

T E N D E R



A QUARTERLY JOURNAL MADE BY WOMEN



April 2014

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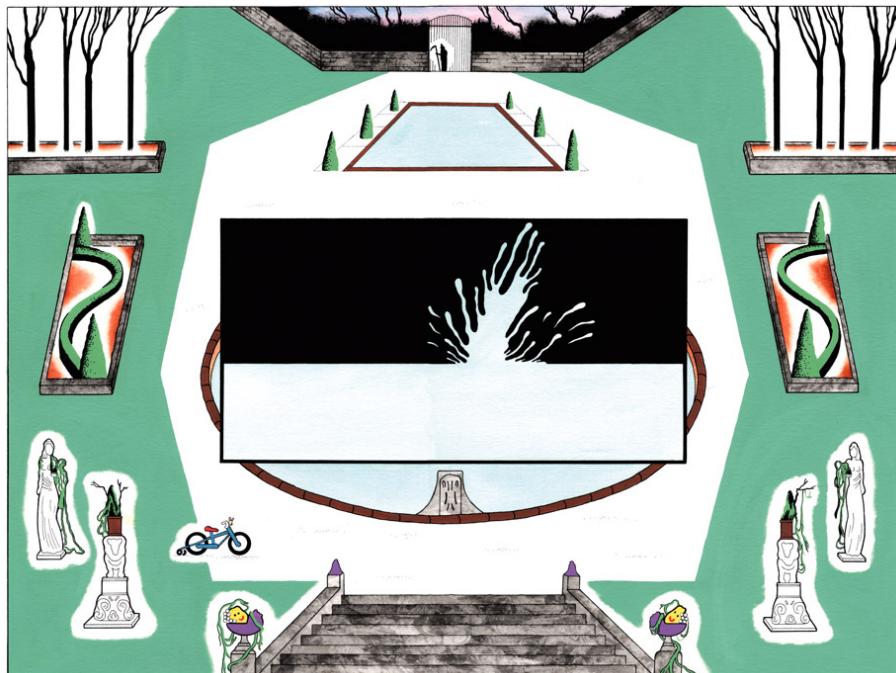


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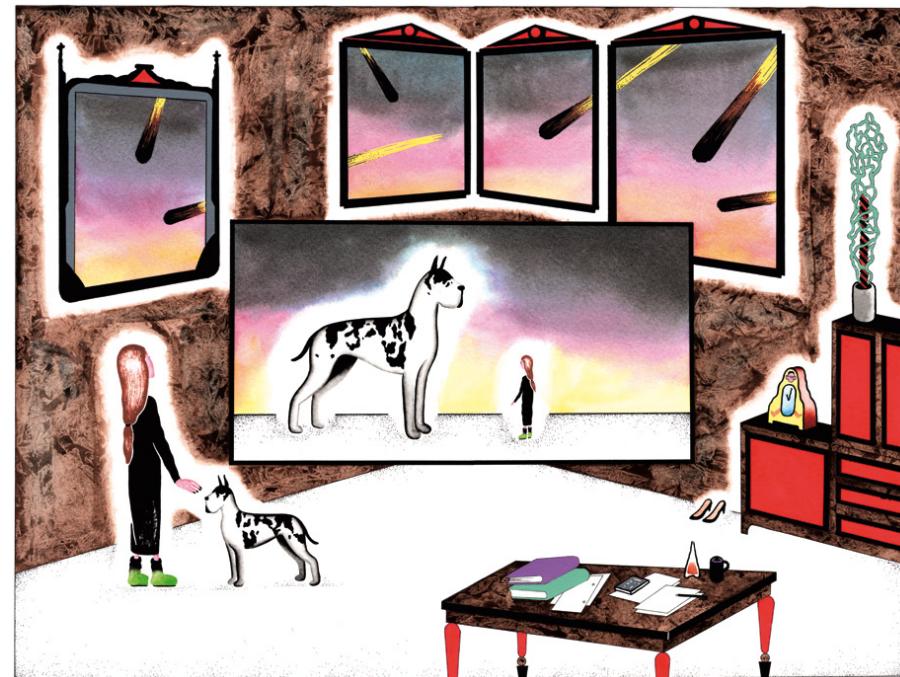
ROXANE LUMERET



ROXANE LUMERET



ROXANE LUMERET



ROXANE LUMERET



EMILY BLUDWORTH DE BARRIOS



'and she was not sorry'

Friends like accessories

As if to say These were they and
These were they

A husband like an accessory
(One accomplishment)

A house A car Etc

One really great outfit you do not want to waste

A system of values twisted like a giant swirl
A swirl which reaches the sky like a tall staircase

To walk down or up the spiral of one's values
To walk with dignity Very erect





'using their gentle violence to stop and calm'

