

Hi loves,

Thanks for reading issue number three of The Fabricated Love Affair Art Project, the 'zine that finally acquired a name. This issues marks the transition from a 'zine that was mostly comprised of artwork and photography to one that includes more writing. It's funny, I remembered just the other day that I used to write a 'zine for my family when I was in fifth and sixth grade-only I didn't call it a 'zine back then. It was a family newsletter, more or less. All I remember was that it included the news that "aunt Jenny was put in the C-Section" when she had Noah, her first son. Frankly I'm not sure if I've evolved much since that brilliant publication, but hey this is my 'zine, I can do absolutely anything with it that I want. Right? So I thought it might be the perfect place to put writing that I'm feeling good about but not complete about. That way you can read it and let me know just what you think. Just to let you know, I'm not interested in bullshitting, folks, so if you're inspired to say anything, please let me know your honest take on it. I'm interested in being a better writer, that's why I put my work out there. So THANK YOU in advance. As always, you can contact me at katiefi@yahoo.com.

And you can read more stuff online here:

<http://www.alfabus.us/>

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xxoo K

The Constant Desire to [Vomit]

expose

disclose

divulge

vomit

purge

express

relate

leak

show

illuminate

clarify

bring (to light, to the table)

translate

write

communicate

tell

relay

connect

engage

undress

strip

This Dancer You See Before You

I once heard someone say something like, if there was no god we would create one. Kind of like if I had no one to write this letter to I might create an addressee. So I was just wondering if today you would be the stand-in.

I dance until I vomit-almost. I have to run backstage just in time, a second before the song is actually over, and I catch my mouth with a large hand. I flop in the big green armchair and let my stomach set for a moment.

"You okay?" Miss Luscious asks and

I say "fuck it, I'm fine. I just ... let go."

And Bunny looks up from her makeup mirror: "Damn girl I told you don't go so hard."

She always says that

"Sweet-potata-pie," she says, "you're the one who takes it just too far. Just past that point where it ain't funny no more."

I tell her I just can't stop, I can't get naked enough.

She says I perform it like I'm worshipping god, that's what she says, "for the love off god girl, you take your work way beyond the stage with you. Girl, you do it like you were prostrating yourself before the Christ Child."

And I think maybe I am, god. I just can't get bare enough.

Bunny says I'm always the girl who always takes it too far. Too far, too exposed, to the point where everyone begins to feel uncomfortable and no one is safe anymore behind their masks. And I think maybe its true, like it's true that I've been stripping since I was just a little girl, like five or six, you know, way before I knew what it was to stick my ass in the air all perfumed up nice and see a grown man fully naked tugging at himself behind a sheet of glass.

For as long as I can remember, I've been trying to turn myself inside out, way before I started stripping myself bare and to the bone. Always guided by this intense, unshakable desire to be known and to know, it came out in little ways-telling the truth too much, even when it made some grown-up's eyes get real wide. Letting boyfriends read my diary, to the point of sabotage. Saying the wrong thing;

it was the right thing. I had to. And the yearning doesn't leave me, I strip one layer away and still there's more. More layers and more yearning.

I don't think I'm alone in that. Each of us yearns for something: new car, new man, more money, love, sex, knowledge, something to eat. We all yearn. And, God, it hurts, because we'll never entirely get what we yearn for. Even if we do, we'll just start yearning for something else. But underneath it all, I'm just a piece of pure love, like everyone else. I'm just a burning piece of Your heart pounding out some desperate love letter.

All we're ever doing is writing those love letters. We do it in our own ways. It's not like we all put pen to paper. I mean, I'm a dancer, through and through, that's what I am, and I'll never become a writer. Not that we ever really become anything, anyway. We either look at ourselves truthfully for what we are or we don't. And the lucky ones of us, well, we love ourselves. And the unlucky: we resist, resist, resist, dress ourselves in a suit and tie, kiss our wives goodbye and busy ourselves with the task of getting older. And that's them I see almost every lunch hour. At least with them, they meet me at the most primal desire and they aren't lying about it. Neither am I.

I'm a ritual stripper, I strip every day, deeper, and this letter is stripping and each day I write the letter. My life is composed of letters. Love letters, that is, you know, cause every letter I write could be called a love letter, even if it were nothing but rage and curses up and down this yellow page. Because it's only love that brings us to show these parts of ourselves. These letters are those little ways we express our love that, almost inexplicably, marches on in the darkest of places.

