

Pack of Lies

If I Lie
Kuo Wei Tung

Running Rivers
Facial

Serif Paper
Charlotte Rohde

My headscarf had
snakes on it
Elif Özyay

The shrimp
barbox
Gudrun Havsteen-Mikkelsen

Quicksand
Maria Mazzanti

When gathering and concocting our series of fictions, falsehoods and deceptions we never considered that these distorted reflections on reality would take shape during a pandemic. Within the context of this unforeseen global event and the multiple truths this situation generated, we were seduced and deceived by the generative lies the texts revealed. Lies which imagined mythical pasts, alternative presents and possible futures.

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We invited charlatans, whistleblowers, compulsive liars, truth-seekers, snakes, two-faced cons and genuine phonies to falsify, exaggerate, concoct, distort, embellish, expose, deceive and mislead.



If I Lie

Kuo Wei Tung

Experiencing the many pleasures of lying: a childhood memory, a fantasy, a remembered rumour, Kuo Wei Tung weaves a network of lies into an embellished truth. Discovering the power of past deceptions, she generates personal myths in a playful reflection on memory. Using lies to skew linear notions of the self, she raises questions around power and personal narrative.

I never understand
 why people lie. I don't think I ever
 really lie, cause I know once you lie, you have to
 create a thousand more lies to cover up that lie you made,
 and this can make you live in fear forever.

What do people
 get when they lie? When
 I was a kid, there was a girl who
 sat next to me everyday on our bus to
 school, she told me every morning about
 how she started her day by sliding down from
 her princess castle slide, attached to her ball
 pool bedroom and how she had this little
 pink car in her giant house that brought
 her to the breakfast table everyday.
 Since I never really lie, I assume what
 people say from their mouths is always
 true. So, in my mind, I started to build up this
 image of her fantasy and I could not believe that
 someone would even live like that. But without
 doubt, I did believe everything she told me,
 and I even spread this rumor of her
 amazing princess house to
 some others. Then one
 day, this happened, she invited
 me to have Sunday afternoon snacks
 in her place. I went, but her house was in
 fact nothing like what she told me. However,
 what is weird is that, since I have to write
 this text, I tried to recall how her
 house really looked.
 Surprisingly, in
 my mind I see this
 princess wonderland that
 she described to me at the time.
 The lie became a real image in
 my memory, and I can't even
 tell now if it is really true
 or not.

I guess this is the power
of lies, when the person who you are
lying to really believes what you say. Then the
power of trust can build up this fantasy in their virtual
world that you really want. Although that person will never
forget that it was a lie, unfortunately, just like me.

I think the pleasure only exists when the things you are
talking about are real and those you speak with
are jealous about your reality, not
a fantasy. Maybe people
can get satisfaction from lies too
but it's just not my cup of tea. Or, you
never know, maybe everything I wrote;
that I never lie and I'm such an
honest person, could also
be a lie. Maybe now I'm just
sitting here enjoying it, cause I already
look like an honest person in y'all readers'
minds.





But what effect do these multiple half truths have on the self?

Running Rivers

Facial

Serif, babe

Charlotte Rohde

Dissolving the boundaries between reality and fantasy, Charlotte Rohde's visceral poems capture this sensation. Corporeal indulgences and evocative metaphors permeate the skin and blur into a tale of whispered lies.

Running Rivers

*under a surface of dark hair ends
a meadow waving in a softer breeze
I can feel your scalp
the ceiling of your scape
 there are snakes in the grass
 gently poisoning your thoughts
 I hear their peaceful rattling
 as they crawl by your lower neck
running rivers with my hand
a little bite stings now and then
they don't like invaders
but you do
 you like the rivers in your hair
 later dripping from your chin
 my fingers run them down
 measuring your thirst*

facial

*a milky sunbeam
relentlessly taking your face
filling your pores

a wave of atonement
softly crushing your teeth
reigning your day*

Serif, babe

*I broke the waves
of your subconsciousness
some lucid drops
remained on my chest
it smelled like growing stone
yet bending glass
And soon you gently
stroked my spine
I was cold
but you were home*



How far does your loyalty lie?



My headscarf had snakes on it

Elif Özbay

Elif Özbay confronts the half-truths of youth. As a wandering memory returns to haunt the writer, power and politics are encountered through the rituals of teenage guilt, while introducing the reader to complexities surrounding personal narrative and religious belief.

This is a story about betrayal. And choice. Perhaps a little bit about resistance. But, mostly, it's about betrayal. 'A' betrayal that somehow managed to get back to me, in more body and affect. You know, these vague memories, some of them find a way to become visceral, with such velocity and detail, you relive the experience but from different perspectives. Well, I remember; I was 16 years old, years and years of experience banked at the Islamic boarding school, where I was a known part-timer, a good girl for sure, and above all, angel-faced. They liked me.

It was summer, and with a story like this I should be able to recall the year, in fact with a little bit of math I should be able to, but let's not get into unpleasant details. Because the year has nothing to do with my experience. My age did though.

Our female hocca loved to scream through the intercom to wake us all for the morning prayer at 5 AM. We bitched about it, yes, of course, but we also romanticised it. Those who couldn't or wouldn't wake up would get cold water in their faces. A disappointed head shake would follow with screams and laughter from my fellow sisters. Laughs would follow us through our prayers and always we would end up finishing in the middle, tears rolling from our cheeks. Nothing else in the world could ever be this funny. We would spot the disappointed head shakes, immediately sort ourselves out and continue with devotion, whatever we were supposed to be doing.

As much as a group of teens could convincingly give their short attention span to Allah, we somehow always did find peace.

Sunday school at the local mosque would never reach this level and my parents knew it.

Somehow I recall the moment my parents presented the boarding school idea to me, like a scene from the Matrix. It was my choice. But we both knew, I would choose red and life would never be the same again. I wanted to see how deep the rabbit was. So, off I went to this boarding school, only on the weekends of course. The quality of 'normal' education was low here, so during the week I would go to normal school. That meant catholic prep school. Double homework, more bullies, forgetting where you are, convincing catholic kids to convert to Islam. It was fine. I don't remember myself complaining.

The boarding school would start on Friday. The bad girls were already dropped off whenever I got there. Their fearing and panicking parents always demanded that extra chat with hoca. No one could know that these girls would sneak out of the window during the night to meet the boys they were supposed to pray away. Sleeping in a dorm with girls meant that the heater was at its max, but everything felt humid; the air smelt like 5 different hair conditioners. Although I remember the humidity, the air was also very dry. It always prevented me from sleeping, so, of course, I saw the bad girls sneaking out and they saw me watching them. Threats from makeup-wearing, long, straight-

haired eighteen year old girls can be scary. I eventually pretended to sleep. I remember these girls practicing the dance scene from 'Save the Last Dance', the one where Nikki jealously steps in front of Sara to dance with Derek. 'You can do it, put your back into it'. Nikki snaps her fingers, arms high up, slaps her own ass, repeats – twirls, grinds, bends over, slowly comes back, her hand on Derek's cheek. This reenactment happened in the canteen, girl on girl. Hoca was not there to jump in front of us, to protect our eyes from any sexually tinted exhibit. We all saw, but we never said anything. They were older and we were intimidated, perhaps a little jealous. Hoca always wore a long coat, even inside. On Saturdays we would have film night. The much older sisters would rent a movie for us. Often of the horror genre, since there is usually no sexual tension to be found in agonising ghosts haunting a house. We would be safe from being seduced by dirty thoughts. Hoca would watch the movies with us. We would giggle when she jumped around for displays of unexpected love. Her long jacket was big enough to cover the entire screen. So much laughter. Years and years pass by. Summer camps, rainy weekends, teenage angst, best friends, so many tears about everything and nothing. When we went out we would cover our hair. Sometimes when we would cross the streets together as a group, we would get yelled at. Goat fuckers was a popular insult back then. We waited for these moments though. We

looked harmless until we were provoked. Almost as if covering your hair gave you something extra; extra guts, extra attitude, extra pettiness, extra come try me eyes. Middle fingers and full-heartedly shouting pig fuckers and nasty infidels became a good sport. These moments bonded us. We didn't even wear the 'headscarf' full-time, only when we were at boarding school. Something happened to me during one of those weekends. It was definitely after one of those bonding moments. I remember feeling melancholic. Slightly bitter. Emotional. Filled with a sense of safety. We were all together in the smallest room. Some of us sitting on each other's laps. I think everyone was talking. Until I started to talk. 'We should cover our heads', I said, with alienating confidence I looked around. I remember saying that we all looked so beautiful. 'Let's do it together'. Together. Together. Together. We agreed we would. Everyone called their parents on the payphone. There was a lot of crying. The kind of crying you see people do when they find the miracle within them. My parents weren't that convinced. I don't blame them. No one is covered in our family. They were probably wondering how I could be goth and also wear a hijab. No matter, I was a covered girl now. In that small little room, I proposed to everyone a blue or a red pill. Looking back, it was just like Morpheus's strategy, there was no way that another decision would be made. With a bit of peer pressure too. But then again, we had just had another bonding moment, a driver called us Mohammed's

whores. We spat on his sparkle green Polo. We were a pack. We were just like the women in Algeria standing up and on purpose covering themselves as an act of refusal against the French women's unveiling parties. Our momentary decision was our resistance.

We went home a couple of days later. This time the goodbye felt different. I knew I would never see them again. Even if I did, 'they' were not like 'them' anymore.

I was back home, where everything felt unchanged, but I was changed. It was summer. Pool weather. I stayed inside for two weeks. My room in the attic was finished. When the windows were open I could hear the seagulls peck at the moulding bread the neighbors threw on the garage rooftop. It sounded like we lived close to the beach. I spent most of my time in front of the closet, daydreaming on how I would reveal my new self to the outside world. How would I cover my head? All those tight pants would really have to go now. I couldn't see friends.