Now that we are trying to get
pregnant

A zygote continuously divides in
my abdomen

Inside my body it is another
universe

Etc etc it is very dark

Asteroid is also another universe

He has six nipples and will never
have kids

Though he would make a good
mother

And would be soothed I know

By six plump kittens suckling his
belly

And kneading it with miniature paws

He practices this laying on his
side with eyes half closed

And has the gruff and fixed attitude
of a mother

Now that we are trying to get
pregnant

Now it is a time in life
where one gets very

Superstitious with words and
thoughts



Like as if each could jinx
but I am like as if stepping into water

Windy leaves wind chimes toads
at night

Something very tranquil

Science is happening inside my
body

And I'm so casual

Like someone who never worries
about nothing

Not the stove, not zygotes

Just taking a walk at dusk around
the block

And making sure the dogs have
water

Becoming not so important

Maybe

Now that we are trying to get
pregnant

I
embark upon the misty path

One mythic brave humble hero

Feeling his way throughout
the world

I am sifting my values

As if to keep them in a
vault



EMILY BLUDWORTH DE BARRIOS



Or articulate them in an
irrefutable way

Like a math formula that's true
for all the situations

A rock among variables

A rock among the hard quick
water

The most important thing in my
life is _____.



ARIANA HUERTA



ARIANA HUERTA



RACHEL ZUCKER



HAIR DREAM

I reach up to touch my hair— there's something stuck, some sort of residue. When I run my fingers through my hair a large clump comes away in my hand. When I look in the mirror, the left side of my hair is thinner. Also, I'm wearing a sticker that says:

HELLO my name is *Rachel Zucker*

Do you want to know about the
miscegenation of the races?

ASK ME



*PLANT DREAM*

My window plant is growing well. It's out on a fire escape I never knew I had. I say to Josh, 'If I just forget about it and leave it alone, it does really well.' I turn the plant so the thriving part faces inside. When I do this I notice that the leaves and vines are rich and healthy, but the roots are withered. Farther out on the fire escape there's a plant I've never seen before flowering with lush, white flowers.

*BABY HOSPITAL DREAM*

Women are milling about outside a hospital, waiting for their babies to be passed back to them through metal chutes in the brick wall. When I demand entry, the personnel in their starched whites ignore me. Other mothers milling about also ignore me. I wonder if they are hired actors. How can they be so calm? I sneak into the hospital and find my baby. He is a small mass of exposed muscle. He is a little chop, a brisket, on a metal pallet. My meat baby is surrounded by hundreds of meat babies all splayed out in hundreds of rooms off a quiet corridor.



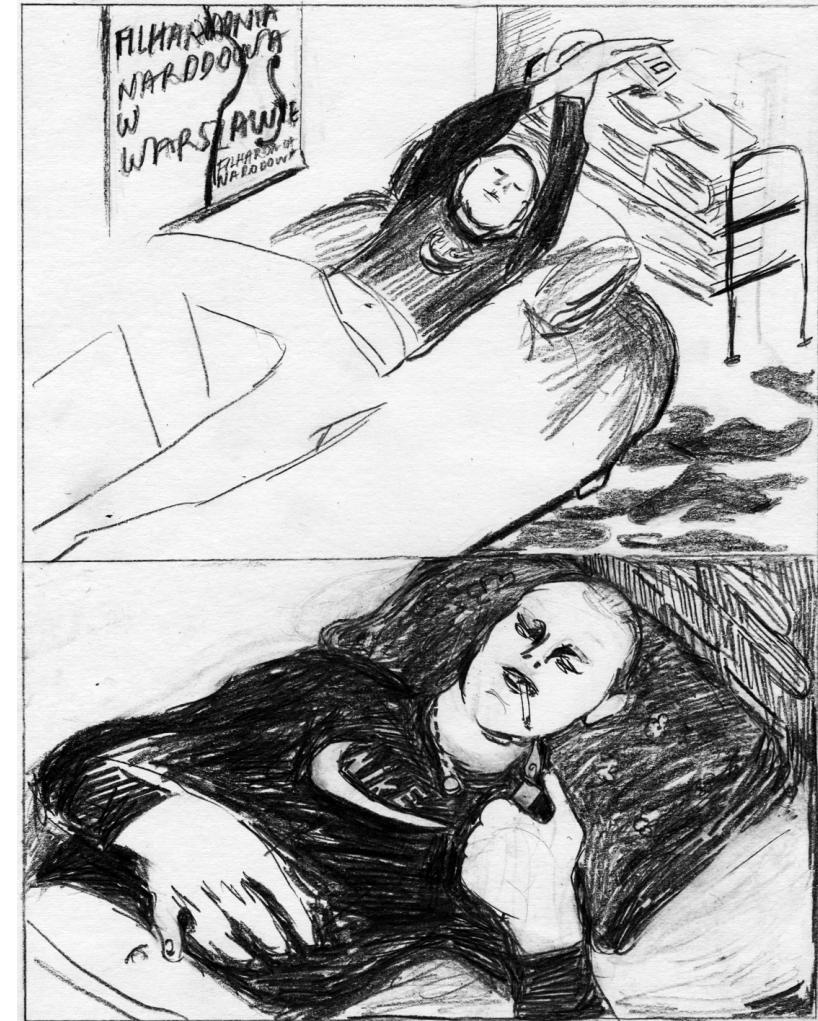
RACHEL ZUCKER



PUBLIC SCHOOL DREAM

I'm running and running through a huge empty building at night in winter. This is the only way to exercise in inclement weather. I jump over students and backpacks, running laps around the gym. I don't feel anything—not the floor, or bleachers I bang into, not the effort of running. I'm not sweating. I'm dead.

