

Concerning Jealousy

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«Concerning Jealousy»

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With works by Whitney Claffin, Graham Hamilton,
Pati Hill, Stella Sieber, Wanwen Zhang and interieur
drawings by an unknown Biedermeier artist.

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Concerning Jealousy

Introduction

Charlotte Berg, Jackson Beyda

In 1895, Edvard Munch produced the first painting in a sequence of works all titled “Jealousy.” The image depicts a romantic triad consisting of Dagny Juel, her husband, writer Stanisław Przybyszewski, and Munch himself. Munch can be seen in the background, in amorous embrace with Juel, while Przybyszewski occupies the foreground, rendered in green, his mask-like face looking towards the viewer in distorted angst. Over the proceeding forty years, Munch would produce twelve variations of that same painting. Although the series could be read as a continuation of Munch’s ongoing interest in allegory, the image reveals a psychic investment in the scene of infidelity which exceeds mere disinterested depiction. “Jealousy” would repeatedly stage the discord between Munch and his contemporary by carefully fixing the characters in their respective roles of seducer, betrayed, and object of desire. The conflict between Munch and Przybyszewski was thus mediated through the painterly presentation of Juel’s affection. When preparing “Jealousy” for an exhibition in Paris, Munch was forced

to withdraw the work out of personal concern:

*“I had traveled to Paris to hold an exhibition there. Then they showed up, and I had to leave with my paintings because it was indeed the two of them that I had painted — him green and her naked. The exhibition in Paris came to nothing [...] This woman-related affair ruined a lot for me.”*¹

In his novella *Über Bord*, Przybyszewski would reverse the roles. In the book, the painter’s wife, Isa, starts an affair with the writer, Falk, and eventually the painter kills himself, while Isa and Falk seem to live happily ever after.² Both Munch and Przybyszewski’s tendency to expose their romantic entanglements — regardless of how much played out in real life — indelibly changed their work, the unpleasantness of jealousy becoming a source

1— Arnold, Matthias, *Edvard Munch*. (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1986), 56–57.

2— Przybyszewski, Stanisław, *Homo Sapiens: Romantrilogie*. (Hamburg: IGEL Verlag, 1993)

of creative motivation. Juell’s characterization as a femme fatale carries bitter foreboding when one considers her murder at the hands of a spurned lover three days before her thirty-fourth birthday.³

Concerning Jealousy at Scherben, takes Munch’s painting both as a point of departure and a site of critical inquiry as a means to explore the ways in which artists have broached the subject of jealousy as a generative tool and a creative problem within their practices. A core comprehension of jealousy entails the perceived risk of losing something or someone due to the involvement of a third party. This third party remains elusive to the jealous individual; it withholds something, the nature of which may not be discernible. The only certainty is that, inherently, the jealous individual can never attain it. The anticipated loss is the result of this unnamed thing gaining enormous weight in the jealous mind. Due to its speculative

3— These men-related affairs ruined a lot for her.

nature, which can verge upon paranoia, the jealous person is often compelled to do the dirty work of assessing their familiar environment on the lookout for disturbances. Apart from glances and gestures, they might notice a previously unlocked drawer now locked, or the arrangement of chairs suggesting unwelcome proximity. This recognition may be followed by a strong desire for their surroundings to revert to a state wherein each object's placement is clear, including their own comfortable place within it. The attribution of jealousy is highly undesirable, as exemplified by Munch and Przybyszewski's mutual attempts to assign the jealous role to the other. But unlike envy, jealousy carries little theoretical baggage, and has less biblically inflected moralism associated with it. While envy often emblemizes a failure of character, jealousy is commonplace — perhaps constitutive of human relations. Jealousy marks the limits, both real and speculative, of an existing social order: whether the implicit contract of monogamy, the illusory promise of career advancement, or the lack of acknowledgement within a friendship,

jealousy is the threshold wherein expectations meet the demystified world of shared social reality. The exhibition aims to expand understandings of jealousy beyond mere romantic-melodrama and into a broader argument for the generative and essential qualities of limitations across various personal relations.

This book serves as a companion to the artistic works which comprise the exhibition. Its various contributions have evolved around the ways in which jealousy can be a creatively generative affect as well as a critical tool for examining both the limits and possibilities of a given relationship. In Agnes Callard's text, "The Other Woman", she reads Tolstoy to argue that jealousy is not only a negative affect, but can be understood as a speculative and generative experience of relationships. Henrike Kohpeiß discusses the letters of Ingeborg Bachmann and Max Frisch, examining their partnership as a site of "ungovernable feelings," while Graham Hamilton explores the relationships between artists and their critics, mapping out complex and often duplicitous desires for

mutual recognition demanded by these roles. The epigraph of the book is a poem by Pati Hill, writer and artist, widely recognised for her xerox-copies, which programmatically aim to translate invisible housework into a visual language. Over the past ten years, interventions within the field of critical theory have increasingly made space for deeper explorations and outright avowals of “negative feelings.”⁴ The experience of jealousy marks us as always limited by our fantasies for one another; although such experiences of rejection and disillusionment are often painful, what is revealed within them is the glimmering fact that limitations reveal the entangled nature of all relations. What defines a horizon of

4— The publication of Sianne Ngai’s *Ugly Feelings* in 2007 and Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* in 2011 are two examples of the so-called “affective turn” in critical theory. The publication of the *2nd Affect Theory Reader* by Duke University Press last year demonstrates the continued relevance of these topics.

possibility always forecloses a different future. Jealousy signals the illusory possibility that relations could always ever be otherwise – that such other forms could only be accessed through the (im)possibility of relation.