I missed that confidence I possessed for just a little while, in that small humid room. My dad knocked on the door, "your brother and I are going to the pool, you should also come" he said. "But ah wait you can't, right? Because you're a covered girl now." After he left I cried to my mother and told her that I couldn't do it. She didn't say much. I had convinced twelve, and I was the first to back out of our pack. They are still covered though. All of them. Even the bad girls. Who would have thought?

It comes back to me often. I wonder if they are

still confident. Still feeling that peaceful. Do they ever think about this as I do? Do they judge me for leaving them? Are they still okay? I miss them.





The shrimp paradox

Gudrun Havsteen-Mikkelsen

Gudrun Havsteen-Mikkelsen assumes the role of whistleblower, interrogating Danish colonialist control over Greenland's fishing export. In an archival approach to narrative, she documents, replicates and bends the shrimp form. Material process becomes a metaphor for the ways society moulds colonial violence into a palatable disguise. Through the production of a luxury gold and ruby ring, Gudrun attempts to re-shape and expose a hegemonic narrative of deceit.

DEFINITION

The paradox of plenty refers to the paradox that countries with an abundance of natural resources tend to have less economic growth, less democracy, and worse developmental outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources.¹

PRELUDE

The amount of shrimp is controlled every season by officials. Everyday the Greenlandic fishermen have to collect data concerning the shrimp population on the seabed mainly to avoid unsustainable over-fishing, but also to avoid value inflation.

The country, Greenland supports itself by selling shrimp to the rest of the world, around half of all Greenlandic exports consist of shrimp production. However, the export value is not high enough for the country to sustain itself.² Greenland is not an independent country, but still a part of the Danish Kingdom, which is tied together by the block grants³ (one quarter of Greenland's GDP and more than half of the public budget). Though there is a high demand for shrimp on the global market, the officials (which are mainly Danish) keep the exports moderately low to prevent a large economic growth in Greenland – and thereby also preventing independence. I wonder if this affects the democracy of the region? Democracy for whom?

The shrimp is an unforgettable resource – and an unforgettable promise!

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resource_curse (18 April 2020)

2. Breum, Martin: Hvis Grønland river sig løs ('If Greenland breaks loose') Gyldendal, 2018, p. 45

3. Economic support provided by the Danish State to Greenland's the home rule Government. An amount they receives every year, a symbolic amount to the old colony.

4. <https://www.export.gov/apex/articlez?id=Denmark-Doing-Business-in-Greenland> (30 April 2020)

ACT 1

ME Can you help me scan this shrimp with your 3D scanner?
I would like to have some data on the shrimp.

3D PROGRAMMER Yes, but first you have to fix the shrimp's surface. It is too shiny and the 3D scanner will not be able to read its data. Let's spray-paint the shrimp white.

The 3D scanner starts to read the material through 360 degrees analysis on a computer-controlled spinning wheel. There are lines in the studio room that separates and connects the shrimp's data.

In the 3D scanner program, behind a screen of liquid crystals, I can see the shrimp take shape.

ME Thank you. This is exactly what I had wished for. Is it now possible to manipulate the data of the shrimp in another program?

3D PROGRAMMER Yes, in another software you are able to remove and reshape its form. What do you want to do with this data of a shrimp?

ME I made a promise. I want to make a ring out of this data in the shape of a shrimp.

3D PROGRAMMER So you will need the 3D printer as well?

ME Yes, I know how to progress from now on.

In the 3D moulding software I can see the shrimp floating in a space. I have captured it and I can manipulate it here. I can close and open its surfaces. I can re-shape it and remove unnecessary material. I can transform the shrimp into a ring.

I prepare the file and preview how it will look after it has been 3D printed in a grey resin. There are pillars, which support the shrimp through the printing, almost providing a scaffolding structure.

I once made a promise. A promise to a ruby hunter, a Greenlandic miner, that I would help Greenland to detach themselves from the Danish State (at this point I will reveal myself: I am Danish woman, the great granddaughter of a colonist and inspector in East Greenland. I convinced the Greenlanders that I was an Icelandic citizen and activist – which to some extent is true) by collaborating with his gemstone business.

ACT 2

RUBY HUNTER Me and my business partner have, for the last 10 years, fought to get permission to collect rubies. After a long and difficult process with the Ministry of Mineral Resources, we finally got a small-scale license to collect rubies at Fiskenaasset.⁵

ME How come that it has been so difficult for you to get a license to mine gems?

RUBY HUNTER Because of the Danish officials, they do not want us Greenlanders to create value with the resources that are available in our mountains. And in the long run the Danish officials do not want us to become independent.

5. Fiskenaasset is an area south from Nuuk (Greenland's capital) a few hours away by boat, with a good mining explorations and prospect for gemstone.

6. The Danish currency is also Greenland's currency. Receipt from Ruby hunter, see p. 32

ME This is also what I experienced in Nuuk, that the Danish authority works for the interest of Denmark and not to benefit the Greenlanders.

RUBY HUNTER Yes! That is why it is so very useful for us to make business deals with other countries – like with Iceland.

ME Sure, I will introduce your gemstone company to my network in Iceland. And we can make a strategy so you can create extra value and sell your ruby-products in other countries.

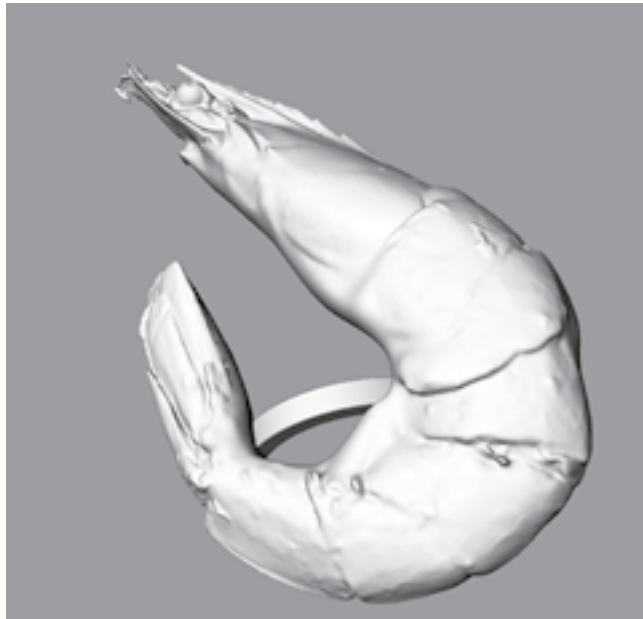
RUBY HUNTER Yes, sounds good! I can make you an offer: 100 kilograms of purple rubies for 100 Danish Crones (€ 13,4).⁶ How is that?

ME Deal! I promise, I will help your business and make prospects into Greenlandic-Icelandic gemstone collaboration.

Years later. Contact was lost with the Ruby hunter. No collaboration happened after all. The interest and investment in gemstone jewelry is declining worldwide.

I would have focused on using rubies for new technologies, rather than jewelry making. Greenland is still a part of the Danish Kingdom.

7. Thompson, Rob: Manufacturing Processes for Design Professionals, Thames & Hudson, 2012. p. 121



ACT 3

ME Can you help me cast this shrimp in a valuable metal?

JEWELLERY MAKER Yes, your shrimp has the slip-form and seems to be in a solid material. We will use the sand-casting method, but first you need to decide what material you want your shrimp in.

ME The closest that comes to the aesthetics of gold.

JEWELLERY MAKER Okay, brass is probably the choice then. It is an alloy of copper and zinc.

The sand-casting method is an ancient method of making objects in metal or glass. The jewellery maker is creating an empty space in the sand, made in two halves.⁷ The force from a hammer compresses the sand. The hammer and the jewellery maker have merged into a fluid movement of force. The two halves are held together and only a 'runner' and tiny air channels separate them. Inside there is a negative form of the shrimp.

JEWELLERY MAKER We will need to melt the brass at 940°C, and when you can see the chicken-eye effect in the melted brass, we will then start to pour the metal into the 'runner' in the sand-casting mould. Do you follow me?

(I want to give the shrimp eyes as well)

ME Can I touch the shrimp now?

JEWELLERY MAKER First cool the shrimp in cold running water. I can see you will need to remove some material from the shrimp. With a file and a metal-saw you can clean-up its shape.

ME Thank you, but I would also like to make space for the shrimp's eyes. I have rubies from Greenland I would like to add as eyes.

JEWELLERY MAKER Actual rubies?!

ME Yes, rubies from Greenland. I smuggled them out and am now trying to fulfil my promise.





While thinking through the materiality of lies, we return to the optical characteristics of glass.

Quicksand

Maria Mazzanti

Maria Mazzanti presents another perspective on transparency, interrogating a politics of disguise. "Through lack of virtue, the window becomes a crystal ball, where we look deep into our inner worlds and mysterious future" she writes, reflecting on the material characteristics of glass as a metaphor for visibility and perception. This could not be more conducive to our current situation. Sat behind laptops our interactions have largely become virtual. We experience a reality far removed from the intimacy we expect to experience. As flawless, glassy exteriors become a trick, glass becomes a two-faced illusion.

Self representation is an interplay between being out of sight and becoming visible, translating the way in which we mediate between ourselves and the construction of who we are.

Accordingly, we inhabit a set of transparencies and opacities that materialize in the surrounding landscape.

Transparency is permeable to light. We call transparent elements and materials transparent if we can see through them, regardless of their mass or the space they occupy. We are cursed with the crystalline magic of transparency and it's ambiguity, transponding the notion as a metaphor for social perception. As a result, we expect our governments, companies, friends and lovers to be see through, to let light pass through them. This concept has spread and represents modernity in a universal translucency of materials and constructions: Crystal clear beverages

that are pure and healthy; see-through cleaning products to disinfect the world.