Every night I'm looking for the next god to strip myself to-gods shining through every sheet of glass, gods in the dressing room putting on their onion gook. Shining through those lovers of mine, god, do I need to strip to them so they can see me just a little bit better, just a little more clear.

It almost kills me, how much I want it, how I can't have it. To get that naked. I mean really naked. All these gods shining through the glass touching their bodies we're just worshipping each other in these little costumes we're

forced to wear but what does it look like beneath the flesh? I ask you, are you the only one that really sees us, givers of love as images of god as full and as exposed as we could ever be?

I think, maybe, underneath all this skin, I am that series of love letters, man. The question is how widely distributed she will be, who will be the next voyeur. Who will take part in the conversation with this body of mine?

I know there are the momentary objects: the Eyes that look, the hands that reach out to touch. We commune, those hands and Eyes with my ass and my cunt. These are my momentary objects of love and if they did not exist, if I were not up on this stage each and every night I would strip myself elsewhere and to some other object. I've been doing it since before I can remember. And if there were no object of love I would create one, I would create the conversation and the conversation is with you.

Each night I choose, I choose a witness for my conversation with you, god. And this mouth can only come from this body that longs to strip itself; it is so perfectly imperfect and yet I can only speak from it. But somehow the more I strip, the more masks I find; they are seemingly endless. This one revered or this one profane.

I once wore the mask of god, did you know, on another stage.

The dancer you see before you, stripped naked before your eyes, used to be an assistant minister in a Lutheran church. That was way back before I knew what it was like to see an erect penis whimpering at the glass, a perfect growl on its face I swear could crash it down if it just pushed harder.

I used to stand before the congregation, my body covered in a shroud of off-white, and chant those notes that were so beautifully noncomplex. I never believed in the Virgin Birth, but I believed in Love. I always thought that was the most important thing. I never thought it mattered much if one story was true or false. It didn't matter to the love letter I was writing with my body and my voice. I never believed that Jesus rose again but I knew he was a great teacher and I would love my enemies as myself. I turn the other cheek. I do not believe in hell or heaven and I do not believe in good or evil-we are all good and evil, we

are all heaven and hell and we are all divine and I will love, love, love. I thought, I really thought, that would be enough. Cause I knew deep down I had the truth there, in the deepest places of my heart, and if I sang pretty enough, my love would just shine through.

Towards the end of the service everyone would come kneel at the banister and The blood of Christ shed for thee, blood of Christ shed for thee. I said that part, over and over, one by one, feeding them from one cup, looking each of them straight in the eye before they turned their faces down. I always thought it would be okay. I thought it was enough to believe in the power of people meeting together, communing together, and loving each other together, so I wouldn't have to believe that it was actually the blood of Christ. I thought that I had stripped it all down behind my mask, I'd stripped it down as bare to the bones as it could go, and I looked at these pieces of You at the banister, as though I could really see them, all their love crammed into ugly bodies. I loved them that much more. As though they were all kneeling there naked before me, underneath hideous floral print dresses and sports jackets. They'd put on all their nicest clothes for You but You didn't even see their clothes. I don't think You even saw their naked flesh; You saw something even deeper than that.

One Sunday my entire family came to watch me, my mother and all her sisters and her brother Robert and his daughter, my cousin and his wife. And I was performing up there, me as assistant pastor.

I sang perfectly, I sang it the best I've ever sung it.

Everyone came up to me afterwards and said you did a beautiful job and I said thank you.

But not my uncle Robert; he saw me. He saw everything, not just the love shining out of me, but the masks, too. He and I, well, we were always just a little bit too similar, I guess. Because he took me aside when no one else was looking. I'll never forget how he gave me a wry smile and a wink and said, now that was a good job; you really had us duped.

That's when the yearning really started, I think. Before, it had just been the child in me, still close to You, wanting to shine my light as bright as I could. There was a child inside me dreaming big, big, bigger and small,

smaller, tiny; everything all at the same time wanting to break out of this body. But something became so clear that day. I could finally see the yearning for what it was. I was so ashamed of what Robert had discovered that I vowed I would never perform again. That I'd never ever wear another mask, that I'd strip my soul deeper each day until I got to what I really yearned for.

That next year I left home for good and I never went back to church.

My cousin Shelly, though, somehow she could just do it so well. When she left home she started studying the Bible harder than ever. She led Bible-study on campus and she began to use language I'd never heard from her before, like struggling with my faith and walking in the light and following the Good Word and I can't even remember everything she tried to teach me but she loved, loved, loved me, even though she probably believed I might burn in Hell if I didn't accept Jesus Christ as my savior.