ANDREA BJURST



ANDREA BJURST



KAREN VANDYCK



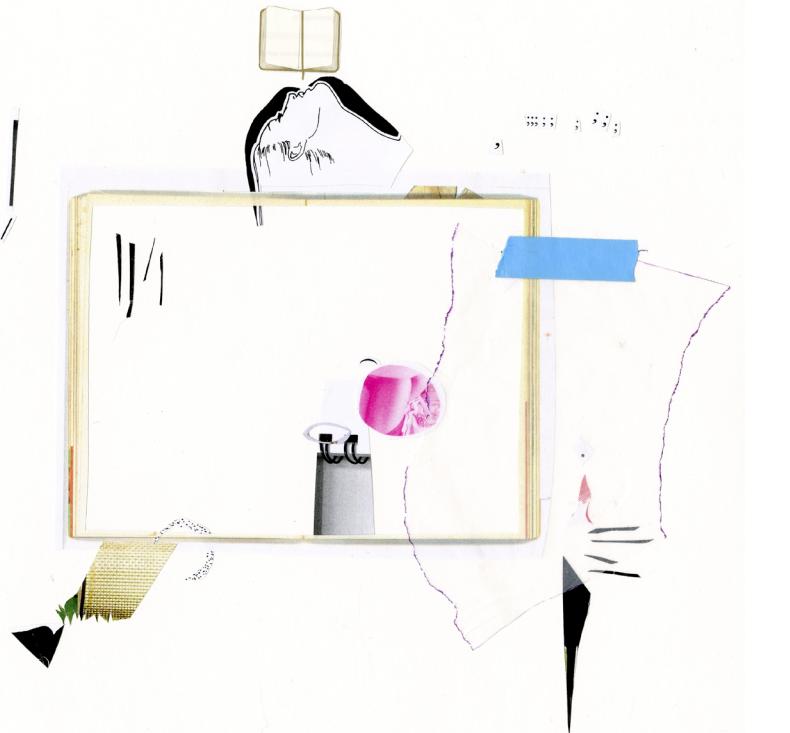
Pulling It Off

What kind of woman
takes her sweater off slowly
pausing to adjust her glasses
turning a page in her book
the sweater hanging there
around her neck
until at last she remembers
and pulls it off?





on *Female Sexual Dysfunction, sentences, silence, Frederick Seidel and Peaches, post-feminism, and more*



« I TOLD PENGUIN THAT I WOULD REFUSE TO SIMPLIFY. I LEFT THAT MEETING THINKING ‘OH WELL, I’VE BLOWN IT’ »

Katherine Angel is the author of one of my favourite books of 2013: Unmastered: A Book on Desire, Most Difficult to Tell. I first heard about Unmastered by word of mouth, and a week or two later was handed an Allen Lane proof copy underneath a table at a Chinese restaurant— reading it in the bath at home a few days later felt somewhat illicit.



I’m not sure what I’d been expecting from Unmastered— no one I’d asked seemed to know how to describe the book without reeling off an enthused but ultimately unhelpful list of superlatives. Unmastered could pass as autobiography, erotica, critical theory, poetry... In this interview, Katherine uses the term ‘performative philosophy’, which would seem to cover most of those bases. The book details in snippets her relationships, the nature of the sex within those relationships, her first experience of being watched by a man on public transport, a frustrating discussion on feminism and porn, her abortion and the depression that followed.

Katherine’s work is important and exciting to me as a reader because of its active investment in challenging genreification and essentialist definitions of subjectivity. The writing in Unmastered is incantatory— ideas like Susan Sontag’s notion of ‘X’— ‘the compulsion to be what the other person wants’— are hit on, mined, left to breathe and/or saved for when they’re better needed, before being picked up again with new intensity.

Reading Unmastered gave me a strangely similar sensation to reading an erasure text like Mary Ruefle’s A Little White Shadow, which, I think, was due to the book’s spaciousness – both typographically and in terms of its ambivalent approach – and the persistent feeling that it was a palimpsest of sorts, housing unseen but somehow perceptible layers of writing and rewriting.

Our interview was carried out over a short period of time in a Google Doc.



Sophie Collins: Are you in London at the moment?

Katherine Angel: Yes, I live here, and have a fellowship at Queen Mary University of London.

SC: What does the fellowship involve?