Glass is ever-present and its symbolism is our allegiance to the spell of crystals. Glass, with its conflicting nature, spanning materiality, symbolism and ideology, is used to produce artifacts to gain access to microscopic or distant worlds, and to create pristine, clear spaces.

We inhabit glass landscapes where walls and divisions open the possibility for non-verbal communication, while negating anything more than a gaze. These landscapes appear immaterial, creating an illusion of proximity between subjects, despite the fact that we are never able to fulfill the satisfaction of touching or grabbing what we see behind them. This dictates a sort of intimacy while denying the possibility of its existence. Through

glass surfaces we negotiate the security of knowing what is there.

We give little thought about the consequences of being analysed from the other side. Glass walls are optical devices to look through and to be looked at.

Translucency was the primer for transparency. At the beginning, attempts to make glass created a murky and colored material, used for decoration and its atmospheric qualities. They say emotions can cloud your objectivity, and the opacity of glass was defective enough to prevent it from becoming honourable. As an age of light arose, technical developments allowed for glass to become transparent, developing in conjunction with the image of the pristine, rational being.

Achieving transparency did not protect glass from the inevitability of natural phenomena. In this choreography of appearances, temporary visual alterations manifested as reflections and condensation, playing a role in duplicating and blurring images. Condensation affects optics, distorting colors, shapes, textures and borders, providing an unavoidable level of opacity. The estrangement suffered by these images is not hidden, but rather accentuated. However this dislocation also brings about a process of opening up and a blending of systems of representation, generating types of visions inaccessible to the rational individual. The inevitable arbitrariness of aberrations allows for multiple signifiers, but it also allows darkness, the possibility of contrast.

Through lack of virtue, the window becomes a crystal ball, where we look deep into our inner worlds and mysterious

future. On the contrary, when we gaze into the transparent walls of our daily landscapes and glass modern buildings, the total dominance of light makes us invisible, leaving no room for flaws.

By living in full clarity we hide the frontiers of the places that we inhabit behind transparent skin. In the same way, we hide in full sight our personal limitations. However, the glazed and modern future is too bright, transforming the clarity into blindness: we are not able to realize that the weightlessness of the soul embodied in the transparency and odourlessness of glass is only possible to certain bodies.

Like the invisible waves of the electromagnetic spectrum, the world shines and bursts in things we cannot see.





CUT-UP

a Survival Strategy for a Fggoat

Emirhakin

Emirhakin explores multiple manifestations of the self, a mirroring of perceptions distorted through a layering of multiple reflections. He quotes American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley "I am not what I think I am and I am not what you think I am; I am what I think that you think I am". He speaks about embodiment, about fabricating another layer of skin in order to survive, how discomfort acts on bodies, compressing them and making them unsettled.

"Who am I?" he asks. Alienation and a performative relationship with identity enables us to simultaneously fit into society while fragmenting a unified conception of self.

I've had so many lives,
 Since I was a child,
 And I realise,
 How many times I've died ¹

I

"Allah'ın hakkı üçtür;"² says the commander and kicks the barrel to see if I'm grasping the G3³ properly. The force runs through the metal body of the rifle to my flesh and bones: right cheek, shoulder, upper body, right to the toe tip of my boot, which struggles to keep me stable on the crumbled concrete. This German-Spanish hybrid has a trigger mechanism with a three-position fire selector. E for *Einzelfeuer*, a single shot. You have three shots to fire and the smell of gunpowder is already at the back of your forehead. *Feuerstoß* equals E, but automatic fire is not demanded. The last thing you saw was the earplugs of the guy shooting next to you. Iron. Clay. Chlorine. Copper. Earth.⁴ When your finger sets the trigger free and switches the selector to S for *Sicher*, the weapon is safe and so are you. Firearm noise encapsulates the whole moment in one single score that rings endlessly through your entire self: burning sun, rusty fingertips, soaked briefs and forgotten earplugs merging into an inimitable sound. The same sensation as putting your head on your mom's chest as a child, the sustained roar from her rib cage calling you to a restless sleep. Now the sergeant is asking me to erect your paralysed body. All I hear is the prayer you've been repeating: *مُهَفَّلَحْ آمَ وَ مَهِيْذِيْ آ نِّيْ بَ آمَ مَلْعَيْ*.⁵ A peculiar journey

¹ "Nobody Knows Me", written by Mirwais Ahmadzai, performed by Madonna, track 5 on *Madonna, American Life*, Maverick, Warner Bros., 2003.

² "Allah'ın hakkı üçtür." A phrase in Turkish which can be translated as "God gives you three chances to accomplish." Although it doesn't add up to completely, it can be associated with "Third time's the charm"

³ The G3 (Gewehr 3) is a 7.62x51mm NATO, select-fire battle rifle developed in the 1950s by the German armament manufacturer Heckler & Koch (H&K) in collaboration with the Spanish state-owned design and development agency CETME (Centro de Estudios Técnicos de Materiales Especiales).

⁴ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: a Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993), 142.

⁵ "He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them." One of the best-known verses of the Quran, widely memorised and displayed in the Islamic world, *Ayat Al-Kursi*, often known in English as *The Throne Verse*, speaks about how nothing and nobody is regarded to be comparable to Allah.

whereby I've witnessed the shifts in your personalities; now it's hard to tell where your body ends and the world begins. This fraught yet brief three-bullet introduction emboldened me to recognise all of You, wholly and partially, who have been inhabiting the same human anatomy for the last twenty-seven years.

II THE END

On the last day of my compulsory military service in Turkey I realised I was nobody. After a month of embodying a toxic-masculine persona, fabricating another layer of skin as another sort of camouflage, alongside the military uniform, to survive among thousands of men, I lay on the bottom bunk bed asking: who am I?

I, as a letter, fixed and grounded in form, was like a stick used for stirring the burning pyre, eventually destroyed by itself in the end.⁶ I, as witness, stopped the engine. The cruise ship carrying the personas I'd generated through the years shuddered. The ocean, a dark comedy which had been splashing to the deck for years, rendering it a slippery ground on which to slide between riotous laughter and piercing sadness, calmed down. Low tide occurred and a dry path sprawled out gently across the sea. All the jetsam and flotsam was unveiled. I tried to look, not with the trained look of an artist, the ostracised look of the migrant, the practiced look of a designer, the isolated look of a victim, the cautious look of a homosexual, but with a look that takes it all in swiftly, as a whole.⁷ I saw the ruby, the topaz and the diamond, and the jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald⁸ in the cracks of the ocean floor, reflecting lots of Self from their facets to a single me.

From this end I hope I can tell you something that I wish someone had told me.

⁶ Ramana Maharshi, *Who Am I?* (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1959), 7.

⁷ "You know you understand something only when you look (not with a prolonged trained look, the trained look of an artist, a scientist or the man who has practised 'how to look'), but you see it if you look at it with complete attention, you see the whole thing in one glance," Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Talks in Europe* (Wassenaar: Servire, 1969).

⁸ "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle," Ezekiel 28 in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Hebrew Bible* (London: Cassell, 1996).

III SHORT CIRCUIT

In my grandparent's house, there were electrical socket holes painted black and containing two cables that appeared to be throwing up copper. As a four-year-old, these soon-to-be electrical sockets were the unknown in the midst of unconditional love. I can still recall the sensation of this fear, without a solid memory to picture myself within. This reminiscence from childhood acts like a short-circuit allowing me to travel twenty-four years at once. Since I am tall enough now, would I put my finger in the hole? If I dare, is there enough room inside? This hollow is stuffed to keep the deepest layer hidden, the layer to which natural light does not penetrate and the extreme amount of pressure will leave you with unobservable specimens.⁹ There, I oscillate like an octopus with a lack of proprioception. After all the things I have stuffed in, what will be the evidence of things not seen?¹⁰

Therefore I have taken this hole as the birthplace of this quest. Numerous personas have emerged along the way, standing in front of it, and memories have come out of nowhere – memories that I have neither been able to forget nor understand.

⁹ The deep sea or deep layer is the lowest layer in the ocean.

¹⁰ "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
Hebrews 11:1, *The Holy Bible: Kings James Version*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017.

IV SIR

sir {noun}, Turkish
means secret, mystery

also: glaze, silvering for mirrors

American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley describes his concept of "the looking glass self" as: "I am not what I think I am and I am not what you think I am; I am what I think that you think I am."¹¹ By describing the Self as a mirror, he points out that we consist of reflections of how we think we appear to others. This method of building a self off of others ends up leaving us with an illusion; each person may think they know us, but they cannot, simply because they have only met a single one of the selves we provide. Approximately six hundred years before Cooley, Sufi mystic¹² Yunus Emre said, "There is an I within me, deep, deeper than I." His poems whirled around mystical concepts, echoing his wandering of the lands where the oldest known mirrors¹³ were found.

After eight millennia, in modern-day Turkey, a seven-year-old is standing in front of the mirror practicing gestures. Constantly checking his wristwatch beneath the well-ironed cuff, it seems an every-morning ritual: smiling, staring, being surprised, laughing, a curious face. Despite the swiftly transforming facial expressions, his body barely moves.¹⁴ Just as he hears the bus, he starts to mum-

¹¹ C. H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner's, 1902).

¹² Sufism is a mystical form of Islam, a school of practice that emphasises the inward search for God and shuns materialism. Practitioners of Sufism have been referred to as "Sufis" (from سُفِيّ *sufiyy* /*sufi*).