The Other Woman
Agnes Callard

Tolstoy was a moralist. He wrote one novel — *Anna Karenina* — in which infidelity ends in death, and another — *War and Peace* — in which his characters endure a thousand pages of political, military and romantic turmoil so as to eventually earn the reward of domestic marital bliss. In the epilogue to *War and Peace* we encounter his protagonist Natasha, unrecognizably transformed. Throughout the main novel, we had known her as temperamental, beautiful and reflective; as independent, occasionally to the point of selfishness; as readily overwhelmed by ill-fated romantic passions.

Marriage and motherhood turn out to sap Natasha's interest in music, in parties, in dance, in her appearance; in fact they seem to sap her interest in having interests of her own. In her new life, she self-consciously and gladly subordinates her mind to her husband's, and finds the fulfillment of her domestic duties both thoroughly rewarding and utterly absorbing. All of this makes her, in Tolstoyan ethics, "an exemplary wife and mother."

There is only one moment in the epilogue

in which we catch a glimpse of the old Natasha. Her husband Pierre has just come home from a trip, and Natasha launches into a speech that begins as a dutiful affirmation of the advantages of marital stability over mere romance —

“What stupidity,” Natasha said suddenly, “that the honeymoon and the first time is the happiest. On the contrary, now it’s best. If only you didn’t go away. Remember how we quarreled? And it was always my fault. Always. And what we quarreled about — I don’t even remember.”

“Always the same thing,” said Pierre, smiling, “jealo...”

“Don’t say it, I can’t bear it,” Natasha cried. And a cold, angry gleam lit up in her eyes. “Did you see her?” she added, after a pause. “No, and if I had, I wouldn’t have recognized her.”

They fell silent.

The reader hasn’t been told about “her”—the events in question must have happened in the years the novel leaves undocumented — so the reference could be to anything from a full-blown affair to an infatuation existing mostly in Natasha’s imagination. All we know, looking on this scene, is that some early fracture continues to reverberate through their relationship. Is Natasha’s continued jealousy the one flaw in their otherwise perfect union? Or is it the spark of life keeping the relationship from flattening into deadness? Could it, somehow, be both?

Jealousy is an unattractive emotion, but unlike hate, contempt or spite, it is not a forbidden emotion. If we knew that Pierre had cheated on Natasha, we would find her jealousy intelligible and even reasonable. We would understand. Or, at any rate, we would say, to ourselves and to her, “I understand.” We are very quick to find such “justified” jealousy intelligible—so quick, that the very speed of our response testifies to

our disinclination to look into the matter too deeply. But let us do so anyway.

Our comfort zone, when it comes to jealousy, is the righteous anger of the betrayed spouse. It seems to speak to us in the rational language of entitlements and violations and justice.

Thus Natasha's attitude towards Pierre is that he "had to be kept in such a way as to belong entirely to her, to the household." But the enforcement of contract is not the real concern of the jealous spouse; infidelity is not really about property rights.

It is true that marriage is a contractual relationship, but how many marriage vows actually specify sexual exclusivity? I have never yet been to a wedding in which the couple explicitly promised each other not to sleep around; certainly I did not promise this. And yet, when it comes to the many things that are explicitly promised—to love, honor, obey, care for, etc.—people rarely end up insisting on their contractual rights. Every divorce is a violation of the "as long as we both shall live" clause,

and yet neither spouses nor onlookers are inclined to be outraged over that fact. Even if one were to write a "no infidelity" clause into one's marriage vows, that wouldn't make it the case that the primary problem with infidelity lay in the breaking of that agreement.

It is the jealous person who understands all this better than anyone. She may speak (in a calmly furious way) of ownership, but she has a very accurate and precise understanding of the limits of such claims. One cannot own another person; one has no "rights" over their body, or, for that matter, over their affections or interests or attention. The marriage ceremony may include me saying, "I am yours," but the truth is that I am not and cannot ever be anyone else's, and no proclamation of mine can change that fact. Jealousy is this knowledge, combined with the intolerability of it: understanding that I don't own, and needing to own. But it is more the latter than the former. Jealousy is often mischaracterized as a negative attitude, misclassified into the family to which fear, anger, aversion and denial belong. To see

why this is mistaken, consider Natasha again.

In the excerpt cited above, we see Natasha living in the opposite of denial. She is haunted by something that happened years ago; moreover, she is actively keeping herself haunted — fueling the fires of her own ancient passion. Her question—“did you see her?”—is uttered not in the voice of anxiety or fear but in the voice of an emotion that launches her backward in time. Her sudden cold gaze and her angry voice connect her to an incident whose details we don’t know, but which she appears to be unable to let go of. That woman, whoever she was for Pierre, is for Natasha some kind of link to a past self, or, even more likely, to an alternative version of her present self: someone she could have been but is not. Whether or not Pierre is telling the truth when he says he wouldn’t even be able to recognize her anymore, I imagine she means much more to Natasha than she does to Pierre.

