

YOUR LOVE IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF LOVE: AN EXPERI- MENTAL MULTILOGUE

Irmgard Emmelhainz

Love, like meaning, is out on the open road, but like poetry, it is difficult. It requires talent, endurance, and skilful formulation, because of its many stations. It is not enough to love, for that is one of nature's magical acts, like rainfall and thunder. It takes you out of yourself into the other's orbit and then you have to fend for yourself. It is not enough to love, you have to know how to love. Do you know how? You cannot answer, because you cannot relive the ecstasies that shook you and scattered you all over the lilac's escapade, electrified you and tortured you with the scorching taste of honey. You cannot recall the liveliest and sweetest modes of death; when your "I" left you for your woman, and you encountered your self, fresh as a ripe fruit, in her.

Mahmoud Darwish¹

My only way to tell you, what I could not then, is to try to understand it your way: "Our global economy simply does not work. We have to find something new."

It is equally hard to learn to live without you.

Maya Borg²

EROS AND SEMIOCAPITALISM: THE LOSS OF THE OTHER, THE END OF LOVE?

According to Franco Berardi, the political battlefields under the current "semiocapitalist" regime are sensibility and eroticism. Sensibility is the capacity to understand non-verbal and non-verbalizable signals, the faculty to discern the indiscernible, which is too subtle to be digitalized. Sensibility is at the core of empathy because understanding amongst humans always takes place at the epidermic level. Sensibility, however, has been under systemic attack by capitalism: through the precarization of life and the fragmentation of vital time, social life has been subjected to competition, bringing about generalized dis-sympathy, isolation, and solitude, fuelled by an intensified exploitation of our brains. It is argued that new information and communication technologies block the transmission of values and disturb physical intimacy, as present, face-to-face communication is more and more rare, and language is reduced to unambiguous code or information. Also symptomatic of this is the fact that digital communication devices such as Skype render eye-to-eye contact impossible and relationships ambiguous, and that smartphones guess in advance what you are going to write in a message. We could further tie the crisis of sensibility to the disappearance of meaning from the landscape: the body of the other appears as an object imbued with sameness, instead of a mystery. The appearance of the body-as-object means the erosion of the other (as *autrui*), the erasure or degradation of its alterity. The consequence of this is the encounter of a narcissistic "I" with another that becomes a mirror to merely confirm one's own ego, thereby trapping the narcissist subject within the logic of recognition.³ If the other is perceived as a mere sexual object, that "original distance," which is at the beginning of the human being and which constitutes the transcendental condition of the possibility of alterity, is eroded. Alternatively, the erotic relationship presupposes asymmetry and the exteriority of the other, an "original distance" that is inherent to alterity and which

impedes the reification of the other as an “it.” In his *Fragments of a Lover’s Discourse*, Roland Barthes posits “atopy”—the uniqueness and irreducibility of the loved being—at the core of the erotic relationship. Atopy means that the other is the figure of my truth, because “the other whom I love is unique, a singular image which has miraculously come to correspond to the speciality of my desire.”⁴ The lack of atopy, and thus the lack of seduction of the atopic other, is derived from the fact that contemporary culture effaces difference and discontinuity by rendering everything continuous and the same; therefore, the otherness of the other is lost in favour of consumable differences. The other as sexual object is no longer a “you”; thus without alterity, the other can only be consumed.

While the atopic other is a desired body, desire is indissociable from utterance, and the inability to know the other as *autrui* also presupposes the blockage of utterance and the effacement (or standardization) of a singular



Silvia Gruner, *Erorchid* (2015). Courtesy of the artist

terrain, a site for exchanging language and non-verbalizable signs. For Chris Kraus, the effacement of utterance and the blockage of language imply illness:

a lot of sadness—feeling so abandoned and exposed. It’s like the world is flat & what lies around the edges of it is a hyperspace of dense emotion w/sadness at its core. I know it’s possible to leave & not to come back & I

don’t know anything about you—don’t know where or who you are.⁵

Here, not being able to know the other (“I don’t know anything about you—don’t know where or who you are”) is linked to sadness and vulnerability: “dense emotion with sadness at its core” is indicative of a landscape emptied out of meaning. The image drawn by Kraus of a flat world with sadness at its centre, surrounded by a hyperspace of sad passions, is not unrelated to the current massive epidemic of panic, anxiety, depression, psychic suffering, and nervous exhaustion that Berardi has diagnosed. Furthermore, in his view, this epidemic is a consequence of the collapse of sensibility and dis-sympathy, grounded on the inability to know the other and her body, of the loss of the symbolic and metaphoric function of language, of the disappearance of mediation (as a shared space for symbolic exchange), and the transformation of mediation into a standardized format.

