

GIVE MY REGRETS
ALEXANDRA BISCHOFF

MY BODY HAS MORE OFTEN BEEN INVITED THAN MY MIND. THIS USED TO ANGER ME DEEPLY. THESE DAYS, HOWEVER, ANY INVITATION AT ALL ENGENDERS ANXIETY. I WISH THAT I COULD JUST BE LEFT TO BED. [1]

AS A CHILD, I WAS SICKLY LIKE CLOCKWORK. STRANDED IN MY DUVET AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH, MY TEACHERS WOULD EXTEND CONCERN. LATER IN LIFE, A RECURRING INFECTION PLAGUED MY URINARY TRACT FOR MONTHS AT A TIME. A SUBCONSCIOUS PROTEST? A DESIRE FOR ALONE? [2] INTERSTITIAL CYSTITIS? DEPRESSION CALLS FOR COVERS, TOO. AN EXTENDED LEAVE. CARPAL TUNNEL FLARES SO THAT HOLDING A BOOK PULSATES, PAINS. [3] NOW, A FIBROUS POLYP SLOWLY WRAPS ITSELF IN THE FAT OF MY RIGHT BUTTOCK. IT'S ONLY YET THE SIZE OF A LARGE GREEN GRAPE; I OUGHT TO LIE STILL, ELSE IT'LL FILL OUT.

THOUGH MY RELATIVELY ABLE-BODY LEAVES BED OFTEN—AND THIS IS A PRIVILEGE—I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF I WOULD BE ALIVE AT AGE THIRTY, TWO-HUNDRED-YEARS AGO.

THE FEMME PRESENTING FIGURE MODEL FROM 19TH C FRANCE NOW ECHOES AS CLASSIC. [4] PICTURED SENSUAL, INVITING, SHE IS MOST READILY WITHOUT A NAME. IN REALITY, AN ARTIST, SHE STRUGGLED. PERHAPS ACHIEVED SOME SMALL SUCCESSES, AGAINST ALL ODDS. [5] STILL, BETTER KNOWN FOR HER ANONYMOUS BREASTS.

I WONDER IF SHE WOULD HAVE RATHER STAYED IN BED? THE WORKING CLASS CANNOT, I KNOW, THIS WAS AND IS A FELONIOUS FANTASY. WHAT ARE WE IF NOT AN ILLNESS FORCED TO SPREAD? [6] SHE, AN IRONIC IMAGE OF WEALTH AT REST. THE ONLY TIME AFFORDED MUST BE INDELIBLY MIRED IN PERFECT STILLNESS.

REFUSING TO MOVE IS PAINFUL TOO. YOU BEGIN TO BURN INSIDE. WEIGHT POOLS HERE TO CAUSE CRACKING THERE. AND INTERNAL REPETITIONS—INTERRUPTIONS—ARE TRAPPING. TURN A CORNER IN THE HEDGE MAZE, BURROW THROUGH THE BRUSH, FIND YOURSELF UNWELCOME IN YOUR OWN MIND. UNINVITING. AND THEN, MENTALLY CARESS EACH ACHING TENDON, BONE, TO LOVE THE FLESH THAT'S A SMALL FLAME HERE, THERE. ACHING. FEEL AN INVISIBLE CHILL AND THE BODY RESPONDS. DESPITE HOW REPRESENTATIONS MIGHT READ, HARD NIPPLES ARE NOT ALWAYS REACTIONS TO EROS.

ESCAPE AND REPOSE AND ENCLOSURE. WHAT OSCILLATION.

ONCE, A MAN I MUCH ADMIRE WISHED ALOUD THAT I SHOULD SHOW MORE LEADERSHIP. AFTER ALL, MORE ASCENDANCY FOR ME MEANT LESS PRESSURE FOR HIM. BUT IT WASN'T RIGHT. DIDN'T BEAR CORRECT. SO I STUNG AND FELT TO FREEZE. WOULD HE INTERPRET TENACITY IN MY UNMOVING, MAYBE? MARVELL AT MY INITIATIVE THROUGH REFUSAL? BRILLIANCE IN SILENCE? DO I WANT TO BE INVITED AT ALL? IT DOESN'T MATTER.

INSTEAD OF RETURNING MY REGRETS, YOU COULD STAY HERE AND WATCH ME AGE. [7] DON'T WORRY—I'M FAIRLY WEAK AND TIRED AND POOR, SO IT SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG. [8]

NOTES

[1] WHERE DID THE FLUTE GIRL GO, AFTER THEY HAD SENT HER AWAY (JONATHAN ET AL.)?

[2] HOW LOWLY, THIS LOVE I HAVE BEEN GIVEN, NOT OF HEAVENLY APHRODITE, BUT HER COMMON TWIN (JONATHAN ET AL.). IT BORES ME HOW INSISTENT THIS LOVE CAN BE, ESPECIALLY WHEN LOVERS THINK I OUGHT TO LIE IN WAITING.

[3] READING IS NOT WHAT I AM SUPPOSED TO DO, ANYWAYS. IT COULD MAKE ME SICKER THAN I ALREADY AM (EBERDREICH 11).

[4] THE MALE FIGURE MODEL USED TO BE THE IDEAL NUDE: HE STOOD IN FOR HUMANITY; NOW, HOWEVER, WHEN WE THINK OF ART HISTORY, WE THINK OF SOFTLY SMILING WOMEN (WALLER 42).

[5] JOANNA HIFFERDAN AND VICTORINE MEURENT ARE TWO SUCH EXAMPLES, THOUGH MANY MORE WE KNOW MUCH LESS ABOUT; LAURE, FOR ONE, THE BLACK MODEL WHO POSED FOR MANET'S "OLYMPIA" (1863) (JIMENEZ 315).