You may object that I am reading a lot into these few lines. That is true. I can imagine all

this with some vividness, because I have occupied both positions: I have been the other woman, and I have also been other-woman-ed. In both roles, I felt intense jealousy, wanting with my whole being to occupy the place of my counterpart. There is nothing so desirable to the Other Woman as the established and secure position of the woman who was there first; to whom, in turn, there is nothing so appealing as the carefree spontaneous romance she imagines he has with the Other.

The primal scene of jealousy is this: I see a mark on my lover’s body, and my mind traces it to Her. How do I respond? You imagine I feel *angry* at being robbed of what is mine; or *afraid* of losing him altogether. But those are not my real emotions; they are merely the faces my jealousy wears when I am in the business of eliciting sympathy from you. The inner truth of what I feel is so much more maddening than anger and so much more violent than fear: it is desire. Desire of desire. I want, quite simply, to have been wanted with the desire with which She was, at that moment, desired.

Not the same *kind* or *degree* of desire, but with that token, past act of desire. Jealousy desires the love intended for and directed at another, the very love one can be assured of never securing. Jealousy hungers after this desire impossibly, unattainably, unsatisfiably. Like all that is truly erotic, it quests for what cannot be had. Jealousy is a *positive* emotion. Jealousy is a form of lust.

Lacan, commenting on Plato's *Symposium*, tells us that eros is "giving what one does not have." Think of how often, in a romantic relationship, one's image of a romantic gesture will be precisely whatever act one's beloved is disinclined to perform. If you are not in the habit of complimenting my clothing, then that's what I need from you, "for once!" If you never fold the laundry, then it's that. The harder and unlikelier it is, the more romantic the prospect of your doing it will strike me; and yet if you actually rise to the challenge, that will always be somewhat anticlimactic. The romance lay in its being undone and undoable. One time, in a furious lover's quarrel, it was pointed out

to me that "nothing I do could ever count as the thing you want; as soon as I did it, it wouldn't count!" That was perfectly true. I wanted him to show me his love — but not just any love. I wanted to see the love he didn't have.

The love a person doesn't have is, by and large, not visible—because it is not there. But in the special case where he loves another, the love he doesn't have for me becomes something concrete and embodied—it is embodied in Her body, it is clothed in Her flesh. And that, finally, is the moment when the laser beam of my erotic passion locates the impossible love it was born to lust after, namely his love of Her. Jealousy ushers eros into its own; jealousy makes the invisible visible.

As long as the invisible stays invisible, we can tell ourselves a set of noble lies: that there is a romantic gesture that would count; that all the love I seek from him is love that is or could be *mine*; that romance is a two-body problem. Most of the time, Natasha lives in the space of these noble lies, a space within

which she can say “*my* husband,” and mean it — or at least imagine that she means it.

Jealousy exposes the presence of the sometimes fleshy, sometimes ghostly, always unwelcome and never fully eliminable third party to the relationship. Jealousy is a form of attraction that repulses us.



I’ve never understood how polyamory is supposed to survive erotic rivalry, but I have exactly the same objection to monogamy. The fact is, the two diverge only in the specifications of the relevant contract, and this difference seems laughably superficial in the face of a problem situated at the molten lava core of the soul. If erotic passion means wanting what is not and cannot rightly be yours, then how can it ever be stable? Jealousy is the thread in which romance is woven, and the thread that unravels it.

Is there any solution to this erotic predicament? Portuguese poet, philosopher and

all-round literary genius Fernando Pessoa offers one. His *Book of Disquiet* includes a set of sex tips for a group of people he calls “Unhappily married women,” though he clarifies that “Unhappily married women include all who are married and some who are single.” Pessoa is addressing all women who find themselves in the erotic predicament, and he tells them:

Picture your husband with a whiter body.
If you’re good at this, you’ll feel his
whiteness on top of you.

Kiss the husband on top of your body
and replace him in your imagination —
remember the man who lies on top of you
in your soul.

Substitution is less difficult than you think.
By substitution I mean the practice of
imagining an orgasm with man A while
copulating with man B.

All pleasure is in the mind; all crimes
that occur are committed in dreams and
in dreams alone!

Pessoa understands that the triad is the unit of eros, whereas stability calls for the dyad. His solution—squeezing three into a space for two by way of an infidelity of the mind — reflects an almost perfect grasp of the problem. *Almost* perfect. Pessoa's one error can be traced to his masculine perspective, or, at any rate, his failure to successfully abstract it away. Any woman of sufficiently erotic temperament could have explained to Pessoa that the right advice to an "Unhappily Married Woman" is not to tell her to imagine having sex *with* a different man, but *as* a different woman.

Interieur
Henrike Kohpeiß

33

Exterieur /

When lover B had told me (lover A), I was still in love with them and with the idea to continuously wade in muddy waters. The only thing I knew, in terms of my own potential “position”, was that I did not want to feel jealous.

I did not want to feel jealous for several reasons. Firstly, because jealousy is moral relational failure and I never fail in that realm; secondly, because jealousy is an energetically draining, exhausting kind of feeling that would keep me from other more important activities. And thirdly, because I wanted my desire for lover B to be pure. Uncompromised. No deviations.

Jealousy, I hear, is one of the feelings carrying elements of paranoia. It reaches beyond itself, beyond reality, and acts on false premises. At the same time, it creates a possibility to realize the unwanted state of things, to become aware of one’s difficult predicament.