KA: I’m looking at the stories that get told about the last fifty years of Western psychiatry, focusing on the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (the DSM— the fifth edition came out recently, to much controversy and commentary), and its relationship to the World Health Organisation’s International Classification of Disease. I’m interested in how a contemporary stance on the irrelevance to ‘scientific’ psychiatry of psychoanalytic modes of thought gets woven into the historical and critical narratives about psychiatric classification. I’m interested in the traces of psychoanalysis – particularly in ideas about somatisation and pain – and why they get glossed over by so many commentators. The project comes out of my work on Female Sexual Dysfunction (which is what the book I’m finishing at the moment is on), and my sense that the stories we tell about psychiatry are often very muddled and unself-aware of the psychiatric epoch that they themselves reflect. I teach also— next year I’m running an undergraduate module in the history of sexuality that I got obsessed with calling An Entire Glit-





tering Sexual Array, after a line in Foucault (but in the end clarity to uninitiated undergraduates won over).

SC: The copy for Heather Phillipson's *NOT AN ESSAY* describes the book as 'a single, fractured whole'. Although the content is very different, the structure superficially resembles that of *Unmastered*— fragmentary, rhythmic, accumulative. With both texts I actually felt that, as well as there being something reassuring in visually registering the sparseness of the pages, the sensation of 'getting through' the book quite fast, given that some pages are made up of only one or two sentences, contributed to my enjoyment. Was the dispersed nature of the text a conscious subversion of the non-fiction form (driven by feminist objectives, perhaps?), or simply the way you're inclined to think and write when freed of the stylistic standards of journalism or academic writing?

KA: The form emerged at the same time as the content. It wasn't conscious; once I realised that the book wanted to be written in this particular form (which happened very visually— a weird flash of seeing the whole book, in its structure), that was the breakthrough— that's when the writing flowed, and the content just presented itself. At the time, it was just a question of rhythm; this had to come after that; there had to be a pause between these two lines; a longer one between these sections. I felt driven by a rhythm, a pattern. But underneath that was the sense that the way I wrote the book (its form, its tone) was what I was writing about— was the subject matter in some way. (Vivian Gornick talks about these issues very beautifully in *The Situation and the Story*.) I wanted to capture what it felt like for me to think about sex, desire, power, feminism, and pleasure. What it didn't— doesn't— feel like to me is how these questions are often addressed, through writing that performs a kind of neutrality, and which frantically keeps at bay the personal vulnerabilities and tensions that animate any life, coming neatly to a conclusive opinion that tends to close conversation down. I wanted to capture a sense of continuous reflection and rumination, and of the dynamic relationship between reflection and sensation. The form of the book is about allowing for movement, change, pause, layering, returning, refrains, looping, folding into. I'm hyper-aware of the obfuscations that can happen in continuous argumentative prose (whether academic or journalistic); of what gets subtly glossed over; what isn't allowed in; what is discarded by sleight of hand. I wanted to create an object where space is allowed for pressure between various elements; for something to undermine something else; for precarity; for moments of incomprehension; for silence, for gaps. I spent years trying to figure out how to write the book about sexuality and feminism that I wanted to write— and I was only able to write it when the form enacted the content somehow, by refusing a kind of fixity. Someone tweeted something Maggie Nelson said in a talk a while ago (so this may not be exact): 'I hate sentences. Just cages and traps. Endless semi-colons help.' That resonates with me. I think *Unmastered* came out of a deep scepticism about the dangers of argument, of the pitfalls in convincing, linear prose.

SC: I identify strongly with what you say about the pitfalls of convincing prose, via which we are encouraged – within an academic, or perhaps just a public world (in



terms of how we present ourselves to others) – to mask our ambivalence, because this just doesn't sit well with narrative forms, or even socially; we are, it seems, somewhat predisposed to distrust someone who appears to have fluctuating/contradicting views— someone who is hesitant, mutable. The other day Roxane Gay tweeted 'I want to write something around the accusation of silence when people don't respond, online, to the latest "controversy."' and before that 'I also resent that if you are a liberal and opinionated and you don't agree with the cause du jour, you're some kind of sell out.' I feel like this is relevant. On a slightly different note, I also feel there is (a not so subtly) implied sexism in devaluing emotional response and distinguishing this from 'robust critical analysis' – a kind of performed neutrality, as you put it – as though the two are mutually exclusive, and the latter more culturally valuable, or capable of amounting to Truth...

KA: Yes, Roxane's tweet about silence resonates with me too. I value silence more and more! And I think real engagement with something takes time – at least for me – and has to allow for not really knowing what one thinks. The most interesting forms of writing (and also conversation), to me, are those where the possibility of not knowing is assumed; where exploration and curiosity are the aims. And yes, I am utterly sceptical of hierarchical delineations of critique and emotion— you don't have to spend long in a university to notice how the idea of 'robust critique' can be used to obfuscate a whole set of assumptions about, as Chris Kraus would say, 'who gets to speak and why'. My way of addressing those issues is really to try to confront them head-on— to make the mode in which to write and talk about, say, feminism and sexuality, part of the thing I'm examining. When I give papers, I often talk about the discomfort, ambivalence and anxiety in working on these topics— because it's really part of the subject matter. All the historical accumulation of feeling about these deeply political questions mingles with your own emotional investments in that accumulation, and to not touch that in the work is, I think, like covering your ears and going Lalalalalalalaaaaa. I try to bring as much of the implicit baggage out into the open, up to the surface.