But beyond the seemingly looming end of love, eros comes back with a vengeance. Eros is needed, because love without eros degenerates to mere sensation, endless arousal and stimulation, emotion and excitement without orgasm or consequence. Emphatic thought begins for the first time under the impulse of eros. It is necessary to have been a lover, a friend, to be able to think, to communicate, to build.⁶

LOVE AS AN ADDRESS TO *AUTRUI*

The loss of the atopia of the other and of meaning from the landscape, as well as the impossibility of a shared site for symbolic exchange or its standardization, do not mean that desire and love have been lost: desire can be fabricated anywhere. *Vulnerable narcissism* is systemic and the condition of possibility for the medium of love. Vulnerability is at the basis of the speech act summoning the other as the beloved. To love, as we will see, is an address to *autrui* in which the “I” transcends narcissism to inscribe itself as consciousness toward the other, in a gesture that draws a possible common

future. The site for the address (its medium) is a shared, transitory, mental and physical site. The speech act “I love you” is not face-to-face communication but an inscription in which the “I” draws a common territory with *autrui*, summoning it as the beloved one, making a promise for something that is albeit uncertain. In the speech act, the address is spatialized as distance is



Rosemarie Trockel, *Replace Me* (2009). Courtesy of the artist and Sprüth Magers Galerie, Berlin

effaced to create a common site to exchange verbal and non-verbal signs and movement, where the I and the other transform each other and expand:

We change ourselves into that which we love, and yet remain ourselves. Then we would like to thank the beloved, but find nothing that would do it adequately. We can only be thankful to ourselves. Love transforms gratitude into faithfulness to ourselves and into an unconditional faith in the Other. Thus love steadily expands in its most intimate secret. Closeness here is existence in the greatest distance from the Other—the distance that allows nothing to dissolve—but rather presents the “thou” in the transparent, but “incomprehensible,” revelation of the “just there.” That the presence of the Other breaks into our own life—this is what no feeling can fully encompass.⁷

In Marguerite Duras’s *Les mains vides* (1979), to say “I love you” is the zero act of communication embodied by the imprints of hands in prehistoric caves. Through these “empty hands,” humanity transpires as a mark that is perpetually reinscribed (for 30,000 years!) in a singular form of address (in the film’s images, in the hands, in the voice-over). *Les mains vides* shows images of Paris shot from a moving car early in the morning, accompanied by a voice-over read by Duras, in which we hear:

Je t’aime plus loin que toi
J’aimerai quiconque entendra que je crie que je t’aime
Trente mille ans
J’appelle
J’appelle celui qui me répondra
Je veux t’aimer je t’aime
Depuis trente mille ans je crie devant la mer le spectre blanc
Je suis celui qui criait qu’il t’aimait, toi⁸

The film makes reference to images of “negative hands” that have been imprinted in prehistoric caves in Southern France and Northern Spain; the hands are sometimes red, but mostly blue and black, and to date, the practice of their making remains enigmatic. In the film, the site of the address (through the voice-over and the touching hand) that summons the other as a beloved one is the cave that functions as a metaphor for the cinematic medium—the blank surface upon which the image, the utterance, and the hand is inscribed. *Les mains négatives* function as an address (through touch and a speech act) in which a “you” is identified but without any given identity: “I love you” is addressed to *quiconque entendra*. This “whoever hears” is singular and plural at the same time, inviting *whomever*, through a performative enunciation, to enter a common space for intimacy (the cave). Therefore, the negative hand, through a gesture of figuring a self, itself, addresses us in an appeal for a communication, establishing a shared site, a medium, a channel for communication and being together.⁹ Communication here is not exchange, reciprocity, or interlocution, but the

gesture of leaving a trace, preparing the common site by withdrawing from it and at the same time performing an invitation while demanding a response. The condition of possibility of the gesture, moreover, is also immemorial vulnerability: “For thirty thousand years I have cried out in front of the sea of the white spectre.” There is both uncertainty about who will embody the *quiconque*, as well as in the summoning of the other to a possible future-site in common.

