

Child's Replay

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‘He held his hand before his eyes and thought: this is all impossible! It is impossible that I have once known this city. Not like this.’

– Ingeborg Bachmann, *The Thirtieth Year*

‘Every case of madness means that something’s come back. The possessed – they are not possessed by what is to come forth, but what comes back. Sometimes life comes back.’

– Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*

‘Perhaps our pretences, everyone’s pretences, which in the moments when we felt naked, defenceless, seemed like play-acting and absurd, should be regarded as admirable? Or perhaps they were necessary, like the games of children who can make play-acting a way of keeping reality a long way from their weakness?’

– Doris Lessing, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*







JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

(The head, which is thought to have been wrapped in felt and loaded into an ambulance, asked to be brought closer to the window, to see the mountains.)

First go back to the hands, disgusting handwriting, digesting it, but I couldn't. Neck instead, yum yum. Not completely unrelated as he did grab me by the back of the neck with his hands, as far as I can, if my memory does not fail me, remember. A second remembrance pertains to a second time my neck was grabbed but this time around by the front, or back, not sure it even matters, so as to finally arrive at the recurring, present sensation of there being something stuck in my throat. It goes, I never ate breakfast as a child for the thought of breakfast as a child would make me into a sick child. Blackout. Why don't you just collapse already, says Grandmother. This Grandmother character is created by another character, who writes here as a character, who has never used the word character before and now wants to use it up at once, who sleeps all the time, all pussy-pussy-rolled-up in blankets and the like and probably very likely quite possibly in its own excrement. That's really what I want to see, the character says, a character's excrement! What does it look like, Grandmother asks. Shush, I am trying to see if I can shit as a character. Character-shit shouldn't be like fake shit, and it shouldn't be canned like artist's shit, no no no no: character-shit should come down hard-sounding like a piano being hammered to bits, to nothing. Beuys-beuys.

This text is written from the perspective of THE CHILD, who is abnormally scared of dying, who has inherited the motherfear of a difficult pregnancy, who, from very early on, sees motherfear on its mother's face.

When THE CHILD is alone, it is afraid of dying. Death can come anytime it is alone, since death is something that happens to someone alone in a room, in an apartment, in a garden, in a theatre, etc. That is to say that THE CHILD wants to be close, in both physical and psychological senses of the word, to its mother at all times. It is a way of avoiding death. THE CHILD hopes that death won't latch on to it, while it waits, for example, on the other side of the bathroom door for its mother to come out.

Motherfear is always displayed on THE CHILD's mother's face. Enough times a day for THE CHILD to have a motherface where its usual face should be. Alone in a room, THE CHILD looks for its own face while looking like motherface.

motherface wants daddyface to love motherface but daddyface is always sad, too sad to love motherface or THE CHILD that looks like motherface.

THE CHILD wants to say bye-bye to motherface but THE CHILD loves motherface too much to say bye-bye.

APR. 5. PM 1:05 – TV ROOM

THE CHILD is lying on its side, on the white rug that covers the laminate flooring. It stretches both its arms up and then cries. motherface crouches next to THE CHILD.

Get up, motherface says.

Give it to me, THE CHILD says.

Get up if you want to put the perfume on, motherface says.

Be careful you don't spill it, motherface says.

THE CHILD raises its torso to a sitting position. motherface gives THE CHILD the perfume bottle.

IMAGERY RESCRIPTING

The subject is first asked to describe a traumatic event. It is often the case that a single image can be distilled and isolated from it. A successful connection with this representation of trauma can be easily confirmed by a spike in the subject's anxiety levels - generally graded as at least seven out of ten, sixteen out of twenty, six out of eight, or three point five out of five.

Then, the subject is invited to alter this image as they wish, transform the scene from which this image was extracted, 'write' what should have happened instead. This new script, which can be realistic or unrealistic, should be pictured in as much detail as possible. Its events should be experienced in the here and now, and particular focus should be drawn to sensory affections. The subject is therefore instructed to

describe their desired script and its corresponding alterations in the first person and in the present tense.

Changes to the chosen scene occur almost as soon as they are desired. Common rescripting strategies include preventing what is depicted in the image from happening in the first place, imagining its onset and consequences as less serious or more compassionately and aptly dealt with, or completely altering its content by means of a fantasy script.

The success of this procedure requires the acceptance of the altered image's fictiveness, even as it is rewritten. In other words, an affective investment in this rewriting precisely as fiction is necessary for the fictional cure. Fiction makes it possible for an image to be believed in.

GODSPEED

It was looking at spaces made fresh, by her packing her things into suitcases, that those spaces were finally understood, naked.

Recap: PAIN CAN'T BE JUSTIFIED; SUCCESS AS A VISION OF COMING TO BE PART OF THE WORLD IS A FLAWED CONCEPT; HALF OF A LIFETIME WAS NOT LIVED IN SEARCH OF COMPENSATION; REMEMBER LOOSE TEA AND ALMONDS.

The sentence that was at first met with resistance comes out after a sequence of attempts at other sentences: what am I doing here, makes the mouth.

Salivating is fear.

What am I doing here, and the hand suddenly relaxes, leaving the other hand, the woman's, unconstrained at last.

(I made her cry when I said nothing would make pain make sense, that it is, in fact, always exceeding narrative. She said to me she was still trying to make it make sense, and I knew exactly why she cried.)

APR. 5. PM 1:15 – ELEVATOR LOBBY

THE CHILD walks out of the apartment's front door into the elevator lobby. It has two blue plastic suitcases, one in each hand.

They're heavy, THE CHILD says.

THE CHILD takes a couple of steps further away from the front door. It puts down the suitcases by the elevator door.

They're heavy, THE CHILD says.

They're heavy.

THE CHILD walks back towards the camera, which is recording THE CHILD from inside the apartment.

MY GIANT GOES WITH ME WHEREVER I GO

Emerson writes: 'I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle.' These two sentences make me think two things. The first is that there is a close relationship between spectacle and expiation; it takes a spectacle to atone for one's sins, and the whole idea of communion with God

unfolds on stage. The second thought is that my life, so far, has been for a spectacle. Not for itself.

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION

There are ink drawings of clocks. They are executed one after the other. Time needs to go forward. And for time to go forward, a clock's pointers need to change position. Once a minute a clock is drawn, to avoid the standstill that is a minute without a clock being drawn and therefore not a minute at all. There is only enough time to let the flowers dry. Keep drawing the clocks. Otherwise, the birthday flowers will never dry, she would say to a child, when she would lock herself in her room, pretending she had to make a phone call but actually screaming in front of the wettest of flower arrangements.

(There is also the room where I find myself now, which has been broken down and ransacked, whose wallpaper has been scraped off unevenly. At its centre, on a stool, a lump sits untouched.)

And why was a child wanted in the first place?

Because it was really all I had to work with. Child-alphabet and child-cry in the room where I find myself now, where a child becomes THE CHILD and THE CHILD waits for a narrative. But childhood is just a sensation. It is little body patterns and ways of breathing. And anal retention.

'I love the repetition. It's like you are stuck in a birth canal, refusing to enter the world - going up and down, rubbing and licking.'

Conversation with a friend. How did it go in the end? It didn't really go anywhere. I just made some small edits in some parts. I thought you wanted to start it from scratch? It's more like changing my relationship with writing, not throwing everything away. But I am confused. I am in the dark. I am going to stay in the dark for a while and trust the dark.

I draw the clocks going backwards.