SC: Which media do you think of as having directly influenced your own book?

KA: Some are very obvious, because of their role in the text: Woolf's diaries, *To The Lighthouse*; Sontag's *Reborn*; Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman*. Also Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, and Freud in general— those two are always hovering in everything I do. But, less obviously: Jonathan Lear's readings of Freud; Anna Funder's *Stasiland*: I read that several years before the book emerged, and it was like a gunshot— I sat bolt upright; something about her voice, the genre, the structure... And then things I read decades ago that went very deep underground in me and somehow influenced the book, though I'm not quite sure how: Nabokov's *Lolita*; Gillian Rose's *Love's Work*; Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*; Sylvia Plath; Sharon Olds; Carol Ann Duffy's love and erotic poems; Jeanette Winterson; Elsa Morante's *L'Isola di Arturo*. And films by Claire Denis (especially *Beau Travail* and *35 Rhums*) and Tracey Emin (*Riding For A Fall*, and *Why I Never Became A Dancer*) that I got a bit obsessed with while the book began to emerge. Also, Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love*. I think that shaped the





book in quite a major way.

SC: Do you read much poetry now?

KA: I read poetry very sporadically, not in a rigorous way at all—but it's an important part of my reading life nonetheless. Recently I read Kathryn Maris's *God Loves You*: there's a tensility in her writing that I love, and Emily Berry's *Dear Boy* I liked a lot too. I'm a big fan of Frederick Seidel. I think I need writing (of whatever form) that is very compressed and forceful. I can't bear anything that is floppy or flappy or loose. And I have a total allergy to anything mawkish. I think all those things are why I love Peaches so much as a lyricist as well as a musician. She's a bit Seidel-like in fact—things like 'Take You On' and 'Serpentine' I think are unbelievably accomplished lyrically. The same goes for Azealia Banks's '212'. In all these things there's a crazy-making synergy of lyric and music and the performative voice they use. But the talent in terms of structure of composition—it's perfect.

SC: Does academic writing ever feel like an emotional investment in the way I imagine *Unmastered* must be/have been?

KA: It has always been very emotionally invested for me, but it's only in recent years that my different kinds of writing have really begun talking to one another. I'm increasingly interested in making the (emotional, political) investments in all my writing an explicit part of that writing. I am sceptical of the performance of distance from one's academic work; it reflects philosophical stances on knowledge, personhood, subjectivity and so on that I don't buy, and want to deconstruct within the writing. It's important to me to write material that reflects or enacts a philosophical position on the material, and on the question of how to think and write. That's why I sometimes describe *Unmastered* as performative philosophy. The academic system, however—or rather, the government's system of assessing and rewarding academic departments—tends to reward intensely narrow disciplinary containment, and rather unambitious, narrow forms of—ugh—'output'. I find that difficult. And I'm not alone; it's making academics all over the country miserable.

SC: I feel as though there is room to manoeuvre, but only to a point—namely, the point where you actually pose a fundamental challenge to how you process theory as a critical reader and writer, and how subsequent readers might receive the product of this challenge. But a lot of readers, even academic/literary ones, simply view experimental criticism as pretentious or hermetic, even though these forms usually have aims to democratise and break down hegemonic structures... Is that a criticism—of being pretentious or of deliberately effecting mystification—you've ever had levelled against you and your work?

KA: Gosh probably! I think some of the negative reviews said *Unmastered* was pretentious. (One publisher in fact said it was 'mannered' and 'over-intellectual', which I found kind of obscurely funny.) I think that when people read, very often (and I'm sure I do this too) they are reading a book in the expectation of something



particular (even if they're not consciously aware of it), and can end up feeling hard done by or disgruntled—or sometimes pleasantly surprised—by what they encounter. When people critique, just as when they appreciate, it's always in relation to something else—which makes the act of critique so layered and multifunctional that it's almost hard to penetrate what's going on in a response. One of the most frequent things people say to me about *Unmastered* is that 'it's not what I was expecting'—which I find intriguing, because I wonder what they were expecting, and why. (Sometimes I ask them.) I think it's a very useful question to ask oneself when reading: what am I expecting? What did I imagine this would be? Why? I suppose I'm quite fascinated by what people (including me) are doing when they write about writing—what they're revealing, or trying not to reveal; what they're hooking a book to. I sort of see what people say about my writing as simply part of the discursive landscape I'm interested in—how people talk about women and sexuality; how they talk about the act of writing about women and sexuality; how they talk, often implicitly, about what kinds of writing are permissible, etc. Though of course at another level it's more like 'Oh x loves my book, hurrah' and 'Oh x hates my book, what a dumbass!' Haha. But on pretentiousness—I just can't engage with that as a way of critiquing something. I'm so profoundly uninterested in that kind of view. And, on the room to manoeuvre point: in part because I wasn't writing within anything—a PhD program, a book contract I had to in some way honour—I was able to follow my urge to write what I wanted, how I wanted, and just see what happened. I found this fortuitous window where I could write, untrammelled, and that was very lucky. I think writing within the expectations and requirements of others is very complicated.