I CALL FOR THE ONE THAT WILL ANSWER
I LOVE YOU

The closer we come to enjoyment, the greater our need to defend against it—to defend our putative sovereignty against the negativity that empties it out.
Lauren Berlant¹⁰

You meet by chance, an impersonal disagreement brings you together; he already knows he loves you, but it takes you a while to realize that he is what is vulgarly called your “Yang.” He pounces you against the stove, and you go to unbeknown places of jouissance, exchange poetry, explore each other and discover there is a line connecting both of your hearts keeping you safe. You encounter plenitude and bliss, you see diaphanous transparency in each other. You light each other up and create a secret pocket to furnish the love.

Too quickly, love and desire overflow the pocket. You realize the love is impossible so you try to disconnect the line, but it is too painful: the disconnection feels against nature, he tries to pull his end of the line with a hunched body. For him there was a threshold to be transgressed, and you underwent a mutation together of the kind that enables futures. Is it not better abort than to be barren?¹¹ For a while you pull the line to and fro; you express desire and are punished—he fades out momentarily. Two mutually giving cerebral hardons (brainsex). A gift, you had touched the sacred, a self-fulfilling prophecy:

When man
enters woman

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like the surf biting the shore
again and again,
and the woman opens her mouth in pleasure
and her teeth gleam
like the alphabet
Logos appears milking a star,
and the man
inside of woman
ties a knot
so that they will
never again be separate
and the woman
climbs into flower
and swallows its stem
and Logos appears
and unleashes their rivers.
This man,
this woman
with their double hunger
have tried to reach through
the curtain of God
and briefly they have,
though God,
in His perversity
unties the knot.¹²

One day you dream that you are naked and about to ask him to finger-fuck you; you never get to place your demand because you are being continuously interrupted by a thousand people coming in between the two of you. The dream becomes a fact. The site for the overblown love-pocket disappears, and you realize that neither a poem, nor an email, nor a million words could describe what you had. What is the word? You read: blissful love can make you sick or crazy. Hurting until you are neither you nor the person that came to be lit up by him, you realize that he moved you at the biochemical, organic, molecular level. You struggle to produce large amounts of endorphins, to make up for the lack, but that is not the problem. You shed so many tears that you wonder if you’re undergoing a medical condition. The acupuncturist confirms that your whole organism is in a state of shock. Sadness drives you toward a self-destructive trip: you fuck yourself up on booze, on pussy, on hash, on work, on trips. You get hooked to We-Vibe 4 Plus,

which lets strangers in other cities make you go from their Smartphones. Take a lover or two, he said, it will make things easier (*un clavo saca otro clavo*¹³—and you go for many *clavos*).
You follow recommendations from a website specializing on getting over heartbreak: cut your hair, see lots of friends, try to meet new people, set yourself a new challenge. And yet nothing provides consolation and you feel that this wound has gone deeper than all the other wounds: shattered, all the scars are freshly ripped open from within. To find consolation, you tell yourself that he is trying to figure out whether he is still part of the project in which he has taken refuge from where you went together, from what he has become in you.

Equivocar el camino
es llegar a la *nieve*
y llegar a la *nieve*
es pacer durante veinte siglos las hierbas de los cementerios.
Equivocar el camino
es llegar a la mujer,
la mujer que no teme la luz,
la mujer que no teme a los gallos
y los gallos que no saben cantar sobre la *nieve*.¹⁴

THE MEDIUM OF THE ADDRESS AND
MALADRESSE

Love is presence and deixis: we are reached out to and touched through an address that implies making oneself present. The referent is neither stable nor transcendental, but transparent and singular: *te desesito*¹⁵ here and now. The other is absent as a referent, but present as an allocution: you are here because I am addressing you.¹⁶ The person whom one addresses may not be there yet, or has shifted sites. In that case, the problem is *maladresse* (or bad address, to clumsily, wrongly address someone) because the space or support that enables the address (the message) may be wrong, gone, or yet to come.