[6] WOMEN OF THE UPPER CLASS OF THE 19TH C WERE CONSIDERED SICK, WHILE WOMEN OF THE WORKING CLASS WERE SICKENING (6). AS SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF GERMS BECAME MORE POPULARLY KNOWN, WORKING CLASS WOMEN—WHO LARGELY WORKED AS DOMESTIC SERVANTS OR IN CLOTHING FACTORIES—WERE THOUGHT LIABLE TO SPREAD THEIR CONSTANT SICKNESS TO THE UPPER CLASS AT HOME (EBERDREICH AND ENGLISH 24-25).

[7] YOU CAN HEAR ME AGE TOO, IF YOU'RE QUIET ENOUGH (JENKINS AND NAPPI 10).

[8] THE PERFORMANCE CONCLUDES AFTER 90 MINUTES: THE TIME IT TAKES TO WATCH THE SUN RISE AND SET ON THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION (JENKINS AND NAPPI 66).

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AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

0:05:11

A SILENT NON - ENTITY CALLED...

0:06:11

WOMEN WERE EXCLUDED FROM ANY IMPORTANT POSITION IN SOCIAL OR EMOTIONAL LIFE.

0:07:58

NO, YOU MISTOOK MY MEANING. UM... YOU'RE ALL TEACHERS ARE YOU? [INDISCERNIBLE] YOU'RE ALL TEACHERS? [INDISCERNIBLE] GENTLEMAN! WHAT DO I DO? WHAT DO I DO? DON'T DO ANYTHING, JUST BE. RIGHT. WRONG. HA HA HA HA. [COUGH]

0:10:32

BOTH HERE AND HEREAFTER.

0:13:37

IT'S FELT FOR WOMEN.

0:16:22

TO YIELD TO A BAD MAN IN A BAD WAY IS WRONG.

0:18:23

[BURP, BURP, BURP, BURP] STOP THAT... ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. [HICCOPI] I THINK I WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR INDISPOSITION.

0:21:14

IT IS THE BUSINESS OF A GOOD PRACTITIONER TO GRATIFY THE, THE SOUND AND HEALTHY PARTS OF THE BODY AND TO THWART THE UNSOUND AND DISEASED PARTS. AND THIS IS THE BUSINESS OF WHAT WE CALL MEDICINE, ISN'T IT? THE, THE, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRINCIPALS OF LOVE THAT WORK IN THE BODY WITH REGARD TO REPLETION AND EVACUATION. [INHALE] YES.

0:24:46

DID I SPEAK OF THOSE? OH, WELL, THE ELEMENTS OF WHICH I DIDN'T SPEAK, UM... UM...

0:25:45

UM... LET'S SEE. FROM THESE EPIDEMICS MANY OTHER VARIOUS
AILMENTS ARE APT TO SPRING. FLOODS, HAIL AND BLIGHT ARE THE
RESULT OF THESE, THESE MUTUAL DISORDERLY AGGRESSIONS.

0:26:34 - 26:59

ASTRONOMY? ASTRONOMY? YES. UM... SO THEN, LOVE IN GENERAL... SO
THEN... YES, THIS IS THE WINDING UP, ISN'T IT? VERY NEARLY, THANK
GOD. SO THEN, SO THEN...

0:28:02 - 28:19

O:WELL, IT MAY BE THAT ... I'VE OMITTED SEVERAL POINTS. BUT IF SO,
I PROMISE YOU IT HAS BEEN UNWITTINGLY.

0:28:36 - 28:49

HOWEVER... UM... VERY BORING SPEECH. OH—DID YOU THINK SO? MUM.
VERY BORING INDEED.

0:38:19

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA! [CLAPPING] WELL, WE CAN ALL LAUGH! IT'S
NOT REALLY QUITE SO DAFT AS IT SOUNDS.

0:39:23

SO IT'S NOT SO MAD AFTER ALL.

0:40:17

ANYWAY...

0:42:22

BY FLEEING FROM OLD AGE AND ASSOCIATING WITH THE YOUNG.

0:43:04

FOR LOVE DWELLS IN THE SOFTEST PLACES. THE SOFTEST PLACES OF ALL.

0:50:58

IS SIMPLY A LACK. A QUESTION MARK, IF YOU LIKE. A BLANK OR A
NEGATIVE.

0:52:31

HE IS REDUCED TO IGNORANCE BY A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN WE NEVER SEE.

1:17:27

OH... HELLO EVERYBODY, I'M HERE!

1:17:51

SOME YOKEL MISDIRECTED ME.

1:18:05

HAH HA HA. [WHEEZE] OH HA. [HEAVY BREATHING] OH. OH HA. HA.
HELLO. HOOO. [EXHALE] OH. OH. GOOD GRIEF. OH, HELLO, H - YES. OH, I'M
AFRAID I... I DIDN'T REALLY GET A CHANCE TO, OH... [EXHALE] OH...
[EXHALE] LET'S SEE NOW, HE HA HA. [EXHALE] OH. [EXHALE] AH.
[EXHALE]

1:19:08

HA. WELL I, WELL, I. ... YEAH, WELL YOU'D BETTER GO OUT AND COME
BACK AGAIN DRUNK WITH TWO FLUTE GIRLS. UGH.

1:19:51

AND WE SEND THE GIRLS AWAY.

1:20:17

AND THEN OH... OH YES.

1:20:41 - 1:20:53

AH, I MEAN OH, I MEAN AH, I CAN'T READ ALL THIS! I MEAN, LISTEN...

1:21:06 - 1:21:11

AH - HOO, HOO, AND THEN OH...

1:26:00

AND ALSO WANTING TO SEE IF SOCRATES WOULD MOVE OR STAY THERE
ALL NIGHT.