It is a feeling that separates a person from the world. Like anger creating loneliness or shame creating it, too. Jealousy binds me back to the location I thought I had just departed from. Like most unwanted feelings, it adds evidence to the fact that nothing ever changes, that abandonment is the certain outcome of any departure. To feel it, is an existential decision on where to go from here. Where to move the heart full of hope and where to put the tired body that had asked for a break several times already. In jealousy, they both turn against each other and themselves in their common attack against a third object – a person, a situation, a child. Giving in to aggression for an experience of exaltation.

Anahid Nersessian reads John Keats's Odes in order to follow the "sheer ungovernability" of "big feelings", which "test what it might be like to be really free".¹ This glimpse of freedom is, opposed to what one might expect, offered

1— Anahid Nersessian, *Keats's Odes: A Lover's Discourse* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 9.

by love *and* hate, promise *and* disappointment, elation *and* jealousy. Freedom as affective boundlessness might echo the naïve idea that we would all be able to care for each other if only we would be therapized enough, capable enough, taken care of ourselves – but that's not it, I think. Nersessian suggests that freedom's sweetness can only be experienced through an awareness of the utopian quality of that concept. We will only ever feel a splinter, get a taste and sense a breeze of it. : "Freedom is solely to be grasped in determinate negation [...]."² We will see it in the closest proximity to where it seems impossible. But we will, in fact, see.

For example, the heavy feeling of indolence is entangled with the hope to be safe in the storm – to protect one's soul from getting off balance. "Indolence is the dream of not becoming a person like this."³ A person like me,

2— Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (translated by Dennis Redmond, 2001), 230.

3— Anahid Nersessian, *Keats's Odes: A Lover's Discourse*, 65.

lover A. A person of fury and destruction. Nersessian explains what this slowed-down, de-intensified affect can do for us, caught up in the temptation to be aggressive and not repress. “It is not self-sufficiency but a complicated style of self-management, ideal for those who know their role in someone else’s drama has half a dozen understudies.”⁴ It is a wisdom about greater and smaller pains, and a conscious decision for one or the other.

It is advised to choose connections in line with the feelings we would like to experience. It is also advised to accompany the occurrence of other, non-desired feelings with generosity, calm and acceptance. Both has been historically difficult to achieve for everyone who’s living their lives with an interest in excitement, intensity and the outer edges of what people can say and do. To explore these edges means to invite, if not produce ungovernable feelings because we need them to not lose track of ourselves when conditions

4— Ibid.

are messy, when the situation itself has become absolutely ungovernable. We need the sharpness of contempt, the fire of hate and the toxicity of jealousy to see where we’re at, to master the injury by expressing it, to live a life without repression.

It takes some courage and some narcissism to move towards the full scope of these feelings. The courage is usually mobilized by the conviction that feelings hold a truth that otherwise would remain unsaid. A truth however, that, as Walter Benjamin knows, extends an invitation to become part of it, but cannot be “possessed”.⁵

From my uncompromised view – I dreamt I had a perfect morning: getting the tears out, or the screams respectively, then dress nicely. Moving into the quiet chambers for work. One mind alone. And here I am – amidst the unresolved problems. Always present, higher

5— Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2009).

up or lower down in the chest, depending on the day's constitution. For a while, I carefully sort the problems that I love so much to forget about the fact that they change their form constantly. I make them commit to one shape for the moment. This is how anger and loneliness return to their places of origin, where they look particularly attractive. They finally look like themselves, like lover A and lover B.

/ interieur

Which type of life can hold all these feelings? The overwhelming happiness of unlikely encounters as well as all the small deaths and demises: Jealousy and fierce pain and constant agitation about the wrongs of this world. For this type of life to keep its shape, perhaps, one has to be alone.

Ingeborg Bachmann attempted to live with a man only once. On October 5, 1958 she informs Paul Celan, her former and somewhat ongoing lover, that "it has been decided" that she would try to move in together with Max Frisch. Even though "it is almost impossible for us [Celan and her] to live with another

person".⁶ How telling that in the very moment of her big decision for such an unimaginable attempt, a turn of events really, Bachmann chooses to remind Paul Celan of their common incapability to share a life with someone else (although Paul Celan had already gotten married to Gisèle Lestrangé in 1952). Depending on one's romantic preferences, Bachmann's remark reads like a last blow of intensity in a failed relationship of two lost souls or like an offer for friendship, in which the most existential fears can be shared. Either way, Bachmann's statement is an incantation of love that, again, depending on imaginaries, one might not count as such. She insists that the deepest entanglement is the one that cannot be lived and that, in fact, its depth is substantiated only when two people realize what they are not able to do. It can also be read as initial

6— Andrea Stoll, Ingeborg Bachmann, Paul Celan, Max Frisch, and Gisèle Celan-Lestrangé, *Herzzeit: Ingeborg Bachmann – Paul Celan. Der Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009), 94-95.

unfaithfulness towards Max Frisch. Offering up her own insecurity and lack of faith in what lies ahead to a third person (Celan) is a deeply disloyal act before any real failure in the relationship has occurred. As if Bachmann can only enter her commitment to Frisch by reassuring herself of the eternal company of those who had seen it failing from the start. Maybe she does not dare to depart from that expectation. The fall would be catastrophic and her inner peace possibly irreparable. Nevertheless, Bachmann is aware of her own double bind of love. In the next sentence she reveals her sliver of hope that it might work out for her and Frisch after all: “But because we know, and do not trick ourselves, and do not try to trick ourselves, something good might occur through daily efforts, this I believe after all.”⁷