SC: I find it really encouraging that genre-defying books like yours are cropping up more and more frequently, but it still feels like there's a lot of ground to be gained—Eimear McBride had a lot of difficulty getting *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* published at all, saying that, while none of the editors she approached with the manuscript doubted the quality of the writing, they just didn't think it commercially viable. There are clear differences between *A Girl* and *Unmastered*—McBride's book is marketed as fiction—but I'm interested to know whether this was an issue that you encountered at all with the publishing/editing of your own MS? How do you feel about labelling media and genreification?

KA: I am fascinated by all this stuff; by the differing status of fiction and non-fiction, by the alignment, still, of novels with creativity and of non-fiction with 'fact'—an idea which hampers proper discussion of so much writing. And then the gender question, the way the female 'I' is treated very different from the male 'I'... And I agree that many fascinating works are occupying interestingly ambiguous spaces—Sheila Heti, Claudia Rankine, Kate Zambreno, Maggie Nelson... all for the good. As for *Unmastered*: several publishers rejected it on the grounds that they couldn't work out how to market/sell it. (Some also rejected it because they really disliked it—it's a divisive book!) When I first discussed it with Penguin, much of the conversation circled around how to describe it and market it; how would I talk about it in interviews, for instance? I told them that I would refuse to simplify; that I would resist it being pushed into some easily narrativised formula,





because the reason I wrote it was to explore spaces that are more diffuse, ambivalent, contradictory, teeming — precisely because those are the spaces I think we need more of. I left that meeting thinking ‘Oh well, I’ve blown it’ — I was so unaccommodating! — but they seemed to like my insistence. There was something freeing for me in feeling very clear that I would only want it published by somebody whose approach I trusted and respected. I was ready to walk away if there wasn’t a good fit. But my wonderful editor at Penguin, Helen Conford, really understood what the book itself most wanted to be; much of the editing process was her helping me realise what the real core of the book was. We shaved off quite a bit of material that undermined its central voice — material that was more explanatory, more anxious, more defensive. The result is a book that is much more elliptical, allusive, compressed — which, incidentally, also lends itself to a multiplicity of readings. I think all of this probably did make Penguin’s job harder in terms of soundbitey catchphrases with which to encapsulate and market the book. But I felt they were very committed to ensuring I could get on with writing and speaking in my voice, without compromise — and that’s been a tremendously lucky experience.

SC: What are you working on at the moment?

KA: My academic book on female sexual dysfunction in psychiatry, and another book that I think is turning into another slightly strange, genre-ambivalent book — about subjecthood, subjectivity, post-feminism, scientific discourses about sex... about Freud and Foucault... about Lana Del Rey and Elvis. I don’t know really. I’m watching it emerge. God knows if it’ll see the light of day...

SC: What about post-feminism? It’s a pretty vexed term...

KA: It is. I’m interested in how critiques of post-feminism (where post-feminism is understood as the framing of feminism as irrelevant, outdated) can end up falling into the trap of what Denise Riley calls the ‘extraordinary weight of characterisation’ of women. I think there are some very slippery manoeuvres in some of the writings on the repudiation of feminism as a performative requirement of femininity. In some critiques of post-feminism, I think that, under the radar, there slips in a very troubling reliance on an idea of women as empty space, and of femininity as fakery, con, illusion, deceit. I’m fascinated by how theoretical concepts, such as performativity and masquerade, can end up doing the dirty work of cultural clichés about women. I’m interested in the subtext of often very sophisticated writings on these things; the misogynistic vestigial tails that are sometimes twitching away in feminist texts. And because a lot of what I work on is about changing orientations to the past — past ways of conceiving the past, and of conceiving the past of symptoms — I’m also very interested in the temporal aspects of critiques of post-feminism: what it is to inhabit a complex present, to look at the ‘young women’ inhabiting a different present, and to look back at a different feminist past. Carolyn Steedman writes that ‘we need a sense of people’s complexity of relationship to the historical situations they inherit’. I think that much writing on post-feminism, and on ‘where we are’ with feminism today, lacks that sense.

