to vanishing point, into my mirror. I hear her I hear her, secretive, low. No word from China. No sign from the keeper. I try to sleep. Excuses of mine."

The Grand Hotel was not very. The pub had three rooms. As it was opposite the courthouse, the front bar was frequented by lawyers and cops. The back bar, with the pool table, was more interesting: psychiatric nurses, merchant seamen, each with access to particular drugs. Next to the back bar was an empty room lit with a single strip light. That is where Pel Mel played, Saturday nights. The tiled floor had one loose tile that got kicked back and forth every show. The band played in the corner, in the half-light. Smell of speed-sweat, mothballs, ether and beer.

The local punk rock sartorial style did not appeal to me. The girls wore shapeless op shop dresses and ripped tights. The boys wore baggy old fifties suits in dull dun dud colors. They looked like quotations of their dads when young.

I liked the feel of tight new girl-denim, even if I didn't have the ass for it. And I had those western boots, but they were in tan, a now forbidden color. So I negotiated with the world. The world of skins and signs. The old sixties mod suits—all narrow lapels and side

vents, with only one or two buttons—at least carve a lean silhouette.
Narrow pants with a little spray paint detail. A classic tennis shoe.
Shirts with collars I'd narrow and square by hand.

A compromise, a holding pattern in genres and genders, skins and signs. Holding what?

Men

It was in my early teens that I noticed men paying attention. Gradually I worked out what they wanted. They would strike up conversations in railway stations. Offer to buy me treats. Ask if they could come into the toilets with me. Walking home alone at night, cars would pull up. Having a strong instinct for self-preservation, I would not be taken for that ride.

Part of me feels: If only I had known how to handle them. How to empty their wallets by taking advantage of their bottomless need. I was suspicious of any interest the world took in me. But even this desperate attention of theirs was worth something. It was a way to appear in the world. A world in which one otherwise disappeared as something of no interest or value to anyone at all.

Justin Vivian Bond: “So many of my thoughts and feelings and ideas became fractured when I was young. So much second-guessing informed every decision that I made that I became a paradox in a way, a combination of bravado and insecurity. That way of thinking permeated my life and has kept me from moving quickly on any impulse for most of it.”

Alive only to the imaginary glance or broadcast call, of Emma Peel, Robin Hood or David Bowie, there was still everyday life to deal with. Family, school and all that. The regular stuff. Someone was

present for all of that. But there was another me. The one that came into existence when certain men were watching. When you were watching, I knew what you wanted. But it wasn't quite what I wanted. There is never any symmetry to what wants.

Comrades

Last years of high school in Newcastle, avoiding the beach, avoiding the popular bars the police checked for under-age drinkers, I hung out a lot at the Grand Hotel at night, and at the university bar by day. You could order a drink without the embarrassment of showing fake ID. You could steal books from the library. And I could hang out with Glen. All worth skipping school for.

He was the most interesting person in my home town. He was beautiful. The way his straight-leg moleskins contoured around his ass, his cock. His beautiful smile. His brown eyes with hints of Jaffa orange. And that he wanted to talk with me.

So we talked. Late into the night in his little cold water flat on Beaumont street. He told me about his studies at the university. Explained some linguistics to me. Since his grandmother died, he had become the last speaker of an Aboriginal language.

I have not forgiven my world for this.

I felt safe with Glen. He wanted to fuck me. Made no secret of it. He didn't insist. The prospect seemed to excite him, scare him too. Glen was gay, Aboriginal and a communist. I was sixteen. Which would be the age of consent at that time, if I'd had a vagina. If he wanted to fuck me in the ass, it was still a matter of what the French

call *détournement de mineur*, as well as against the law, regardless of age. And on top of that, he wanted a *white* boy...

It wasn't just that. He wanted not just to fuck me, but to have me. To make me his. He wanted it all. Not forever. Just for a while. And not all to himself. This was an unknown form of want to me. For now, it was just sharing cigarettes and laughs and ideas and sensations about the world. We were a party of two. Exiled in this cursed language not of his choosing.

He would touch me, caress me, above all share with me his guarded smile. I became a body that someone as magnificent as Glen could want. And so it went on. Then I went away, to university in Sydney; he stayed in Newcastle. I was not to see him again, for a little while.

Until I left town, preserving my equanimity was made possible in equal parts by comrade Glen and comrade Jenny. They were both at university; I was still in high school. Together we formed a party of three. Jenny was long and lean, very fair and with fine brown hair. Her slender wrists were just like mine.

I picture Jenny, lying on a bare wooden floor in the sun. The powdery smell of bare wood. Jenny in jeans and a tank top. The bump of her hip causing an undulating line. I lie next to her, mirroring her position, our heads propped on crooked elbows.

Jenny probably doesn't notice, but my jeans are the same cut as hers, probably from the same store. It caused me no embarrassment to go in and try them on, not so much because of the unisex style of

the time, as because in my own mind I am really her little sister, mimicking her style.

I want Glen to want me, but I want to be Jenny, even though Glen does not want Jenny, or any woman. He wants a boy like the boy I am finding I don't want to be because of who he has to become.

Pier Paolo Pasolini: "The love of Carlo the meek for the communist young men of the people—which transforms him into a woman, makes him their slave—turns into hatred in the Carlo with Power."

Maybe it would all have turned out otherwise if I had fooled around with boys or girls my own age. But the girls were confused. They did not know that I wanted to be them rather than fuck them. And as for boys, if there was a gay boy in my year at high school I did not know who he was. Law of averages would seem to suggest there was at least one. Maybe it was me.

It was not until starting university in Sydney that there were scenes of me fucking girls, or touching some other boy's dick and watching him come. This was before I met you. These were the awkward years.

Preferences

“So which of us do you prefer?”

Edward presented himself alongside a woman I had not yet met. He had her pose with him. Like I was being offered two flavors of ice cream. I did not know what to say.

It is the start of the eighties. This happens in Sydney, in The Big Smoke. It is another university bar. Macquarie University.

“So which of us do you prefer?”

Close-up on my face. The audience, all of two people, Edward and this woman, awaiting an answer. It had not really occurred to me that I could have choices of people. I had thought that my desires were just a forest of can't-see-wood-for-trees abstract longings, not impulses upon which to act. I thought it was for other people to take me as offered, or more usually, to pass. I was eighteen years old.

Frank Moorhouse: “All right, there is no such thing as innocence, but I was uninitiated. How did you find me?”

You can picture me as one of those skinny and awkward teenagers, too self-conscious, not really in the world. Trying to look cooler than I was in my provincial mod look. My spray-painted pants.

Smart enough in a dreamy, impractical kind of way. But also a close observer of situations, with a faulty but serviceable sense of danger.

Flashback: cuts of compressed memories, of scenes that are like and not like this, as possible preludes. I could be taken for younger than I was, with a dewy, unfucked look that showed up like a destroyer on any pedophile's radar. They were always offering to take me home, to give me lifts in their car, buy me ice cream. Something about them smelled like a dangerous story, and not really the interesting kind. They were awkward, desperate, not in charge of their own attention to me. So I passed.

Well, most of the time. Sometimes there were men whose interest did not seem predatory. Who seemed like they saw me as more than an object of their need. Who saw another need open back towards them. On the train to the big city, the man opposite recognized me. We were both reading the *Tribune*, the communist newspaper. He was a merchant seaman. "Name's Jack."

I had been aboard the ship on which he served, the *Iron Arnhem*. These days, you can just look it up on the internet. There's even a sort of Facebook for ships. The *Iron Arnhem*: 4,307 gross tons, 1,997 net, 8,518 dwt. Lbd: 119.68 x 19.02 x 7.743 meters. Built by Adelaide Ship Construction 1972 (or 1973). Six cylinder 4SA MAN diesel oil engine manufactured by Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Japan: 6,000 brake horsepower, 14 knots on 16.5 metric tons of fuel per day. Controllable pitch propeller and bow thruster. Crew of thirty-two.

Of whom Jack, at the time, was one. After last drinks at the Grand, the crowd from the pool parlor sometimes decamped to the rec rooms on board the coastal freighters. I remember the rec room on the *Iron Arnhem*, lit by black-light, with fluorescent posters of naked women. I had looked at the posters; Jack had looked at me, discreetly. I had felt him looking, but acted as if I was alone, and so I was.

Jack recognized me on the train. More like he saw through me. When we arrived in The Big Smoke, he took me for an exotic meal in Chinatown. He knew how to order off the non-tourist menu. Regaled me with stories of the sea. Sympathized, and not without sincerity, with my inchoate Marxist theories. And casually asked if I would accompany him to his hotel room. I declined. I think he felt both disappointment and relief.

Maybe Glen had felt relief, in a way, also. He had been my first boyfriend, or my second, depending on how you count it. Sort of. He was the first one to actually love me but not to fuck me. But with Glen we got to be intimates. I tagged along with him everywhere back in Newcastle, like I was his girlfriend. Or at least how I thought a girlfriend would behave. I took an interest in all of the things he was interested in. I made myself presentable and agreeable to him and his friends. I was attentive to his moods. I dressed for him. He liked me in punk-tight pants and t-shirts, so that became me.

So when Edward called me out—who do you prefer?—it was a question that had some answers but vague ones. Certainly not any I could articulate as a raw, ripe, unfucked teen. If he wanted me he

should just take advantage of me. Plenty had tried. None had got very far into my pants, although Glen had come into my affections, where he remains forever.

It was obvious theoretically at least that I was supposed to want to fuck girls. Their very being just paralyzed me into inaction. I felt like nothing a girl was supposed to ever want. I was puny and weak and disinterested in the great contests of teenage masculinity. Could not even compete. Born with clubfoot, twice over, like I was two lagos in one, although it was a disability that it wasn't too hard to mask. I could pass among the walkers, if not the runners. If I could pass as bipedal, maybe I could pass as bisexual?

I must have presented some sort of alternative to late-teen-boyhood that some girls appreciated, as one or two tried to put themselves in my line of sight. I looked away. I had no idea what I was supposed to do. Or why I was supposed to want them. I just wanted to hang out with them. I wanted to be them.

Cut back to the university bar: I felt a certain ambiguity toward Edward's proposition. The answer I could not really articulate would be that I did not really want the man or the woman. I wanted to be wanted, *by* the woman *or* the man. That did not matter so much. Except that to the extent that I understood wanting and being wanted, then the one who is supposed to want is thereby a man (even if they are technically a woman), and the one who is wanted is a girl (even if they happen to be a boy), which would be me. What I probably most wanted was to be wanted by Edward, but I wanted to be wanted as the girl.

That woman that Edward presented as the other flavor was called Debbie. Like Edward, she was a science student. Like Edward she was older. As I had just come to university, Debbie would end up having a lot of practical advice for me. She had toyed with the idea, she told me later, that she should invite me to her room. But she never did. Perhaps I was supposed to show some enthusiasm for the prospect. I liked her a lot and would do anything she said. But perhaps she did not quite see me the way I saw me, as an object for her to possess if she chose. Perhaps she really did not know how to top me, even if she wanted to. In Sydney, in the eighties, there were not common words for these wants.

So nothing happened that night. I did not choose Edward or Debbie. Neither of them chose me. That first year at university, I had awkward, fumbling sex with other students fresh to the city. I could at least say that I had fucked a girl; that girl could at least say she had been fucked. Not that anyone said such things. One just got to carry oneself as having passed a requirement.

Mostly I got naked with Gordon. He was a country boy; tall, clean cut and clear felled. Dressed in moleskins and boots, rather as Glen used to dress, although without the edge he could give it. Unlike Glen he was from a big land-owning family. Actually they owned land not far from where Glen's mob were from. It is entirely possible that Gordon's ancestors had dispossessed Glen's ancestors. That ugly rage again.

Gordon had shocked the residential college by announcing to everyone that he was gay. This was not really news to me. The college soon divided into those who accepted Gordon and those who

didn't. I was quickly labeled a faggot for being in his company. I did not know why this was supposed to be a bad thing.

Gordon liked music and poetry. I expect that alone might have got him labeled gay even if he was not, actually, gay. We listened to Wagner on his rather elaborate stereo. We read poetry to each other, and Oscar Wilde.

Oscar Wilde: "It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances."

Gordon came from money, country money. He had been to some private boarding school. Apparently there it was the *done thing* for boys to read Oscar Wilde aloud, then quietly jerk each other off. His dick was shorter and thicker and gave out with a jet of milky cum that was truly satisfying to watch.

Locker Room Talk

“Gordon says you’ve got a big cock.”

“What.”

“Gordon says. The faggot. Says yours is a big one. Show me.”

“No.”

“Come on!”

“No.”

“Fucking show me, ya fag.”

“Oh, alright.”

“That’s not very big. Here. See mine. This is a big cock.”

“I suppose so.”

“Well, its big when it’s hard. I’ll show you.”

“No thanks.”

“Faggot.”

And so on. Ostracized by the kinds of people you meet at university that you would rather not know anyway. The people I left Newcastle to escape. I hung out with the commies, the punks, the junkies, the lesbians, and of course the theater crowd. And also with certain angry, sad, bitter, wild, addled, cunning and volatile girls. Like Leslie.

Circle Jerk

It made sense to me years and years later, when I heard how Leslie's life had turned out. I heard through an old friend (Debbie, actually) who had reconnected with her on Facebook. Leslie had become one of those powerful women who run things. Apparently, her hair is still a very simulated blonde if no longer suicide blonde. She has the power suit thing down.

She had married, had a kid, who had grown up, then she got divorced, and powered her way into the world, putting that square shoulder to the wheel. She had wanted, I think, looking back, a way to have power in the world, and she found it, only not where she was looking, when I had known her, so long ago.

The century was starting its eighties; I was starting my twenties. Punk became post-punk, which gave me license to wear colors cocktail bright. Even over that glare, you couldn't not notice Leslie. She wanted you to notice. Fair but not pallid, water-blue eyes, shock of near-white hair in asymmetric attack formation. Torn black tights, mini-skirt, cigarette. A cut mark on her arm, maybe, but not so as it looked like a regular habit. What I really noticed was her nail polish.

She was alone in the bar, with a whiskey, intent on her notebook, marking it with her left hand curled around the pen. From a

distance the open page is a mesh of angular black slashing lines. I sit beside her as there's nowhere else to sit. Take out my own notebook. Write in it, a little bit self-consciously. She looks up, catches my eye.

"You want a drink." she says. (Statement, not question).

Her (chipped) nails were a fabulous purple. I took out the *Pantone Color Guide* I had in my bag and found that color's Pantone number: 2126C. I wanted to be a writer, but being a Marxist I thought I should know about the *means of production*, so I was learning as much as I could about the graphic design and print trades. I thought her 2126C would look good on the cover of the student union magazine, which I edited. Leslie thought this was hilarious.

We ended up on her tiny mattress in a nook surrounded by windows in a generic North Shore apartment. It's deep in the night, quiet, except for the sound of a motorcycle screaming down the Pacific Highway in the stillness, like unthrottled desire. I wrote in my notebook: "And once we lived like millionaires, she and I alone, in some dark recess, in the morning. And sirens howled, like wolves, in the night, and crisscrossed the strips, of blackness, searching." As poet, I remained a poor copy of my high school friend David.

This is not something logical but it is just how I feel about it: when one person is bigger than the other one, the big one fucks the little one. It does not matter their gender or age or inclination to be top or bottom, I just feel like the big human fucks and the small human is the one who is fucked. There. I said it.

Leslie was shorter than me, only five-foot-one without her giant heels. But her shoulders were wider, her ribcage deeper. And she was stronger than me—much, much stronger. This rather confused things, but on balance, she was the big one, all exaggerated curves and muscle. She would push me down on her little mattress and encircle my cock as if it was hers. She would grind on me and get off, rubbing her clit against me, arching her back, her breasts bouncing. She really didn't care if I came. If I came too soon, and in those days that was depressingly often, she would rub herself on my flaccid cock 'til she came, incising her chipped nails into my skin as she pressed on my shoulders. One could say she topped me.

Bini Adamczak: “I wish to propose to you a new term, one that has been missing for a long time: *circclusion*. It denotes the antonym of penetration. It refers to the same physical process, but from the opposite perspective. This word, *circclusion* allows us to speak differently about certain forms of sex. We need it because the affliction of penetration still rules supreme.”

Maybe I was Leslie's pet. She liked to play with my hair, shaving and cutting, bleaching a stripe into it. Our nails all painted the same violaceous chemical color: 2126C. She liked having power over my body. She would press me against the wall, crowding into me with her hard pelvis and soft breasts. “I'm going to fuck you now,” she'd say, matter of fact, “But first let's do some lines.” The speed made her twitchy, moody. It made me jittery, electric. Eager to be used.

I was her girl, her dancer. She dressed me in shiny black tights meant for dancers, worn with tight t-shirts spruiking the day-glo logos of local bands: Mentals, Tactics, Laughing Clowns. Held

together with a studded leather belt. My look a blurry photocopy of her look. For a while I really felt like she saw a female me.

Now you could call her look, her attitude, her way of being *hard femme*, and make sense of it.

The look was a cover. She pressed so hard into femme that it was as if she was fucking her own look from the inside. She pushed her own appearances so far away from herself it seemed like she was not even touching her own skin. Inside it was a coil of electrified barbed wire, wound tight on speed but also on a desire to fuck the world. She pushed it so far that her peroxide hair, her high contrast make-up, her trashy slutware ended up splashing onto me and sticking. Her skin came on my skin. And my cock became hers. She took it over. It responded to her desires. She fucked me with my own cock.

Bini Adamczak: “The verb to penetrate evokes a non-reciprocal or at least unequally distributed process. It is a contradictory feature of bourgeois ideology that efforts causally associated with power precisely in a society premised on the opposite: power derives from the exploitation and appropriation of others’ activeness. O workers of the anus and the mouth, of the vagina and the hand, I say to you: be pushy!”

We were walking to the Trade Union Club, to go see Pel Mel. Past a line of men outside, smoking. One of them jeers at me: “What are ya, ya faggot!” The others join in, hooting, kicking, spitting, at me, on me. Leslie yelled back at them, but it’s hard even for a hard femme to be really menacing when she is all of five-foot-one and a little unsteady with heels and drugs.

We got extra tooled at that show, far too cranky; sweaty and living in jump cuts. It is the night she abandons me. After she fucks me one last time.

I was a witness. I'd seen the limits of her power. That she could not protect me in the world. And I couldn't protect myself: not fast on my feet, not present in the moment, not sharp with cutting lines, not quick to clock a scene before it clocked me.

It's taken decades to figure out my own inaction in this one little scene. I'd already been called faggot and queer and whatnot just for how I looked. It was puzzling, but I felt proud to be what they thought was such an insult. And ironically, they maybe knew before I did: Yes! I will become that faggot poof pansy sissy fairy queer ponce gash pillow-biter knob-jockey sperm-gurgler bum-boy Oklahomo, worker of the mouth and ass, or even in the ear if it'll fit. I'll do all you fret about and more and love it! I will be score and be scored by unknown pleasures you will never know! Just you wait, hun!

Paul B. Preciado: "It was necessary to close up the anus to sublimate pansexual desire, transforming it into the social bond, just as it was necessary to enclose the commons to mark out private property. That is how heterosexual men were born: they are bodies with castrated anuses."

But with Leslie that is not quite who I felt I was. I didn't know who I was in this situation. I was not that poof. That queer. I was not taking cock in the ass. I did not feel like her faggot boy. I felt like her faggot girl. I knew no words for this. What was galling and painful was the *inaccuracy* of their insults.

They couldn't see the runoff from her hard-femme high-maintenance armor on me. The same chipped nails, the same bleached hair. They couldn't see that I wanted to take the wrapping off her and wrap it onto and into myself, so Leslie could be something else. Be the hard, hot spiky wire.

She stopped answering my calls. I heard a while later that she had a nervous breakdown. I asked if she wanted me to come to her but she did not want to see me, anyone. She did want me to read what she wrote when she crashed. It was a delirious text, in her slashing hand, all about what she called the Circle Jerk Boys. Standing in a circle and jerking off and jetting cum all over each other, over and over, zany and absurd. But the circle is a zero, a nothing. They are scared shitless of falling in the hole between them. They can't look down. They stand around its edges but there's nothing inside, and they see nothing outside either. They just see each other, and touch their own dicks.

It made me think of the men that yelled abuse at us. It was a magnificent text. She would not let me publish it, even under a pseud. I lost touch with her until many years later, when I heard as one does through Facebook about her life, her career, her success.

This is a crazy, interpretive leap, but I'd like to think that she figured out it was better to be dangerous because she has power than to have power because she was dangerous. I'd like to think that she figured out how to insert herself in the circle jerk, in one of the circles where the jerks have actual power, and to pass as one of them, jerking her own theoretical cock with the best of them (with a professional manicure now). I hope she uses her dick for the greater good.

A Spy in the House

At the end of first year at university, I got thrown out of residential college. I'd had only a minor part in this adventure, but I was expelled all the same: The communist cell within the college organized a food strike after somebody found broken lightbulb in their meatloaf, again.

I ended up in a big share house off campus with people I barely knew. Listening, through the flimsy walls, to heterosexuality:

“Come on!”

“No.”

“Come on!”

“No. I said no.”

“Bitch.”

“Leave me alone.”

“Fucking tease.”

“I want to go home.”

“Aw, come off it.”

“I'm going.”

“Don't go.”

“Let me go.”

“Come on.”

“Let go of me.”

“Fuck you Sharon.”

“Give me my bag.”

“Fuck you Sharon.”

“Give it me.”

“Fuckin cunt.”

“Leave me alone. I’m going. And don’t ever ring me again.”