Jealousy enters the scene in this competition of two mutually exclusive kinds of closeness, which must look like this in October 1958: Max Frisch’s offer of a shared life with all its

7— Ibid.

safety and bourgeois elements and Paul Celan’s occasional, erratic appearances in a “field of poppy”, as Bachmann once described the bulks of flowers he had sent her when they had first met.⁸ Bachmann is in no way exposed to Celan or dependent on him and she must have consciously decided against a more permanent form of life with him.⁹ But this does not mean that she could easily let go of the beliefs and attachments that seem to tie them together in such a way that would crucially and cruelly inform what she expected her own life to be. Existential loneliness makes the advent of a settled life in a couple seem implausible and the fact that someone else – Celan – experiences this in a similar way appears as the greatest possible solace. Needless to say, this connection — because of its existential quality for both participants — was further contoured by their shadows. The undertow of artistic and romantic

8— Ina Hartwig, *Wer war Ingeborg Bachmann?: Eine Biographie in Bruchstücken* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2017), 69.

9— Ibid. 50-63.

competition between Bachmann and Celan took its tolls in the form of sharp judgements and destructive behaviors towards one another, but these judgements never weighed against their bond and were instead integrated as signs of its superior quality.

We know all this from the shameless publication of Ingeborg Bachmann's correspondences with her lovers and friends against her explicit wishes. Judging from the words Bachmann wants others to receive, she is struggling for discretion, which is "another way of trying to cut losses, to avoid the same risks I want others to take for me".¹⁰ This struggle contrasts the image of ruthless intensity that has often been painted of her life. Bachmann always adds a layer of suspicion to what would be a too direct articulation of her own pain. Her efforts to explain not only anger and disappointment but even the most subtle withdrawal and slight changes of tone, never end. Bachmann trusts

10— Nersessian, *Keats's Odes: A Lover's Discourse*, 88.

language far more than she trusts herself, and thereby causes many cases of the aforementioned double bind — a state in which all is true, all at the same time: both the impossibility of living together, the eternal bonds of negativity, and the dedication to a life of a comfortable shared home. Contradictions of desire, resolved into an inexplicable truth.

Parts of the correspondence revolve around furniture: which to put in and which to remove from the shared living space. When Bachmann and Frisch move in together for the first time in October 1958, Frisch describes to her the temporary apartment he found where they could begin the adventure of a shared life, until something permanent would become available. It is borrowed from a graphic designer and has "four rooms, two of them big"¹¹, which constitutes the condition sine qua non for both of them to feel capable to get *anything* done

11— Ingeborg Bachmann, Max Frisch, "*Wir haben es nicht gut gemacht.*" *Der Briefwechsel* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2022), 55.

in each other's presence.

Many of Bachmann and Frisch's letters address the necessity to be alone in order to work and how to make that possible while living with another person. This also shows in all the trips they took, often apart from each other, to fulfill concrete tasks or simply to find a remote location to write under better conditions. At no point does this necessity itself seem illegitimate or problematic. The problems are often logistical: The lack of space or of light in the house, the problem that if one goes away, the other is no longer available to give opinions on the work, or the problem that the labor of care sometimes forces one to pause the work of writing. To Celan, Bachmann writes in September 1959, that Frisch and her "never got to work in such proximity".¹²

Space and the orientation in it is a recurring issue when Bachman sees herself as "always losing ground in love" and to never really

12— Stoll, et al. *Herzzeit: Ingeborg Bachmann – Paul Celan*, 122.

having had both feet on the ground in the first place.¹³ "Wandering from one vestibular disorder to the next", Bachmann is earnestly looking for some kind of settled existence that allows her work discipline to be taken on under good conditions.¹⁴ After the first major crisis in their relationship, provoked by Frisch articulating that to him, living together causes problems even after all the precautionary measures they had taken, he tries to explain himself for reconciliation. He suspects that what made it difficult for them was for "a very simple reason", that "house and studio are one for us".¹⁵ After Bachmann and him had made up in October and finally decided to give it a second try, Frisch opts for generosity; they both should forgive themselves for their lack of productivity in the past year, as they had done other things, "lived fast, not anxiously".¹⁶

13— Bachmann / Frisch, "*Wir haben es nicht gut gemacht.*" 145.

14— Ibid. 102.

15— Ibid. 156.

16— Ibid. 169.

It seems as if in this image of Max and Ingeborg and Paul at the site, the decision for the multi-dimensional experience of one's own feelings excludes others, or, at least, their permanent presence in one's life, to realize some type of life at all. The high standards of loving Bachmann held, lead her to compose an encounter between Max Frisch and Paul Celan, which both of the men explicitly wished to take place. Bachmann writes to Celan in 1959 that such a meeting would "make everything easier" for Frisch, who explicitly desired to not be excluded from which ever contact Celan and Bachmann still had.¹⁷ Frisch and Celan finally met in Sils in July 1959 after a period of unrealized plans, without Bachmann being present, and after initial friendliness and good spirits, got into a poetic and political disagreement later that year, when they argued over a criticism by Günter Blöcker of Celan's *Todesfuge* and his response to that, in which

17— Stoll, et al. *Herzzeit: Ingeborg Bachmann – Paul Celan*, 102.