¹³ The oldest known mirrors date to around 6,000 BC and were found at the site of Çatalhöyük, in modern-day Turkey. Around 3,000 years later the Egyptians made metal mirrors from highly polished copper and bronze, as well as precious metals.

¹⁴ D. Elkind, "Egocentrism in adolescence," *Child Development*, 38 (1967): 1025–1034.

ble a prayer seven times: Surely, with each difficulty there is ease.¹⁵ But doesn't faith mean not being worried?¹⁶ Yet, seven prayers would always lose against one laugh that ignites his mind.

I want to know how he survived.

¹⁵ Surat al-Sharh ("The Opening-Up of the Heart") is the ninety-fourth section of the Qur'an, with eight verses.

¹⁶ "To me faith means not worrying," says John Dewey, an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer whose ideas have been influential in education and social reform.

V TOP/MYSELF

In elementary school I had no idea why people started to call me a "top". In Turkish, the word top stands for the ball, which is a round object for games where the play of the game follows the state of the ball as it is hit, kicked or thrown by players. It was obvious what they implied with this word was not that friendly, since every time they yelled at me, we were not even playing a ball game. The roundness of the ball was somehow associated with being not man enough. But alongside other words such as soft or sissy, it was not rocket science to realise these namers were not happy about me. Their disgusted faces while shouting, discouraging body language as they passed by, and tactics that roamed on the edge of minor brutal acts – they simply did not want me. The hardest part of bullying is not being humiliated, because they imply what you are being punished for: I was accused of not performing normative gender expressions adequately. The epithets came, therefore, as a form of gender policing, applied to me to establish their own masculinity.¹⁷ But for sure, this resolution can only happen years after; during these sessions of verbal and physical harassment, I was also convinced that I was guilty. But the hardest part was to figure out how to sustain my daily life with this guilt.

Soon this bullying turned into a game with three phases: preparation, play and exercise. All these stages had their own audiences: my family at home, the pupils at school and finally myself. A parallel can be drawn between this supposedly childhood game and "Monkey in the Middle," where players

¹⁷ Dude, You're a Fag, a book by CJ Pascoe, examines masculinity and gender policing in high schools through ethnographic research. Pascoe largely focuses on high school boys' use of the fag epithet to establish their own masculinity by questioning or challenging others. See: CJ Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

are supposed to pass a ball backward and forward to each other, while a “monkey” in the middle has to intercept it. It feels harmless until you become the monkey, and it starts to hurt if you are the ball itself. Philippe Rochat, a psychologist whose main focus is the early sense of self, says that to be excluded from the group can be the worst suffering of all, a psychological death.¹⁸ Venturing into this dangerous realm where I was perpetually condemned as soft, splitting¹⁹ emerged as a survival strategy. It was urgent to distinguish myself from the ball, although we were inhabiting the same body. Freud described splitting of the consciousness as a way for the ego to avoid a rupture, effecting a cleavage or division of itself.²⁰ For me it was an instinctive drive; rather than resenting the pejorative names, I participated in this bullying practice passively, by detaching myself, and being present as an outside observer. I was still being paralysed by shame, but it was not my responsibility anymore to recover from this ostracism. Resistance turned into resilience. I became a rubber rather than a billiard ball. Sacrificing some properties such as hardness was crucial, but as a result it was more convenient to entitle rather than withstand. Elasticity is vital in allowing you to return to your initial shape when force is removed.

18 Philippe Rochat, *Others in Mind: Social Origins of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

19 Splitting is a relatively common defense mechanism for people with borderline personality disorder. See: Mary C. Zanarini, Jolie L. Weingeroff and Frances R. Frankenburg, “Defense Mechanisms Associated with Borderline Personality Disorder,” *J Pers Disord* 23, no. 2 (April 2009): 113–121.

20 Sigmund Freud, *On Psychopathology* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), 217.

21 Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Volume IV: Criticism: Historical Criticism, Intentions, The Soul of Man*, ed. Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 174.

Yet doing nothing while waiting them to have enough was the hardest part of all. Because it requires every ounce of your energy. Oscar Wilde says stillness is the most difficult and the most intellectual act,²¹ but where is the other cheek when it has already been turned? Facing the bully in a passive state can easily break you into pieces; intelligence becomes the ability to turn this passivity into a state of flow with entropy. Just like the Japanese art of Kintsugi, in which you repair broken pottery. Eventually, every bowl will be broken. And every system. And also you, like a pillar of salt,²² stiffened by the fear, in front of the hostility. It's easier if you design yourself for it, rather than trying to prevent it.

Finally, bedtime was the final phase of the game, when I remembered what I am, examining the aftermath of the day-long disidentification, rethinking encoded meaning,²³ the singular question: alone at night, lying in your bed in total darkness, tightening your muscles—you notice you are no longer the opposed one. Since all names are made up by someone else, even the one your parents gave you, so now, what would you call this creature?²⁴

22 “The command was given, ‘Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, lest you be swept away. While fleeing, Lot’s wife turned to look back, and was turned into a pillar of salt.’” *Book of Genesis, Part 19, Sodom and Gomorrah*

23 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

24 “But don’t forget who you really are. And I’m not talking about your so-called name.” Louis Sachar, *There’s a Boy in the Girls Bathroom* (Livonia, MI: Seedlings Braille Books for Children, 1993).

VI CYBERBALL

In 2003, Kipling Williams, whose research mostly focuses on ostracism and social influence, conducted a neuroimaging study to examine the neural correlates of social exclusion. He tested the hypothesis that the brain bases of social pain are similar to those of physical pain. To trace a line between daily-life metaphors like “hurt feelings” and pain itself, Williams developed a computer simulation called “Cyberball.”²⁵ During the virtual ball-tossing game, three participants had their brains scanned as they tossed a ball back and forth, until two started to exclude the third. As the exclusion became inarguably present, the anterior cingulate cortex regions (which act as a neural alarm system in pain and conflict detection) started to light up in the brain of the excluded participant.²⁶ So, when you say that your feelings are hurt, they indeed do.

One year before Williams’ study, ten-year-old me stands in the school yard, waiting for the bus. I fix my gaze to avoid eye contact – yet aggressive noise from afar comes as no surprise. Whatever your mind tries to ignore, your body reads as significant information and converges all its energy on. The seismic activity of shame: as you hear the specific adjectives approach you step by step, your ears filter these words out of the surrounding sounds. The acute sensitivity of your receptors allows them to collect extensive amounts of data for perception, to prepare your body for a response. Fight or flight,²⁷ but I am

25 N. I. Eisenberger, M. D. Lieberman & K. D. Williams, “Does rejection hurt?” *An fMRI study of social exclusion*, *Science* 302 (2003): 290–292.

26 Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

27 “The fight-or-flight response (also called hyperarousal, or the acute stress response) is a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival.” Walter Bradford Cannon referred to “the necessities of fighting or flight” in the first edition of *Bodily changes in pain, hunger, fear and rage: An account of recent researches into the function of emotional excitement* (New York and London: D. Appleton & Company, 1915), 211.

not moving. They have feet, but they walk not.²⁸ As they push me to the Seniors-only smoking area, I feel relieved by the fewer number of spectators but stressed by being about to miss the bus. Once they arrive, one after another they start to ask their rhetorical questions. “Why do you act like a girl?” Since any response would make them furious, I keep silent. With their throats they can’t make a sound. Some seniors are turning their heads as they understand what is going on. Eyes they have, and they see not. One picks a stone from the ground and aims at me; I remember the hesitation in his eyes. What an immutable law of universe, that all things truly wicked started from an innocence.²⁹ One grasps my chin and forces me to speak. “Say something you ball.” This flattening touch compresses my body and renders me into a mere surface. Neither shall ye touch it.³⁰ Physical contact with fear says something that is not like anything else. Touch is where you come to exist in a fallen state;³¹ there is no longer a separation between self and other. A fleshy realisation happens. You understand that you can only exist with each other.³² There’s a universal rhythm between your jaw and the twenty-seven bones of his hand, not a transcendental state but a state where all lose themselves, the good and the wicked³³ surrender to

28 Psalm 135:16, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments, Together with the Apocrypha*, 1975

29 “All things truly wicked start from an innocence.” Ernest Hemingway, *A Movable Feast* (New York: Scribner, 1964).

30 “...but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” *Genesis* 3:3

31 ‘Fall of Man’ *Genesis*, Chapter 3, *The Holy Bible*

32 Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 50.

33 “...a state where all lose themselves, the good and the wicked.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969), 49–50.

omnipresence. They have hands, but they can't feel. "The sense of out-of-place-ness and estrangement involves an acute awareness of the surface of one's body," says Sara Ahmed.³⁴ With every stone, this surface expands. Discomfort arises as a feeling of disorientation: your body becomes a pile which is out of place and unsettled.

Eventually physical pain overcomes the emotional distress, at that exact moment a silent agreement happens and they leave you. So does the bus.

VII MEETING WITH THE FATHER

In this step the one must confront and be initiated by whatever holds ultimate power. In many myths and stories this is the father, or a father figure who holds life and death power. This is the centre point of the journey.

One hour later I am knocking at the door. I recognise my mother behind the frosted glass. Her frustrated face is not welcoming. Without asking me why I was late or about the bedraggled uniform, she moves to the kitchen. As I walk to my room, I hear her steps. In a while she kneels down, moistens her thumb with spittle, removes a stain from my forehead and takes a breath in. Like a prologue. "I was in the parent-teacher meeting," eyes neglect mine. "Your teacher told me you never play with others," hands take off my sweater sharply. "You can't sit with girls forever," jaws are devoid of any feelings. "Play with boys." I catch the noise of television; my father is in the living room.