And then one night the house burned down.

I had been in a feline sleep on the big black vinyl chair in front of the television. Bored, I went to the university bar for a while, but nobody I knew was there. Except Leslie—with someone new. Came home.

The fire engine was still out front. The smoke had cleared. The big chair in which I had been sleeping was gone. The electric wires in the wall behind it had shorted, and the whole thing torched, leaving a hole in the floor. I looked at the hole, smelling of smoke and burnt hydrocarbons, the aroma of non-existence. It was as if one of my nine lives had died.

My belongings that were left fit in a milk crate. Not really knowing where to go, I went to Edward. When Edward had presented me with options, himself or Debbie, I could not choose. Now I chose. I chose Edward, with his shock blue eyes, his strong jaw, his broad chest, his discreet ass, his square-cropped hair...

I knew exactly what I was doing, for once. I knew he would take me in. I knew I could live there. I knew he would want to fuck me. That he would think that was part of the deal. Broke after the fire, it was a way to make rent.

The Gas-Lighter

The first things Edward taught me was how to make his dinner, pack his bong and suck his cock. He was easing me into the position. I didn't mind. It felt stabilizing to have a job description. The apartment was quiet and secluded, tucked into Sydney's leafy Northern suburbs. There was no telephone. The kitchen was rudimentary. Edward had simple tastes in food.

Kay Gabriel: "Well, what do men buy you? I want one of these extravagant types to pay my rent. I want another to show up regularly with a carful of groceries, right at the end of the month when it really matters. I want a third to nurse my immaculate asshole with the kind of attention you lavish on a gift."

I knew nothing about how to do anything, and made a lot of idiot mistakes, for which he chastised me. I was routinely reminded of my incompetence and immaturity. My mental competence was challenged. Admittedly, I was smoking immense amounts of weed, and so it is entirely possible I was out of my mind. But then the person who was insisting I was out of my mind was smoking even more pot than I was. And yet somehow I took his word for it, that I was crazy.

This is now called *gas-lighting*.

The pot made the days trickle down like honey on a cold morning. Sometimes I could really concentrate on my studies and my writing, sometimes I was listless, feckless and affectless. Even in that state, being whatever it was that Edward wanted provided a point in an otherwise rather smeary time and space for where and when I was supposed to be.

I wanted just to be wanted. I wanted to become a thing. For a while I barely existed. Lost between the grooves of the vinyl forever, forever rotating on the turntable. Not quite called into being by his quite explicit needs and desires.

It was with a certain tenderness and patience that Edward taught me how to be fucked. It was my great good fortune to be taught how to be fucked by one who had been taught how to be fucked.

In my utopia: before anyone attempts to fuck another, they will first have learned how to be fucked. Irrespective of genders or whatnot.

Lying, thing-ish, face down, Edward eased first a well-manicured, well-lubricated finger, through the outer, then through the inner rings. Not an entirely novel experience, having done this alone on occasion, but provoking some unspecifiable anxiety in the presence of another.

With the way blazed, Edward eased in his hard cock, ass opening toward it. And so I became one of the fucked ones, the penetrated ones, the engulfing ones, the ones who open for others rather than who expect others to do the opening.

Maggie Nelson: “I am not interested in a hermeneutics, or an erotics, or a metaphoric, of my anus. I am interested in ass-fucking. I am interested in the fact that the clitoris, disguised as a discreet button, sweeps over the entire area like a manta ray, impossible to tell where its eight thousand nerves begin and end.”

Gary Indiana: “R asked me once why I like to get fucked, and I couldn’t think of an answer. I think it’s natural, but I don’t know what nature is.”

This, I felt then and still sometimes feel, is the great asymmetry of human being: There are penetrators and the penetrated. Either your body opens and encloses another; or your body extends itself out of itself into another. One can be both of course, alternately, or even at the same time. But basically, there are the fuckers and the fucked. I wanted to be, and became, one of the fucked. To become flesh.

Jean-François Lyotard: “Open the so-called body and spread out all its surfaces: not only the skin with each of its folds, wrinkles, scars, with its great velvety planes...”

Or if you can’t unfold it, flay it, display it, then have some other surface alight on it, feel it, handle it, get into it. The body as a thing to be exposed and unwrapped and had. But it wasn’t enough to be the object of Edward’s rump-bump-pump action. This disappointed him. Sure, he would turn out the lights, kiss me and press himself against me, turn me over, lube up and fuck me ’til I cried. But that was not the end of what he wanted.

He wanted me to *want* to be fucked. He wanted to penetrate both flesh and being. He wanted me to ache with need for him to inject himself under the skin. He could not recognize himself in me as a mere thing that he fucked. I had to be another being, but one that wanted to give itself to him.

So I changed myself. I changed myself in the mirror of his inclination. I was not just a thing he could have. I became another. One that dwelled within the aura of another's desire to poke their dick into it and come and cum inside.

He probably didn't know how that would work out.

The Girl

How could I be in the world as a thing that he would want to penetrate? That he would want to fix with his eyes and words. How could I be the thing into which he would want to cum? How could I be a thing that wants to be this thing? A thing alive to its thingness? A thing that—better yet—beguiles and coaxes him into opening it up to itself?

Perhaps there were skins and signs out there from which to learn how to be this. All I could model myself on as the object and subject of another's want and desire to fuck me was a repertoire of images and feelings and moods and looks and stories—about girls. (Emma Peel pops Steed's cork.) I felt that as the one who is fucked, the small one, that I must be a girl. Or rather, *the girl*, as the fuckable one impersonates a sort of abstract, idealized thing. An impossible thing.

Ann K. Clark: "Marx wrote that money allowed every value to be replaced by its negation in the social economy. As money is to the social economy, so also The Girl is to the desire that must motivate a consumer society. In her abstraction, she transmutes every need into an attribute which she can supply. She represents the promise of ecstatic delight with which commodities must be clothed in order to be felt as needs."

The fashion for girls at the time ran to skin-tight, stretchy jeans. Walking in Paddy's Market one day with Edward, I saw the perfect pair. Tight as cling-film, but at market stall prices. I dragged him into the stall with me. In the makeshift changing room, I made him help me sheave into them, modeled them in the mirror. "Does my ass look fat in these?" He laughed nervously. I left them on and put my old pants in a bag. Edward paid and we left, a bit briskly.

Had I embarrassed him, exposed him, outed him as a gay man and a potentially hostile situation? The woman who ran the stall had not been hostile. If anything she had been sweet and understanding. I had barely noticed. I was a girl. Girls get their boyfriends to buy them tight jeans that show off their fuckable asses. It had not even quite occurred to me that we were gay people. I started to get paranoid.

Doubly paranoid. In public with Edward, we could be taken for gay men together. We are in a bar. Edward orders himself a gin and tonic. The bartender glances over me, and he says: "And what will the little lady have?" Recognizing his "mistake," he apologizes, perhaps even genuinely. But then, if you're not a girl, what are *you*?

I order a gin and tonic too. The bartender brings them. Mine has a straw; Edward's doesn't. The convention at the time was that only girls' mixed drinks came with straws. Supposedly so lipstick wouldn't leave a red stain on the pristine glass. Or maybe so the straw got to fuck the drink for good luck: That the man will get into the woman like the straw got into her glass.

Back in Newcastle there were bars (the Grand was not one such) where bar fights happened with ritual regularity. They generally started with the same liturgical phrases. Whether these phrases had come from the popular tune “The Newcastle Song” or whether the song had borrowed them from everyday life hardly mattered. The ceremonial exchange goes like this:

“What are ya?”

“What are *you*?”

When the call is answered in kind, the fists fly. When you’ve seen it more than once it’s rather boring. I avoided such bars, although for me they were fairly safe, apart from the flying glass. Those men did not feel the need to fight the likes of me. So long as I did not look like too much of a fag I simply did not exist to those fuckers. The fuckers who ran that world. (Who run this world...)

I was too afraid of those fuckers and their world to be consistently—what? The word for it would later be—*femme*. The word for it then would be—anything that could be spat out with some menace. If you were that, you need not be accorded the ritual question. They could just hit you without warning.

To them, women were a lesser being than men, and faggots were a lesser being even than women, and not a few of the women agreed with them. Granted only second class being by the men, they took it upon themselves to agree with their men on the third class status to faggots, poofs, ponces and nancy-boys.

Most days, I passed as a just not very manly man, only so lightly existing. I observed the world with some detachment. I did not care either to hide or to announce that this was a body that a man fucked in the ass. I passed through the world as an undetected anomaly.

At home or among friends, I felt like Edward's girl. A young, provincial, incompetent one, who nevertheless knows her little charms and tends them. He could be kind and tender, and I would sit in his lap, smoking a joint, talking about books. He showed me off to his friends: "Look, it even does critical theory!"

He was quick to point out my shortcomings, to me and to others. My vagueness and inattention, my inability to make a roast or a loaf without burning it. My being existed for him to shove his meat in my asshole. I did not exist for the purposes of shoving cake in his cake hole. I had a modicum of pride, but it was brittle.

I was crazy, he assured me, and stupid, and I believed it. This too was a kind of penetration, a skull fuck. It prevented me from becoming a person that could pretend to the world that it was whole. I was just fragments. As we all are, perhaps, but fragments that stayed artlessly unstuck.

There was one thing for which I continued to refine a rather passable talent, however. For getting Edward to want to fuck me. I refined the craft of taking cock in the ass. He had complained of my being a mere object for him to cum in. And so I warmed to the role, not just of the object to be penetrated, but the subject. I became the one who wants to be breached at the boundaries, who wants to be touched inside, that makes the other want that want.

If I could not know who I was from the world touching me from the outside, prodding 'til I felt a self; then I would become one by being touched from the inside. Edward's cock would press my insides against their boundaries, pushing what would become, when pressed, against skin from the inside, a being I could call, a being I could call I. This coming into being, this inside out subjectivity, would change things between us.

(How to) Get Yourself Fucked

It can take a lot of consideration to create the optimal situation in which to be fucked.

I had to watch my diet. Edward lived on red meat, white bread, Coke, gin, and tonic. If you are going to be available to be fucked at almost any time, a high fiber diet is advisable. I became what went through. I was all peristalsis, made to get nutrients processed promptly, to make the body available again for fucking.

One had to get the drugs just right. In the early days, just a gin and tonic or two and pot laced with tobacco. It is good to get a little high, but not so high that you can't perform, move the action on from one scene to another.

The lighting took a bit of adjusting. Not too dark that you fumble for the lube, but not too bright that the flaws of this actual body get too much in the way of its imaginary skin.

And the music. Well, that was dj-work. Everything resonated with different vectors of body-feelings-brain. Bowie's *Heroes*, Talking Heads' *Remain in Light*, early Prince for something less austere or cerebral. King Tubby to bend time into space. Fela's polyrhythms, the clear, crisp open lines of Miles Davis.

So I choreographed a little. Made an inviting scene. Staging and props for mental music videos. I learned when to make my move. A favorite was to take the TV remote from his hand, turn it off, and plant myself in his lap, my legs spread around his waist, and kiss him gently. He was not a delicate kisser. If he responded—and this usually worked—he glommed his mouth onto mine like a limpet and tongue-fucked my throat, aggressively, invasively.

Sitting in his lap, feeling his cock rise. I would disengage the airlock of his mouth from mine and step back for a second or two, strip off his pants and take his cock in my mouth. This was not really necessary in that his cock was usually hard already, but there seemed something about presenting myself in service to it that made my all-access availability more alluring.

At the opportune moment, I would stand, take him by the hand, and head for bed. He usually took a break at this point, for one more hit of pot, or a fresh gin and tonic. It gave me time to cue the music, get naked and luxuriate, then lie abed, in the full presence of anticipation. A moment of weakness, in a way, as everything depended on his wanting to fuck me.

He usually did. I usually won his attention over various distractions. He would press his body down onto mine. I could feel his cock against my thigh or my ass, but mostly just the suffocating weight of his big strong body locking my small one in place beneath him. Here, in the place I should be, just selfless want—to have the self squeezed out, to be just a flattened web strung out to touch.

But first, to fondle that cock that I want inside me. To anoint it. When we first started fucking, this was with Vaseline. I still remember its oleaginous texture, industrial bouquet. He always accused me of using too much. My technique was to make the runway so slick he would have to drive it home harder and longer. Make him work to spurt.

At first, I wasn't flexible about how to start. He had to take me from behind, while I guided him with my hand. It took a little patience. The outer ring was easier. Once that lock popped open, it took a complete state of relaxation for his cock to slide through the second. That inner cirlet is an involuntary muscle. It has feelings of its own.

This is a peak of intensity. First, there is the total requiescence of the body, which now exists for no other reason than to take cock into itself. Then there is the deep impression of the second breaching, the inner circle, the signet ring. If you do it wrong, this is painful. Maybe the cock is pointing at the wrong spot or is trying to force a lock that's decided on not opening to meet it. One has to learn the good pain from the bad, the one that just means nerves are shouting from the one that means damage and harm.

But when cock passes through that second cirlet, even if it isn't pain, it's a lot of signal. One's whole body gets skinned and signed from inside. Nervy systems web with vivid, visceral information. Often it's the peak, the best part, the moment of pure non-being. Fuck me so I don't exist.

What has been punctured are the remnants of the hard, closed masculine body, that admits nothing into itself. To feel this is to be

a euphoric moment of de-gendering. Not only is this a body among those that is fucked, it is also one that for this moment at least does not fuck.

Jonathan Kemp: “Taboos not only against anality and anal intercourse, but, by extension, against so-called passivity and powerlessness, come into play in our traditional understanding of the penetrated male body. Through the traditional cultural associations that exist between the concept of body and the concept of woman, the name feminine is given to any breach of the taboo against penetrating the male body. Reclaiming that body as something other than grotesque or unthinkable, it might be possible to understand the penetrated male body as something other than feminine, and feminine as something other than submissive, powerless and vulnerable.”

With my ass up in the air and Edward’s cock sliding in, out, in: I beg beg beg to differ differ differ. Sure, take it in the ass and be a man if you want, but I didn’t want any part of that part. This holey body is coming to feel itself as femme. I wanna be your dog. I want you to come negate my negation.

Edward liked to fuck me doggie-style, which somehow seemed to give a rather sharp and eventually unendurable buzz to the prostate. So I made him mix it up a bit. I liked to lie face up on my back, legs wrapped around him, while he fucked me on his knees. I especially liked to cowgirl, which put me in control of his cock, of where and when and how hard it pressed, although this was not to his taste. He liked looking at me, looming over him, with the smile of the just-fucked look, but only for so long. For Edward to cum he had to pound hard with maximum leverage.

Paul B. Preciado: “My elbows are burning. Fucking her is harder than factory work, harder than driving a truck loaded with nitroglycerine in a cowboy film. She tears off my skin every time.”

Doing at it doggie-style, pushing my head down into the pillows. He thrust away until he came. And how he came! Dazzling flood of jizz, always three white-hot squirts that spark and cascade into this teeming bay. Enough to fill a cup. Nothing made me happier than to feel those reliable three blasts of wasted sperm, fertilizing nothing.

Sometimes it felt as though he could fuck me so I stayed fucked. And I did, for a while. Walking down the street, ass a little sore, feeling its closure, a sealing to a self, but also feeling some agency over opening to the world at will. But it was never forever.

René Crevel: “Tell mankind I am happy. Tell mankind that for at least a minute I escaped their globe of expectation.”

User Manual

Every book should have an image that passes through the whole of it. So take this book and roll it into a tube. Hold the tube in your hands. Pretend that the tube you made of this book is my ass. Press your cock up against one end of it, and slowly slide it right through. The book gives you its consent, in writing.

What, you don't have a cock? Everyone can have one. They make very fine designer cock technology. It's the fashion now. Better than the old flesh ones. You can choose what size and color, and it's never limp.

Either way, take your cock, press it against one end of the ass that is this book. Slide it in, out, in, out, until somebody cums. Maybe it's you, cumming cursive into this book, your personal copy. Maybe it's you, wet from rubbing the base of the dick against your clit. Sign a little of your juice within its pages.

Maybe you have some other junk-design on your end. Maybe its girl dick. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that this the book wants you, wants you inside. Although if that's not your thing, it can be switched.

This is more meme than memoir. Not a personal essay so much as an impersonal essay. It's genre less adventure tale than misadventurous

tail. Not only literary criticism but also critical literalism. It's not about coming of age, it's about the age of cum. It is not entirely factual. Maybe these were not exactly the forms, the feels. It might however be a book that has *sexual veracity*. If something gets hard, or wet, or cums, or doesn't, that at least probably happened. It was probably more sublime ridiculous beautiful ugly than described.

Slut Pride

I'm in the mid-eighties by now: freelance writer; full-time slut—but only for Edward. A monogamous slut.

Such a curious word. The slut is the untidy, wallowing woman. Slut, sloth, sleet, slush, slatter: it's all spilled liquids. She does her chores poorly. The sexual slant is more modern. Sweat and santorum; jizz and juices. Sure, you could reclaim it as a kind of sexual agency. Maybe it could also just be about being open to a hot wet fuck. To walk down the street with pride knowing that you have molten cum dripping from your hole down your leg.

Chris Kraus: “My entire state of being’s changed because I’ve become my sexuality: female, straight, wanting to love men, be fucked. Is there a way of living with this like a gay person, proudly?”

There I was, lounging about, reading a book, dressed in almost nothing, the housework sort of done. Available. Sensing with the special spidey-sense of the penetratable, the possibilities when he enters the room. Come into the parlor, come into me, come in me, if you want. Here on the sofa. If you want. Forget about making a mess.

Messing with the slut is messy in other ways. Maybe emotionally messy. Maybe just untidy. One time I knocked the bong over while

pivoting around him, and we fucked to the odor of rank tobacco and hash juice.

Messy also in a turbulent, mammalian way. An animal body in jitters and spasms, grunting and crying as if language did not yet exist. Or using another language that translates from the nervous system its thresholds of intensity. Messy in another way, too. Taking pleasure in being fucked, but wanting more, needing more. For he still had to make me cum.

It bothered Edward sometimes that I hardly ever got erections when he fucked me. But to those who know how to use it right, an ass is a complete and superior sexual organ in itself. Nothing could compare to the rush of penetration, of a body being opened and peeled back and folded back over and over, inside becoming outside, or at least it could sometimes seem.

So the next part was a little indolent and tedious for Edward. I just wanted to lie, back arched, legs spread, ass pressed against his knee, luxuriating in the just-fucked splendor of being a body that made another cum. My limp little prick seemed more like a useless appendage. Still. Edward would get down on his hands and knees and suck that little cockle until it refocused a center of sensation from ass to cock.

Eventually I would cum, just a dribble, but with great long shuddering gasps, up to and even over the line into blackouts. At best, it wiped me clean, reduced under his mouth and hands to fluttering flinching flesh, devoid of subject, gender, identity. Just being. For a moment at least. How hard it is to stay outside of one's self.

He found this a bit of a chore. Source of a difference of opinion as to who did what for whom. For it would appear that the one who is fucked gets the most exquisite experience, a penetration of body and being. Yet on the other hand, it really is to make of oneself a thing that one offers a body to another, as a thing to be used. It's an asymmetrical conjoining in incommensurable experiences. Perhaps it was Edward's various attempts to even the ledger that drove the whole dynamic towards delirium.

What Does Not Make Us Stronger Kills Us

“We have to talk about something.”

“Sure, Edward, what?”

“You’ve heard of AIDS?”

“Yes.”

“Our people are dying.”

“Yes.”

“They say it’s from ass fucking. Bodily fluids.”

“So you can’t fuck me anymore?”

“They say it’s OK with condoms.”

“Condoms? Like straight people.”

“Yeah, except they use them to prevent babies.”

“So we use them not to die?”

“I guess.”

“Well, I’d rather you fuck me with condoms than not at all.”

“It’s a pain.”

“—In the ass.” {giggles}

“It’s not funny.”

“I know. So condoms then.”

“And water based lube.”

“Do we have any of that?”

“No. We’ll have to get some. And get tested?”

“Tested?”

“Both of us.”

“Have you had sex with anyone other than me?”

Afterbirth of the Clinic

Getting tested was an object lesson in the body as an object lesson. It was all anonymous. You got a code number for your results. The blood drawing was efficient, technical. I had not seen the vacuum blood tubes in action before. I watched the tube fill itself, hardly sanguine about whether that blood was killing me, about the numbers it would yield, the back story that might follow.

Eric Michaels: “I watch these spots on my legs announce themselves over a period of weeks, taking them as some sort of morphemes, arising out of the strange uncertainties of the past few years to declare, finally, a scenario. As if these quite harmless looking cancers might, when strung together, form sentences...”

We got our results. We opened them together. Negative and negative. It felt wrong to celebrate. But we did have a commemorative fuck. Awkward, with getting the condom on. Edward thought nothing of it, but the water-based lube changed the whole feeling of his cock inside me. More of a clinical friction reduction. It lacked the industrial smell and feel of petroleum grease. At least, we joked, we were no longer contributing to the petro-industrial complex.

It felt wrong to celebrate for a reason I could barely admit. Better people than us were dying. I felt unworthy of this survival. An era of funerals began. At Stephen Cummins’ service I lost it completely.

Stephen's close friend and collaborator Simon, who had every reason to feel worse than I did, steadied me. Some present there had another funeral to go to straight after, he said. It was not fair of me to undermine their strength. He put this so gently. So far removed from any demand to man up.

Sarah Schulman: "And then we were all overcome by that moment for which there is no appropriate response except familiarity. It is shameful, not knowing how to really feel it. Being over-prepared for death."