Frisch refused the unconditional loyalty Celan had hoped for. Celan experienced the criticism by Blöcker as antisemitic and Frisch saw Celan's plea to vouch for him as an unnecessarily vain attempt towards emotional blackmail. Frisch's reaction left Celan deeply offended and caused him to cut contact with Frisch and Bachmann for a while.¹⁸ A few months later they reconciled and Bachmann famously referenced her relationship with Celan in her only novel *Malina*, after he had committed suicide in 1970.

Frisch and Bachmann separated in 1963 and exchanged some bitter, some desperate and sad letters after that. In the end, after the separation seems complete, Ingeborg Bachmann tediously lists the objects that are left in the common household to ask Frisch for instructions on how to proceed with them. At this point, their correspondence is tainted by the shattered hopes they had for a shared life. Bachmann exudes a coldness that must have

18— Ibid. 127, 165–171. .

seemed to her like the only remaining means for self-preservation. Yet, it does not seem to work. Their five years long correspondence and life together had made Frisch and Bachmann so transparent to each other in language and thought, that none of them could seem to give up that closeness, to stop insisting on the weight and precise meaning of each other's words, and choose to evaluate them as an expression of raging pain instead.

The wildest, most uncontrollable feelings only have a chance to really occur in such proximity. They are fueled and enabled by the belief that even in our loneliness, we can meet each other and we are not alone.

*In my fantasies you pull the pleasure out of me
like a thorn and I am finally empty, free.*

(P.92, Anahid Nersessian
Keats's Odes – A Lover's Discourse)

DTR
Graham Hamilton

53

Im wiring (sic) ab jealousy rn

What are you jealous of

Other ppls freedom to make bad work

You can make bad work too!
Don't hold yourself back!

1. Fairness

I remember this basic cool fact; “you cant see words without reading them.” I say remember because I’m sure it’s not such a simple and true tenet, but it was an intriguing idea to me when I was younger, opening a whole new way of beginning to think about how complex the relationship between seeing and reading was. Is.

Sylvere Lotringer: The interviews, or what people say, it’s just text.

Kathy Acker: Yeah. But even when you’re doing art criticism, paintings are a text.

S: It's like plagiarism without plagiarism.

K: Exactly.¹

So what's a text and what's an image? SoiL Thornton (notice the spelling and capitalization of their chosen name) has made a practice of complicating the two. Speaking of the two—or more, their pronoun, “they,” insists on this complication. How many me's in-between? What part of my singular-ness or sovereignty am I responsible for making legible to you? But these aren't language games, or are they? Thornton's practice began in painting (continues in painting too), but a large part of their early work has been kind of disowned by them. Its status as work, or their work, is now somewhat ambiguated. It's worth mentioning, because this expressive body of drawing and painting, on paper and various found surfaces (saw blades, fences, rocks), is composed of a non-linguistic grammar. Their work now is

1— Kathy Acker, “Devoured by Myths” interview by Sylvère Lotringer, reprinted in *May Magazine* #22, March, 2024

a more elaborate negotiation between spaces, people; our images, our titles; the work's titles, materials lists; and what expression is left around or in-between those nodes. I keep saying in-between because it's important. It's where the meaning is made—for SoiL's work specifically, but also between art and language in general.

I didn't sit down to write about SoiL's work exactly. I wanted to think about a disagreement they had with an art writer, a critic. Their disagreement, over the production of an artwork that involved quoted material, resonated with a question about criticism that has been lingering for me. The question is how do we allow each other—or don't. When today we generally seem to be interested in ordering our responsibilities to each other and disorganizing unequal compensation systems, how do we sort out what's fair? In other words, what is the nature of the relationship between the artist and the critic? It feels less important to try to decide what is legally or fiscally fair in the disagreement between SoiL and their critic

and more important to focus on what type of agreement should have been entered into in the first place. Nonetheless, let me describe the terrain.

An art writer—a critic—writes a review of SoiL’s show. SoiL thanks the writer; the writer is paid by the magazine (a grossly nominal fee surely). The two become sort of friends over the review. Both benefit from a type of mutual association, their works being now symbiotically tied together. SoiL is an artist who has enjoyed success (fiscally for sure), but has also committed themselves to undermining and rebuilding their career as their integrity seems to demand. Later, SoiL includes the review (cut from the pages of the magazine, including the front page and the entirety of the article) in a collage. SoiL tells the writer about the new work. The writer includes a picture of the new work on their linkedin, publicizing the association, turning it into status.

Some time passes and it seems the writer

begins to sour on the arrangement. They feel an extra value has now been extracted unfairly from their labor (the writing of the review), and they want to be paid for it. They contact SoiL’s galleries, who then contact SoiL. SoiL, sensitive to issues of representation, exploitation, utilization, multiplication, immediately concedes that something can be done, offers to take the work out of circulation, asks the writer what they think a fair percentage could be. But then they also start to think about where the boundary is between the work that went into the work (the text into the collage), but also the work that went into the text (the original art show). “Whose is it?” is a question we can ask, and are asking about a lot of things, specifically artworks, these days.

The law offers here to intercede, to sort out questions of “fair use.” But we know the courts don’t do fair well. What’s legal is just a set of worked over social negotiations, calcified into laws. More importantly, law is historically prejudiced in whom it looks after. There are so many examples of successful and unsuccessful

litigation of artist's use of each other's images that it clarifies little to explicate them here. Our communities are also regulated by any number of para legal and informal intersocial arrangements about ownership, territory, boundaries... Norms, also flawed.