"One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy. For if it is impossible to trust the terrifying father-face, then one's faith must be entered elsewhere; and with that reliance for support, one endures the crisis – only to find, in the end, that the father and mother reflect each other, and are in essence the same." Joseph Campbell, "Atonement with the Abyss", *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

"Why are you late?" my father absently asks, fixed on the television.

Some nervous faces are speculating about the fall of democracy on the screen. I had some sympathy for this election, because the following day was school holiday. I remember this new guy from the news when he was arrested because of a poem he read.³⁵ I feel drawn to him spontaneously. His gestures and facial expressions seem reliable, remarkably sincere and mundanely familiar, like a neighbour rather than an elitist politician. Someone familiar would never follow policies that would divide a nation into endless fragments,³⁶ would never suppress dissent,³⁷ arrest journalists,³⁸ silence the press, build surveillance mechanisms to turn society into a snitching society,³⁹ tighten controls over the Internet to block access to information,⁴⁰ declare that

35 "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers." In December 1997, Erdoğan recited a poem from a work written by Ziya Gökalp, a pan-Turkish activist from the early twentieth century. Under article 312/2 of the Turkish penal code his recitation was regarded as an incitement to violence and religious or racial hatred and he was given a ten-month prison sentence. See: "Turkey's charismatic pro-Islamic leader," BBC News, November 4, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2270642.stm>.

36 Soner Cagatay, "Erdogan Is Dividing Turkey Against Itself," *The Atlantic*, March 31, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/turkey-erdogan-kurds-pkk-isis-syria-coup-gulen/521487/>

37 The Times commented that between July 2 and 4, the state-owned media channel and national broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, also known as TRT, gave 204 minutes of coverage to Erdoğan's campaign and less than a total of 3 minutes to both his rivals.

38 The Stockholm Centre for Freedom (SCF) has 242 names on its list, which was last updated on December 17, 2018 and includes additional information on the status of the imprisoned journalists. Kerim Balci, "How Many Journalists Are Behind Bars in Turkey?" *International Observatory of Human Rights*, February 18, 2019, <https://observatoryihr.org/blog/how-many-journalists-are-behind-bars-in-turkey/>

39 "Truck driver Ali Dinc took his wife to criminal court for allegedly insulting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Dinc told reporters he was sad about ending his marriage, but did not regret his snitching." Pinar Tremblay, "Turkey's Culture of Snitching," *Al-Monitor*, February 29, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/02/turkey-offending-president-becomes-divorce-reason.html>

40 "In November 2016, the Turkish government blocked access to social media in all of Turkey as well as sought to completely block internet access for the citizens in the Southeast of the country." May Bulman, "Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp blocked in Turkey after arrest of opposition leaders, Social media sites reportedly 'blocked by throttling' following arrests of Kurdish-backed politicians," *The Independent*, November 4, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/facebook-twitter-whatsapp-turkey-erdogan-blocked-opposition-leaders-arrested-a7396831.html>

empowering LGBT people is against the values of the nation,⁴¹ serve as a de facto leader for years through allegedly manipulated elections, reinforce the present amnesia regarding the history of Turkey by rendering it a state of oblivion, ferment a beautiful but lonely country.⁴² Above all, he doesn't look like a bully who would use his force to dominate or bring democracy to an end.⁴³ Anyways, isn't it democracy to stay silent in the face of the vast corruption of the majority?

While the whole nation is unconsciously confronting their father figure for the upcoming years, he repeats his question.

"I was playing football with friends, Dad."

41 Carmen Fishwick, "It's Just the Start: LGBT Community in Turkey Fears Government Crackdown," *The Guardian*, November 23, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/23/its-just-the-start-lgbt-community-in-turkey-fears-government-crackdown>

42 Asuman Suner, "A lonely and beautiful country: reflecting upon the state of oblivion in Turkey through Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Three Monkeys*," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no.1 (2011): 13–27.

43 "Democracy, for us, is not a final goal, but a means to an end. We will take the democracy train as long as we can, and then at some point we will get off it," said Erdoğan at the beginning of his political journey. "Getting off the Train," *The Economist*, February 4, 2016, <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2016/02/04/getting-off-the-train>

VIII STRAIGHTENING THE LINE

"A radius is a straight line from the centre of a circle to the circumference of a circle," reads the formula which never managed to be stored in my memory. After an uncertain point, school became a place to study others instead of focusing on the classes. Ceaselessly waiting for any form of ostracism makes you hyper-vigilant to those around you,⁴⁴ because bullying could just as easily arise from boredom as from any more anticipated cause. Yet this state of alertness created my first coping mechanism. Along with obeying orders, cooperating and complying with requests, mimicking can be also considered as a tactic of reconciling with the majority. We are all born with a powerful skill: copying others.⁴⁵ But only some of us have a chance to test this ability, bringing it to consciousness and creating first-person knowledge via third-person information,⁴⁶ by observing others. Therefore, bullying establishes the required circumstances: where we feel that we are being monitored and evaluated, and which makes the need to appear normal critical.⁴⁷ Apparently, I was not, but what was normal?

Since gender is the opiate of the masses,⁴⁸ I needed to gird myself with the prevalent manner of bullies in order to be able to cease the hostility and equilibrate the imbalance of power. It is necessary to find what distinguishes us from others in order to

44 K. D. Williams, "Ostracism: A temporal need-threat model", in M. Zanna, ed., *Advances in Experimental Psychology* (New York: Academic Press, 2009), 279–314.

45 A. N. Meltzoff, "Infant imitation and memory: Nine-month-olds in immediate and deferred tests", *Child Development* 59 (1988): 217–225.

46 A. N. Meltzoff, P. K. Kuhl, J. Movellan and T. J. Sejnowski, "Foundations for a new science of learning", *Science* 325 (2009): 284–288.

47 Bruce M. Hood, *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2013), 69.

48 "Gender, not religion, is the opiate of the masses." Erving Goffman, "The Arrangement Between the Sexes," *Theory and Society* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1977): 315.

be something.⁴⁹ So, normal was not a high-pitched voice but one that was blatantly loud. Not a quiet presence but sitting with legs wide open. Meticulously examining my antagonists, I gradually imitated every move, compromising every aspect that was mine. An introverted voice yielded to assertive speaking. Elements of masculinity may be destructive as they permeate, but extermination allows for new creations. In the banality of evil, negotiation was simple: as a "faggot" I was the lowest of the low, lower than any diversity.⁵⁰ On this low level, if being a reptile was inevitable, why would I be a turtle and be easily hunted when there was an option to be a chameleon?

Chameleons are renowned for their ability to blend in with immediate environmental or social stimuli, but this multifaceted skill stems from weakness rather than capability. These creatures are utterly defenceless, they have neither a dangerous bite, nor can they move quickly.⁵¹ Accordingly, staying hidden is their only tactic for evading predators.⁵² This tactic of mimicking to hide uprooted myself⁵³ from the bullied-self-of mine and provided me with a new persona that was released from routine persecution. In a relatively short time, this perpetual disintegration⁵⁴

49 Alejandro Jodorowsky, *Psychomagic: The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy, "Lessons for Mutants"* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2010), 301.

50 Neil Barlett, "The End of Eddy by Édouard Louis review – a childhood in hell," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/feb/01/the-end-of-eddy-by-edouard-louis-review>

51 Tammy Keren-Rotem, Noga Levy, Lior Wolf, Amos Bouskila, and Eli Geffen, "Alternative Mating Tactics in Male Chameleons (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*) Are Evident in Both Long-Term Body Color and Short-Term Courtship Pattern," *PLoS One* 11, no. 7 (2016).

52 Benji Jones, "Chameleons' Crazy Color Changes Aren't for Camouflage," *National Geographic*, August 2, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/08/chameleon-camouflage-color-change-myth-news/>.

53 "It means uprooting yourself—tearing out your roots and leaving yourself vulnerable." Lesley Hazleton, *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad* (London: Atlantic, 2013).

gave me a new life. A life that I could only live when I was outside of myself.⁵⁵ A life from which I could construct plausible⁵⁶ stories for my parents after school. A life where I was not an obtrusive monster but a whimsical creature. A life where I was curating personas out of other people's realities, as a collection of serviceable tools for further circumstances.⁵⁷ A life, yet not a single life. But what was life about anyway? Nothing but a struggle to be someone or running from your own silence.⁵⁸

54 "The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration," Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, (London: Penguin, 1991), 83.

55 "A person starts to live when he can live outside himself," Albert Einstein."

56 Constructing a plausible story is known as confabulation and is found in various forms of dementia as the patient attempts to make sense of his or her circumstances.

57 Lukas Feireiss and Thom Bettridge, *Radical Cut-up: Nothing Is Original* (Amsterdam: Sandberg Instituut, Sternberg Press, 2019), 16

58 Rumi, "In the Arms of the Beloved," in Farrukh Dondy, trans., *Rumi: a New Translation of Selected Poems* (New York: Skyhorse, 2017).

IV EXTINCT ANIMAL

As I grew up, this mimicking technique emerged as a survival strategy whereby I assimilated an aspect or attribute of the other,⁵⁹ on and on, and surrendered my identity to an unaccomplished process of production⁶⁰ which is never complete and always constituted within. As this remix method became essential to maintaining my life, mutating ceaselessly through other realities, it developed into a singular practice: perform to keep alive. Composing with bits from others to create a persona, whether in a socially dangerous situation or not, alienated me from myself – as if there is one. In this strange loop,⁶¹ wherein I managed to sustain this technique of self-design, another layer of me was always in the search of a connection with the un-lived life. Unconscious attempts at reconnection surfaced intermittently: when I had difficulties falling asleep for years until adolescence; when I started to inflict pain on my body deliberately, as self-harm; when I struggled with shortness of breath and felt like I was suffocating until we ended up in emergency for nights and I was diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder, just after I graduated from high school. As I excelled this assemblage to compose a new persona, the former me would be cast away with all of the others, alongside the truth I strived to efface. Slowly, the child in old pictures became a stranger, while I was becoming a person whom I did not know,

59 "A psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly and partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified," Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 206.