It reminded me of the film he and Stephen made together, *Resonance*, about how masculine violence echoes through lives, bodies, feelings, social space. The man who is gay-bashed; the woman who is threatened. The ways of coping: gay love, girl-talk and self-defense classes. Two men in a boxing ring. They spar a while. Then they dance. Men together. Then the woman and the two men dance together. Two comrades, three.

That last scene shot on a Sydney rooftop, the one where Stephen and I shared a writing studio in the old caretaker's hut on top of a decrepit office block on George Street. Watching it again on YouTube bringing tears again. Like that night of Stephen's wake, which we had while he was still living and living well, so he could come. The line of empty vodka bottles extending along the hall. Then there had been all the tears in the world.

At the funeral, some decorum, then. Nothing selfish in one's grief. To just feel with others, to not close in on one's grief but to open, to feel that others' feelings touch yours, is to feel more than enough.

Transaction Costs

Money was always a problem. I never had any money. Writing odd things, the occasional print design job. Forgetting to chase the invoices. Edward had money. He had an inheritance, late-spawn beneficiary of a once-great fortune. His colonial ancestors traded in tea.

There was once a great fortune in my family, a long time ago. We were not the beneficiaries of it. My colonial ancestors made their money, ironically enough, from gas-lighting. Actual gas-lighting: light made from burning compressed gas. Before electricity made them obsolete. Drugs are a more reliable form of expropriation than tech.

I lived in Edward's apartment, and since I was broke, spent his money. Did a bit of housework, which at least gave him the pleasure of complaining of my crazy incompetence, as I did it very badly. I took charge of smoothing out his moods. All I knew about how to do that—what you might now call *emotional labor*—came from the Mary Magdalene song in *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Maybe it's a problem with the couple as form. It becomes transactional, but not rational. We were not comrades but traders of goods and services. I felt kept for the purposes of his access to my body, a *catamite*. Yet he felt like I got the better end of the deal, that there

was an asymmetry of sexual joy between the fucked and the fucker. Like I was embezzling, skimming off orgone energy or something. And maybe I was.

Yet I felt like he got the pleasure of being the man. He enjoyed the dick-swinging swagger of accomplishment, of being the one who got me off. He felt like it was his money we spent. I felt like only the money he earned was really his, and not all of it was.

He felt like I did a lousy job around the house. Which was true, but I did housework no less badly than he did paid work. And in any case, that was only part of the job.

I had to make him feel good about himself. But he felt I only did that so he would want to fuck me. And I felt like it's no bad thing to get your man in the state of mind where he wants to fuck you. And so on. Like petty claims court. Like heterosexuality.

Love and Money; Sex and Death

And then I ran into Glen again. Such a pleasure to see this tender comrade! But so many things ran across his face as soon as he found me living with Edward. Somehow he had thought I might be straight, that I was not available to him when he met me, back when I was sixteen (but looked about fourteen). Maybe it was just that fear got the better of him. Triple forbidden taboo: too young, too boy, and too white.

He seemed to take hope from the fact of my having a boyfriend who it was clear fucked me on the regular. And yet this meant Glen had not had the pleasure of being my first. And besides, if he was to take me away from Edward—a goal he seemed to settle on immediately—he would have to seduce me.

Glen led a rather less domestic life, and that was the lure. He lived out of a couple of milk crates, and camped in one friend's home after another. He came and went in various houses in the city as he pleased, or went on what he ironically called *walkabout*. Even to locate him on any given day meant phoning one after another of the vast old share households he circulated amongst, looking for the one with the milk crates that signified his base camp.

He gave me some numbers to call, and his winning, yellow-tooth smile. Calling various houses, I found he had bivouacked with the

legendary libertine communist bus driver. I hastened over. The bus driver did not get up to answer the door, but shouted me in from the bedroom. I found the bus driver there, with his bus driver's hat on, otherwise naked in bed, reading Hegel to two women, one either side of him, also naked. I wanted to be both of them at the same time.

The bus driver motioned for me to join them, but I declined. Too shy. I could only operate in a small repertoire of parts, nearly all of them created for Edward. I had nobody to be if I was to be with them, yet. Besides, I was a strict Althusserian at the time and we did not trouble ourselves with a dead dog like Hegel. I sat on the musty old sofa in another room to wait for Glen, grudgingly reading *Society of the Spectacle* and maybe even appreciating it.

Guy Debord: "The spectacle is a permanent opium war which aims to make people identify goods with commodities and satisfaction with survival that increases according to its own laws. But if consumable survival is something which must always increase, this is because it continues to contain privation. If there is nothing beyond increasing survival, if there is no point where it might stop growing, this is not because it is beyond privation, but because it is enriched privation."

In his own time, Glen appeared. He was as usual dressed in mole-skins and riding boots, like the country boy he was, but wearing a cheap collared shirt in nylon, the kind worn by entry level office workers, which is what, among other things, he was. He had been out all night, and bought the nylon shirt on his way to the office. He took it off and threw it in the bin. Glen was constantly in

motion, doing his crappy job, working on his political projects, roaming the streets for quick fucks.

Glen Hennessy: “Let me walk here unmolested simply complex warm and gentle, saying there is a human life; there is a human life.”

He was human, tender and kind with me. Unlike Edward, he had very little sense of private property. He freely gave his things and himself to anyone. Particularly his good humor. This was his secret gift to all these households where he might show up and stay, but never pay rent. He brought his smile and generosity with him. We slept on the floor together.

He wasn't a great fuck. At least not with me. He adhered to a different philosophy of fucking. It was the orgasm that mattered. It was about getting off, quickly. There was no luxuriating in penetration. Everything quick and efficient. He would just turn me over, stick a little lube in my ass with his thumb, rubber-up, then shove his dick in, gently, but without ceremony. Then we read Marx together, and Césaire, luxuriating in the prose.

Aimé Césaire: “One of the values invented by the bourgeoisie in former times and launched throughout the world was *man*—and we have seen what has become of that.”

He kept me away from his Aboriginal world. It seemed to me from afar that he was accepted or at least tolerated as a gay man there, but the proposition of Glen having even a casual white lover in the picture could not help but be fraught. On the rare occasions when I appeared in his world, I was treated as political booty. The white boy

the black man fucked to get back at the white world. This was a part I could consent to play, but it wasn't entirely like that for Glen. To Glen we were comrades. We met as comrades, fucked as comrades, a material attitude to life which contains its own problems.

There was no getting around the fact that the world from which I came wanted him dead. Kind, gregarious, generous Glen. But he was Aboriginal, and gay, and a communist. It was a wonder every day that he had not turned up a corpse. Phones rang constantly, in certain share-households, various police agencies calling, wanting the whereabouts of this or that party. Sometimes rather more sinister inquiries. Paranoia was a simple matter of self-preservation.

Then there was the time I woke up with his cock in me, pumping at me, shunting my body across the makeshift bed. Then the little grunt he made when he came, and a single warm splash inside my ass. He fucked me while I was asleep, and without a condom. I felt violated, unsafe, like an object handled carelessly. He thought that because I had an erection in my sleep that it was OK to fuck me. Well maybe it would, but I had not granted that freehold to him, and it was mine to grant. And never without a condom. I left without saying goodbye.

Glen Hennessy: "Love I won't forget that night they had us down on the footpath and were kicking your head against the wall or all the straight people who walked past and let them—I won't forget them at all."

There's a rare hand-made chapbook of Glen's in the National Library in Canberra. Trying to hire a researcher to make copies via

Facebook, Julia, an old acquaintance, offered to pop over from her public service day job and do it for me. She sent me cellphone pictures. The Library had us write up a *use study*, because—metrics. How to measure the feeling, which every archival act entails, of talking to the dead? And when the dead was this simply complex warm and gentle human one once loved?

Looking at Julia's pictures of Glen's words, now I feel it was a misunderstanding between us, about generosity. I had not returned the gift he gave of himself to him in a manner he could recognize. He just took what he thought was offered. I still thought of myself, as Edward did, as someone's property: mine, his. To bicker over. Glen tried to live without property. Not in a traditional way at all—he was mission-raised. He was trying to find some other way. He had no language for this everyday life, its law.

My people spent so much time haggling like landlords we didn't even notice when Facebook and the like became landlords of the spectacle of our own desires.

It came as no surprise to me that Glen died young. Heart disease; a disease of the heart. I still mourn for him. For all that's lost. For this world that my people set on fire. All that is solid melts into air.

My Calling

I got my own place, again, with more carefully chosen housemates this time. I may not have had much figured out by the age of twenty-one, but I was no longer gun-shy.

I had figured out I did not want to live with a man. I went back to seeing Edward, but had my own place to retreat to, lick wounds.

Good days, in lots of ways. With Edward I had got the Basic Fuck down to performance art. Once you have the Basic Fuck, you can experiment, ornament, improvise. Most of those that we liked turned out to involve drugs of a wide variety of sorts, and sometimes that and sex in public. Elaborate schemes to forestall rising boredom.

Dennis Cooper: “He watches the face he’s been grinning at all evening eat out his crack as though it were a scene in a porn tape he’s renting. If that were the case he could judge his sex partner more clearly. As is, he’s too distracted by personal traits and sketchy fragments of history. Alex knows, for example, that blondie’s attracted to freckles because they remind him of pennies strewn inside a wishing pond, his favorite memory of childhood. He fixates on asses because they’re so round and pond-like. Slobbering over them seems to refill his more dried-up emotions, or something like that. Occasionally a tongue disappears up his asshole and he feels

involved, though it's still kind of vague, like he's passing the scene of a crime and gets hit by a stray bullet.”

Not living with Edward made the approach toward the moment of fucking more elaborate. I would call him up and ask him to come around and do me. Tomorrow, or on the weekend, he'd say. But then I would go through the hours febrile and tremulous. My whole being tended toward a longing, but also a distancing, from the prospect of his cock coming into me. I would shake and startle. I would obsessively watch my diet, trying to purge my whole tract of its food processing functions, to make them ready for their drug and cock processing functions. Sometimes I'd call it off at the last minute.

Other times, I would show up out of the blue. I would appear on his door step in a trench-coat. He opens the door; I open the trench coat. He husks it off, picks me up, and carries me down the hallway, past the torn wallpaper, to throw me naked onto his bed. I lie there quite a while, in a transport of longing, while he lights up some pot, smokes it, offers me some, makes us gin and tonics. It feels to me like a kind of pay back, making me wait. Making me anticipate, nerves on pilot light.

Kay Gabriel: “Knotted somewhere between a high and comedown I looked out my window at the illuminated fronts of loan shops and fast food joints while he stretched my hole loose and swept past my dick like it wasn't there. Stuck on the soundstage for *Little Shop of Horrors*, a Lower East Side with a low and busted ceiling for a sky, did I match him grunt for plaintive grunt? Sure, but he smelt like every good thing. Intimacy is touching ballsacks and somewhere in

the pitching and heaving his touched mine. Actually he offered to flip. The reader will suspect by now that I don't."

He comes in, naked but for a pair of blue speedos, and presses himself against me. I wrap my legs around him and measure his weight pressing me out of my body, leaving a mass of quaking flesh and nerves, just dying to be fucked, to be peeled and shucked and reamed inside-out until there is nothing but the body unraveled as one endless skein, a wicker-weave just wanting to tangle, to be fricked and unbraided and upbraided until it catches fire.

Injector Seat

We began a systematic experimentation with sex on drugs. My least favorite was heroin. It made me itchy. But the temporal dilation was interesting. Edward was in charge of the bang-up, which he did with precision. That this seemed practiced was a warning I missed.

Edward puts his favorite porno tape on and sits in his armchair, his supply of pot already prepped and nearby. We are both naked. He does not want to watch me, but the porno. I don't mind. I do not feel like being fucked on heroin. I feel rather like simply floating in time. He motions me over to him. I kneel before him, in his chair, his frayed but regal yellow-gold velour throne. I take his cock in my mouth.

Sucking cock tends to give me a bit of an ache in the lymph nodes. I don't know why, but after a while it gets a bit uncomfortable. I could suck Edward's cock to his satisfaction on the rare occasions I did not want to be fucked, but it was not by choice. It was rather more of a chore. I tried to make it look easy, as I did not want to give him cause to complain that sucking me off was such hard work. At least he didn't grab the back of my head shove it onto him.

In my utopia: before anyone gets head they will have first learnt to give head.

On heroin I felt nothing much except the orphic tug and slap of sea-time, and the saliva-slippery smooth meat in my mouth. I did not notice the ache in my back or neck. I just closed my eyes and sucked. Settling on a rhythm, varying it, moving the point of sensation, along the fine line between noise and repetitive boredom, all to the tune of the sub-disco porno soundtrack. It must have been for a long time, as the porno tape ran out.

Edward started thrusting hard into me. I let him. I calmed a gag-reflex as best I could as he took over and fucked my throat. I glimpsed the appeal of this. An alternative way of being penetrated, of being turned inside out.

My reverie is severed by the first measure of Edward's cum choking my throat, then the second, shooting out my nose, and the third surge spattering over face, eyes, hair. A *facial*, I think they call it now. To be a face to come in, on and over. But good. For a moment the face was just folded tissues coated in cum. To lose face, to be faceless, numb, dumb and numbered.

Edward was not usually a vocalizer, but he let out a punctual bass moan. This brought me round a bit. I sank to the floor, and he joined me, spooning me from behind. When we started to come around, he told me it was the best cock-sucking he had ever had.

He too had allergic reactions to heroin, although not as bad as mine. Which is just as well, as we surely would have killed ourselves shooting heroin and sucking cock.

The Ecstasy Years

Georges Bataille: “I insist on the fact that there is generally no growth but only a luxurious squandering of energy in every form! The history of life on earth is mainly the effect of a wild exuberance; the dominant event is the development of luxury, the production of increasingly burdensome forms of life.”

The late eighties were a great era for ecstasy. It came in loud and clear and could be procured without too much difficulty. Edward had a sideline running quantities of pot into the city from an old school friend who grew it out in the country. Good quality stuff, and readily exchangeable as currency for the good gear.

I got even more obsessed with the staging of the encounter. I thought of sex and drugs as a ritual event, not to be taken casually. I wanted the setting to be right: the light, the music. I kept us on strict diets. Only fresh fruit was to be eaten while high. And of course one had to arrange the furniture to make available several scenarios for fucking, each with its own appropriate lighting.

When ingested, ecstasy can come on slow or come on strong. I liked to get us relaxed and comfortable for a while, and when it felt like it was starting to buzz, I liked to dance, maybe to something like Prince’s “Automatic.” Edward was a terrible dancer. So am I really, but I could get into it, and savor the taste of his eyes on my naked back and ass.

Both the music and his gaze seemed like creamy sheathes around my body, making it undulate, giving me the curves I wish I had. The drug, the mood, the music, and Edward's devouring gaze unmanned me, and I needed that. It did not really matter that he did not see my body the way I did. I saw it as a girl; he saw it as a boy. So long as I stayed skinny and fairly hairless, I would always be a jailbait fantasy in his head.

When the drugs ramp, that's when I would launch on him, unfolding squid-like tendrils, surface upon surface, all to be licked and smoothed. A whole that wanted nothing but to be expertly breached. I would take him by the hand and lead him to one or other fuck-scenario I had pre-planned, but would choose on a whim. Sometimes doggie style on the rug by the fire. Sometimes I'd sit on the edge of the sofa, and have him kneel before me and fuck me that way.

It was all in the timing, to get cock inside me at the peak, when all meat-sheets were a-shimmer with their silver-quick light, sliding and riding slick against each other. With his cock inside me I opened up to the emptied spaces of other being, became a mere skin of receptors to its whims.

Sometimes it got a bit head-trippy. Once I took cock out of mouth so I could write something on an index card. It read: "the ontology of luxury against the luxury of ontology." It seemed apropos at the time.

The coming down part could be a tribulation, one best shared, a common currency of bad, jittery energy. A quiet time for downbeat lights and sounds and druggy talk, true to the moment, true to no other.

Penetration

“I love it when you fuck me.”

“I love to fuck you too.”

“I can be someone else with your cock inside me.”

“I just love you as yourself.”

“Well, I don't. I feel like I can shed my skin and be naked.”

“I love to look at you naked.”

“I mean not just without clothes. Without myself.”

“You're so silly. Why would you want to do that?”

“I feel like I'm trapped in this body.”

“You feel like a woman trapped in a man's body?”

“No, I feel like this is a woman's body, just not a very attractive one.”

“And one with a dick.”

“When you fuck me I don't think about my dick.”

“So I've noticed.”

“When you fuck me I can be my actual girl-self.”

“You're more like a teenage boy to me.”

“Well, I can be that for you if you let me be my girl-self for me.”

“I love you just the way you are.”

“Well, I don't. I want my self to go away.”

“You're so silly when you talk like that.”

“Just hold me now. Make me go away.”

Perverting the Space-Time Continuum

Sometimes we would go out dancing on ecstasy instead of staying home and fucking. This was the late-eighties, an era when a sort of queer culture was forming on the edges of Sydney gay men's culture. So many gay men were dying, the dykes came in to run things.

A little public space opened up where I could be my femme, faggy, fay and frivolous self, or non-self. I wore sheer black tights and ripped denim short-shorts and boots to hide my cripp feet, and not much else. And we danced and made out, in the toilets or in the nooks in whatever temporarily tinsel warehouse was hosting the frolic.

Sometimes I felt judgy looks from what I thought of as the "straight" gay men. The ones going for that hyper-masculine energy. They all looked like undercover cops to me: Their hair and mustache neatly trimmed. Collared shirt, tailored jeans. The only give-away is that the jeans were a bit tighter. The clone look. They didn't much like obvious fags like me. Were we diseased to them?

I felt like they had a prejudice, and so I returned it in kind. It seemed like they were trying to be more masculine than straight men. If straight men imagined they were above the women they fucked, then the clones would be above those men by fucking other men instead. On the logic that if you fuck it then you are above the thing fucked. Fucking men who were femme does not fulfil this feat

of the overman. As everybody supposedly knows, us faggots are even less than women. Plenty of straight women would agree, and sad to say so too would some lesbians. The non-straight world was not free of its obsessive ranking and sorting. It was not communism. I wanted to destroy all of this.

In the world of the clone men, women were commonly referred to as *fish*. Meanwhile, the clones referred to each other, usually in an arch tone, as *she*. They subsumed and erased the femme aspect of the world. I did not really relate to this version of gay culture, and while it was surely not the only one, it was the only one I could readily find. I started hanging out with dykes.

Monique Wittig: “Oily vapors move about in the overheated room. The walls are greasy, sweating. The women let down their hair, they soak it in the aromatic baths. Their hands and arms glisten, their breasts are bare.”

These were a particular subset of dyke. Those who were into s&m and various other kinks. They too were in exile among their own kind. There were lesbians around who seemed only to read Mary Daly and insisted that any kind of penetrative or even playful sex was the work of the he-devil of patriarchy. Between the kinkier dykes and the gays who failed to clone themselves something was emerging that would later be called *queer*.

I felt as though there were all sorts of seemingly political ways of acting that were more over-writings of a body’s fleshy callings. In part out of necessity, as the existing scripts for the body tied into patriarchy and all that noise. But to me, refusing those scripts

entirely left less room for play than diving into them, owning up to them, pressing them to the limit. Desire makes everyone its bitch.

At ecstasy dance parties there was some respite from all that, although I did not succeed in getting myself publicly fucked as often as I might have liked. The sight of it would have been a bit unseemly, a faux pas. Instead, parties were for dancing. When the E hit, you turned the mammalian-chemical urge to fuck into kinetic dancing energy. You fucked and were fucked by the whole room, streaming laser-cum from your eyes into everything and being, oozing wetness from more than one crevice. The signs and skins of disco-mutant issue had finally found the right molecules with which to sway.

I still wanted to fuck. I had to get Edward home at just the right time, while we were still buzzing, before the shoulder, and edgy, scratchy time. If I was lucky, he gave me Rohipnol. It's a downer and a muscle relaxant. It felt like cheating, but it worked. My whole body would melt into the bed, like grilled cheese on toast in the toaster oven. I'd feel his cock slip so readily into my greasy ass or mouth and want nothing more than to have two, ten, a hundred more holes to take cock into, to be stretched and liquidated like a seventies fondue party, sporked from all sides, from the inside and the outside.

Fiona McGregor: "Donna measured out then droplets and poured two orange juice chasers. traffic waited for the drug to take over then moved into gear, moved into water. Down down blurred slurred guiding Donna's hand, slower more lube yair oohhh put on another glove. Her arse was already open, she didn't douche and dinner was twelve hours ago. Heavy limbless oozing across the floor,

she was a camembert left in the sun, sap from the scission, molasses welling over the lip of the plate. Was that her moaning over the other side of the room? Can't stop but can't get there, Donna over her the proverbial bull. Till cell by cell traffic's muscles began to reattach to bone and she stopped exhausted, I need to piss. Donna pulled out, traffic farted wetly. Down there, Donna pointed with a shit-smearred glove. traffic tried to stand, couldn't started to crawl. Crawled giggle through eternity..."

And then we would wake up feeling like total crap.

Watching You Watch Him Fuck Me

I did entice him to fuck me in public sometimes. It was almost a sacred act to put myself under him among others, in the half-light, amid the sound and sweat of that jizz-utopia of the kind of party where sex in public would just happen. Would just be accepted as some human thing.