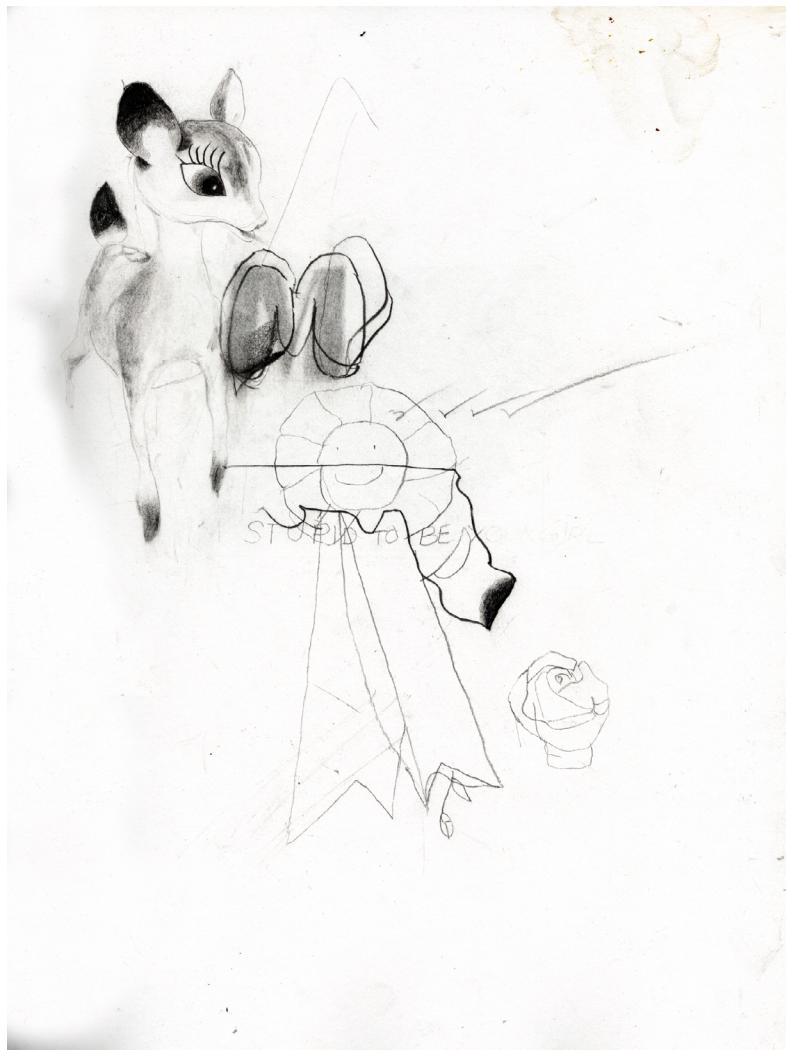


SC: What interests you about Lana Del Rey?

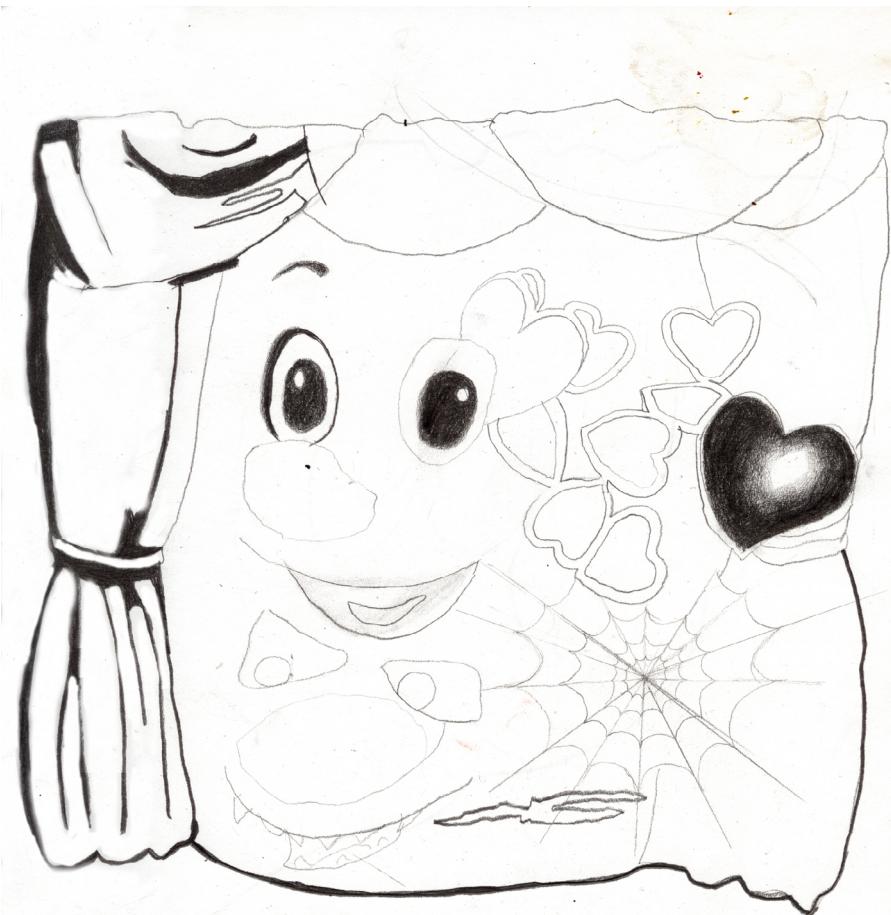
KA: Del Rey interests me for all the reasons that the post-feminism question interests me. She’s a fascinating, hyper-stylised space into which people project a lot of anxiety about ‘girlhood’, sexuality, and feminism. And I think her performative style, and the persona she embodies, actually throws back at us a lot of the difficulties we still have with reading what looks like femininity within a conceptual world where the performativity of gender is taken for granted. I think she’s much harder to read than people initially think.