In Miranda July’s film *You, Me and Everyone We Know* (2005), the main character explores the disconnection between an utterance and

its support as the cause of psychic suffering, different possibilities of inscription, as well as different forms of address. The encounters between the characters in the movie are marked by *maladresse*, which also implies an address from a ground or a premise that is not shared. This is because the couples are asymmetrical: two teenagers and a depressed middle-aged man; a bitter curator and a five-year-old mestizo boy; the character played by July and a man recovering from divorce; a man seeing his wife slowly wither away with Alzheimer’s. Love messages are inscribed in pieces of paper taped to the façade of a house, in a car’s window, in newly bought animated shoes. The recently divorced man externalizes his pain by burning his own hand. But at every instance, not only does the message not come across because the receiver cannot decode it, but the very medium of the message is missing, broken, or will never reach its destination. One of the couples, the boy and the curator, are chatting online unaware of whom the other is, and the boy defines love as: “pooping back and forth forever,” which gets transcribed like this:)) <> ((. This involves a continuous starting over from an uncertain projected future; a movement of opening and closing, the endless propulsion and reception of the same, which is a way of imagining staying safely bound to each other: but the poop always remains the same.¹⁷ Is that even possible?

LOVE AS MOVEMENT: OUTLINING AN
EVER-SHIFTING SITE

Love is movement: from I to you. A tearing of the subject away from itself, eros takes it outside, toward the other, in a commonly shared territory, an immense site that brings about freedom. As Kathy Acker put it: “We find the coordinates when we come to them... [to the] definers of space...”¹⁸ The site (the *true* site) is mostly located upon a meaningless landscape, desire can be fabricated anywhere, its field can be shifted anywhere:

#lastnightitouchedmyselfthinkingofus
#therewerehairfilledholessweatgluedmouths

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#tryingtoimagineyourfingersinsidemebutiforgot-
 whattheylooklike
 #analwhenfantasizinghelp!
 #iwantobeinsideyounow
 #iwillandwillletyouknowbutyouwillbeontop-
 frombehind
 #ihopeyouhaveyourfingerspleasingyourright-
 nowandifiwerenexttoyouiwouldsuckyourstick-
 yfingerspleasetouchyourselfandcomethinkingof-
 meinsidefuckingyoufrombehind
 #youmakemedreamofyouiamasobsessedby-
 ourbeautyasmuchasyourmindandiwanttokis-
 syourlipsasicomeandiwanttohearwhatyouwant-
 metodotoyou
 #thismaysoundweirdbutiwanttolosemyvirginity-
 toyourpurpledick
 #fillallmyholesplease
 #pleasecomeinsideme
 #canwetakeupthepurpledickandthebondage-
 pleeeaaaseee???
 #byallmeanspurpledickbondageandwhatever-
 el sewecanplaywithsoon
 #touchmelikeyoudolovemelikeyoudo
 #fuckyoubutthankyouforhavingseducedme
 #better(self)censored
 #ifyoudecidedtobecomefreeiwouldneverwant-
 toleaveyou

Tugging the line between the two of you, the unspoken understanding that there is common territory is undermined by his communicating from a place outside of your shared site. I miss you” is answered by “I found a book that you must read,” or “when can we meet?” gets as a response “I think I don’t desire you erotically anymore.” A power game that you are not part of, kills something inside you and becomes irascible contempt, upon which you act—and which you will later on regret.

Torn out, a flame thickens
 between us as if
 not right now we’ll be
 ripped from this life
 or each other a white
 lie not a little more tender
 than quick. Inextricable
 reluctance to die¹⁹

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As time goes by, you realize that you need some sort of closure, but it takes a while before he can give it to you. Permanent absence is foretold by his ghostly voice on the phone. To make you feel better? He says: “I had never invested (time, messages, etc.) in anyone like I did in you, but I am no longer in the place I was a few months ago.” He uses words like wonderful, obsession, different types of bonds between people, therapy, the real thing, gratitude, beauty, value, time, family, future, never before. A pragmatist. And I had never felt so loved by anyone before as by him. You ponder on the difference between *being in love* with someone, and *loving* someone. When *in love*, you are before a narcissist projection of your own desire; when you *love*, the other has given you the gift to move outside yourself so that he or she can touch your soul. And that place outside of yourself is that of absolute vulnerability. Stuck in damn traffic in this godforsaken city you dance-cry-sing-dance-cry-sing for months without an end. Is there some kind of truth to be eventually revealed? *Il n’y a du vrai au monde que de déraisonner d’amour.*²⁰