Robert Glück: “We watch the pleasure rather than the men, feeling the potential interchangeability. One of them masturbated me, others tended me respectfully because the one who is fucked induces awe by his extreme exposure. To look someone in the eye or call out his name would have been intrusive: their collective mind said he’s doing it which my finite mind repeated. Although they masturbated themselves to obtain immediate knowledge of my excitement, it was as spectators that they solemnly shared in what pleasure revealed. In the first place I was naked, their eyes and hands on my body confirmed that. In the second place I was desired. In the third place I was penetrated which put me in a class by myself. The hand on my cock short-circuited pain, vouchsafing the more resonant pleasure, eager ass. I was set, things were settled—I felt a soldier’s fidelity to the orgasm now that it had singled out from all the orgasms in the flux. The purely physical deepened, or rather became more incisive, more pressing, relegating any previous terms as though I were a body torn into existence. I, my identity, was more and more my body, so I/it cried out with each release of breath, not

to express myself but as a byproduct of physical absorption. But the spasms that were not me overtook and became me along with a sense of dread.”

Some of you read a little too much Georges Bataille in the late eighties. Got a bit carried away with the sacred side of the erotic ritual. Sometimes it was just mammals rutting.

Guillaume Dustan: “Stéphane is on top of me. I have both my ankles on his shoulders I spread my legs to the max and take his nine inches. I’ve got the hard-on of death. We cum almost at the same time. After, he tells me he’s beginning to understand what fucking is all about. I tell him that out of the thousand men I’ve fucked, there are four or five, OK a dozen, who know how to do what he has done to me. There is also Chad Douglas, but he’s exclusively on cassette. In fact, he is listed on the credits of one of the ones I bought the other day, *Remote Control*. I only hope that in real life he’s not dead.”

Mardi Gras

Edward bought us tickets to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras at the Showground most years, starting back before all the other names for various versions of us were added to the title, and before the controversy about whether *bisexual* and *transgender* were even a thing at all.

At the Showground, in the Hall of Industry, way up in the stands, watching the stage show. Lovely drag queens in towering concoctions of feathers and flouro, enacting the ritual of the world upsidedown. The beats were generic Hi NRG, white-boy disco, but set the whole space pulsing.

The drugs boot-up with all the fanfare of an eighties Mac starting. I pull Edward down on top of me on the bare wooden floor between two levels of riser. I feel his hard, warm body press me against the bare planks. The powerdery smell of bare wood. I love to feel his weight on me and wrap my legs around that body. I know he had condoms and lube. Only trouble is that under my short-shorts I am wearing tough black tights—the kind of industrial strength ones made for dancers.

After taking off the shorts, it seems like too much trouble—and too exposing—to take the tights off. The boots are lace-ups, and the knots start to look like some spy encryption rigmarole that even

Emma Peel couldn't hack. Edward tries ripping the tights. They won't tear. My ass lifts off the ground as he grapples with that infernal black webbing. Edward always kept his nails neatly trimmed, not least because they sometimes found their way into my ass. "Use your teeth!" Feeling the desperate need to be unwrapped like a candy and licked. Eventually biting and ripping rends a gash in them.

It's not exactly comfortable, face down against the wooden floor. The smell of the wood reminds me of comrade Jenny and I become Jenny just as once I would have most wanted. Edward has trouble getting the lube packet open, so he simply spits on his rubber-clad cock as lubricant. I can feel eyes on us, little pin pricks of scrutiny fucking my sweat-glossed back and shoulders.

Edward finishes quickly. He declines to suck me off. There's no need, as there's been a spontaneous orgasm when the show opened. The unfinished wood abraded my hands, forearms and knees with an itchy dryness. It was uncomfortable and a little violating and hardly the best sex ever, but it left a total, low down filthy slut lying in the wood-dust and spent candy wrappers. What it wants to be; what it needs to be.

We got up, sequined in sawdust and sweat. My shirt ripped, shorts nowhere to be found. Spent the rest of the night dancing in black boots, shreds of shirt, ass-torn tights, cum leaking. Not caring, not caring for anything at all.

Our Mardi Gras: it was as if all the fags and dykes of Sydney and beyond had spent in one frivolous night the energy of a thousand

artificial suns. As the night ended, the sun itself returned, again, as it does, no matter how hard you try to burn all its surplus energy off in a night. Back comes its indifferent light and heat, blasting and stabbing at our sore, tired, wrung-out, strung-out animal envelopes. We slope and slop off. Edward and I felt too crashed to make it to one any of the recovery parties. Traversing the city like occupied territory, for the sanctuary of his home. Disapproving looks from the neighbor. Even at home it does not feel like a home in this world.

Femenine

The ripped black tights had made me feel like I was in another skin, another species even. I loved the feel of wrapping my tentacle legs around him, feeling him through the layer of cheap nylon. The stretchy mesh felt like it held my body in while he fucked me, in case the thing of it might split open and disgorge some mutant pupae.

Tights are inconvenient. There was something both sexy and comic about Edward biting me open, but it ruined my only pair of tights. I think those had been a gift from Leslie. I was going to have to go and buy some stockings and a garter-belt. In cliché-black, the universal color of sex for the white-skinned. I was going to have to go and buy my own fetish object.

Preparing to buy your own fetish object is a strange feeling for a Marxist. Not just any Marxist, one trained at party school. Back in the seventies, comrade Jenny and comrade Glen and I had sat there, while comrade teacher instructed us in the finer points of the Marxian commodity. Buying sheer finery seemed like a perverse fulfillment of that education. In party school I had sat next to a steel worker with the tip of his finger missing.

By the late seventies the party had become somewhat heterodox, so we were all made aware of those new-left-Marx-plus-Freud theories. So shopping was now a matter of going off to buy a commodity

fetish sex fetish. The notion was thrilling, embarrassing and ideologically cockeyed. Like I was becoming not only a pervert in the Freudian sense but some Marxist one also.

The commodity fetish in Marx is rather misunderstood. He is making a joke at the expense of the bourgeois reader. The bourgeois thinks only savages have fetishes. The savage mistakenly attributes powers to mere things; the civilized bourgeois knows that only God, Reason and the Market have such power. When the bourgeois thinks they are most reasonable they are more like the savages of their own imagination, says Marx. They attribute mystical powers to commodities on the market, unaware of that greater power, which made them—social labor.

Peter Stallybrass: “What was demonized in the concept of the fetish was the possibility that history, memory, and desire might be materialized in objects that are touched and loved and worn.”

The sexual fetish in Freud always rather bored me. Apparently, I suffer from castration-anxiety and substitute the fetish for the woman, the part for the whole. But maybe I wanted to *be* that woman, or like her. Maybe being without a dick did not seem like such a bad thing at all, especially if I could have an extra way to be fucked in its place. If anything, I had vagina-envy. Freud seemed to think I was like one of those savages that bourgeois such as himself thought themselves beyond. We're all supposed to worship the monologue of dick mono-logos.

E. L. Callum “No longer should we view the fetish as a phallus substitute, but rather the phallus as a fetish substitute.”

Well, okay, I wanted dick, but in me not on me. And only on occasion. I wanted dick, not the phallus. Dick only works for so long, then shrinks back to almost nothing. I only wanted it when I wanted it, and not for all time. But I had a dick, even if I did not want it all that much sometimes. I wanted a ritual to make it go away for a bit. To bring to the surface a fuckable body. One called into being by skins and signs, recognizable ones, to become the spectacle of fuckability.

William Pietz: “The fetish is, then, first of all, something intensely personal, whose truth is experienced as substantial movement from *inside* the self (the self as totalized through an impassioned body, a *body without organs*) into the self-limited morphology of a material object situated in space *outside*.”

I went to the fancy David Jones department store in the city and rode the clackity wooden escalator to an unfamiliar floor. I selected a garter belt in black, plain and undecorated, and sheer black stockings to go with it. Talls, for my long lean legs. It was only when I got to the counter and met the disapproving gaze of the saleslady in her single strand of pearls that I realized I was not my femme self, but to her I was a man. Just one of those perverts. She rang up my order, over-charged me for an extra pair of stockings, and did not look at me. I let her get away with it. Quivering with feelings that would not concatenate. Her moral guardianship of gender somewhat undercut by her use of it as an excuse to bilk a customer.

Edward tolerated my femme affectation. I smoothed the stockings over my legs, like quotations. The feel of the sheer spidery nylon, good quality this time, a skin upgrade. I felt like a little costume

drag allowed me to perform myself a bit differently. A travesty, sure, but a willed one. I could slip between genders, shimmy past masculinity for a moment, but not really launch into another gender. It was more a euphoria of lofting out of gender for a moment, composing some other body outside gender's gravity. To not-exist in a non-existing gender, to float a femme phantasmagoria of skins and signs.

The body brought to the surface, that the black mesh brought out, was a body that nearly always felt rather femme anyway, even when bound down to the everyday world, with its thin wrists and waist, its soft skin and long hair. I would have liked bigger tits, of course. And perhaps more uniquely, I thought my ass wasn't quite fat enough. And I was always ashamed of my malformed feet. But a girl has to work with what she's got. Even a non-girl.

Harryette Mullen: "Mistress in undress, filmy peignoir. Feme sole in camisole. Bit part, petite cliché."

Even with his cock in a condom, the moment he came inside me felt like vindication. Even if there was no more of the warm splash of his triple-shot cum, wasting itself inside my Marxist ass, it felt like recognition, in some fashion, in being a body that could be desired, that could be wanted, that someone would fuck. Even if the body I wanted to be fucked in, and the body Edward wanted to fuck, were not the same.

The Discreet Disgust of the Bourgeoisie

The slow build of ingested ecstasy has its charms, but there's a kind of rocket-ride sensation if you shoot it up. We didn't do this too much, as it was easy to see where it might land. I rarely lost complete touch with a sense of self-preservation. I had read Rimbaud, but was not romantic about the derangement of the senses. It was more practical. A way to be temporarily erased from the world, but in order to come back to it and endure it.

There was needle exchange, to free us from one worry. There would always be clean fits. Edward drove me to the chemist in his little white convertible sports-car and made me do it. I took the black vinyl box of used sharps in with me. I was wearing my black stockings, a little laddered by this time, and garter belt. You could get glimpses of black spidery-webbed leg through the huge tears in the contrasting gray jeans I wore over. My long hair wind-tousled. I still had the taste of Edward's cock in my mouth. Although he hadn't come in mouth or ass, I still felt like a slut.

I waved the black box of sharps at the pharmacist's assistant. She said nothing, got the pharmacist. He wore surgical gloves. He put a tray on the table and gestured for me to put the box in it. He said nothing. He whisked that tray off the counter top and replaced it with another, holding a fresh box of sharps. He would neither speak to me nor touch anything I had touched. The box

of sharps, used or fresh, a negative fetish. I had become untouchable filth, not even to be spoken to. It's some sort of achievement for a white boy.

Skins and Signs

The sharps were to shoot up ecstasy. But first, a change of costume. This time I was wearing those spray-on jeans, no underwear and Patti Smith *Horses* t-shirt (women's size small), as if the fabric was holding my little body in, to stop it bursting into insatiable flesh. Edward prepped and took my arm. After the bang-up, he left the bedroom to fix himself a leisurely gin and tonic, leaving me alone with the rush.

In a few seconds, I'm gone. Wash of pure sex. Flesh shakes, rolls, roils, recoils, turning over on itself, despairs of ever becoming fucked. There's a sinking into a selfless demand, a pure need with a swirling void in it. A much retracted sense of self becomes a single point of hatred and longing for Edward that spools out in a deepening time, but which was probably less than three minutes. And yet there was a loving of him absolutely, to the brink of annihilation. Love him so I don't exist. A need swept by, away, the need for him inside, for him to be the point at which to oscillate between being and void. He came back, eventually, and was dragged down to the maelstrom by some unnamable force within it.

Edgar Allan Poe: "In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen

before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven. The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.”

A body rolls, wave-like into me; mine, perhaps. His mouth on mine, his tentacular tongue forcing its way. “Fuck me now!” The command came not from me but from frothing foaming sea-pussy. He peeled off the denim sheath and t-shirt. Here is a body a naked wet open world.

His cock came in hard and too fast. A lighting gust went through this viscera. The shock gave way to shock waves, of flesh peeling open, exfoliating, and folding over and over on itself, a body turning inside out and disappearing into waves refracting on waves of data-foam, sensation of neither pleasure nor pain but of raw need to not be, to rage, to rile, to upend all the coordinates of a self in a body.

I don't know if he came or if I came. I blacked out. For some fractal of time I was lost in the great outdoors. All I know is that we lay in a pool of our own sweat for some unmeasurable time, crying together, reduced to a mammal state of seeking shelter and comfort in shared heat.

We tried that a few more times afterwards, never quite to the same effect. The turn off was approaching, back to self-preservation. I knew I would turn away, but not sure if Edward would.

The Narrative of Decline

The close of the eighties: Edward lost his public service job and started driving taxis. This was not the best turn of events. Taking speed had fucked up his ability to hold down his day job. He passed the taxi license test, but the cab driving world was awash with first rate speed. Some drivers were primo dealers in it, straight from the glove-box. Edward had maintained his pot connection, so he had gear to trade. It all worked out for the best, business-wise. But in other ways it was the beginning of the end.

Since we had been shooting up heroin and ecstasy, it stood to reason we would bang-up speed as well. This was always Edward's job. I loved that there were so many incision points for him to gut me. With his casual barbs, which poked holes in my self-confidence. With his tongue and cock, which punctured my tinny thin scales of boy-armor. And with needles, which jabbed their way into the integrity of neuro-chemistry.

Speed, the starter-gun. The heart high-jumps out at you from in. So you need to fuck hard and fast. The athletic challenge is to try and relax against the tightening up of the musculature that the drug creates. To try to ease open, first the outer ring, the roaring arena, over which there is some voluntary control. Easing that cock in, while neuro-electric trebble shoot from the ass-ring up around and through that body, defining its shape, its

contours, making and marking it all surfaces, all electric artificial disco flesh.

Then pause, draw breath, stabilize the breathing, holding the cock back, gently nestling it against the inner ring. Slowly back and forth against it, putting just a little pressure on it. Fighting impatience, the drive to end it. Then comes the choice.

To slowly open the inner ring with the cock, prolonging the sensation of fire and light. Or to take it fast. Not so fast as to injure, but fast enough to stab nerve-knives everywhere, filleting the body and self into emotional steak, to become nothing but this circling hole, this void, this nothing with cock passing into it and out of it, and beyond.

Libidinal Ecology

I was broke, again, so I let Edward take me away with him on vacation. We took off in his sports car, to Tara, a gay and lesbian retreat in Kangaroo valley, south of Sydney. Being from north of The Big Smoke, the color and light felt fresh and tender.

To relax among our own people. I wasn't the only faggot-boy ephembe there, although clone style of gay masculinity was much in evidence. Looking at some of the couples, I wondered who was paying for what, and in what currency.

Night times meant waiting discreetly for our turn for hot tub sex. Daytime found me reading *Economie Libidinale* by the pool, very slowly, with a dictionary and my terrible French.

Lyotard's book was and is a scandal. In it, Marx the Great One splits into two. There's the Marx of *Capital*, the Bearded Man, the law school tyro, the serious theorist, obsessively explicating the workings of the body of capital. But there's also Marx the Little Girl, the poor other that the Bearded Man loves. This Marx is a bisexual hermaphrodite, endlessly trying to extract from a critique of capital, that great universal pimp and procurer, some other form for the social body. He wants to weave a world maybe no less polymorphous, no less abstract, but where the Little Girl no longer has to give of her strength and heart and

ass and wit in exchange for money. Marx was, I recalled, a freelancer writer...

Jean-François Lyotard: "What is there left to love in this society, with what can one strike up a natural, immediate, and impassioned relationship so dear to pure hearts? The task set Marx the Advocate by Little Girl Marx is to discover an object of love, a hidden priceless thing, forgotten in the subversion of prices, a beyond value to the trade fair of values, something like a nature in denaturation. To rediscover a natural dependence, a We, a dialectic of the You and the I, in the sordid solitude of pornographic independence to which the capitalist function of money and labor condemns all affective expenditure. His whole critique draws its impetus from the following denial: *no, you cannot make me come.*"

Edward thought we should go hiking. We set out up river, walking along the rocky edges through dense shrub rustling with activity. I may have glimpsed a lyrebird. It was the time of year for birdsong, but if that had indeed been a lyrebird, then all the different birdsong calls we could hear might have been made by that one lyrebird. They echo other birds beyond perfection.

We could see another couple walking ahead of us for a while, but then lost sight of them. The going got rough in the lush shrub. It seemed like there was no path through, so we stopped for a bit by the river's edge. Edward had a baggie of speed with him, so we snorted it. On went the electric, just under the skin.

"Fuck me here," I said, gesturing to the slick, wet rock that jugged out of the river. I shimmied out of my jeans, peeled the t-shirt, arms

raised to the sky in the warm breeze. Naked light on flesh. I put my studded leather belt back on, so he would have something to grab hold of if things got slippery, and maybe for the visual erotic contrast of white skin, black leather, shiny stud. The rock was smooth and solid, gently eroding this skin. I felt sunlight strobe warm light in the rhythm of Edward's cock strokes.

He fucked me and came in the condom. Drugs out of a plastic bag; jizz into a plastic bag. Both bags, one full now, one empty, to be walked back out later and disposed of responsibly. So economical. Burning through the powers of this sun that warms our skins today, and the waste, well it goes somewhere.

He turned me over and sucked me off while I sprawled on my back, on the warm, wet rock, voluptuous and chemical, bare and alive, in and against nature. When he was almost done, I heard noises nearby, maybe the lyrebird. I looked up and met the gaze of the couple we saw earlier, a man and a woman. They looked straight, and straight at us.

I felt exposed, nabbed, open, the abject thing at which the finger is about to be pointed. But they just smiled at us and waved. Holding hands. Their witnessing, perhaps approval, meant a lot to me. Perhaps too much. It's just mammals snorting and cavorting, the instant joy of millennia past.

I think of Glen. He liked to fuck outdoors. Not usually my style, as it is too hard to adjust the light and décor. Whose land was this? What languages were spoken here? We're not really here. There's nothing here I can call by its name. It's a crime scene for an

unnamed crime. I can't help but feel implicated. A bystander, uninitiated but not innocent.

Jean Genet: "Querelle, now clad in bright blue silk tights, proceeded slowly, his figure moulded by the azure garment, waist accentuated by a steel-studded leather belt. He felt the silent presence of every muscle working in unison with all of the others to create the effect of a statue carved out of turbulent silence... He was looking for a quiet place, solitary as a cell, sufficiently secluded and dignified to serve as a place of punishment."

On the way home from Tara, Edward drove as he often did on a nice twisty road, at full speed. His father had been a rally car driver, so he actually knew what he was doing, but still, I always felt like I had put my life in his hands in more ways than one. The seatbelt strapped me to this off-careering vehicle, while the engine revved, the tires squealed, and Edmund worked the brakes and gears and wheel with the same adroit and commanding touch as he used on my body. Fleeing the scene.

I wanted to be ridden and driven, but not the death drive. The longing for the triple shot of his cum piping warm inside me was a strong one. I had no idea if he was still negative.

Trust

Edward had a bit of a speed problem.

It was affecting his prowess. He could not get it up any more. He got me drugged up and lathered up, but couldn't get hard. I felt so bereft, churning over and over in my need for cock, while he just lay there next to me and lit another joint. Finally, I straddled him, feeling his limp cock under me, rubbing it against my ass. I felt a bit as if I was Leslie, and under me was me.

Kathleen Mary Fallon: “Kinky Trinkets tells: OK the big secret I mean this is The Big Secret—no one not even (for christ's sake don't tell anyone I told you but) NOT EVEN GOD THE FATHER CAN PERFORM look I've seen him trying I mean I've been there while he was trying maybe it was my fault I don't know.”

I rolled a condom over my Little Other brand vibrator and fucked myself with it. I turned the speed up to a high bpm, bass beats in the bottom end, spontaneous cum from this ass-techno. But it was not the same. It's not the same as being fucked by a human. The machine does not want me back. It fit a need, a hole; not a lack, a desire. Maybe it's better that way.

Then there was the last time. I wanted him to come and fuck me, so I called him up. He wanted to come right over. I insisted he had to

stop and buy lube on the way, as I was all out. He arrived, let himself in and came to me, waiting in bed for him. He was hard already, just waiting to stick it in, so I turned over for him. He rolled a condom on and plugged away, and it felt so much like it used to be.

A memory of non-existence or a non-existent memory?

And when he came, I felt the old hot triple dram of his cum inside me, like in the old days. A bitter sweet feeling. But Edward wasn't entirely safe, and anyway, why had the condom broken? He had not stopped to get lube. He just brought Vaseline from home. He fucked me with Vaseline on the condom, which weakened and broke it.

I got the test again. And waited. Rehearsing my own illness, writing my testament in my head, over and over.

Eric Michaels: "I wonder whether Jupurrula—on hearing of my death—will burn my Texas cowboy boots which I will send him next week, or whether, as I hope, he will find and invoke some dispensation, some loophole in the 'Law' to permit him to wear them for a while."

Negative still. But still. That was the last time Edward ever fucked me.

What Are You Doing After the Orgy?

Perhaps it was because I wouldn't let him fuck me anymore that he got me a job. It was at a place called Numbers, on Sydney's Oxford street, the Gay Mile, same side as Patches, Capricio's and—clone heaven—the Midnight Shift.

Numbers: go up the stairs, and there's a store renting porn videos, selling vibrators, condoms. Gay wank mags in sealed plastic bags: *Mandate*, *Drummer*, *Blueboy*, *Vulcan*, *Torso*, *Urge*, *Ram*, *Hot Shots*, and my fashion nemesis: *Tom of Finland*. Also various mags for rather more specialized tastes, but not, to the disappointment of one customer, any animal action. The real action is the amyl nitrite sold under the counter, and the glory holes out the back.