I wonder after all this time, how she loves me like she does. That girl just never lets go. No, she wouldn't. Even when I told her why don't you just fuck a man first, try it out, before signing on for life? Take him for a test drive. She never stopped loving me even when I looked her straight in the eye and told her I didn't give a shit about heaven or hell cause I didn't believe in either. She even kept loving her father after he told her that her that bible study was distracting when he was sending her to college to learn something valuable. That was a struggle, she said, that her own father didn't support her in her journey, and I shrugged, wanting to know what to say.

When Shelly was almost done with college her father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And you know what Shelly did she took me on a camping trip, just the two of us into the wilderness alone.

That's when I told her that I didn't believe in Easter and I didn't think it much mattered anyway, that wasn't the point to me anyhow.

And she just looked at me but she loved me anyway.

I remember I asked her again, "don't you want to have sex before marriage, why would you want to wait, it's such a beautiful thing to share with someone else, just as good as a good conversation."

And she said, "no, I want to find someone who is on my path of faith, who will walk next to me, hand in hand, both of us facing towards god." But she was crying cause she was looking for that person and she couldn't find him.

"I have so much love to give," she said, "and I just want someone to take it."

I said, "I know that you do."

We did not fight, her and I, until the very end, over something silly, like finding the right campsite.

I remember asking her, "Don't you just yearn to break through all the bullshit, Shelly?" I said. "Make your own fucking decisions-can't you decide anything for yourself?"

She said, "you're so free and I wish I could be that free."

"What can I do," I asked her, "what can I do to make all this pain stop?"

"You can't do anything for me. Because all I want," she said in a tone harder than I'd ever heard out of her mouth, "is stop making Dad have cancer."

I looked at her and wished to God that I could.

Five months later she called me as I was just coming off stage and Bunny handed me the phone and said "she knows where you work?"

I said "yeah, but she loves me anyway."

Shelly told me to fly to home because Robert was going to die.

I got on a plane the very next day and my mother picked me up and we drove straight to the hospital, and there was Robert more thin than I'd ever seen him.

"I'm so afraid of pancreatic cancer." Those were some of the first words right out of his mouth. It hurt so bad because I had always thought that when someone was about to die that they would be ready.

He came home with us the next day, so we could be with him as he died. And all of my family was there and we held his hand for four days straight. I learned out that Robert had been going to Catholic Church with his wife and his daughter after he was diagnosed with cancer. And I found out that he'd finally converted to Catholicism a few days before so that he could receive last rites before he died.

So when he told us goodbye we called up the priest and that Catholic priest came over and performed last rites.

Shelly's friend said he'd burn in hell anyway, cause Catholics don't go to heaven. Shelly didn't even say fuck you bitch but I would have. No, Shelly just kept on loving I guess.