— Envy is the feeling that fairness has not been properly ordered. It is a feeling that arises to order what is fair. In *Texte Zur Kunst's* "Envy" issue ("Neid " in German, a clue? even if only a false cognate of "need"), Sighard Neckel describes the difficulty or impossibility of mutuality, so sought after and so hard to obtain in the art world. "This is why Freud believed that only the demand for fairness can process envy, for it alone indicates the condition on which we can desist from envy. The elementary rule is that giving and taking, as well as rights and duties, be correlated by principles of mutuality."²

2— Sighard Neckel, "Invidia Modern: The Order of Resentment", *Texte zur Kunst*, September 2021.

What's fair? An artist makes a show. The artist generally takes on a large part of the investment themselves and is (hopefully) compensated by selling the works. But every show is an opportunity to fail. An artist is put in a considerable amount of risk every time they share their work—increasingly my most pressing definition of "artist" is someone who is committed (not romantically but practically) to precarity. The artist's practice is always up for a certain amount of damming reconsideration; they don't generally work in a team nor do they stick to a line or aesthetic that creates the type of continuity of a brand. But actually, some do. A lot do, and they don't live in any real proximity to precarity. They live indulgently next to vulgar wealth (not really possessing it themselves, but also some do, yes) and benefit from it while imagining themselves apart. But refusal is integral to art, right? I'm getting lost. There are a lot of ways to be an artist, and an artist is a dramatic image set in and amongst a drastically vague set of conditions, around and without: money, support, stability.

Between artists, endless competition and backstabbing, a type of begrudging sharing that can only be called love (with all the hate it entails). But what is the relationship between the artist and critic? The same, or is the tradition of art and its commentary a more mutual arrangement? What are its norms? Envy wants to seek out a better arrangement.

Must the critic act in good faith? Are they not engaged in what is an almost altruistic act of service? Their work lives off the artist's

work;³ it is a type of collaboration. The critic must enter seriously into this cooperation, precisely because they do not have to ask; the artist has already made themselves available, open to criticism. One doesn't need to praise or love the art or artist, better if they don't, but they should proceed carefully. They must practice integrity.

3— My friend Stefano Faoro comments: "Is this 100% true? I think the curatorial turn made it possible to not need artists anymore. And this didn't make artists disappear. But it made them not essential for critics. And being not essential is a status—even if you are there, you know you are not essential. Is this some kind of freedom? On both sides? Or maybe I am wrong and critics really depend on artists? I think my problem is to see this relation as a dialectic. I don't think it is. It has lost this dialectical condition for a much more free – coercive and neoliberal – freedom: absence of mutuality and also, therefore, absence of consequences. Artists and critics can never meet, and, on the other hand, sometimes they are the same person. Both annihilate dialectics."

These questions make it sound like the critic is a type of volunteer or social worker. There is the uncomfortable tension between the critics' circumstances and the way in which their work creates value in the artist's production; though this position has been quite diminished, gallerists seem to make most of the decisions on who is in and out nowadays and all they care about is the market (paintings only please). Also criticism is almost always under/not compensated. What do you get for a TzK article? A hundred euros or an artist edition. Sounds like a knock knock joke. 50 bucks for a critics pick, and we have a real critical problem with our publishing institutions, just as we have a broader problem with newspapers and news platforms. Not only are these platforms insufficiently funded or staffed to support good journalism/criticism (or reply in a timely manner to your pitch/invoice/email), but also that they are owned/bought by parent companies with illiberal politics or hemmed by editorial boards with pickled and retrograde political positions. That said, when we are so quick to kick such institutions down the stairs, what

place do we have left for criticism? These magazines took decades to build as platforms. That they had already abdicated much of their critical position, become so watered down and positive, maybe makes it so much easier to feel they already have no value for us in moments when they go and become really politically offensive.. But institutions have phases, they are not only what they are now.

In relationships, what I need from you is a negotiation that is always ongoing. I parse and sort out the limits of what I can live with. Mutuality is the goal—I give it, I get it⁴— but compromise is the mode. In one of their many conversations on the political potential of love, Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt are talking and Hardt says “Love is the social mobilization of joy. They’re intimately related. The short version is: Joy can be without others, whereas

4— Here misquoted from the original text: “I give it, get it,” Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015), 52.

love can't."⁵ If criticism is a relationship you don't do it alone.

2. Jealousy

Jealousy is up all night with the moon.

A friend of mine used to joke, "everyone's a critic, especially the critics." A quote she always attributed to some imaginary author/comedian, but was actually only ever her own saying, herself a critic. If the first impulse here in this meaderning text is towards fairness the second is to the souring of an unfair or unfavorable dynamic into jealousy. Neckel provides a very succinct explanation of the difference between jealousy and envy: "When envy is complemented by an individual's sentiment that they have a legitimate claim to

5— Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt, "On the Risk of a New Relationality," interview by Heather Davis and Paige Sarlin, *Reviews in Cultural Theory*: Issue 2.3.

the coveted object, it turns to jealousy."⁶

The philosopher Agnes Callard, who's essay on *Jealousy*⁷ can be found elsewhere in this catalog, expands further: Callard sees jealousy not only as a negative emotion but also as an essential motor of our erotic desire. She describes jealousy as a blindspot, the need to inhabit the exact position you can not be in. In her explanation, you are not jealous of your beloved's attention and affection for another lover, but jealous that the other lover knows your beloved in a way you can not and will never be able to – they know your beloved without you. You don't want to get rid of the other lover, but instead you want to become him, and to know your beloved as him.