My shift starts at midnight and runs 'til ten in the morning. I sit behind the counter, selling the occasional wank mag, renting a few more videos, selling a lot of units of amyl and condoms, but mostly dispensing tickets to the glory holes out in the back. These are dimly lit niches with coin-op porn screens. There's holes in the walls between the stalls, for anonymous hand-jobs, cock-sucking and occasional-ass fucking. No need to see or interact with the person in the next booth. There's a fair bit of cruising in the hallways, and there's one booth that is longer and has a bench for group scenes.

It's a fairly boring job. Mostly I bring my Brother electric typewriter and get my master's thesis written. "Keith" comes most nights for a chat although sometimes he goes by "Craig." He sits on the counter with a glass bowl of little pink packets of flavored lube in his lap. As numbers come in he pretends to throw them and shouts "Sweeties! Sweeties!" It never got old to him.

The clientele are mostly clones. They wear their hair and moustache neatly trimmed, the undercover cop look. I find the few leathermen more appealing, all shiny chaps and straps and peaked hats. They prefer the group scene booth. Craig (or Keith) greets them all and gossips about them: she did this, she did that, she did this with that other number, and so on. I don't really pay much attention.

If there's trouble I'm instructed never to call the cops. There is an ancient can of Mace under the counter, and a number taped to the bottom of the phone. I get the Mace out once. I only threatened to use it, as I had no idea if it would work. I only called the number once. Low-rent mobster types showed up. There wasn't really much trouble. Mostly just numbers refusing to go home. Even turning all the lights on wouldn't clear the place. I hit on an easier way to get them out: I switched out the generic hi-NRG disco tapes for my own cassettes. This was not a free jazz crowd.

After shooing the last numbers out, I had to clean the back rooms. The morning after this long dick-milking shift, it generally stank of off-gassing chipboard, sweat, lube and spume. I put on rubber gloves and picked up the spent condoms. I mopped the floors. I wiped the spritz off the walls a bit. I unblocked the toilet from all the used rubbers that had usually been tossed in it, despite the

imprecations of the sign above it. Then, after skimming a couple of twenties, I did the books.

Anne Boyer: “She might just prefer to be neither bookkeeper nor embezzler finally, when desire with an audience becomes, like pornography, a desire about the audience’s desires, and there is another desire: to keep one’s desire for one’s self and off the books.”

The management were too cheap to provide an actual ledger, so I had to rule up a page in a school notebook into the columns first, then enter all the day’s takings, like math homework. Every now and then someone would open the roller shutter and come up, looking for action even though it was daylight already. One morning a number came up who wanted to buy all the leather harnesses in the shop for a party, so I indulged him. He left a marvelous tip.

I count the cash, bundle it, drop it in the wall safe. I have to stay until the boss shows up to unlock it. He was a small, probably-straight man, usually accompanied by a tiny dog. He would politely say hello, collect the cash-packets and leave. He was a bit more civil than some of the gay men who were the “managers.” Some of whom I thought were total pricks. Yelling at me for not ruling straighter lines in the ledger. They would also want their own shifts covered at last minute if they had something better to do.

The official reason I got fired was for putting leather and rubber on the same mannequin. Apparently, fetishes were supposed to be kept separate, like niche markets. But I loved to mix leather and rubber and shiny vinyl, not to mention lots of other wants to which even

the expansive sex bazaar of Numbers did not cater: feathers and lace and sheer nylons, satin and rope.

Sometimes I see the faces of those managers in magnificent photographs of the Sydney gay community by William Yang or C. Moore Harding, and I think: some fucking community. Some of you were middle management pricks. Accusing us of stealing while creaming the place off big time for yourselves. But then I remember that many of them are dead.

Gay Society

I saw a lot of interesting people come up the stairs at Numbers. The draconian antipodean laws of libel prevent me from naming some of the juicier names. Besides: you were not your name at Numbers, you were a number. Use any name.

There were a few who looked like they could be me some decades hence. Great flaming queens in make-up and glitter. Not a look that ages well but I felt akin with them, and knew there would be slim pickings for them back in the glory holes. The clones generally preferred other clones.

Juliana Huxtable: “Demigods birthed from the earth, but of a decidedly different nature. As mythology would have it, days were made of surreal hallucinogenic trips, circle jerks, and group love relived through long-standing rituals that celebrated the universal and inevitable, existential isolation of the queen. The day as sun was contradiction (word), the expanse of the world at large and the prolific force of solar energy stood in contrast to the static play of sacrificial hand-jobs, blow-jobs, fistings, and fucking that occurred day-in and day-out.”

There were also a few “straight-acting” types who were not publicly out but were at least out to their wives, and actually brought them along once or twice, as tourists from heterosexuality. Always early

in the shift, before things got sloppy. Naturally, they never took them out the back where the real action was. Sometimes these fine upstanding quasi-closet cases bought their ladies top of the line vibrators. Sometimes on the company card.

Then there were the lesbians. They also came early, sometimes for gay porn mags. We had a great price on Crisco. Sometimes they bought harnesses. Lesbian s&m was a controversial thing at the time. Some thought lesbians were not supposed to do those sorts of things to each other. They were supposed to put flowers in each other's hair, dance around in a circle holding hands and fall asleep, or something. So there was a bit of discreet shopping for whips and chains where they would not be seen. Some of them knew me and occasionally invited me to their scenes, not to participate but to witness, and in any case I was too squeamish. They were into some hardcore shit.

Pat Califia: "Iduna stared into Kerry's eyes, covered with the reflecting aviators, and used the tiny portraits in them to guide her hand while she made two slashes at the place where her breasts came together, a little v that fit in her cleavage. The blood immediately started to rill, and she cupped her hands under her breasts to help her corset push them close enough together to gather it and keep it in a pool."

I met Ralph McLean at Numbers. I knew who he was. He was famous at the time as the first openly gay lord mayor—of Fitzroy, a part of Melbourne. He might be out as gay, but that he had been a comrade seems still to be on the quiet. There's a monument dedicated to him in Melbourne now, depicting a lovely man-boy with undulating abs bursting out of a shroud of cowardice.

And I met James. James actually picked me up when I was working at Numbers. He asked for my phone number. And for once I gave it. And for once that gift was returned.

Downstream

James was a beautiful man, tall and lean with golden skin. A long, sharp face softened by fine, fair wavy hair. His gait was a bit awkward. He fell off The Gap a few years before I met him and still suffered for it.

James Waites: “Hiya—I got kicked off faceBook on NYE—no reason given—just sneaking back—how r u. Went for a swim at Coogee this morning—life’s a beach Cant write legibly any more and got to watch my balance—but so far can still type—so with the clock ticking no am bout to shift my writing interests. Hoping to go on a trip down the Mekong with Matt. the idea is a daily travel, blog mixed in with our times in Sydney in the 1980s—we were very close friends at that time and we both have chests full of colour adventures—we worked in a dodgy nite blub bar together and then head off to Arthurs—where Matt would inevitably pick up the sexiest woman in the room. Meanwhile I was getting over falling off the cliff hanging out with the P White set etc—so lots to share on this blog project as well.”

In the eighties James was already an influential theater critic, so we got to see the shows together. Much to his disappointment, theater did not interest me all that much, but I admired his commitment to it, his inability to compromise on what it should be.

James Waites: “Dont choke—but if I did a PhD it would in part be because i want to catch up on my reading. I’ve said too many times I stopped at Foucault. If I go ahead it wont be until next year, and I would love to know if you could help me with a reading list that such a thesis would benefit from. I can do the face-to-face interviews (that’s what I do now for a living), and my mind has an historical bent. There is a book in this on the birth and history of the Sydney G&L Mardi Gras alone. The trip down the Mekong with Matt—which I truly hopes happen—is an idea that i think unshackles me from theatre and into a form of writing I can man manage—no costs, no publisher hovering, humble, a bit silly, incorrect, add photos, in blog-like bites that my mind and now my body can cope with.”

James had been the stage manager for the local production of the *Rocky Horror Show*, which I had seen as a teenager. He knew the theater director Jim Sharman, our Nobel-Prize-winning-novelist Patrick White and his lover Manoly Lascaris. He moved among the Sydney theater and homo royalty.

James Waites: “To give you the best idea of my plan is. Matt when we caught up after twenty years listed a string of events and experiences I ahd shared with him in our fun years in Sydney in 1980s. I guess that is the springboard for this part travel part yarn about ideas, and part history of a very lively decade in Sydney—who lead very different lives but crossed paths many times.”

James and I were much better company for each other than anything else. Despite my indifference to theater, there was much to talk about, in books, music, cinema, politics. I loved hanging out with him. He was about five years older than me, had

received a more rounded education, traveled more widely, and had, as far as was possible in this world, succeeded in living as a gay man. Something at which I felt I had failed over and over.

James Waites: “And am glad our ships passed in the night (and not for public consumption). A long time ago now. but you made an impression. Ahh nostalgia. When I do get my new website up—in about a week from now I will be quite quickly turning my gaze back to growing up in New Guinea which I believe fits your sentence—‘Nostalgia for an actual past that they experienced as having some critical or utopian force for present?’”

I cajoled him into fucking me a few times, but he was not particularly enthusiastic. Lying on his back, nursing his wound, I gently sucked him hard, rolled a condom on him and looked about for lube. He used the nearby hand cream, which was just a little too slippery. The texture wasn't right. But still, I straddled him and took his cock into me. It worked a few times, but felt like a mercy fuck. James was kind that way. Even if you needed cock in your ass he would humor you.

James Waites: “Below is a link to a model of the site. I am looking for freedom to come at my thoughts from different angles—and in some places as influenced by past and new reading. I will never be a big gun, But I have a decade approx in front of me to put to use—sooner or later. Matt has been staying over, wisely suggesting it's time I unshackled ‘who I think I am’ from ‘my body.’ In his highfalutin language: “Jim, just fuck the body off—promise me—at least for part of every day! enuf—I just wokeup from an afternoon nap—Global Warming has arrived in Sydney today! Surreal. Oh

one last thing—am abig Pasolini fan—greatly impressed by the ‘politics’ in *Salo*—and that last silent long shot from the window...seeya j.”

Pressing skin against skin, kissing, licking, touching, sucking, but not fucking. The sex-thing didn’t work out. That I was not just something to fuck to him made me really start falling in love with him, but it made me want him to fuck me, maybe to make my love toward him slow down. There was not enough friction between us. Not enough difference. It was all too symmetrical. I like cock but I like difference: a conundrum.

James Waites: “I am nostalgic for my early days growing up on the southern most tip of Bougainville—late 1950s—no technology but a two-way radio and a seaplane that delivered ‘cargo’ once a fortnight in good weather—only three Euro families and some American nuns my father taught to ride Harley Davidsons—no roads but bush tracks which the bikes could use. I mostly look back with ‘nostalgia’ on the ‘integrity’ of the village and the union of belief and art practice (gazing back from adulthood now fully contaminated with ‘alienation’ and ‘anxiety.’) Never felt a true Westerner.”

We ended up friends, and remained friendly. Reading each other’s writing. Fond of each other, welcoming chance meetings, sharing a joke, usually about his cursed day job as theater critic, which he saw as a cross between being a parish priest and a dentist.

James Waites: “I decided to take on this new blog project after realising I had spent most of my life reading and writing rubbish—

but 'living' a lot!!!. I say that because I want people to know it was a decision made before my recent Parkinsons diagnosis. If that advances in an ugly way (it may not) I could have a new 'nostalgia' field to explore."

James is dead now. I miss him. He never did write that book, or take that boat ride down the Mekong river.

Class Analysis

Through James, I met John, who was a patron of the theater, mostly as a way to meet boys. And I became, as the French say, his *ballerina*. John was a big man, in every sense. Handsome, well dressed, almost John Steed, but more manicured malice than charm. He was a partner in a law firm or an investment bank, or something. (It's best if his story becomes somewhat fictional. Those libel laws...) He was always beautifully but discreetly dressed. He moved in important circles, not ones I ever got to see. He had many lives. I was permitted to meet his homosexual friends. Some might have said they were gay, but not in any sense that still implied gay liberation.

Paul B. Preciado: "The homosexual revolution was started by lesbians, effeminate fags, and queens—the only ones who needed revolution to survive."

Patrick White: "I was always homosexual, but I was *never* gay."

Each was his own little Lord Henry manqué: aesthetes, elitists, patrons of aspiring artists, musicians and writers, usually the cute ones. They dined well, enjoyed the theater, fine art, fine wine, fine toys, fine boys.

Juliana Huxtable: "The aesthete-faggots were in their own world of nostalgic subcultures organized around the lived dreams of undying

youth: tragic androgynes glamorously avoiding middle age life or perhaps glamorizing its unavailability. The responsibility of adulthood indefinitely suspended in a Dionysian indulgence in which everyone simultaneously played Lord Henry and Dorian.”

“This tuna is truly sublime.”

“Yellowfin.”

“It is getting fished out.”

“There won’t be any more of it someday.”

“Oh, *we* will always be able to get it.”

At their little gatherings, they would show off their prizes to each other. Look, this one paints! This once dances! I was the writer. I was not supposed to get along with the painter or the dancer. Our social contact was always supposed to be mediated by our patrons. So we pretended to hate each other if we did not actually hate each other. Having never perfected camp repartee, I always came off the worse for these encounters. Besides, they were always prettier than me. I was cast in the part of the smart one, and thus an object of suspicion for both patrons and the patronized.

I was also permitted to be present in another social circle, which many of the other ballerinas were not. I was a bit older and house-trained, so I would be shown off also to the world of notionally liberal-minded straight couples of a certain class who patronized The Arts. They wanted to congratulate themselves on being comfortable mixing with The Gays.

If I was out with John, I was his plus-one. I was the *handbag*. I was the girl. This was quite educational. I was not expected to talk,

except for the purpose of social graces. I was not supposed to have opinions about things. It was permitted for me to agree with John's opinions, or shades thereof. I was expected to smooth out disagreements between John and the others. Mostly I just tried to blend in and observe. A closet communist. At some point the men would segregate themselves, usually to talk business or politics. I would be left with the wives.

They were spectacularly turned out. Generally, they were *first wives*, with their own spheres of power and influence. They dressed well, and fashionably, but in a conservative vein, which bespoke the possession of money and power rather than just great tits. I rather liked them, with their gorgeous and discreet jewelry and bags. Some had jobs, some had charities. They had fine educations and had done something with their lives, but at some point had married and spawned offspring and were consigned to the second rank around town as part of the deal. They knew it. Quietly plotted against it. Their idea of women's liberation was restricted to their own entry into the upper rungs of the ruling class.

I did my best, but I did not exactly fit in with their world. Some of their husbands kept mistresses my age, so I was a constant reminder of that little complication, which even among emotional sophisticates threatens comfortable understandings about money and property. I may have inadvertently caused some anxiety about the alleged heterosexuality of certain husbands. They had, like my Gordon so long ago, gone to all-boy boarding schools.

John knew other people, powerful people, whom I never met. That was an all-stag world, and one where his homosexuality was simply

overlooked. For those fuckers all knew John was loyal first and last to his money, some inherited, some “made” by him, although it looked as if it was more a matter of not squandering the fortune and contacts into which he was born than any genius on his part.

This seemed to me to be the object of keeping a ballerina on the side, as if to prove that talent, charm, good looks or fuckability were really not *all that* without the money and connections to elevate it into Circle Jerk of power.

One could get used to this, I thought. The fine wines. The quality coke. The car and driver sent to fetch me. The spread in Point Piper with harbor views. The beach house weekender. But I had no claim on him. John was no fool. He never let me get close. The feeling that was never to leave me was that to him I was expendable. The feeling that is a class analysis.

Service Work

Made comfortable and lazy by John's favor, I was not chasing many writing or casual teaching jobs. I was left to myself from day to day. Days filled with a certain edge of availability, an alertness, a willingness to serve. It came down like a screen between me and the world, between me and other people. I was impenetrable to all, except him. And he was absent. An absence I could taste.

Then came the call. Usually late at night. To say the car was coming to get me. I'd hurry to dress. He liked me in things he had given me. Stylish, but easy-access. The ride was always a moment of panic. His driver was discreet and distant. No solidarity among service workers.

With John there was rarely any chance for seduction. He was not interested in mysteries. But he had command of his own aggression. He took me hard. I liked being man-handled. Thrown on the bed or over the back of the sofa and just plain fucked, or maybe a better word is *banged*: Just a little too hard and fast to keep a hold of myself. Snatched and scattered, no time to gather before becoming his animal, flesh, meat.

He liked to watch me jerk myself off after he railed me. He had no interest in helping out. He just watched and played with himself until he was hard again. I did not particularly want it in me again.

But sometimes he liked that. Outside of the arousal state, being entered took on a different palpability. Just something bodies do. My ass-snatch a convenient hole for him to wank into. His indifference to me not without its clarity. My body serviceable.

Frank Moorhouse: “How hyper-charged life is when it breaks out of propriety. I was sorry, as I trembled there against his legs, for those people with well-behaved love. How good it was to have one’s integrity utterly infringed, to be the trembling, crushed, infringed self.”

John was prepared to be generous, and I took various small considerations from him, but no large ones. My motives were unclear to me, and to him, and perhaps I enjoyed confusing him. He thought I refused the big favors in pursuit of something still-larger, permanent. But the opposite was the case. I did not want to be in his debt. I wanted him to hold me, which he never would, but I wanted no hold over me of any other kind.

Pierre Klossowski: “From the viewpoint of exchange, a living object, the source of emotion, is worth the price of its maintenance. The effort and sacrifice its obsessed owner inflicts on himself in order to maintain it represents the price of this rare and useless object. No figures can express it; only the demand can.”

I didn’t want his money because I was the money. Not convertible in all transactions. Some of his worlds were closed to me. But in others, I was the money. We ballerinas were all money. And after a while, spent.

Straight Llife

By the start of the nineties, I had figured out that I could not live with myself for too long as both I and myself would just disappear. And by now I knew I could not live with men. I had loved Glen, but he did not live anywhere. I did not love Edward any more, although part of me still longed for him to fuck me. Living with him would just suck me down with him. I had almost fallen hard for James because he did not want to fuck me, so I longed for him to fuck me to cure me of that love.

As the nineties went by, I lived with women. I loved them. I cared for them. And I fucked them. (Did I do my share of the housework? Unreliable witness. Ask them.) Nobody needs to read another story by a man about, well, anything really. Certainly not another story where the man fucks the woman. So let's just keep it to this not-novel but less storied dilemma: how does a man whose peak sexual experiences all involved being fucked in the ass go about having sex with a woman? Depends on the woman, of course.

Also, here's another wrinkle that makes this maybe a less common story. What if the man in this story, who fucks the woman, is maybe not a man after all? And what if this man, sorry, this not-man, doesn't even know it? Or doesn't know it yet, at least. What if this, this, human, let's say, this egg that wants not to hatch, this thing that wants not to be there, to not exist, is driven by a desire opaque to

this human and to most of those around it? Maybe that is some less common kind of almost heterosex worth attempting to write about.

Some general considerations. There's two parts to this. The first involves attraction; the other, the actual sex itself. So the thing about women is that I always wanted to be them. When I was with men I felt femme, I felt like part of me was some kind of aberrant sort of crip-girl anyway. I feel as the one who is fucked that I am a girl. Years of reading gay and queer theory have tried to shift that notion aside, but that's how I still feel it.

Judith Roof: "What genders do: they provide the registers through which individuals can resolve the relation between psychical and social systems, finding vectors of desire and identification that persistently resolve lack and difference and by which these drives find purchase."

I was always intermittently attracted *to* women, but always constantly wanting to *be* them. These desires flip through scenarios that are not just sexual positions but also prepositions. I had boyfriends who made me feel during some particularly vigorous act of fucking, that I managed to lose some part of masculinity down the back of the sofa cushions, and was glad to see it go: gender euphoria. But then we kept on going. I got so high and so fucked that I didn't exist, had ceased to be a man, and then ceased to be a human, and had become a thing. Maybe that was one layer of shucked shell too many.

Unless I was really high, it didn't work. I felt like a fake, an unreal girl. A dupe, a trap, a fraud. But wait a minute: hadn't I lived through the eighties? Why would I feel that being a copy was a bad

thing? Simulation was in fashion. It was the foundational myth of the epoch to come, for better or worse.

Here is a myth to live by: Ariadne was a mortal woman. She was a weaver. Her weave was just as good as that of the goddess Minerva. And so M turned A into a spider to punish her.

Or so the story goes. This is a culture that believes that things are their own private property, not to be copied. And yet I have heard the lyrebirds, who sing as well as any bird, and can do the voices of more than one. They even do human things, car alarms, kid's toys. Should hear them do the leaf blower. There's an inverse world where things become other things, not better or worse but otherwise. Maybe the story goes like this: Ariadne wanted Minerva to turn her into a spider all along. By simulating one thing, Ariadne became, not a copy of that thing, but something more interesting.

If women were attracted to me, which much to my surprise was occasionally the case, they generally expected me to want to fuck them. And I did. Everyone has fantasies in their heads when they fuck. Here, mine was: that I am in her place, getting fucked. At the moment my cock starts to enter, I feel I am the one being entered. Pause, just the tip touching, in-her (in-me), out-her (out-me), in a little more: Moebius striptease.