VULNERABILITY

My song does not belong to anyone. But there is no passion suffered in pain and in love to which a Hallelujah does not follow.
 Clarice Lispector²¹

At the end of her essay “Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain,” Leslie Jamison suggests that women have started to come up with reasons to dismiss women’s pain. Popular culture (and a certain strain of feminism) has posited wounds and the suffering of women as somewhat glamorous and yet abject gendered states, and because of this, women tend to get impatient with women who hurt too much.²² What comes to mind here is the reception of Emma Sulkowicz’s performance of “carrying her burden” (the dorm mattress on which she was raped) around campus at Columbia University for eight months. Her gesture has been perceived by men and women, university authorities and public



Akram Zaatari, *Beirut Exploded Views* (2014). Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Hamburg / Beirut]

opinion alike, as both heroic and manipulative. The assertion that the particular way in which she chose to make public her rape, her wound, was deceitful and alludes to what Jamison calls the “post-wounded” condition, which implies that for women “woundedness” is overdone and overrated. Being wounded has been thus posited as a stereotypical “female” state of abjection: an undesirable condition of femininity, and thus dismissible.

And yet woundedness is one of the conditions of possibility of love. In a poem by Samura Koichi, quoted by Chris Marker in *Sans soleil* (1982), the wound is posited as immemorial, as disembodied, as indissociable from time passing by:

Qui a dit que le temps vient à bout de toutes les blessures? Il vaudrait mieux dire que le temps vient à bout de tout, sauf des blessures. Avec le temps, la plaie de la séparation perd ses bords réels. Avec le temps, le corps désiré ne sera bientôt plus, et si le corps désirant a déjà cessé d’être pour l’autre, ce qui demeure, c’est une plaie sans corps.²³

The wound is rooted in singularity, only to transcend itself with the passage of time. The disembodied wound is immanent, it is everywhere, and it becomes a scar that never goes away. And while gender violence is very real, woundedness is beyond gender specificity. Vulnerability is neither inherent to gender nor a sign of powerlessness but an act of assertion, of empowerment. Vulnerability means being able to cope with states of pain, and sexuality and subjectivation—the movement towards the other, towards the shared site—can only happen from an absolute place of vulnerability and self-exposure. What Lauren Berlant calls “optimistic brokenness”:

Apostrophe is not only the condition of love but an ideal of self-encounter. Can the addressee make more of it than you can, is she you who waits for the sentence of your existence to finish and, inevitable, to miss its mark? For the addressee, you are willing to make provisional clarities. For the addressee, you are willing to perform and openness that’s an optimistic brokenness. If you’re lucky, you’re a topos in your own world, although without the apostrophic phantom you cannot exist in the world.²⁴

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Man Ray, *La prière* (1930)

VULNERABILITY AND POWER RELATIONS

Why is it so impossible to imagine life outside a consuming abusive and chaotic situation? Where your needs mean nothing. Where you are totally submissive to the will of another. Where you live on the edge of devastation and feel more alone than being alone but it's infinitely easier than facing your pain or growing a sense of self-worth. I am, for you. Check the way you are drawn to the ones who are not paying attention. Keeping another alive becomes the only way you know how to avoid your own egoic collapse. When someone is screaming, you are calm. When someone is falling apart you are reasonable and sturdy. How does one become a thing made to serve. Keep returning to the scene of the crime hoping to rewrite the outcome. How does one become, a thing.

Jackie Wang²⁵

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The question of gender and power relations inevitably comes up in discussions of vulnerability and woundedness. What would the world look like if women had the position of power men have in the contemporary world? Surely it would not be a mirror image of inversed gender relations, and men would not be forced to have cosmetic surgery or driven to hate their own bodies. The problem is not asymmetrical power relations—power relations exist beyond gender—but the unequal pay and distribution of labour naturalizes in men and women asymmetrical roles within society. Our inability to imagine a world in which difference is levelled out can be seen in Brian de Palma's *Passion* (2012). The film imagines powerful women as only wanting dick and killing each other for it—and always there is a man on top of them. Evidently, absolute equality is a myth, but what kind of top/bottom relations could be justified? McKenzie Wark put it this way, in his epistolary exchange with Kathy Acker:

Butch/femme and top/bottom seem to me to be different articulations of the same thing: the incommensurable relation, the coming together of things that are not the same, in a relation that then makes of that assemblage something also singular. [. . .] It's just an actualization of one of many possible (virtual) forms of the fundamental relation, which is difference.²⁶

Thus, for Wark forms of differential relationships that involve states of power and vulnerability are inevitable but they can transcend the absolutization of gender polarity. The problem is when these forms of differential relationships harden, are naturalized and become hegemonic, as under heteropatriarchy. And yet, as Kathy Acker writes back to Wark, beyond a power relation, the ground of radical difference lies in the self composing only as it constantly decomposes itself, violently and in silence, only to realize that being a separate individual is impossible.²⁷ Radical difference is therefore already embedded in being insofar as it is changing all the time, and in relationship to others. Power is an indescribable monster that

can create differentiated forms of pain and damage—through the tyranny of incertitude, games, manipulation, abuse. For Acker, moreover, power relations can be translated to states of subjection not as a form of victimhood, but as freedom. To be able to put oneself at the complete mercy of another is the basis of all ethical relations. The desire to become an object of desire for the other *is* a state of desire. Power relations can be enacted contractually in the realm of sex, in bed: with erotic relations we are at the root of all relations.

What comes to mind here is the bestselling novel and film, *Fifty Shades of Gray*, which popularizes a neoliberal version of sadomasochism. The center of the narrative is the issue of subordination upon consent, but the signature of the contract gets indefinitely postponed. The contract is that which enables a symmetrical form of cooperation: when the submissive desires his or her position, the relation is configured as symmetrical because both get what they want. In the movie, the conditions of the contract are endlessly discussed (e.g. “no fist-fucking”), and S&M is presented as a mere lifestyle in which the difference between dominant and dominated is denied. Moreover, the narrative conflates contractual power relations in bed with gender-specific relationships in everyday life: Anna is to be Christian's submissive both in and out of bed. It is as if Christian were fusing the logic of business concerns across erotic life—importing or translating a certain practice from one area of life to another, *benchmarking*, taking up the most efficient and productive course of action to maximize competitive advantage and yield.²⁸ Like contemporary labour relations, what characterizes Anna and Christian's relationship is the literal denial of the difference between employer and employee through the deferral of the signature of the contract, which would render their relationship symmetrical, especially because the side who has the power in S&M relations is the masochist.²⁹

You ask: what is the relation between sovereignty/auto-poiesis and poetry/prayer—especially as Bataille enables us to think this?

Given the role of language in the sovereign operation of auto-poiesis, poetry is an enunciation in excess of language (in particular: as discourse of knowledge). In and as its excess, poetry exceeds any measure or principle by which to adjudicate its opening (or exposure) unto NOTHING (or the Outside)—nothing but language (hence we derive a radical, or for Bataille “sovereign,” notion of “auto” that is without a recourse to self or subject). Prayer is one form of poetic/poietic enunciation, but now, given the above, is recast as a-theological, since it slips out from any theological transcendental reference. Prayer voices an adoration of the Outside that, in the infinity of its finitude, is what Bataille refers to as “inner experience.” Prayer, then, would be one “method of meditation” for this sovereign inner experience (what I describe as the “intimacy of the Outside”). Prayer is this sovereign slippage out of self, unto nothing that it—like poetry—speaks and writes. But I also want to argue that this operates in non-linguistic ways as well, for instance as bodily disposition and gesture. This is where the Man Ray photo comes into play. In the simplest of terms, my paper is an attempt to move from slippage as (non-dramatic) sovereign operation—including in the poetic language of slippage—to the “prayer” that Man Ray presents in the photo of that name.³⁰

DESIRE CAN BE FABRICATED ANYWHERE

You want everyone to know you are hurting, but leaks of unstable subjectivity are bad news for most people; you confide in old friends who rescue you from the flood of tears and provide comfort in a transient sisterhood of ailing fresh wounds. You are reminded that everyone is their own wound, and his touch begins to feel like a void unable to carve your silhouette back into an old or new image of yourself.