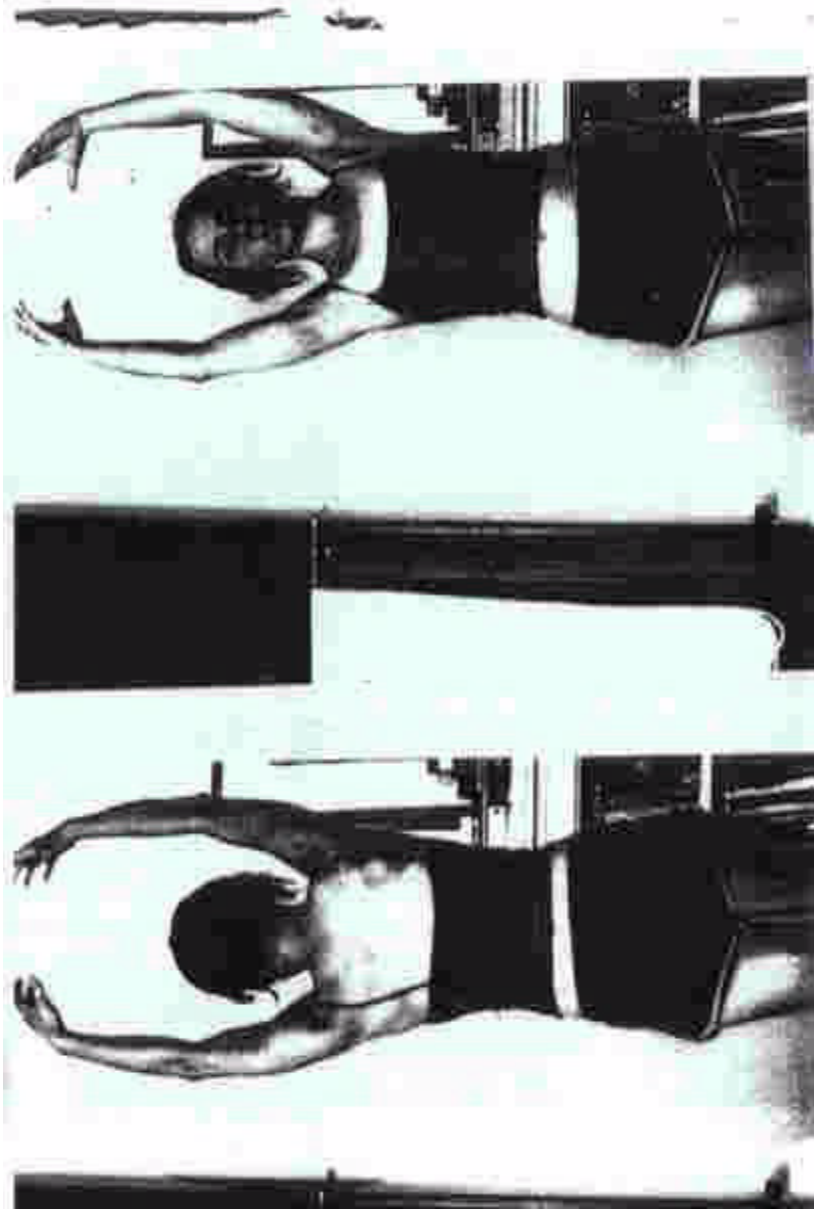
I watched that priest save him, all the while just winking inside myself. I smiled and loved him more because I knew then, I knew, that it was all okay.

To perform and to be at peace. Because in this life we are powerless-except in our ritual and our love. So however we would do it, he and I knew this conversation with you, god, cause we just want to live, each of us, if we can, in this eternal moment of ritual, this letter of ritual, this dance of ritual.

I hear the opening of my last song for the night and I climb back on stage.

She's already here, waiting for me, I see her at the very back of the room. She hovers just inside the door, her eyes clear windows. I dance harder. I want her to know. I glimpse her again, I pretend not to look, but I glimpse just a little bit of her when I can. I think I catch a smile on her face. I want her to know.

I might just be reborn through this dance, and I'm just dancing a letter to you god, I'm dancing this letter to you. And I will dance in this eternal moment for as long as I can possibly can. I'll push it harder this time 'til I do, vomit it out all over the stage and the glass. And the faces that peer through. The dance of the pain of existence with its absolute joy, its absolute pain. Because I can glimpse it, that's why I smile so big and cry all at the same time and it hurts so fucking badly to be that beautiful and that small and that large and everything in between, like the little girl dreams of becoming big big big balloon in my little bed, getting larger, getting smaller, uncontrollably switching back and forth, always both, always everything in between.



I Ask the Impossible

Ana Castillo

I ask the impossible: love me forever.
Love me when all desire is gone.
Love me with the single-mindedness of a monk.
When the world in its entirety,
and all that you hold sacred, advise you
against it: love me still more.
When rage fills you and has no name: love me.
When each step from your door to your job tires you-
love me; and from job to home again.

Love me when you're bored-
when every woman you see is more beautiful than the last,
or more pathetic, love me as you always have:
not as admirer or judge, but with
the compassion you save for yourself
in your solitude.

Love me as you relish your loneliness,
the anticipation of your death,
mysteries of the flesh,
as it tears and mends.
Love me as your most treasured childhood memory-
and if there is none to recall-
imagine one, place me there with you.
Love me withered as you loved me new.

Love me as if I were forever-
and I will make the impossible
a simple act,
by loving you, loving you as I do.

Dear [god],

there are many spiders here in my house; they are good luck. I can tell that they are a beautiful part of your creation. My neck hurts today, it is stiff from dancing, but still I want to dance to this music and worship it with my body; my body reverent to the things it can do.