60 "Perhaps instead of thinking identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a "production," which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation."

61 Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity and diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 227–327

Douglas Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

by design. These rituals of immediate fabrication somehow assured me that I had driven my primal persona to extinction, dextrously: without any possibility of excavating or resurrecting and in that way meeting him in another reality.

V

The second Monday of the military, the night for administrative movement, where troops need to maintain a deployment as one man seamlessly. "Toe to line," echoes the chief commander's voice, filling the void above thousands of soldiers. There is the moon and stars and immediate silence. Sergeants started to distribute camouflage face paints while another voice explained how to apply it. It's a small palette: five sections for colours and a mirror in the middle. "This is not a makeup session for fun!" Paints should be applied asymmetrically, random yet mimicking natural patterns. While I am painting my buddy's⁶² face, another soldier approaches and asks me to do it for him. Humidity makes the paint slimy. "You got to disguise yourself from the enemy!" roars a military throat, aiming to restrain the unexpectedly festive atmosphere. Another soldier describes the design in his head. "Can you paint a bold red line from both sides of my mouth, like blood? Like I just ate some flesh?" Now I'm encircled with men overly amused by the idea of putting makeup on their faces, now that it is justified as military camouflage, which spirits away the idea of femininity. "Dude, you are a designer, come on!" begs another one. Am I? This is the first time I recall the designer-me I had left in north-eastern Europe. After painting more than half of the troop, I feel the fleeting pleasure of gaining recognition by accomplishment – until the commander rebukes me for inappropriately exaggerated designs.

"Attempts to manipulate the codes of ceremonial communication always produce bad results," writes Helmut Lethen,⁶³ before linking this idea to Sighard Neckel,

⁶² A battle buddy is a partner assigned to a soldier in the army. Each battle buddy is expected to assist their partner both in and out of combat.

⁶³ Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 125.

who argues that artificial behaviour inevitably goes wrong: "to maintain at all costs the 'illusion of their own noninvolvement,' the greater may be the corresponding fear of losing their aesthetic distance from events, of bungling the performance, of suffering a minor interpersonal catastrophe."⁶⁴ The Commander stands in front of me, furiously admonishing me that this is a place to be a soldier but nothing else. Am I? "Yes sir!" my mouth says.

After a while, simultaneous stamps of combat boots rebound from the forests we are passing. "You need to be vigilant! The enemy never sleeps!" As I keep up with the pace, the woods all start to seem alike. There I am, being trained to be one of the glorious soldiers, ready to clash with the enemy. With every step, I get closer to you. As July wind touches to our faces with every step, colours on thousands merge into each other. How do you call army green with radiant red? Where are you, the terrorist who lurks behind the branches but only appears at the roots? "Step up!" The voice shakes our heavy bodies. Who are you now, the militant without any armour? I can feel you carrying your little body, as a history of congealed touches, through thorny woods. As we climb the hill, I can see the lights of city, like somewhere I have never been before. Istanbul, Byzantium, Constantinople, Stamboul.⁶⁵ How could your five-foot body be stronger than mine? Every step in this synchronicity blurs my mind. I can see your

64 Sighard Neckel, *Status und Scham: Zur symbolischen Reproduktion sozialer Ungleichheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1991).

65 The city of Istanbul, including the entirety in general and the old city in the historic city walls in particular has been known by a number of different names. The most notable names besides the modern Turkish name are Byzantium, Constantinople, and Stamboul. Different names are associated with different phases of its history, with different languages, and with different portions of it.

hands stretched, asking continuously for a new name.⁶⁶ Your face flickers between the trees. With every step of thousands of heavy boots, dust particles are lifting more than ten centimetres. Dust to dust.⁶⁷ As we walk, my skin burns in this polyester and cotton blended fabric. Ashes to ashes.⁶⁸ The moment I realised that deep down in me, something else is witnessing all of this – finally, we are face to face. Between my camouflage and your childish innocence. Twenty years between twenty-seven and seven. I know all of your names, and they are naught but names.⁶⁹ I know you kid, but you don't know me. I know your patient endurance,⁷⁰ because I have been there. "Tomorrow there will be a recruit training with the G8," announces the commander and sweeps away the crowd with excitement. But I can only see you. "Calm down! You can only shoot three bullets," he adds.

Then I ask my fellow: "Why is it only three?"

I trust you to kill me.⁷¹

66 "Think instead that your name has become a wretched thing, and cast it off. Adopt another, any at all, so that God may call you in the night. And keep it a secret from everyone." Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (London: Penguin Classics, 2016).

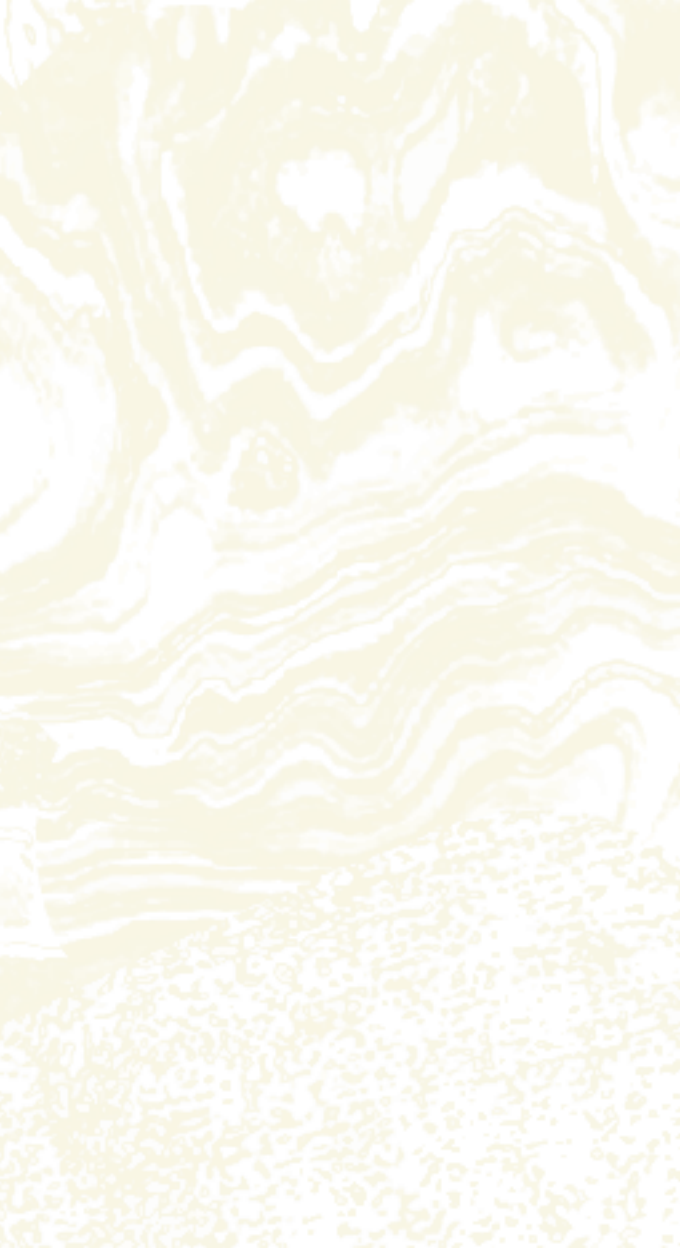
67 "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Ecclesiastes 3:20, Bible (King James)

68 "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," phrase from the funeral service in the Book of Common Prayer

69 "They are not but [mere] names you have named them – you and your forefathers – for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow not except assumption and what [their] souls desire, and there has already come to them from their Lord guidance." Surah An-Najm, Quran 53:23.

70 "Those of you who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan. I know your works, I know your toil, and your patient endurance." Revelations 2:1-4.

71 "When you're beaten, when you hear checkmate, and can finally say with Hallaj's voice, I trust you to kill me." Jalaluddin, Rumi: the Book of Love, trans. Coleman Barks (New York: Harper-Collins, 2005).



Path n.2812*

A walk on a fragile territory

Francesca Lucchitta

In Path n.2812 Francesca Lucchitta explores the stories we tell ourselves spatially. Lucchitta subverts the illusion of control a list might give, to highlight the fragility of spaces and objects we perceive as familiar or insurmountable. Reflecting on the role of language and naming in relation to anthropocentric claims over the landscape, we begin to consider the ground we stand on, which suddenly appears less and less solid.



Frane di sponda nella Val Settimana.
Landslide in the Week Valley, Italy, December 2019.

To my dear mountains

CONTENTS

1

In order to follow the signs
you need to know the
language.

2

One after the other.

3

How long does it take?

4

Slow thoughts, fast thoughts.

5

What is under my feet?

6

Layers on top of layers of: a
fragile territory.

7

A landslide. A hundred
meters lower from where it
moved from.

8

I wondered where the
fragments were moved to,
what they had become.

9

Residual. Hidden histories.

10

Memories to reassure myself
about my solidity.

11

The mountain outside have
no fear.

12

Solid as a rock. Stai saldo come
una roccia.**

13

As if something had cracked
inside me and my experience
is leaking out.

14

Put a stone on it. Mettiamoci
una pietra sopra.

Afterwords.

Working–walking on it.

Bittersweetness.

*A path is a sequence of
points in space. The text is
written as a sequence of
sentences, a list, an index.