Each love is unique, and desire is endless interpretation. The line between your hearts uprooted you from both your own beings so forcefully, that you got lost in trying to find a way back. You projected yourself into the other with such power that now without the other you cannot regain yourself: you feel lost, forever. Both of your

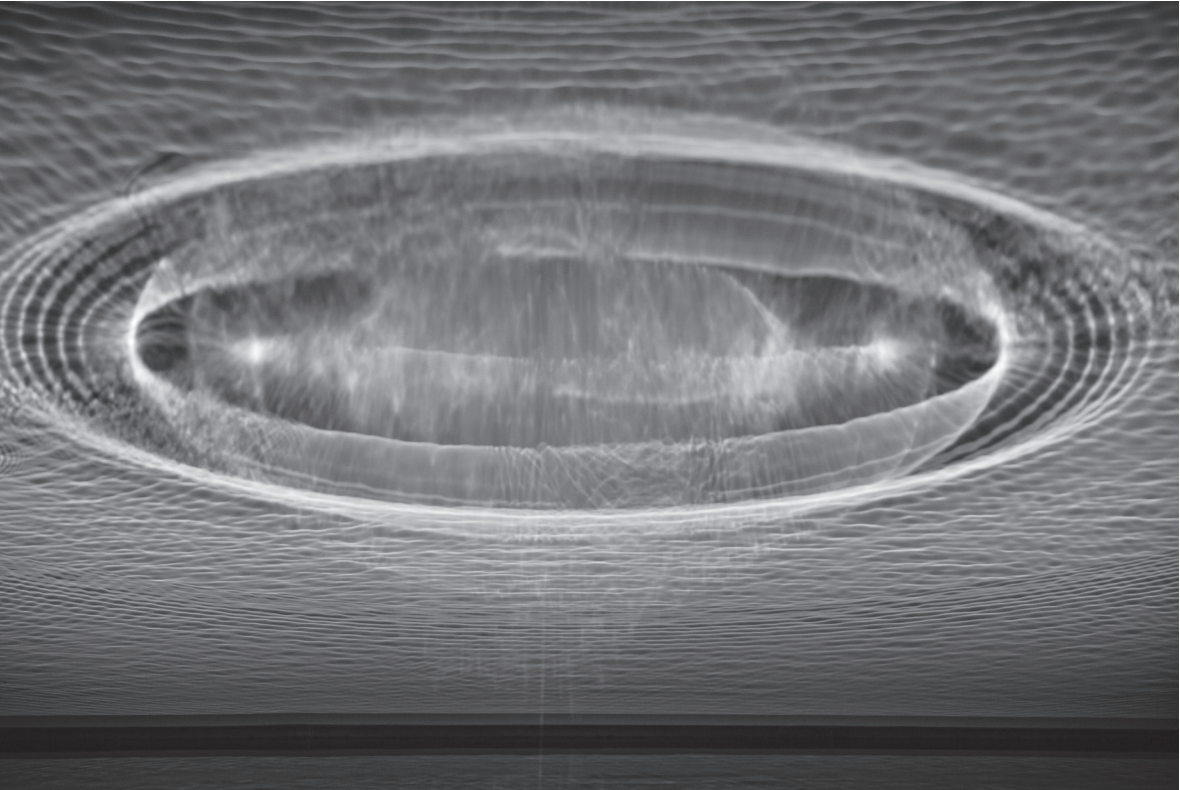
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spirits are in exile from each other, but you keep telling yourself: I am his. Interpretation provides consolation and devastation at the same time; you never said “I love you” because the promise of a shared future embedded in the speech act was impossible to make: exposure without commitment—dangerously letting yourselves go down a steep slope, without affirmation and without detachment. You think of the irony of the fact that the last time you met, you exchanged two books by Miranda July: *No One Belongs Here*

attentive valleys and caves—the world’s ears—listening closely as it reverberates into the echo of an echo.

The echo is the traveler’s pleas to the transient, a bird tracking another bird, the end insisting on prolonging the tale. The echo is the carving of a name in the air.³¹

To see you at a distance in a crowded place (a party, a gathering, vernissage, event, whatever) admiring how you brighten everything and everyone up with your smile, biting my lip



Olafur Eliasson, *Notion Motion* (2005). Courtesy of Studio Olafur Eliasson

More Than You and *It Chooses You*, and recall the scene in Godard’s *Une femme est une femme* in which Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina stop speaking to each other and start arguing by showing book titles to one another.

He begins to appear as an intangible spectre, and you hope that you are finally in a place to bid farewell.