I danced this morning until I almost vomited, to a track of music I never heard before this morning. Maybe it is the luck of the spider to find this song. It is not often that I dance this particular dance, not often that my body dances to the point of purging, but when it does ... my god, when it does. It is a dance I have been dancing since I was about eighteen. I remember the first time I danced it, I was home from college, had gotten my wisdom teeth removed of all things, I was nauseous from codeine and I began to dance to amazing grace, ani difranco's version. It started slow, my body crumpled on the ground, then an opening, stretching out, warming up. As the music built, it took me up into it, this ferocious dance, where my body is thrown about by the music, dancing the dance of a marionette, hung by lines that pull me beyond my control, this way and that. Amazing Grace exhausted me into submission. When the song was over I ran into our downstairs bathroom and vomited into the toilet.

This morning I finish reading The Myth of the Eternal Return. I read of the mystic, the primitive man who lives a continual present. There is something profoundly valuable in this paradigm, I think. If we were to give no attention to it, time would cease to exist. Like

the dancer, repeating the same dance, his desire to refuse history, to confine himself to an indefinite repetition of archetypes, testifies to his thirst for the real and his terror of "losing" himself. He will not let himself be overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of profane existence—profane, in this case, is the world of non-existence, non world. It is the world that I glimpse with my mind's eye and panic—I panic at this glimpse of nonexistence because I yearn for this constant conversation with god, this constant moment of letter writing with you, god.

The ritual is dance, the ritual is eating, harvest, sex. None of these are profane, god, this is the real stuff from which we are made. And I will dance in this eternal moment for as long as I can possibly do it. The dance of the pain of existence with its absolute joy, its absolute schmerz because you glimpse it, being forced by something much larger—that's why you can smile largely and cry at the same time and it hurts so fucking badly to be that beautiful and that small and that large and everything in between. It reminds me of the dreams I had as a child, growing larger, shrinking smaller, uncontrollably switching back and forth. Tortured, tortured by this image.

I experienced something like this morning once before—on Prince Edward Island, when I was 16 years old and I saw the sun and the moon in the sky at the same time and three colors juxtaposed like giant bands across the sky, the primary colors of our entire existence and there I was, laughing and crying all at the same time, falling into the sand, with the most profound

joy and the most profound pain of being, that I could not be larger, more beautiful, become the world somehow. That I could not dissolve time.

If we were to conceive of the dissolution of time then this constant conversation with god might finally be illuminated, the continual, eternal conversation with the divine that we take part in. Wordsworth called them Spots of Time

CS Lewis, also, had his finger on this. CS Lewis said something like, time is the essence of our lives; yet we are constantly surprised by its existence. This would be strange, if it were not for the fact that we are destined to live outside of time.

Perhaps I dance in an attempt to live outside of time. I cannot do it through Christianity as Lewis could. It seems that Christianity is far too rooted in fear, avoiding those signposts of sin, avoiding false gods, steering clear of some conception of the dark. Christianity almost appears to be devoted to dying, to ceasing to live on this earth, so that we can more quickly get to a place of no time, to the conversation with god. But we do live on this earth and I want to live here, I want to converse. And I believe that I do converse, we all do, in every moment. I choose life, I suppose, I choose life, for now. And I choose this mode of conversation, somehow. And I will not look at any part of this life as false or as a signpost of sin-everything on this earth seems far too divine to be not god. And if life is not divine then let's perform, perform as we never have before, this dancing, perform life with passion and live as we never have.

It's difficult - beyond words - to capture
how beautiful how joyous it is to listen
to music. My favorites are

others
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about

torturous wanting so badly

Whenever I thought of something to write, I immediately thought of his reading it, and the thought of this man, [GOD], reading something I had written only made me want to write it more; I could see him sitting (not in any particular place) and reading what I had written and telling me if he liked it, or never mentioning it again if he didn't, and the point wasn't to hear him say that he liked it (though it was better than anything in the whole world) but only to know that he had read it, and why that should have been so is beyond words to me right now, or just to put into words now (and it was only through words that I knew him) would make it either true, or incomplete, like love, I suppose; why do I love you, why do you love me? Almost all of my life as a writer, everything I wrote I expected [GOD] to read, and so when I first heard of my brother dying and immediately knew I would write about him, I thought of [GOD], but [GOD] had just died too ... And so I wrote about the dead for the dead, and all along as I was writing I thought, When I am done with this I shall never write for [GOD] again, this will be the end of anything I shall write for [GOD]; but now I don't suppose that will be so.

For a very long time I had the perfect reader for what I would write and place in the unscathed books; the course of the books has not died, it only comes alive again and again in different forms and other segments. The perfect reader has died, but I cannot see any reason not to write for him, anyway, for I can sooner get used to never hearing from him—the perfect reader—than to not being able to write for him at all.

Jamaica Kincaid, My Brother