** Through the spectacles
of geology, terra firma
becomes terra mobilis,
and we are forced to
reconsider our beliefs of
what is solid and what is
not. Although we attribute
to stone a great power to
hold time back, to refuse
its claims (cairns, stone
tablets, monuments,
statuary), this is true only
in relation to our own
mutability. Looked at in
the context of the bigger
geological picture, rock is
as vulnerable to change
as any other substance.
Robert Macfarlane, from
Mountains of the Mind.



Can you spot a liar?

Nuances of the Now

A semantic patchwork on the scatteredness
of current understanding

Heleen Mineur

In *Nuances of the Now*, Heleen Mineur plays at speaking in tongues, performing a riddle which restlessly unravels through the text. Collecting fragments from self-help manuals and clean living propaganda, Mineur assembles a cut up of seductive eco-living myths. Summoning an array of instagram influencers which preach the benefits of sustainable living, Mineur uses the script form to expose the failings of eco-consumerism.

I Ants and Chickpeas

After developing an obsession with the celery juice movement³, I tried to find the origin of the fascination with this vegetable. I stumbled upon the 1950s (presumably) American (see: raisins) invention of this healthy snack, even devoting a day to it⁴.

Ants on a log—not to be confused with Ants Climbing a Tree⁵—is a snack made by spreading cream cheese, peanut butter, ricotta cheese or any number of spreads on celery and placing raisins on top. There are numerous variations of ants on a log, including:

Gnats on a log: with currants

Ants on vacation: without “ants,” or no raisins

Ants on a Slip ‘n Slide: add honey on peanut butter before adding raisins

Ants in the Pants: without peanut butter

Fire-ants on a log: substitute craisins (dried cranberries) for raisins

After adding real in the search-bar, I stumble upon digitally created collages. Giant ants are being photoshopped, and the log, grass or moss are copied from the first page of Google Image results (I wonder if they are even real, or scanned for terrarium purposes). There are only six ants. They look like they are having a lot of fun; sunset.png is being portrayed in the background. The log is tiny compared to the big shiny bodies of the ants. One picture even contains an absurdly giant ant, being perhaps the gynecologist of the colony {g}.

The gynecologist leaves her cocoon, flying long distances from nest to nest, looking for a winged male ant to steal sperm from. When received, the male ant dies, the gynecologist flies to a new piece of moist soil. She starts a new colony, and detaches her wings from her body.

Womxn will never be seen as gynecologists. They will also never knowingly commune like her. In human life womxn are correlated with cyborgs and simians {h}, the possession of Planet Earth {i}, and even the meat industry {j}.

Are we mimicking Ants on A Log? We’re pretending to

be ants—alive and kicking, communal, really smart, forming great structures—but are actually just raisins: already dried up, rusted into habits, and actually all the same; the non-sexy versions of grapes. Placed deep, crushed and then turned to paste, peanuts (perhaps the mush that is left behind by everything that humans have accomplished) are spread out on celery—a great, nutritious source of life. The roads and structures we build will soon be poured full of melted Nespresso pods, and will be left—perfectly intact, but without life—lying under contaminated soil and radioactive grass.

(A rhythmic text performance perhaps titled,)

Self-Care Is Everything for Dying Coral Reef⁶

There I was—eating cold pad thai that the Uber-Eats-Driver had handed over to me four hours before. Previously, I stopped another Uber-Eats-Driver, assuming he was at the wrong house. He was not. Uber-Eats-Driver was at the right house. My neighbours were also waiting passionately for Uber-Eats-Driver.

[opening big cans of chickpeas]

It seems that Uber-Eats-Driver is the new archetype of comfort mixed with nutrition, but was Uber-Eats-Driver ever what you expected them to be?

How often did they leave behind this soothing emotion—a phenomenon once connected to care or to cooking?

[opening more cans of chickpeas]

It seems we are having very ambivalent feelings about something so fundamental.

Is care an affection? A moral obligation? Work? A burden?? Spending hours maintaining an aquarium garden for your fish⁸? Spending hours looking for magnesium capsules—for coupons for OrganiCups—for condoms made out of cauliflower—for purses made from rhinestoned coconuts and large crystals to masturbate with.

[...]

For productive winter morning-apps (06.30 wake up 06.45 take a short walk 07.15 shower 07.30 breakfast 08.00 emails 08.30 2 hours of work with zero distractions).

[pouring a lot of chickpeas into a sieve]

Things taste different when they've been frozen ...
Even more when refrozen and frozen twice.

[pause]

Birds aren't real ... Pigeons are government surveillance drones.
Just like frogs, snakes and wasps.

[applause] [eats some chickpeas]

Fake phò simulacra are staring at me through windowsills

I want that plastic shrimp in my mouth right now.

[...] [eats some chickpeas]

My blood is slowly transforming into chickpea juice
... slimy yet clear.

[mouth is now full with chickpeas] [tries to yell]

"It looks like she is living the life ...
except she didn't SEASON that damn CHICKEN ...
I could never!"⁹

[pause] [swallowing the chickpeas]

They look cute with their braces and their laptops with
feminist stickers...

But where is the time kids saw freckin' movies / red fre-
ckin' books? Just chill!!¹⁰

They all have that fuck this-look ...

"Oh well, look what happened ... I'm so sad!! I'm so poor!!"

[stands up] [space for improv]

MATSUTAKE exist in third nature {k}

MATSUTAKE are wonderful wild mushrooms that
live in human-disturbed forests. Like rats, raccoons, and
cockroaches, they are willing to put up with some of the
environmental messes humans have made.

MATSUTAKE allow us to explore the ruin that has be-
come our collective home!

[softly yelling] [big hand movements]

Get MATSUTAKE tattooed on tits!

Get MATSUTAKE healing essential oils¹¹, now with
10% off!

A Banana, being eaten; Greta Thunberg, time travel-
ling²²; The Cheeto²³, waiting for his wife to peg him.
(loaded) Drones²⁴, flying over, without noticing. Sea-
sons change, without noticing. Food changes, without
noticing. Days go quicker and quicker, without noticing.
Time changes, without noticing. Subjective time is hap-
pening; time shaped as information.²⁵
Did we forget something? Did we lose something back
there, when we were falling? Did we perhaps forget to
name something that was important? Did we forget to
collect it? Are elements slowly getting left behind at the
speed we're moving at? Are peace and spirituality un-
derstandings stuck in tales? Where did things get lost
when we were falling, or are things just endlessly
repeating?

Epilogue

She breathed softly. She had soft hair (not soft
eyes). She bit a piece of her cheek and chewed on it a
little bit. The bread was soft and had vibrant smells, and
the juicy fruits became a token for the future await-
ing. The notion of future was something fabricated, it
was something we collectively decided to believe in. She
took my cat's head and pressed his ears to the side and
took a deep whiff of the smells on his forehead. She
talks about waste and its relation to power {t}. She gave
me a glass of water. It was nothing special, it was just wa-
ter. But it was water from her well. It tasted like her {u}.
I was hungry to listen, you were too. Words pulled to
me like magnets. The queers talked with their riddled
speeches. Riddled for the heteronormative charlatans,

but not for her. They shared a love that they would never understand. It is deep love, from fag to fag (but not those who were together). It was not sexual, and therefore the deepest love that humans could ever love.

Equality was a fabulation. How to desire a feeling that is never communally felt? She thinks it's about seeking each other's truth, not about sacrificing. Equality being significant like bios {v}, it being juicier than dominance and 12-ounce steaks³². She was unlearning, which was like detoxing from the nostalgic and deeply rooted, but fabricated, odours of fresh laundry. She learned about plants. The patience. The impeccable moments in between waiting and waiting. She wrote to me about everything that I had forgotten or that could heal me. She remembered the tastes of cakes behind windows as if it happened a minute ago. She gave a little tappy ... a little tap taperoo³³ on my forehead for hours and days and years—trembling my body with the debris of emotions finally leaving me.

All was hazy and resembled human nausea³⁴. The fog turned to drops and into rain. The rain made everyone the same kind of wet. Socks and shoes were all sogging a way to paradise, the land of almonds and agave {w}.

Some excerpts from my essay; all, in a sense, brewed from lies, speculations and truths. The complete version can be found in "We must begin somewhere", Issue V, Design Department 2020.

{g} The queen / mother of all the ants.

{h} Relating to: Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

{i} Branch of feminism that examines the connections between women and nature. Its name was coined by d'Eaubonne in 1974.

Ecofeminism uses the basic feminist tenets of equality between genders, a revaluing of non-patriarchal or nonlinear structures, and a view of the world that respects organic processes, holistic connections, and the merits of intuition and collaboration." See: Kathryn Miles, "Ecofeminism," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism>.

{j} Relating to: Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1990).

{k} "that is, what manages to live despite capitalism. Imagine 'first nature' to mean ecological relations (including humans) and 'second nature' to refer to capitalist transformations of the environment." Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

{t} See: Max Liboiron, "Waste colonialism," *Discard Studies*, November 1, 2018, <https://discardstudies.com/2018/11/01/wastecolonialism/>.

{u} "I don't pretend what I'm doing is new. I want my work to be like the small glass tumbler I'm clutching in my sweaty hand; unremarkable but important because it holds something need. I want to fill it with something as clear and necessary as cold water, then I want to give it away. Of course, it'll be water from my well, warmed by the heat of my body, and it'll taste like me." Holly Hughes, *Clit Notes: A Sapphic Sampler* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

{v} "Bios. is what is known as qualified life, the life of the mind." Laurent Dubrueil and Clarissa C. Eagle, "Leaving Politics: Bios, Zôê, Life," *Diacritics* 36, no. 2 (2006): 83–98.

{w} Vegan parody of "the promised land"; the land of milk and honey, November 3, 2019.