Farewell is the silence separating sound from echo. Sound is broken and echo is preserved by

because I wanna die when I see you, so beautiful you are. I hear someone calling your name and I feel I don’t know what. Then, our gazes meet and we single each other out from the crowd, knowing that we’re there for each other. We talk with our eyes (as we always do) and I am able to go beyond myself; meanwhile, I walk toward you and take your hand (her hand!).

#meanwhile // #everstill

@Stephanie Bailey @Pip Day
@Silvia Gruner @Regina Kuri
@Urok Shirhan @Rolando Vázquez

1 Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*, trans. Sinan Antoon, Pen America, www.pen.org/poetry-nonfiction/presence-absence.

2 Maja Borg, preface to her film *Future My Love* (2014).

3 Byung-Chul Han, *La agonía del Eros* (Barcelona: Herder, 2014), 11.

4 Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 34.

5 Chris Kraus, *Aliens and Anorexia* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2001), 227.

6 Han, *La agonía del Eros*, 79.

7 Martin Heidegger quoted in Andrew Shaffer, *Great Philosophers Who Failed at Love* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 70–71.

8 “I love you more than you / I will love whoever hears that I cry out that I love you / Thirty thousand years / I call / I call for the one who will answer / I want to love you / I love you / For thirty thousand years I have cried out in front of the sea of the white specter / I am the one who cried out that he loved you, you.” Published separately as a script. Marguerite Duras, *Les mains vides* (Paris: Aurelia Steiner, 1979), 39.

9 See Dominique Vivant, “Duras’ Negative Hands,” a text of a talk given in the context of Alan Read’s “Caves” week in the Anatomy Theatre, King’s College London, in early 2011, dominiquevivant.blogspot.mx/2012/01/duras-negative-hands.html.

10 Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

11 Samuel Beckett, “Cascando,” in *Collected Poems in English and in French* (New York: Grove Press, 1977).

12 Anne Sexton, “When Man Enters Woman,” in *The Complete Poems* (New York: Mariner Books, 1999).

13 Literally, a nail (*clavo*) used to get another nail out.

14 Federico García Lorca, “Pequeño poema infinito” / “Little Infinite Poem”: “To take the wrong road / is to arrive at the snow // and to arrive at the snow / is to get down on all fours for twenty centuries and eat the / grass of the cemeteries. To take the wrong road / is to arrive at a woman // woman who isn’t afraid of light // woman who murders two roosters in one second // light which isn’t afraid of roosters // and roosters who don’t know how to sing on top of the snow.”

15 A contraption: “I desire/need you.”

16 Barthes, *Lover’s Discourse*, 15.

17 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 27.

18 Kathy Acker and McKenzie Wark, *I’m Very into You: Correspondence 1995–1996* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2015), 108.

19 Dana Ward, “Between Here and There,” in *This Can’t Be Life* (New York: Edge Books, 2012).

20 “The only truth in the world is love beyond reason.” Alfred de Musset, *Il ne faut jurer de rien* (1836) (Paris: BeQ, 2008),

148, beq.ebooksgratuits.com/vents/Musset-jurer.pdf.

21 Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva* (New York: New Directions, 2012 [1973]), 12.

22 Leslie Jamison, “Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain,” *VQR online* (April 2014), www.vqronline.org/essays-articles/2014/04/grand-unified-theory-female-pain.

23 “Who said that time heals all wounds? It would be better to say that time heals everything—except wounds. With time, the hurt of separation loses its real limits. With time, the desired body will soon disappear, and if the desiring body has already ceased to exist for the other, then what remains is a wound, disembodied.”

24 Lauren Berlant, “The Book of Love is Long and Boring, No One Can Lift the Damn Thing,” *Berfrois*, 14 May 2014, www.berfrois.com/2014/05/lauren-berlants-love-theory.

25 From her blog “Ballerinas Dance with Machineguns,” 14 April 2015, loneberry.tumblr.com/post/115524414882/what-was-the-feeling-you-had-walking-to-the-park.

26 Acker and Wark, *I’m Very Into You*, 86.

27 *Ibid.*, 130.

28 See Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 135–140.

29 See Walter Benn Michael’s excellent analysis of the novel, “50 Shades of Libertarian Love,” *L.A. Review of Books*, 22 May 2015, lareviewofbooks.org/essay/50-shades-of-libertarian-love.

30 John Paul Ricco, in an email