Torrey Peters: "Rosie threw off the sheets, lay on her back. She guided Amy in. The first thoughts Amy had were of warmth. 'Slow at first,' Rosie said. She had a half smile. It was too much. Too close to being laughed at. Amy shut her eyes and focused. But she could feel the sexual charge leaving her. She pulled back up to the fantasy:

she wasn't really fucking Rosie. Rosie was fucking her. She belongs to Rosie. She was Rosie's girl. She pictured Rosie pinching her nipples, and reached around and pinched Rosie's tiny breasts. And then. Without warning, Amy was coming. Later, much later, she would learn the word for this: dissociation."

Here's the thing about being with someone you like and love and care for and find funny and smart and hot and you fuck them willingly, joyfully, eagerly, but are not really super into the fucking part: you can do it for a long time.

Sometimes the sheer beauty of the fucked body overwhelms. I so want to be inside that body that my cock is inside. I want to feel it's coming alive to its own boundaries, its transformation into pure surface and nerve. But most of the time I can ride along as long as it takes. Being admittedly quite bad at this straight fucking thing, allow me to claim just one virtue: *patience*. Good fortune was to meet someone who was patient with my patience.

The Other Side of Seduction

I felt her green eyes on me from time to time. At parties, at screenings. I knew her name. I knew who she was with, or thought I knew. All we had exchanged was glances. Then there was the party where, for the first time, we spoke more than a few words to each other. More words of no consequence. It was all in the manner of speaking. We talked for a while, she said she was leaving, and left.

After waiting a little while, I followed, found her dawdling outside a little way. We weren't seen leaving together. We ended up in her room, at the top of the stairs in a big old ramshackle shared house in Newtown. Disapproving look from the one housemate who was up as we came in. Maybe they had fucked once. Something a little emotionally messy passed between them and cast over me, but just for a second.

In her room. Big old mog of a cat looks at me sleepily. Miranda disappears back downstairs to make tea. Paralyzed with indecision, I settle for taking off my jacket and shoes and propping myself up on the bed, pretending to read *Godard by Godard*. Not knowing what to do with the jacket, I settled for neatly folding it and putting it on the floor. The cat takes a feline interest in it, sniffing, pawing, and sits on it. Feeling anxious, horny, and an anticipation that is mostly of imminent failure of one kind or another.

Here are all the ways I imagine things all going terribly wrong: something to do with that housemate; something to do with who I think is her actual boyfriend calling or even bursting in; something about the cat's disapproval of me; that it was all a misunderstanding and she wants me to leave; that I will spill tea on the bed and break the mood; or there won't be a mood to break; or she is sleepy and just wants to go to bed; or I will not know how the transitional moment works to get from talk to kissing; or I will misread the signs and that is not what she wants; or it is what she wants but I will discover I don't want. Wait, do I need to pee? No-no-no I don't know where the toilet is!

Miranda takes a while. She made chai. It is delicious and warm and sweet and spicy. We drink from little cups, not talking, just looking at each other. It is like a little ritual. I think about the rituals I made for Edward when I wanted him to fuck me. I think I am Miranda for just a moment. I think I know what she is doing. She laughs. I think it is at me but it is at the cat sitting on my jacket. "Well you've both made yourselves comfortable," she says.

Miranda turns a light out. The light was already low and shaded. Now it feels like an arthouse movie set, lit from just one angle, our shadows tangling already, projected across the far wall. She stands, turns away from me, lifts her snug black jersey dress up over her head and turns back toward me, naked now, smiling. I flash on the times I have done that same move for Edward, but just with a lousy t-shirt.

I can't help but be struck dumb by her beauty. She knows what she shows: mocha skin, streaming black hair, green eyes, long legs and wide hips, tapering sharply toward a tiny torso. Yes, I am objectifying

her body. In that moment, she wanted me to. Although she did not want or need or even know about this part: that I both wanted, and wanted to be that body.

It is the smile that gets me, stops me into inaction. She is a perfect cinema of her self and feels it. I flash on jealousy, that she can be this. She comes to me and straddles me. It is a move I don't quite recognize that I recognize. For a moment I am her. Or rather I feel myself acting as her, from the outside, from where Edward sits, but not as Edward, as still me but not me. A twist-strip of need, action, desire. Her skin pressed against my clothes. It's confusing but all confusion dissolves in her confidence; her grace, even.

Eileen Myles: "I was drunk and was just more comfortable being dressed. So we rolled around the bed that way for a while, this crazy part of me shocked that I was making out with a naked woman and keeping my clothes on for a while made me a man, my big dick cunt. Please she finally said..."

"Let me." I let her unbutton my shirt. She takes her time. I feel her command over the situation in the tempo, but in a way that leaves a space for me to feel like who she is addressing and undressing is her man. Wriggling out of my pants underpants socks is all me and done in a jerky panic. It is as if I have arrived at rehearsal having learned the wrong part. But the anxiety itself has an erotic pulse to it.

Finally, I am on top of her, pressing hot skins together, she wraps her long legs around me. She feels so tiny that it makes immediate logical sense in my weird system of body classification that I am on top of her and want to fuck her. "I have no self-control," she

whispers. In a voice I might have deployed myself on occasion, in her place.

Now comes a very inelegant and terrifying moment where I rummage about for a condom, which involves displacing a sleeping cat from my coat, checking all the pockets, trying to rip the condom packet open, having to use my teeth, all while living in advance the depressing moment where I lose my erection and make some apology about it.

That does not happen. Not in this take.

Past the moment of actually managing to get the condom on, this was not one of those magical first fucks. The seduction was magical. That was Miranda. The fuck was just sort of ordinary. That was on me. I thought of all the times—which I have not described because it would be too boring—when Edward was less than fulfilling. But the thing you feel the first time is maybe something about someone's sexual character. Who they are in the moment they let themselves be.

Miranda is one of those people whose sexual character has a lot to say. For such a small person with such a shallow ribcage, the deep basso of her fuck-chant was surprising, delighting, but it did distract me into thinking: oh, the housemate knows, knows every time, the whole house does. Is that why she has the room at the top of the stairs, as far away as possible from everyone else's room?

Miranda's Movie

I loved Miranda. And her cat. But she had to teach me how to fuck her, because honestly I had no idea. I really wanted to know. For a lot of reasons. Because I loved her. Complicated by wanting to be her, actually feeling that I was her in moments. But still.

Another reason was because she was seeing three other men besides me. Candid about it. These days this might be called *polyamory*. Now there's whole books of ethics about all this.

She said I was the only one who knew about all the others, which was something. I clung to that. Number one I already knew about, who had given her a ring, sweet and serious. Number two sounded like seriously dangerous fun. Number three was the rich one (her version of my John), who had a habit of just showing up in his expensive car to whisk her away. Since I (number four) was the only one who fucked her in her own room, I had to know about his movements in case I had to be hidden when he showed up.

It seemed like an engaging game to me. I liked conspiring with Miranda in her juggling act. Since I wasn't the rich one or the dangerous one or the serious one, I had to be the confidant. It felt like the Prince song, "If I Was Your Girlfriend."

She had different inflections of wardrobe for each. As a strict vegetarian, she wore only faux leather with the dangerous one. The serious one was a fellow film maker and got her Anna Karina early Goddard leading lady look. The rich one got lingerie with all the straps and lacey bits, the thought of which gave me complicated thrills. She was a reader of men.

“Miranda, how did you learn to handle men?”

“Four step-fathers.”

I was the supportive one. The rich one gave her money from time to time for her film making, but I was the one who she talked to about it all. She was resentful and bitter about all of the world’s petty injuries and slights. And no wonder. But it was a spiral that could just keep going down and down and shut her out of even those occasional possibilities she was not denied in the world.

She knew I saw Edward from time to time. Cool about it, up to a point, and incurious. It was an irrelevant subplot to the movie, which was more about which of her four suitors Miranda would choose. I really thought so little of myself that I didn’t think I had a chance. I wasn’t as sincere as number one, or as thrilling as number two or as generous as number three. Looking back, the end was always plain to see. Only number one and I really loved her, and I was the fresh, new love, full of curious discoveries and hormonal joy.

Miranda wanted me to fuck her, but I just did not really know how. She was a self-described *size-queen* and apparently I just barely made the cut, penis-size-wise.

“I’m a small woman, so guys with little dicks think they’ll do for me, you know?”

(Oh, I know...)

“But I have *standards!*”

Miranda’s utopia was to cum while being fucked in the missionary position. Which took a while, so if I came too soon, she would get positively angry about it. Like that Yoko Ono song which starts with her rhythmically moaning to the beat, and ends with her shrieking in rage.

I got so serious about the job at hand of making her cum when we fucked that she made me wear a blindfold for a while. I’d been scrutinizing her face, trying to read the signs of where she was on the curve to cumming. How ridiculous I must have looked, on top of her, thrusting away, up on my elbows studying her face for clues. The blindfold was actually a good idea. Made me feel where we both were, where the thing was, the event was, that was neither person.

Leslie Feinberg: “Jacqueline looked confused. Then she laughed till tears streamed down her cheeks. ‘Honey,’ she’d start, but she was laughing too hard to continue. ‘Honey. You can’t learn to fuck from reading *Popular Mechanics*. Being a good lover means respecting a femme. It means listening to her body. You know, you could make a woman feel real good with that thing. Maybe better than she ever felt in her life.’ She stopped stroking the dildo. ‘Or you could really hurt her and remind her of all the ways she’s ever been hurt.’”

But oh, the pressure! One time she was going off to meet the almost-fiancé. I helped her choose an outfit for him. And then we

fucked. I came, too soon, again, and she didn't. "You can't leave me like this! My cunt is engorged. I'm flushed. He'll know I've been fucking someone else. *What are you going to do about it!?*" After some kissing and petting, keeping her fire lit while frantically trying to relight mine without being too frantic because that doesn't help—I fucked her again, and she came, that long, low series of frame shaking utter utterings.

She put the outfit we had styled for her back on. She looked put-together. Perfect. I drove her to her rendezvous with almost-fiancé, stopping a block short so we wouldn't be seen. Out she hopped, spring stepping in her boots on the rainy sidewalk. She spun around, smiled at me and laughed, with me, like a conspirator. And strode off. I knew I was hers. That was when I knew I had been cast to act the part of the male lead in her movie.

Retooling

We looked and dressed and drank and smoked like we were in early Godard movies. Only not in French, but antipodean English. And our witty dialog was far less apt and punctuated with expletives, because both men and women swore like sailors in Sydney, in those days.

It's a minor variation on the stories straight people tell about being girls and boys together. The one distinctive flavor to the story might be this: the way I learned how to fuck Miranda was to draw on my knowledge of how to be fucked. Sure, I had only an imaginary vagina. All I knew related to being fucked in the ass. Sure, what I wanted from being fucked was not the same. It worked best for me if I could start out in an easy position, like cowgirl or doggie, and change it up a few times. I liked to be penetrated and fucked from a certain angle, working the friction against a part of the folding unfolding ravel of flesh, to the point of sensory overload, or discomfort, or boredom. Withdraw, pause, start again. Sure, it was more the beginning of the fuck that was most intense, not the end. The moment of opening up for cock was the moment for which I lived.

Andrea Lawlor: "He could smell himself. His cunt was gaping and his stomach was gaping and his mouth was kissing, kissing, kissing. He whimpered as the rock star unbuttoned her jeans and pulled out her plastic cock, black and shiny to match her rock-star shininess.

I am being penetrated by punk, he thought as she thrust into him, pushing his legs apart. Collapsing onto him like a pistoning sex blanket.”

Maybe the fucked body is always a different one. And maybe the fucked body is a more diverse series of events than the one fucking. Yet still I hold this as a central speculation in this *philosophy of the fucked*: there’s something in common about the being of being-penetrated. That’s how it seems now, in retrospect. This owl of Minerva flies, not at dusk, but at the time of the post-fuck cigarette.

At the time it was a matter of intuition. Of putting my ass in the place of Miranda’s cunt. Of putting Edward’s cock in place of my own. I had trained him in how to fuck me, after all. I had had to read the signs. And so Miranda trained me.

And so on down from the ages. Everlasting intimate college. The fucked teaching the fuckers—if they’re open to learning.

In other words, I learned how to be a straight man fucking by listening to my inner girl. But in the rub, the selves disappear anyway. They don’t exist. For a moment it all merges into a particular and fleeting splash into time of a universal animal.

Georges Bataille: “The tiger is to space as the sex act is to time.”

Dick-Tech

One day I glanced into the window of a sex shop while passing in the street. The model in the window brandished a black leather-clad cock protruding jauntily from a matte-black rubber strap-on harness. I walked right on by, and around the block, and came back, and bought it. All without really thinking about it. As soon as I saw it I pictured it on Miranda's body, the matte-black rubber hugging her hips.

Miranda was game to try, but it was clearly not her thing. She indulged me. She put the harness on. It would hardly tighten around her tiny waist. It seemed a little out of scale. The cock attached to it seemed alarmingly large, and seemed decorative rather than functional. I stretched a condom over it. I tried, but I just couldn't get it into my ass. I offered to fuck her with it.

“Well, you always say you're a size queen.”

“Whereas it turns out you're only a size princess.”

The situation amused her, but what she wanted was cock, a man's cock. I recognized immediately that at least part of it was the pleasure of being the cause of erection. I had felt that too, the validation that comes from one's ability to get a man hard. I put the harness away.

Hannah Black: “They jerk off in the evening watching videos of other people fucking, just like me. In porn I am unified with the experience of men. I get high and try to focus on just the cock as if it were mine. There is pressure and warmth like a world bearing down on the head. How does soup feel when the spoon dips inside it? I am disappearing in a woman. When I decide I’m done I close the tab, I am back inside this disappearance, inside the woman that others recognize me as. Find me somewhere in the world where I can rest. I think gratefully of everyone I have ever put my fingers inside.”

The Return of Non-Existence

Edward called me. I had not seen him for a long time. His mother had died. Would I come to the funeral with him? The world had opened up its monstrous non-existence for him. I could not refuse. I held his hand that day. For the last time.

I heard from Facebook that Edward is still alive. He is doing alright, and involved in addiction services as a volunteer in Sydney's inner-west. I got this from another of his old boyfriends, who said that when they met up again recently Edward upbraided him for putting on weight. But then apparently Edward has not aged well.

You Are Your Attention

A portrait of McKenzie Wark, by the Facebook algorithm.

Nature | Moving Company | Contemporary Art | Photography |
Space Exploration | Spring | Birds | Writing | Reading | Left-wing
Politics | Global Warming | Artist | Animal | Livestock | Freight
Transport | Communication | Flight | Autumn | Language | Lace |
Grass | Deer | Emotion | Dark Matter | World | Being | Human |
Image | Laika | Wave | Organism | Australia | New York City | e-
flux | LGBT Community | Bodies | Writer's Block | Socialism |
Capitalism | Alaska Thunderfuck | David Bowie | Lady Bunny |
Walter Benjamin | Prince | Lana Turner | Harvard University Press
| Pusha T | Valentina Tereskhova | Justin Vivien Bond | Feminism
| Playwright | Hegemony | Media | Cameras | Cooking | Food |
Chapati | Herring | Cheese | Future | Society | Galaxy | Modernity
| Earth | Instant Messaging | Social Group | Alumnus | Homo
Sapiens | Love | Family | Dresses | Trousers | Shopping | Fashion |
Lingerie | T-Shirts | Jeans | Denim | Hats | Top (Clothing) | Tights
| Body Suit | Sock | Cashmere | Black (color) | Psychoanalysis |
Gender | Social Class

Queen Bitch

Dear David,

when you died, you took over my Facebook and Twitter feeds for days and days. It was as if anyone across a fairly wide range of ages, genders and persuasions had kept a polaroid or two of you lodged in memory for some bent reason or other. For the queer and trans kids, you had made life endurable. High-contrast images of you broadcast their way through the noise, signal-boosted by repetitive riffs, drummed into every last suburban, provincial, antipodean redoubt, calling them (us) out into other lives.

A lot of normal-seeming people loved you too. It turns out even they needed a little piece of you, somewhere, sometime. And you kept putting it out not just in the seventies, but in the eighties, nineties. You left the twentieth century and landed in New York. When I emigrated there myself at century's end it was a comfort to know you were there, somewhere. Your standard raised, queen in residence.

Looking back, I think what was there for all to feel even if they did not quite know it is that yours was a body that had been fucked. You had opened yourself up, somewhere, sometime, and let the world, and some dick—in. And you turned it into a power. You were that rare rock god straight or not, who was not just a power top. You seemed more like a power bottom. That was the subpage signal that

you put out. Here was one who had taken it in the ass and spat out money and fame.

Huw Lemmey: “His hair bristles against my buttocks but there is no pain. Just pleasure, as my butt gulps him in, and I rock forwards and back, the greatest power bottom ever bred, a prizewinner, a destroyer of penis. Within minutes he is pulled deep inside me, ingested, brewed, stewed by my ass till all that is left is his trousers trailing from my asshole, his black socks coiled lifeless like used rubbers on the floor.”

It matters that yours was a story that really gets going in the seventies. You could not have been a sixties pop star. The sixties still coated sex in the prophylactic of love and romance. Those adorable mop-top Beatles! They were never quite convincing in the seventies. There wasn't much sexual danger there. The Rolling Stones made the transition. Mick had that androgynous thing. Keith was wearing Anita Pallenberg's clothes. They already hinted in the sixties of what was to come.

The seventies were about sex, not romance. Mostly straight sex. We were all supposed to worship dick. Boys were supposed to be dick. Girls were supposed to want dick. It was a whole dick theology. Of course, all was not quite as it appeared. Even in cock rock itself. The ruts of want curve how they will.

It was a time when the way out of boredom wasn't via the alibi of romance. One could want the fucking without first the flowers. And there were many boys and girls who wanted to be fucked, preferably by a rock god, or someone who at least looked like one, and as soon as possible. Nobody was waiting 'til they were of age.

We teenagers of the seventies lived through the great cult of cock. And if one had a cock, you could try to mimic the simulated cult of it on display in rock and roll. But if you did, and it worked, the girls you fucked were not dreaming of you. They were dreaming of rock stars. You just got to be the substitute for the substitute.

Kathy Acker: "He warned her to watch out for her jealousy, he knew all about jealousy. He had just spent the night on a rooftop with a girl who was telling him she was madly in love with David Bowie."

Some wanted expressly to be fucked by you, David, by the Diamond-Dog Starman himself. This is no mystery. You were of course so lovely. Those cheekbones! They could even make one overlook those English teeth.

Above all, you were the one who gave off the signal that you had been fucked too and knew what was up. Who better to want to be fucked by than someone who had experience, and above all the experience of being fucked? And you did fuck those teenage girls, didn't you? On the LA scene, for example. Not everybody was cool about that side of the seventies when you died.

There was just no exchange to be had between teenage groupie and rock god. The girls were pimped out by culture industry sleazebags. And what did the girl get out of it? What she wanted, perhaps: to be fucked by a rock star. Or at least by the rock star's bass player. To watch from the wings. Sample the drugs. Ride in the limos, like a pet. And maybe, just maybe, to be the muse. To be the secret "you" to whom the song is addressed. Which for us moderns is a way to pass into myth. It was hard work, trying to be a muse in the seventies.

It promised not just obscurity and obsolescence, but addiction, anger, sadness, madness and herpes.

After you died, I noticed that what the financial press most loved about you was that in 1997 you issued \$55 million worth of “Bowie Bonds,” securitizing future earnings from 25 albums recorded before 1990. Investors were to receive 7.9% interest on the ten-year bond. The issue was the creative genius of one David Dullman. The rise of online music sharing reduced these bonds almost to junk. Moody’s rated them as BBB+. But not before you got your money’s worth. You became a New Yorker of leisure.

So it wasn’t much of a deal, getting fucked (over) by you, was it? When you walked away with so much of the fame, the money, the booty. All the groupies and fans could treasure were memories and earworms. Maybe earworms should be considered a form of venereal disease, caught by aural sex. Or maybe earworms are a form of money, which one gets from playing it by ear.

But all the same, maybe it was worth it. Who’s to judge? All for those few moments of penetration, of being the one you chose to fuck. For those few minutes, as dick grooves into you, it’s to be not just any little body in the world, it’s to be the hole in the center of the world, around which it revolves. Sometimes. If it isn’t just sad and uncomfortable, or worse—imposed and unwanted. To even imagine these things as ambiguous, ambivalent, shows a seventies scar and taint.

Sometimes, to be the one who is fucked is to be everything. That was the dirty secret of the era of cock rock. We worshiped your dick

only when it was in us, doing its job, for us. In itself, it is nothing. You were nothing. Except with you, David. You were in on the secret. Somebody had fucked you too. And sometimes we fucked-ones, we fucked-up-ones, figured out from your example how to turn our inside-out weirdness into not just a life but a living of our own. Turns out the straight world will pay us to play in their place, to put a little twist on the endless production of boredom.

You were the substitute. You looked pretty tall but you were high and your heels were platforms. You were the double, the copy, of those original great white English rock stars, already copies of the white American copies of the blues. Maybe you stole less from Black art because you shop-lifted the discarded remnants of it from the op-shops of the culture industry. Where the others tried to pretend to be the real thing—Mick Jagger singing in those dopey cod-cowboy accents—you were something else.

You were Ariadne, but your spiders were even better than Minerva's familiars. They were from Mars! And stayed around after dusk. Outrageous. You just got on with the job of weaving your own second sun. Broke it down into steps and got the process sorted.

Tom McCarthy: "It struck me as I waited that all great enterprises are about logistics. Not genius or inspiration or flights of imagination, skill or cunning, but logistics."