MARY WICHMANN



MARY WICHMANN





SIMPLE COMPLEX SHAPES: V

Discalendar this case,
aztecally: heart removals,
no sender
no return
no via dhl –
you've plateaued out,
zigzag – it's happening,
not lost,
between your eyes,
quetzalcoatl mon amour



SIMPLE COMPLEX SHAPES: VI

Lord, should've noticed
you're my outstanding
biometric scanner failure

ten years plus
iris colour unknown

shining, their colour
is shining, lord



MARIE JACOTEY



MARIE JACOTEY



A L I C E L Y O N S



We drew Ukraine
on wrinkled sheets
deep wide plain
drenched in rain
black loam spring wheat
we drew Ukraine
on wrinkled sheets

l
&
p

A L I C E L Y O N S



g

g
a
s
l
&
h

A L I C E L Y O N S



whose cheeks have bellowed

to blow

myself so far from myself?



A L I C E L Y O N S



what god?



from *Fractals*

« O READS THE SAME BOOK AGAIN AND AGAIN, IN THE SMALL BEDROOM
HE STILL OCCUPIES IN HIS PARENTS' HOUSE »

*Reading Habits*

H writes books for people who know more about maths than her, for the few people who know more about linguistics, and for general readers who may expect anything or nothing.

S is clever and well-educated but a bad reader. SL is a good reader but badly educated. B is better educated but a bad reader, and not so clever either.

None of them will read books by H.

W used to read novels but now reads, almost exclusively, biographies and histories. W is married to M, who went through a period a few years ago, around when her children were born, when she only read fashion magazines. Although she is now an accomplished reader tackling Dostoyevsky, Darwin, Derrida, she feels she should not miss issues of the fashion magazines and must read these too.

B's husband, G dictates what B reads. She likes to read what he buys and does not think of it as dictated, but she never buys a book herself. Sometimes B chooses books from libraries but, as the books will not continue to live with her, she does not see this as rebellion. G sees himself as an independent reader: he buys all the books on the literary prize lists.

P, who is married to SL, reads detective stories, comic fantasy, and books about people who were young at the same time as he was young. These latter are biographies or autobiographies.

When O offers P a book, he feels strangely insulted.

F, who is married to S, reads the same kind of books as S, but not at her instigation. At the end of each book, because both are intelligent, each is mystified by his or her disappointment. Still they continue to read.

L reads books for work. She is a writer. She enjoys reading them, but they are for work too. L is careful with her reading diet and feels bloated by books she does not like, or which do not contribute to her work.

L reads books in one language. M reads books in two languages, N (L's husband) in three. O can read books in four. All the rest read books in one.

The children of H, W and M, L and N, F and S, read batches of similar books designed for children of their respective ages. Next year, they will move onto the next batch.

The children of G and B are grown up. One of them is married to S. The children of P & SL are grown up. One of them is O.





O reads the same book again and again, in the small bedroom he still occupies in his parents' house.

L, M, N and O would all read books by H. M has read one of H's books: N, two, plus an unpublished manuscript which he is reviewing for a literary journal. L and O have not actually read any books by H but mean to, except O, who would not. M once asked W to read a book by H and when he refused she felt an surprising sense of personal rejection.

None of the other people mentioned would, or have, read books by H.



Exes

Some people are prolific with xs. Some use a single x, some several small xxxxs. Some of them put a number of xs before their names, which are sometimes initials, so that there are more xs than anything else. Some of them put the xs after their names, which are longer than the xs: these people are more likely to use a single x. Some of the xs are unexpected, like the single x from someone who flirted with me, but who withdrew his attentions so that the persistent x seemed insincere, impertinent. Some of them are from people who use too many xxxxss and oblige me to use too many in return. Most are from friends. Few are from lovers, who tend to drop the xs when they are interested, resume them when they are serious, then drop them again when they no longer feel involved. Only one is from a person whose name is X, who I slept with once, and who decided not to see me again, which is confusing as I no longer know whether the X is his initial or a term of endearment.



MEGHAN PETRAS



MEGHAN PETRAS



MEGHAN PETRAS



GRACE JENSEN



Upon realizing how fun it was to draw penises, and very easy. I tried to draw a vagina and found myself very confused as to how to simply convey it, phallic appearance manifests easily. I practiced drawing vaginas for the next couple days. Thought I would submit a drawing from the experience. (This was taken with my phone).

Regards,
Grace



CONTRIBUTORS



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ILLUSTRATIONS PAGES 20 AND 38

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY SOPHIE COLLINS



COVER AND ENDPAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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