3 Across the globe, millions of people are experiencing the health-changing benefits of drinking sixteen ounces of straight celery juice on an empty stomach every morning, a healing practice that was originated by Anthony William, the Medical Medium, decades ago. See: "The Global Celery Juice Movement," <https://www.celeryjuice.com/global-celery-juice-movement>.

4 See: "Ants on a Log," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ants_on_a_log.

5 Ants Climbing a Tree (traditional Chinese: 蚂蚁上树) is a classic Sichuan dish in Chinese cuisine. It is so called because the dish has bits of ground meat clinging to noodles, evoking an image of ants walking on twigs. See: "Ants Climbing a Tree," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ants_climbing_a_tree.

6 A parody of Anne Boyer's line, "Attitude Is Everything for Dying Coral Reef". See: Anne Boyer, *The Undying* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

7 Related to: María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

8 "Ep.5 Sweet Potato Betta Tank (Kartoffel Gets Hurt) No filter, No CO2, NO ferts 4.5 Gallon Nano," video, 5:59, <https://youtu.be/HYHmSM87dno>.

9 Ana, comment on Clancy Burke, "MY 2 A.M. MORNING ROUTINE (no, that's not a typo)," video, 12:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2D6nO-2pykw&t=276s>.

10 Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), "So ridiculous. Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Greta, Chill!," Twitter, December 13, 2019, 1:22 a.m., <https://twitter.com/realdonald-trump/status/1205100602025545730>.

11 "Perhaps the happiness factor in smelling matsutake is what pressed Japanese odor engineers to manufacture an artificial matsutake smell." Relating to the mushroom in: Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

22 Leyland Cecco, "Greta Thunberg, time traveller? Girl in photo from 1898 resembles activist," *The Guardian*, November 22, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/22/greta-thunberg-time-traveller-1891-photo>.

23 Donald Trump.

24 "From lightweight surveillance devices to heavily armed attack weapons, pilotless aircraft are rapidly becoming a favoured tool of warfare." Dan Sabbagh, "Kil-

ler drones: how many are there and who do they target?" *The Guardian*, November 18, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/nov/18/killer-drones-how-many-uav-predator-reaper>.

25 Inspired by: Metahaven, *Digital Tarkovsky* (Moscow: Strelka Press, 2018).

32 Inspired by: Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

33 "I've been doing EFT for years without knowing it was a thing, whenever I feel pressure ... wow and I thought I was so weird ... just give little tappy ... a little tap taparoo" KING, comment on Brad Yates, "Intro to EFT—Tapping with Brad Yates," video, 5:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiD72cZ5mcU>.

34 Sentence borrowed from: Kathy Acker, *Empire Of The Senseless* (New York: Grove Press, 1988).





You Can Have a Little Truth, As a Treat

Patricia Bogdana Becus

Truth is in short supply for Patricia Becus. Confronting the imaginings of a compulsive liar she records his myth-making in relation to her own perception of reality, in order to construct a personal narrative. Via facebook and the journal medium, Becus' father uses the written word to materialise his desires. Through the layers of fabrications Becus struggles to discern fact from fiction, coming to the conclusion that both might exist in parallel. Becus' father is a liar and a poet.

Every time my mother called my father a liar, he would reject the accusation by shouting *Sa orbesc eu!* (lit., may I go blind). That he tempted fate, given the myriad of eye diseases running in both his maternal and paternal bloodline—glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration—could be mistaken for fearlessness but my father is profoundly scared of such things. In the most recent installment of his medical fears, he's been calling me every day to ask what type of supplements he can buy to avoid a visit to the doctors for something that he suspects could be the type of peripheral blood circulation problem that caused his grandfather to lose a leg. His reaction to being called a liar was the complete opposite of his demeanor when he did the lying: he lied with ease and delight. He was going to buy the hotel in our hometown and name it *PatriDoro* after me and my sister. He would send me to school in the UK.

At different moments in time, my father told me he named me Patricia after Patti Smith and Patricia Kaas. When I met Patti Smith in 2015, I told her I was named after her. My father is a poet so this option made more sense to me. In the late 1970s, my father's high school Romanian literature teacher took him under his wing and invited him to join a poetry workshop. There are pictures of my father reading to audiences of fellow bearded men. There are pictures of him and some of these fellow writers posing in front of buildings and pictures of them sitting around tables covered in ashtrays filled with cigarette butts. One day, I spotted my father in a Facebook picture posted by Mircea Cartarescu, the most translated Romanian author. *Poza cu multi optzeci ti ...* (a picture with many of the 1980s generation) read the accompanying caption. My parents believed the name Patricia was going to help me integrate in the West where they had no doubt I would live after I'd "run away" from Romania. During my days in an advertising agency in

New York, I made no friends when I repeatedly corrected the partner who insisted on calling me Pat with "That's not my name." Though he never visited me in New York, my father told his friends he did. Not only that but he shared elaborate stories about my life in the city: I criticized the curator of the Helmut Lang installation at Sperone Westwater for not citing André Cadere as an influence, I took fashion criticism classes with Anna Wintour.¹

For all his lying, my father also kept numerous records of the life that we lived in Lipova. His bookshelves and drawers are filled with notebooks covered in detailed observations, to do lists, receipts, invites, newspaper clips, letters that he received from friends and acquaintances, meeting notes, letters he wrote but did not send, essay drafts, public transportation tickets, various product labels such as a product description for socks made in Arad, a Puma sneaker patch.

"Stepan is an Armenian name!" my father announced one day when I was in high school. I immediately relayed this fact to the first guy with whom I went on a date, "I am probably Armenian." I had no interest in Armenia, it just sounded better than being only Romanian. In the early 1990s, when my mother opened her flower shop, my father suggested we named it Stepan's the way Americans named their businesses. Stepan, apostrof S, he would say. In the first entry of a notebook, made on 6.X.1994, my father documented the months he spent managing the flower shop. On the first page, he listed the fiscal information of the flower shop. On the next page, the name and license plate of the Turkish businessman whose girlfriend crashed a Ford Fiesta into mom's Dacia, the invoice details for towing services and three different lists of poems that he submitted

1 <https://www.speronewestwater.com/exhibitions/helmut-lang/installations#5>

to literary magazines. Judging by their titles, most poems are about mom or by mom. The rest of the notebook is made of lists: detailed information about cash flow (money in, money out, number of bills, Deutsch marks, Hungarian Forints, that kind of stuff), an inventory (number of Coca Cola crates, number of carnations that he got without an invoice), and debt that he needed to recuperate from his bohemian friends ("I need to get this money back from..." "V.V. URGENT to recuperate") as well as notes about the amount of money missing from the register.

My grandmother took the reins of the flower shop after that. She expanded into the plastic flowers market after finding a supplier from Oradea, two tall men who drove their car through small cities like ours selling coronite, round floral decorations made of plastic flowers (in every color imaginable) that could be hung from cemetery tombstones. When she could not pay them, she would fake an invoice and tell them she had just been hospitalized, then she would stop answering their calls. In the final years of the store, my grandmother also started selling porcelain tombstone pictures. The city hall announced that the building in which our flower shop was housed, which once belonged to the AECS Sere Arad, the state greenhouses co-op, would be returned to the owner (a woman who lived in Germany) from whom it was confiscated by the Communists. During a visit home in October 2013, I noticed that the Stepan's sign was gone and someone else had opened a store that sold plastic toys, overpriced VGA computer cameras and some books.

My father is nearly blind, his cataracts get worse every year. Last summer he started typing his poems straight onto his Facebook wall. He types with his right hand index finger, like he used to type on his typewriter. He takes his Facebook user job very seriously, posting numerous links every day: links to fashion collections, links to DIY furniture projects involving car tires, to YouTube videos of Patti Smith, to first-edition books such as Cioran's *Cahiers* accompanied by the caption "just got this last week," (a lie) or images of goth outfits that are meant to trick his boomer friends into outrage. He writes down all the urls of his favorite websites in his notebooks and writes down the time and date of the various art or music shows that happen in Brooklyn. He learns about these shows through newsletters and believes the people who send the newsletters invite him to these shows, or so he tells me.

In a poem from 12.XII.1977 he wrote, "I would wish for many things but no one can have many things / Not him, not me, not others / Because the many things belong to the others / And they do not know what they own / They believe they own everything / But everything also belongs to us / The humble ones who want the truth, freedom, and justice."



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CUT-UP a Survival Strategy for a Fggoat Emirhakin

Path n.2812*
Francesca Lucchitta

Nuances of
the Now
Heleen Mineur

You Can Have
a Little Truth,
As a Treat
Patricia Bogdana Becus

Fast forward to the present and our social, cultural, economic and media landscape is changing before our eyes in such a drastic fashion that it is hard to believe.

In this pandemic reality our collection of fibs feels like a strange comfort. The truth is, we live in a world where racism is perpetrated to undermine people's humanity and within a Europe where the spurious far-right narrative is steadily gaining traction. We are surrounded by a media so abundant in conspiracies that many question the veracity of the virus in the first place.

Discerning fact from fiction feels more arduous than ever. A fib can be fantasy and a fantasy can allow us to imagine something different or better for ourselves, our family, our society and the world around us. In this regard we hope to cajole you into permitting yourself to be convinced by our bundle of half truths,

Pack of Lies

If I Lie
Kuo Wei Tung

Running Rivers
Facial

Serif Paper
Charlotte Rohde

My headscarf had
snakes on it
Elif Özyay

The shrimp
barbox
Gudrun Havsteen-Mikkelsen

Quicksand
Maria Mazzanti

When gathering and concocting our series of fictions, falsehoods and deceptions we never considered that these distorted reflections on reality would take shape during a pandemic. Within the context of this unforeseen global event and the multiple truths this situation generated, we were seduced and deceived by the generative lies the texts revealed. Lies which imagined mythical pasts, alternative presents and possible futures.