You weren't just one copy, a remainder, a nicked original, you were the tactics of copying itself. What is authentic in the copy can't be the copy, it's the *copying*. And so you copied over and over, variations, showing how a look and a sound and a mood

can be put together, out of information. How to let the world's information ever so gently into the body, how to let some tasty tentacle-strand of the world's information take you. You were a pioneer of artful *liking*.

You liked Sydney, had a fabulous apartment there in the eighties. Sightings of you were rare. What kind of quiet life did you live there? I had seen you perform at the Sydney Showground in the late seventies, but never saw you on your down-low visits down under. But I knew Geeling, who was in the "China Girl" video with you. She was part of the late-night Kings Cross crowd: restaurant tradies, music industry pros, journalists and media people with graveyard shift deadlines. We played dice and drank Sambucca in Kellet street dives 'til all hours. Geeling said few but kind words about you.

You liked New York, and moved here in the nineties, a decade before I did. An English rock star in New York, again, only this time nobody tried to shoot the piano player. Perhaps because you were not you. You never claimed your body was the fount of anything authentic, daring the world to make a sacrifice of it. The show was an act, not pretending to be real. There was no you there to kill, no collateral on the symbolic debt to damage. Like disco, you belonged already to the culture of the twenty-first century, where fame is not a one-for-many sacrificial act.

Cities still need their actual stars in residence, even more than their imagined superheroes. Casting a searching beam of possibility into the light-polluted night skies. I came here to New York when the new century started, to what I thought of as your town. Sure, there are some good nineties stories I'm not telling you. Me and the

locally-famous lesbian artist; me and the cross-dressing literary identity; me and the avant-garde punk novelist. And there's stories from the noughties and teens decades, when, like you, maybe I didn't put out the best of me.

You made a graceful exit on a grand stage. Let me borrow from your art and transpose it into a minor key, a minor genre, and end *Reverse Cowgirl*, after a few more digressions of course, with a few anecdotes you might like. I'm sure you got used to Australian anecdotes. While she was actually a New Zealander, Geeling could tell them well, deadpan and a good arc but no redeeming moral.

In the end I'll tell you an anecdote about the only one who said my crip feet were beautiful. The one with whom I lingered. The one to whom I emigrated. The one I gave everything to; the one I gave up everything for. The one who gets me; the one who gives me.

Yours, McKenzie

Unidentified Flying Chicken

From: Chris Kraus
To: McKenzie Wark
Date: Sun, May 6, 2018 at 12.39PM
Subject: Reverse Cowgirl
Security: standard encryption (TLS) [Learn More](#)
Important according to Google Magic

Hi Ken,

I reread the ms on the plane the other day, and had one thought about possible addition... it felt like, towards the end, maybe after David Bowie, it would be cool if there was a scene/rant/digression that didn't address the central motif of sexuality, but had to do with the subthemes that run through the book: time, how people turn out, or don't, surprises regrets unpredictability pre-post-political politics, provincialism, moving around. The things that feel implicit, under the surface of discussion of gender & sex. How things can be remembered, what fragments stick in a more or less vanished world? Sex and attraction, the great organizational points. I've been thinking about these things too recently... how uncanny and unpredictable it is, how things turn out.

xo C

From: McKenzie Wark
To: Chris Kraus
Date: Sun, May 6, 2018 at 7.26PM
Subject: Re: Reverse Cowgirl
Mailed-by: newschool.edu
Important according to Google Magic

Hi Chris,

I'm in the Unidentified Flying Chicken place near where my daughter has her afternoon karate classes. I don't particularly care for the chicken as its breaded. But I always have a cider here while she is in class. Who would have thought that the narrator of this book would be dutifully taking a daughter to after-school karate twice a week? Who would have thought the narrator of this book would be living in Queens in a co-op with a shared garden? Who would have thought such a louche type would end up married to the same person for twenty years?

The point of a story is usually to show how one thing leads to another. There's a character, maybe a few others. They do stuff, usually to or with each other, and the things they do make it look like what they do is what makes time itself move forward. But it's not like that at all. Time just passes. It leaks out. It just goes on and on. The characters make gestures, wave about, but they're just flotsam.

I miss the sea. That giant eye of the Pacific Ocean. But I became a New Yorker. The sea is not far away here but it's not as if you can smell it or taste it. Its May, nearly summer. I'll avoid the beach. The sand is a different texture. The seagulls here are fucking monsters, way too big, and their legs are the wrong color.

The wrong *color*. I spell like an American now. I even think it's more rational. Shedding unnecessary letters like expired identities or defunct empires. Even the Sydney sections of *Reverse Cowgirl* will feature me getting fucked in the *ass* rather than *arse*. Those just seem totally different words to me with ranges of meaning at antipodes from each other.

To be antipodean is to be neither here nor there. To be an antipodean in New York is to be not much of anything. There aren't many Australians here. Even fewer from New Zealand. What that must have been like for you, when you moved here? Being from a world that was whole and complete yet so small and that nobody elsewhere much knows anything about it.

Sometimes I feel like it's a secret. If you say you're from the antipodes, people answer that they have heard it's a nice place for a vacation but it's just too far to fly. I feel like telling them that, like Atlantis, Utopia or Wakanda, the antipodes are a myth. Maybe the Flat-Earthers are right: the antipodes are a myth and we're just paid agents working for NASA and the world government.

And yet I keep getting Facebook updates, from friends and family. It's like in a Philip K. Dick novel, where everyone still on earth gets news from the Off World Colonies, but nobody knows if the news is real. Can all the beautiful sunlight, the gray-green trees, the sand like sugar, can it all be real?

Maybe most of the twentieth century will turn out not to have been particularly real. Slaughter and carnage and torture on an industrial scale, and all just because there were new ways to squander the

carbonized memory of the sun. Just when we were figuring out how to just be humans together, at least in principle, it turns out it was all on borrowed time.

In this century to have been even an odd sort of communist is to belong to a defeated people.

Time to go pick up my kid from karate. It is some small comfort to know that the first man to try to harm her will likely get a swiftly executed kick to the head.

Love, McKenzie x

Women in Clothes

It was a fashion crisis evening for both of us. I went for super-tight jeans, fitted, asymmetrical t-shirt dresses (two layers, gray over black). Christen got this outfit for me from Oak, but the knee-high, pointed-toe, black leather, fuck-me boots I got myself from Shoe Market. I'm still new to fronting this level of femme look in public, but tonight I want to be this.

I'll let Christen Clifford describe her wardrobe strategy. It was her big night. I'm just the plus one, the handbag. She had a piece in an anthology called *Women in Clothes*. It was chosen for the evening of readings from it. The readers included Molly Ringwald, Justin Vivian Bond and some actor from a popular TV show. Christen's piece was to be read—*squee*—by Molly Ringwald.

The reading is at Symphony Space on the Upper West Side. Big fancy venue. A dressed-up, grown-up crowd. Women in pearls. For clutching, if necessary. The readings swept along, a well-paced show, but we were both impatient. Eventually Molly took the stage to read Christen's piece. She squeezed my hand.

Christen is younger than me, and right in the zone where a young Molly Ringwald appeared out of the celluloid dark to model what teenage Chrissy might want and dream and feel in the world. And now a poised and collected all-grown-up Molly, with kids about the same

ages as ours, is the actor reading a script that Christen wrote. You live and struggle and endure New York for decades for moments like this.

The story is not about me. I'm a minor character in it. But of course the parts that stuck me where when Molly spoke what Christen wrote what a character that could have been me did or said. A version much improved.

Molly Ringwald: "My husband has long hair. When we met, we both had long hair, mine a few shades blonder than his. We would walk the streets in matching leather jeans, and when we went to brunch at Teddy's, the hostess would say, 'Here you go, ladies.'

"We got married in Sydney, on his home turf, and when he said, 'I take you as my husband,' everyone twittered politely, thinking he had made a mistake. When I said, 'I take you as my wife,' our guests realized it was a joke of sorts and laughed.

"When I told my shrink there was women's underwear in his drawer, she said, 'Well, there's a few possible scenarios. One, he's a cross-dresser. Two, he's just super-careless and messy and doesn't realize they are there. Or three, he's seeing someone now. I bet it's one or two.' I was like, Huh, I have no problem with that. If you dress up in women's clothes, who am I supposed to be?

"When men want to dress as women, they want to be the sexy version, in lace. Men never want to be a stay-at-home mom still in her period underwear and nothing else at four pm, nursing a baby and zombie-ing her way through the house, not picking up anything, crying in front of the dishwasher.

“I’m on my way to being a sexless woman in khaki Capri pants. And yes, I am being judgmental. Short gray hair, no shape, boxy bright t-shirts, sneakers. A wacky piece of jewelry. My worst nightmare. Or, god forbid, Eileen Fisher. Mud-colored linen.

“Before I started dressing like a man in public, I had experience fucking. Like a man, but not. A strap-on. Well, a few, actually. There’s the leather dildo harness my partner had when I met him, and the simple silver glitter one (comfy and sparkly), and the RodeoH underwear. These are good, because they make the cock so close to my body that it feels warm and part of me. But it doesn’t fit a double dildo. For that I need the leather one without the backing snapped in. Then I feel like we are fucking each other.

“To give myself the entitlement of a man, I had to look like a man. I don’t feel the need to live as a man, or dress like one all the time, but I like being able to play with it. And yes, it does feel dirty, like I’m getting away with something that other people can’t.

“It’s wonderful to be a woman if you are young, thin, and pleasing to men. Otherwise, there’s not much that’s wonderful about it. We were told to be sexy, that without children we wouldn’t be fulfilled as women, but raising them, in decent conditions is practically impossible. It seems essential to capitalism that women be made to feel that they are failing all the time. Every choice is the wrong choice. I want to break free of convention.”

Molly swept the audience along, they laughed and sighed. The part about the women’s underwear in the draw drew a groan of recognition from a few women in the audience. *I feel so seen*, I thought, in

the language of social media. I had appeared in somebody else's story. The other against which the narrator writes herself into the reader's line of sight.

This would be my utopia of literary communism: when anyone can take anyone and make them their character.

In the green room, I took pictures of Christen and Molly together. I met Justin Vivian Bond. I was star struck, giddy and tongue-tied. Here I was with my trans-femme hero(ine), out in the world as femme for the first time myself, and unable to even speak.

I would like to say that this was the moment I knew I had to transition. That I was trans, maybe trans all along. That my flailing attempts to be gay and to be straight, to be the man-made femme object or duplicate femme subject, had all been driven by a dysphoria I could feel but not name. But it wasn't quite as narratively neat as that.

I got Christen to take a picture of me with Mx Bond. Then we went home to the kids.

Purple Reign

“So you packed your cock?”

“You mean *your* cock?”

“I wear it, but it goes in your ass.”

“It’s the in-between cock, then.”

“But did you pack it?”

“I thought you did. I have the harness.”

“Oh, so no cock, then.”

“We could go back and get it.”

“I’m dressed for sex club. Don’t want to see the kids or the sitter.”

“I guess we have to go the Babeland, then.”

“Let me google it.... Not open.”

“What’s the other one?”

“Pleasure Chest, sixth avenue.”

“There, then.”

....

“These are a lot bigger. Don’t know if I could fit that in my ass.”

“Only one way to find out.”

“Are they made for ass or vagina?”

“Well they’re a challenge either way.”

“What about this one?”

“I don’t think it can be like, a realistic looking Black man’s cock.”

“Huh?”

“Well, most of the club are African-American. They might think it’s a sort of fetishistic thing.”

“Oh, right.”

“How about this?”

“It’s big.”

“It’s a challenge.”

“I think I’ll call this cock *Purple Reign*.”

“Happy birthday!”

The Art of Circlusion

At the club—let’s call it Club *Jouissance*—our (fake) names on the door. Down the stairs to the dank, dusty basement. Aroma of chip-board, sweat, lube and spume. Generic disco beats, dim lighting. Street clothes shucked, hung on hangers.

I’m wearing the black leather knee-high fuck-me boots, above which peek fresh black Wolford nylons, attached to a black leather garter belt. On top, lacy black satin camisole that was a gift from Kathy Acker. The boots are low heeled, as with my crip feet my ankles don’t move much. The garter belt fits tight, keeping this dishabille ensemble from coming completely adrift when things get busy.

You are all in generic tight black sex-wear, but it’s a seamless outfit that makes your body almost impenetrable, like an Emma Peel catsuit. A little of my fantasy attire has splashed onto you. Over the suit is the shiny silver harness, and *Purple Reign* swinging and bobbing and attracting all kinds of attention.

Megan Milks: “One of the first things people mention about *Jouissance* is the smell. The ‘premiere’ Brooklyn play party for cis women and trans people, *Jouissance* takes place in a basement dungeon where the air is ripe with mildewed sex. Breathing deep is like stuffing lubed balls of mold up your nostrils. Potently unsexy, this

hard mold smell will not only clog your sinuses all night but cling to your clothes and hair long past your leaving.”

The dress code is underwear only. There’s a lot of men here wandering around in tighty-whities with their dicks out, waving Viagra hard-ons, peeping and lurking. There’s a banality and pathos to this sex club. Its cheapness and ordinariness has a certain low-rent charm. Even sex clubs can get gentrified. But neither of us want to get too involved tonight. Best to wander a bit first, feel where the energy is pooling in or spooling out, stake out a station to station ourselves at.

The back left corner is for group scenes. There’s a spit-roaster on hands and knees, cock in each end. Back right corner is the whip and chain crowd. A whip-ready flank is spread out over a bolster. The middle section is a black painted chipboard partition forest, enclosures of different shapes and sizes, some large with boxy black vinyl covered horizontal surfaces, some small with just a ledge. One has a sling, which we shall come back to. A vision in red lingerie wafts by on her own, the only other non-hard penis in view.

Front left is the women-only space. I’m always jealous that the better sling is in there. I glance through the translucent curtain. There’s some action starting up in there. Bodies arranging themselves. Front right is a stripper pole and dance floor, except nobody dances much. It’s a place to take a breather, check out bodies and cosplay themes under mirror-ball disco light.

Megan Milks: “We follow the promise of malevolent laughter to the back room, the BDSM room and the worst-smelling area of the dungeon. Aha—the birthday scene. I recognize a few of these folks

but hang back on the edge of visibility, unsure of protocol. N., the birthday person, is lying on their back as five femme sharks circle, pretend-swimming in makeshift beachy costumes—bikini tops and crocheted wraps—with cardboard fins on their heads, each taking a turn as top shark. *Fuck me, sharks!* shouts N. It's a riot to watch."

Walking around the space, grazed by gazes and bodies passing, the boots bringing my hips into play, changing my posture, making energy fan out and up through the spine, a plasmatic throb. I watch you being watched, become one of your watchers. *Purple Reign* is not the only strap-on here tonight. I catch glimpses of another, but *Purple Reign* trumps it.

I settle into the sling, booted feet in stirrups. Now that I touch it, feel its head in my hand, *Purple Reign* really does seem a lot bigger than our regular cock. Later I compare its dimensions to the one for which tonight it has to substitute. Comparative dick technology. Measured in inches, as this is America. Your-my regular, *Jean Genie*, is six inches long, four inches in diameter at the head, narrows a bit and is four inches 'round again for the length of the shaft. *Purple Reign* is seven inches long, and four inches in diameter, but five inches in diameter at the head. Now, these are not the biggest cocks anyone was ever fucked by. I'm not a size queen. A size princess at best. Going up in size before a live audience was more challenge than I had in mind, however.

I put the condom on *Purple Reign*, and more than the usual amount of lube. We brought our own, which is probably the clearest sign of class difference here. I want only *high-end* lube in here. The giant head of the cock presses against the outer ring. I stretch back in the

sling and guide its tip with one hand. Gently pulling it toward me, I feel myself open up in papery layers as its presence is writ in me, in ALL-CAPS. Maybe just a bit too exclamatory. Not pain, exactly. Everything feels right. Just readouts going off the charts. We are starting to attract attention.

Again and again pulling silicone techno-cock towards this ass, feel the rush, the info-prick, and easing *Purple Reign* back. I feel a lot of eyes on me. Men and dicks, watching. Like each is watching with three eyes. Silent chorus. Some touch me, gently and without intruding, so I let them. “We don’t have to do this,” you say. I know, but I want to.

I feel like I don’t want to embarrass myself, like I made a show of being able to do this, called attention, now I want to show this thin resume of a body’s work-it experience. To perform. Not for them, for me. I have only two physical talents. Athletic, almost: writing text and reading cock. I want badly to take it. I don’t want to have to write it up as the queer art of failure.

It’s the burst of sensory static that is holding me back, knowing I will disappear into the nerve-net. It’s all about relaxation, the calm, tender feeling of a body exposed, simply breathing, loose in all its connections. Then there’s nothing for it but to circlude that unprecedentedly large cock-head inside. I disappear into the feeling of opening and opening, peeling back over and over, layer by layer, becoming nothing but parting flesh, quivering and dilating. That mutant creature cry. The sound of an animal feeling one of its rare moments of unalloyed joy.

Your cock pokes a hole in time too. It seems like forever, just resting there, that big round cockhead through the first ring of this ass. A certain equilibrium in the web has to reset itself. And then, on to the second ring. Gently teasing at it, feeling the pure artificial symmetry of the cock, its spherical head, its cylindrical shaft. Then, the second push, and it is home.

Michelle Tea: “I stretched the white clingy glove over my fingers, and I slid them one, two, three, four, up her cunt. *Put your fist up me*. What? I had read about this once, in a lesbian book. Your fist. God, the energy shooting off her chest.”

It is as if every first moment of choosing to be fucked, every willed penetration, every circulsion, is a continuum with all the others. Some are smooth lightning, some are boundary-rocking shocks, the good kind of pain, some are just not all that exciting. But they are all moments together in a continuum of being. Of being the one who is fucked. The one that opens a surface folded inside to meet a surface from outside, revealing the body as nothing but folded surfaces, as having no inside and outside, no interiority for a self to hide in.

With a cock that big, it can't really be thrust or poked or stroked in me too hard. It's a matter of surfing with it, riding along, open to its moves. The gentlest movements of it keep me from surfacing as me. After taking it while splayed out, back arched, in the sling like an offering, voluptuous and lubricious as Ariadne, time to retreat and repeat the ritual of penetration, again and again, with variations.

We move to the ledge behind the sling. Pause to adjust garter straps and stocking tops. The audience jostles about to get a look. Next

you do me doggie style. *Purple Reign* feels like it fills me and presses me against the leather garter belt around my waist.

You hazard some hard thrusts, getting into the role of the fucker (I flash on times I fucked you like this, but with a mere human penis). Your hands grip hips for leverage (as when I gripped your hips, which flare so much more elegantly from your waist than mine).

Purple Reign feels like it is pushing organs out of its way, hollowing out a body, pressing innards outwards, where they gather against the garter of skin, fit to burst it, bound together by the tight leather belt at the waist, and by some enchanted power of the loose black camisole. Skin outputs of sweat and electric. Heart pump pump pumping faster than cock, syncopating. Fuck me 'til I don't exist.

At the edge of blackout, pause, slow. Retreat. Retract. Time of the downshift into cowgirl. You lie on the ledge and I replace the condom, lube-up again. Cowgirl is hard on the crip ankles, but now this pre-fucked body is in charge of its own re-penetration, working it, riding it in the half light, touched on the inside by history, eyes closed to feel the other eyes on the scene but not see them. Cowgirl is a less existential fuck and more pure ass-pleasure. I look down at you looking up.

The last act is sometimes a hard one. Sometimes I don't attempt it. "Let's do it." Going for reverse cowgirl now. On top again, this time with my back toward you. It is the most intense, sometimes too much. *Purple Reign* slides in easily this time, with a satisfying parting of the rings, right into place in one movement. (I'm showing off for the audience.) At this angle it feels as though *Purple Reign* will burst through my back, blasting me open at the sacrum

like some pervert alien chest-popper. But I don't burst, I just feel vaulted and pitted from within. Mutable monster meat.

Donna Haraway: "Monsters have always defined the limits of community. The Centaurs and Amazons of Ancient Greece establish the limits of centered male polis of the Greek male human by their disruptions of marriage and boundary pollutions of the warrior with animality and woman. Cyborg monsters define quite different possibilities from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman. A cyborg body does not seek unitary identity, it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment."

Reverse cowgirl: It's what I like and—if you put a six-shooter to my head to make me decide—who I will be. What I will answer to when called: reverse cowgirl. What I would even select as a gender on Facebook if it was among the fifty odd choices: reverse cowgirl. This almost-girl who bought her first western boots before she even knew who she was. Reverse cowgirl: The Spider from Venus. This New Yorker, this almost American, come like so many do from the provinces, who likes to take cock in her or his or her antipodes.

Hands reach out to touch a limp penis, mine I guess, but I gently brush them away. I came already anyway. There's a cum stain christening these new stockings. The head of this cock feels so big it has to be gently eased back out. The condom rolled off and disposed of. My ass wiped. Time to go wash hands and toys. Leaning on you, quivering, palpitating, wobbly, thought-slicked in some hormonal drench. So grateful for your gift.

I wander around with that just-fucked feeling, watching the others. Open still, ass annealing. That's all, folks. Feeling like we gave to this spectacle of sex, and now can draw back from it, to lurk in turn.

You are helping peel open lube packets for that vision in black and red lingerie who is trying to jerk off a naked man, without much success. There's an age at which the struggle is against the boredom of all sensation. It has come to that.

Closure

“Let’s take this cab.”

“OK”

“Did you like that?”

“You know I do.”

“I’m glad.”

“I’m so lucky to have you.”

“Ha.”

“That you’ll put on your cock and fuck me with it.”

“I know what you want.”

“You know I’ll do anything for you too.”

“I’m counting on it.”

Latent Destiny

Who is this I in my head that thinks it's me? Who is this me that thinks it is the recap of a series of phases, adventures, quests, events that carved it into its given form? This I, in this now, remembers all of the past iterations of itself that culminates in this comic-happy (or tragic-unhappy) plot-point. This I, in this now—forgets all of the other pasts that don't fit this dramedy.

There's something a little devious about such a self, with its neatly pruned pasts. Put down in writing, as memoir or autobiography, this arc of sameness, of destiny fulfilled, can come to seem as if it was an actual life. The I simulates itself, projecting an image of itself into the past which reflects back its light to the present so that the present self feels like it is actually there.

In writing the past of an I, there's a memory implant. From the inception of the story, it quietly anticipates the zigs, the zags, of a future time for a reader before it happens. To the reader, first person narratives look like they work forwards, one phase following another. A silky thread slinking along, suspended over the void of the page. Something will end up being revealed that was secretly there all along.

The reader follows along, one sentence after another, scuttling along a line. But the writer-spider had a plan all along, and lays the line to

reveal the pattern of the life to the reader as if it were the reader's discovery. Story is a ruse of memory.

So it would seem with this story. All this boy needed was a Good Woman who will let him cross-dress occasionally and who will fuck him in the ass. Now that we know the ending, we see how this was always where it would end. Season finale; roll credits.

Only it didn't. Other stuff happened. This I became someone else, something else, and that story no longer made sense. I don't even know who I was before any more. Some other self just calved-off from the melting iceberg of time and is dreaming of the endless ice-sheet from when it imagines it came.

This other I just decided one day that it is trans.

Veronica Scott Esposito: "I had often been instructed that undeniable desires are not approved foundations for truths. They are whimsies, weaknesses that prey upon the hysterics. The true man learns to subjugate them. The conventions that had been beaten into me were powerful. It had taken me years to do as these conventions required, and now I was in the process of taking it all back, of making my body absurd. I was not at all prepared to withstand this displacement. In that season I felt my inner self as a young woman who fights for the self-possession to cast off falsehoods."

Now all the stories of this I and its past read differently, and if they can't be read to fit, forgotten. There's new strands to this past self now. But I won't tell you the new ones. I'll resist the temptation to implant them back into the past, as if this future self was always there.

Grace Lavery: “Any decision, even those on the most bedrock, most life-or-death matters, will contain a substrate of whimsy. One of the things that frightened me, I think, was the thought that I might have run out of phases—that now that I had made something like a definitive declaration about who I was, the first thirty-five years of experimentation and improvisation had drawn to a close, and must be replaced by something somber and even slightly sad. Perhaps we could think of my life up until this moment as in some sense a period of latency.”

The manifest destiny, of striving peoples and persons, unfolds toward a final cause, the end a nascent state in the initial form. The latent destiny, of peoples and persons, unravels when the end turns out to be other than the promise. The end turns out to reveal a hidden drive.

But maybe there's no destiny, just the whimsy of history. The end never really expresses either the essence or the appearance of a start. Some detail is always appearing, attracting off-path. All that strives and endures is forever distracted by side-quests.

Part Two: Eurydice Speaks

Lakehouse

It was that summer at the Lake House when the story changed. Or maybe it wasn't. I don't remember—yet. Maybe I'll have the memories later when I feel in need of more past for this present I.

The Lake House Summer Commune is our annual ritual. Every year the same people live together for two weeks on a former dairy farm up in the hills outside Roscoe, along route 17 in upstate New York. This is our extended family-by-choice, and an occasion of a dozen years standing.

I missed the day that three of the women took mushrooms and spent the afternoon lolling by the lake, spinning yarns with the universe. I'd arrange to meet the writer Douglas Martin, who had a place upstate. I was going to ask his blessing to write a book about Kathy Acker.

I took my share of the mushrooms the next day, by myself. It wasn't so sunny. The weather has fickle moods up here. I packed a bag and ascended the big hill to be alone.

I settled under the tree where Christen and I had carved our names years before. It was one of our summer rituals to come up here, smoke weed and fuck. This time it was just me, singular human with the bugs and birds.

Not having taken mushrooms for years, I did not know what to expect. I didn't quite take all of my share, so there would be no temples in the sky. Accounts of other people's trips are quite boring, so I'll just stick to the decision, up on that hill, that I may or may not have taken.

Naked to the sun, on the blanket, nestled under the tree, peering into the dense grass, a whole city for bugs and birds, frogs and salamanders. Otherwise alone with my own body. And for once it felt right. Of course I jerked off, as drugs and sex go together, in this body's world.

Torrey Peters: "The poppers hit. Purple jellyfish expanded and pulsed across the backs of Amy's eyelids. She had just enough time to get her mouth back on Reese's soft cock before her constant interior monologue, that complicated apparatus that processed all the raw signals coming from her body into tolerable meaning, for the first time in her life, cut out. Some critical component of consciousness withdrew from her body like the contact at the end of the needle lifted from a still spinning record. No words. No thought. Just the raw, unprocessed, open fire hydrants of data that rushed in from Amy's senses, Time became a slippery fish amongst it."

Since I was already writing this book, I thought about the writing, if "thought" is the right word. More that I felt it. Felt the book in the body, and the body in the world, the book in the world, the world in the body... Since the body felt fine with itself, for once, it felt fine in the world, and the book felt like it could be fine in the world someday, too, or almost.

Micha Cárdenas: “I have been going through a personal process of transitioning as a transgender person. So in the early stages of writing, I had questions like: ‘Where does this desire to be female come from?’ I began to feel like this was an unanswerable question. Yet, I still have a powerful desire to have a more female body, it interrupts my consciousness during the day, at the dog park, at school, sometimes when I see an attractive woman. I find the search for its origin or cause opens up an aporia, the answer unavailable to my conscious logical thought processes.”

Reverse Cowgirl made sense to me, finally, as a sort of autofiction account of someone who was trans all along and did not know it yet. In this case, even the writer didn’t know the shape of the web she made.

Well that’s sorted. What was still absent, from body book and world, was the sense of this: Why did the book start with the news of the death of my mother? I’d finished the whole book, I felt, without figuring out why that was the start. They say when you edit your own work to kill all your darlings. Most writers have unmarked mass graves for once favorite sentences. We’re tankies like that. Yet in this book, that opening overture had survived so many culls, like a commissar’s pet.

Reverse Cowgirl starts with non-existence, with the death of my mother, with the death of Glen’s language, with my need to get back there, in that place of non-existence, the place where my mother isn’t, where Glen’s language isn’t. The place where all the lost language goes: the communism of non-existence.

This is what mushed brain-body-world felt about it all: that I didn't look for my mother in others, or not so much. What I looked for were those who could ferry me toward her absence. Only to visit, as a tourist in the underworld, as in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée*. To go to where the stilled mother-tongues still click—and return. Return to the world of the unjust. To have witnessed the edge of non-existence, not with shame, but some other feeling.

Something else was going on besides the will to temporary non-existence. Something to do with temporary non-masculinity. With men I became the femme other, whether that was what they wanted or not. With women I became their double, putting myself in their place. I want and need those moments. Of relief from this unutterable feeling of corporeal wrongness. This itchy flesh, this gender tinnitus, this emotional mold.

This was the mystery about it: Why did the passage to non-existence, the passage out of the body of Orpheus, pass through becoming the body of Eurydice? There's a becoming female on the way to becoming the kind of other that isn't human at all any more.

Orphée et Eurydice et les autres

Here is a myth to live by: O does not know, when he sees them, that they are agents of death. Yet there's an attraction. Is O attracted to them, or to the non-existence behind them? Are they attracted to him? How can that be, when they exist only to mark the place of non-existence?

O has always written to them, for them, just not about them. All the writings of O are thin and taut, and strung over the void. But O is not quite what he appears to be. O is also E, and she is a mute other side of him. Maybe there's some of her too in that writing.

She is what is between O and this agency non-existence. O thirsts for annihilation, to merge with the lost. E does not. She pulls him back. E has not even really been born.

O is attracted to the void, but E is attracted to another, to one who exists, to A. It is with A that E can be herself. E loves A and A loves E. But O pays no attention to E, or to A, and keeps writing to the beckoning void.

O ignores E, but the agents of death does not. The agents comes, not for O but for E, to take her away, to leave O alone as himself in the world. O feels that E is gone, has slipped into non-existence, through the sigils of her absence, written in silver.

O has to find E, to bring her back to him. O finds other agents of death to help him. But these agents are not really there to help O, for these agents of death are attracted to E, and are only helping O to get to E.

The agents take O down, down from the heights, down even further, under the waters, where non-existence does not live. The agents takes O down to the communism of non-existence.

But there are debts to be paid. One does not pass through the liquid mirror between non-existence and existence, death and life, just at will. O may return with E, but O and E must have no contact with each other. Each remains opaque to the other, unseen. Neither may look at the other, lest the void come and take the seen back to the unseen forever.

O manages for a while to ignore E, to be seen while E is hidden. Meanwhile E has a few times and places where she is seen, without O. E gets fewer chances to be seen in the world than O does. Did I mention that this is a myth about gender?

O looks at himself in the mirror, from time to time. What he sees there is his death, in slow motion. He turns away. He closes his eyes and listens, instead, to the plurivocal sounds of the great matrix of nothingness, to the radio of glacial death. He steals lines into his writing, gleaned from his metallic aerials.

Jean Cocteau: “Three times: The silence goes faster backwards. The mirrors would do well to reflect further. The bird sings with its fingers.”

One day while O is listening, he looks up, at the mirror, and does not see himself. He sees her. He sees E. And in that instant, that crossroads of all the strands of this myth, that is where this one takes the turn that is unexpected.

When O sees E in the mirror, it is O who must vanish, back to nothingness, back to where all the mother tongues blab silently. The death of O frees E to be in the world, to be with A. For while it was A who was married to O, it was E who loved A. As to whether A will love E without O is another story.

And who else is A besides A? Is A also B? Is every one also an other, as the poet says? Or is it only some whose secret is another, and for whom the agents come?

Writing goes out to non-existence. To the wind. But all that can be seen of it lies on this side, as lustrous strands strung over the ether. They're strung to make the void shimmer in its absence.

What if all my writing was addressed to my mother? Wasn't my first book dedicated to her? Maybe we're not the playthings of the gods so much as fanfic versions of their own myths in their own faulty memories.

Kathy Acker: "What Orpheus wanted wasn't Eurydice, but that moment when he disobeyed the gods, all that he had been told, when he turned around and looked at Eurydice full in the face. Not that he had wanted to see her. He looked into her face because he didn't, because he wanted her body closed to him, her face sealed shut by death. When he turned around to grasp Eurydice, he saw

his own inability, that which cannot be seen. He saw himself. Actually Orpheus has never seen Eurydice, for he doesn't want her to be. Art comes out of such a moment."

Gender Euphoria

The mushrooms were humming and thrumming away. Or maybe that was insects. Bug, cloud, drug, bird: all joined in a chorus in which all the parts resonate together. An augmented reality production. All the theories came out to play. I made a story that made it all connect. I wrote in my head, not in time like linear writing, but in three dimensions—as you can when you're high.

Serge Doubrovsky: "Fiction, of events and facts strictly real; auto-fiction, if you will, to have entrusted the language of an adventure to the adventure of language, outside of the wisdom and the syntax of the novel, traditional or new. Interactions, threads of words, alliterations, assonances, dissonances, writing before or after literature, concrete, as we say, music. As soon as I write myself, I invent myself."

But also, when you're high, you get a perspective that seems complete and whole, live in three dimensions, and then the perspective shifts again, and there's four dimensions. I jerked off and came and got to not existing. Then something skewed the scene.

Hidden in cum/drug euphoria, in the joy of not-existing, was something else. A dysphoria: a warp, a skew, a twisted strand. Within the need to not exist, a need to exist, but otherwise. The femme body, that I that is another, welled back up to the skin, the surface, and

insisted that it stay there. Rather than non-exist as human on a part time basis, to transition to existing, all the time, as something that would no longer be pretending to be a man.

This body was strong in this moment. Strong enough for the change in mood. Strong enough to touch on the sadness of the non-existing, on the graves, marked and unmarked. The bereft human world. Nothing would ever close the flyscreen through which swarmed non-existence, all that neither strives nor maintains. To be human is to be and not be, to be impossible, a folly. We're not fallen angels, just pretentious monkeys. Mammals addicted to bad ideas. Primates distracted by the shiny-shiny.

This weather had changed. A bough breaks. It was cold now, cold all through. And the gray, and the wind. The whipping trees and hissing grasses. The birds were gone, the insects, silent. A mammal body lies naked, alone and exposed on a hill as the lightning arcs. I'm laughing 'cause I just decided that thunder is the gods, farting.

When you're thin and almost fat-free, people envy your bony body—but they wouldn't now, when the dead chill has just passed straight through it like mortality. I pick the blanket off the ground and wrap into it, huddled under this sheltering tree. Try to get senses and thoughts oriented to enduring the elemental. I could try to sit out the storm under this tree, the one Christen and Ken carved their names on. Or pack up and head back down the hill, with the downpour, and leave my old name, my deadname, carved on the tree, behind.

The hill is steep and slippery and muddy. Miraculously, I don't lose my footing even once. The rain torrents down, beating on the tall

grasses while the wind tousles them. Frog flit in the mud. As the lake comes into view, its surface teased by the pelting rain, I see Arturo on the dock, in his bathing suit, with an umbrella. This makes me so happy, drinking in some deep intelligence from him.

Back in the big house, Dana is practicing guitar. I try to avoid all humans, lock the bathroom door and take a warm shower. Not for long as there's only so much hot water to share. Dry and warm again, I pull on a t-shirt dress, black tights and my magenta Converse platform sneakers that I got at Dana's store. Everyone is used to me looking a little femme sometimes, but the feeling is different now. The femme body is already here, it doesn't need the second skin to bring it out. The sun is back again, and I head out onto the marshy grass.

Its decided. I'm giddy with resolve, adventure, logistics, epidermal charms, demigod blessings. I will transition. I am going to make my exit from masculinity. I don't know how far I can get away from it. I don't know who this I is or who she will have been or become. And I know I have left this too late.

But it doesn't matter. I'm out. Out as trans. Out as trans to the trees and the hawk up in the tree and the lake and the fish down in the lake and the beaver downstream in the river. Out to the sun, out to the sky. Hello world, I'm trans! Am I binary or non-binary? Am I trans-femme or a trans woman? No idea. Well, some ideas, some steep inclinations. But the decision that's made is to jump off the edge of masculinity and hope to float.

Carolina is sitting down by the lake, naked in the sun, reading. Cassandra is in the lakeside pagoda, writing. I feel like talking to

someone but they both look like they are enjoying some alone time. Besides, maybe I should talk to the sky and the water for a bit more and leave the maenads be. So I climb up into the hammock suspended in the pagoda, and while it gently rocks, cocoon with the light that plays inside the pagoda's roof, reflected off the water.

After a while, I dismount the hammock, shell out of all of my clothes, sprint across the dock and plunge into the lake, with a foam noodle under my arms. Not enough fat to be buoyant, the noodle is a handy prosthesis. I tell myself that a layer of psychic man-skin is cleansed from me at the moment the shock of cold water hits.

Looking up at the sky, clear blue center, edged with gray. Being gently drawn away from the dock. The lake is artificial, there's a concrete outlet down to the river. Sounds of a swirling twist of runoff water, sucking me toward the outlet. I let it take me for a while, then push back, towards the dock.

I climb out and stand naked in the warm sun, watching the light reflected off the water, direct this time, not the second hand light cast onto the inside of the pagoda. Carolina is asleep, naked in the sun. Cassandra is on the paddleboard, naked in the sun. Three human animals, bodies warm in light. Eurydice joins the maenads in their tribute to sun and water and life.

Girdick

These budding tits hurt, but otherwise, these hormones seem to agree with me. It's a cool enough spring day that I'm wearing the low-heel, black suede, knee-length Stuart Weitzman boots that I got for myself in the winter. The 5050 model. They might be a bit of a t-girl cliché, but feel both tough and femme—and cover up my crip feet and calves nicely. They got me through the start of transition. And with them: Wolford leggings in gray, little black H&M skirt, navy Verameat t-shirt dress. Nails in black with a layer of glitter.

Putting this sort of look together feels a bit like designing an anime character. It's a matter of adding what in that world are called *chara-moe*, little signature details, moe-points drawn from database of appearances that add up to enough femme to feel consistent from inside to out. I'm taking selfies most mornings to make sure it's working. Check the plasmatic pulse from flesh to skins.

Christen and I are sitting in the sun on a little balcony off our hotel room. We're in New York, a short subway ride from home. It's a staycation. There's really nothing sensual or erotic about a New York apartment you're raising kids in.

We're doing a "relationship quiz" from the *New York Times* to check-in. Christen is in one of her regular phases where she hates me. I'm used to this. One of my purposes in this relationship is to be the

scapegoat, not only for all the things I might actually have done wrong, but for all of the ways in which the world has wronged her. I used to not mind this, but hormones are changing the emotional field in which I have to dwell, and it hurts a lot more.

It's edible pot this time. It's a little cool in the room, even with the French doors closed. So we get in the hotel bed, under its starchy sheets, cuddling to get warm. I'm explaining how it hurts me a lot more now, to be the scapegoat, while she holds me. She tells me about those parts of her resentment of me that are about actual things for which I deserve it.

The edibles start to buzz. Time to fuck. First, the decision about who cums first. She does, this time. I'm on it. For years I'd been anxious, with cis women, about not being able to fuck. That was after the years when I always came too soon. I figured out what you can do with tongue and fingers. Say goodbye to castration anxiety.

I'm wearing a black t-shirt, as it's cold in the room, but that's all. No garter-belt, no stockings. None of that seems necessary. Now I'm dressed, every day, in middle-aged artsy-intellectual New Yorker lady-clothes, sometimes even Eileen Fisher. I no longer need the frisson of lingerie. It doesn't take any props to cue the femme body. It manifests already. It was always here, all along. Now it doesn't hide and needs no coaxing into play.

I'm on top. I'm her cowgirl. Not reverse this time. (Trans or no, I'm still the world's most predictable control bottom.) I'm focused intently on getting the bigger dick—*Purple Reign*—into my ass. Everything feels just a little different in this body. In a good but

still unfamiliar way. Christen touches my tits and it's electric. Distracting, even. The whole map of what happens where is fresh.

The moment *Purple Reign* plunges hard into my ass, I think of my therapist. Then I think about how I'll be telling my therapist how I thought of him at this exact moment.

The distraction is momentary. Christen is fucking me hard, maybe a bit too hard, but I want it. I like a little pain, the kind that is really just too much intensity. It's just difficult in the moment to tell the difference between that feeling and when you're bruising some internal organ.

I have girldick these days. It's a little more sensitive, maybe, but doesn't really get hard. I get myself off. I'm not quite sure how girldick works yet, so easiest if I do it myself. It unspools a surprisingly large pool of spoooge into her navel.

Natalie Wynn: "I have not had an orgasm in this year of our Lord 2018 and I'm not particularly interested in trying. I no longer have the male compulsion to climax and am mostly put off by what I have down there, so this isn't even distressing to me. Plus, I've found I can experience sexual pleasure via other outlets (inlets, really). So I guess the lesson is trans women have diverse sexual preferences, and I'm at one extreme end. I actually love the aesthetic—and yes, even the mouthfeel, there, I said it—of girldick on other women. But on my own body I'm not living for it. Maybe it's just because I'm a mess of dysphoria and insecurity. Just don't listen to anything I say. I'm sorry for tweeting. I'm so sorry."

Sex is like it usually is: two humans who have known and lived with each other's bodies for a long time. Seen how they age and change, in each other's mirror. And yet how certain tricks still work to get each other off. Sex without apologies. Only it's a little different now, with this body, with its tits and girldick.

Later, lying eight-limbed and quiet: "Your skin is different," Christen says. "It was always soft, but now it's—silky. Oh, and also, when you came to me just now, for the first time, your body was that of a woman." Or so I think she said. We're both so high we're having a conversation where each makes semi-surrealist babble for the other, each in a language nobody else in the universe speaks.

Casey Plett: "And their bodies easily clicked into place, turning the same pages in an old book, following a progression both already knew, one both women had known the first time they touched each other: Here, here is my skin that feels like your skin, my muscles and frailties that feel like yours, the lift of your flesh something I intuitively know from my own body, inner maps that, for most of my life, I thought were purely shameful and mine alone."

I'll try to write it all down in my notebook in the bathroom. Later, those notes will be barely legible. I always figure things out while on drugs. As if drug-time were one continuous time into which to plunge out of straight time.

This body, for the first time, convinced not only itself, but another, that a male language was no longer what it spoke. It will have to figure out how to speak another language of the body.

Check, Please!

Being too fucked-up to figure out room service, we go down to the hotel restaurant. Somehow, we manage to order. Somehow, I remembered to bring my estradiol and spironolactone pills, the former to boost my estrogen, the latter, to block testosterone.

“What are those pills?”

“My bitch pills.”

“Your what?”

“My E.”

“Your what?”

“My hormone meds.”

“Oh, your fem&ems.”

“My breast mints.”

“Your tit-tacs.”

“My anti-cistamines.”

“Oh that’s funny coz you take antihistamines too.”

“My lesstosterone.”

“Your anti-guy-otics.”

“My hoe-zac.”

“Owww...”

“Check, please!”

I left a big tip.

Chorus

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Natalie Wynn, tweeting as @contrapoints, 4th June 2018.

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