6— Neckel, "Invidia Modern: The Order of Resentment."

7— Agnes Callard, "The Other Woman", <https://thepointmag.com/examined-life/the-other-woman/>

So is my (our) beloved object art? and he/it stuck between us? Are we even in a relationship?

Maybe I'm just a jealous (critical) guy. What I have been worrying about lately is that my critical spirit is more about jealousy than anything else. Not the righteous judgment that takes care of our shared project, but jealousy at others' liberty. I watch myself use intelligence like a cudgel, fomenting arguments to beat others down (and keep me down too). But I also feel the way some of my peers participate in art is not only *bad*: weak, ineffective, silly, superficial, but also *Bad*: manipulative, corrosive, and antagonistic to all the wrong things—that they undermine a project we are all wagered in that is vital to our society, my life—that they haven't earned their success or more specifically that the things they did to “earn” it are wrong, are things I would not do, “should” not want.

Where is the balance between criticality and jealousy? Eve Klossoky Sedgwick (in “Paranoia and Reparative Reading”) encourages

us that to give up a type of paranoid critical reading does not have to mean giving up our political discernment, “to practice other than paranoid forms of knowing does not, in itself, entail a denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression,”⁸ Still, I am suspicious of my very moral imperative.

One artist writes bestseller novels (Calla Henkel). They are fine, formulaic, stated plainly so, the author tells how she read the ‘how to write a novel’ books and just followed the instructions. I read the first book, grudgingly enjoying it but hating its manipulative simplicity, designed to conquer airport bookshops, to top the charts. This is not literature, I thought. I also chided myself for being so uptight. I went to the launch of her second book—nope—I felt reassured of my judgment—this was something corrosive, stupid, and worse, mean. The author was taking all her fine intelligence and using

8— Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 128.

it to dupe people. We knew the book was a trojan horse (though without a subversive fighting force inside), but everyone else did not. (But who cares?!) Is it still satire if the reader doesn't know it's a critique? I asked her later in a roundabout way if she thought she was acting in bad faith, she told me she thought Americans believed way too much in the power or sanctity of literature, that that was dumb. Maybe I just want to write my own book; "You should!", she said.

Below all of this there is an anxiety about effect and effectiveness in culture. Is art essentially supposed to work against culture? This is not a rhetorical question. Is art culture's critic?!

3. Self-portrait

Picasso said every portrait is a self-portrait. Maybe SoiL's critic is jealous that SoiL has confused their relationship, made it ambiguous, made their art so much into a type of criticism

that they have eclipsed the critic's position. They have taken their writing and made an image of it – covered their song; they have become what the other thinks they cannot be, a critical lover of art... Which one?

Carla Lonzi, in the introduction to her book/text/artwork *Self-portrait*, asks:

"But how could one distinguish the true artist from the false artist, if there were no more critics, this is the question that emerges in this case. However, first, one must ask why this distinction is considered so essential by society."⁹

The book, a portmanteau of long interviews with different artists mixed into one text, was also the site of her departure from criticism into a more direct political practice. Having given up the position of critic she writes:

9— Carla Lonzi, *Self-portrait*, Translated by Allison Grimaldi Donahue. (Brussels: Divided Publishing, 2021), 15.

“What remains, now that I’ve lost this role within the art world? Maybe I’ve become an artist myself? I can respond: I am no longer alienated. If art is not in my abilities as creation, it is as creativity, as consciousness of art in the willingness to do good.”¹⁰

Art is transformed into an awareness, and the loss of her critical distance is only the loss of her alienation. She is passing into a type of participation; she is engaging communally with enjoyment. Later in *Self-portrait* Carla Accardi, one of Lonzi’s interview subjects, commenting on the public conversations between artists and critics held in Milan in the 70s, urges that we must remain thorough in what we allow in dialogue and in art.

“But let me tell you, how false it all is. Look, it seems to me that in Italy there is actually a tradition of falsity, because people think, ‘It does no harm, falsity isn’t what destroys ideas... deep down maybe there

are good ideas, new ideas...’ No, this isn’t the way. One must be a bit tougher, a bit more puritanical and should say, ‘No, where we find good ideas, new ideas, we can cut them out, we can make a division.’”

and then she playfully but vindictively turns on Lonzi, the critic, her friend and interlocutor.

”So, I wanted then to clarify: what does the critic do? He does the opposite of everything I previously mentioned, he does everything at random, comments waft about like when you smell a good fragrance, a rose and you remember ‘roses exist,’ or you go into someone’s studio and say ‘Oh, look at this thought that he had...’ But the critic has knowledge locked in a certain phase, in its own neurotic form.”¹¹

Just now, back on instagram, I see a friend (the most successful painter?) has posted a screenshot of her story, a black and white text

caption: “Also fuck that Manhattan art reviewer fucker I’d like to see what kind of art you make bitch” I send it to another friend, the comedian critic, she writes back, “Lol that insta. But also... / That’s kind of a big mistake about art criticism / It’s not supposed to be written by artists”

To all of it, I insert Lonzi’s reply to Accardi, or the reply Lonzi had originally inserted herself:

“I want to kiss you!”¹²

Such loving effacement, such love of being effaced!

I tell my friend I’m putting her texts in the essay

“Ya go ahead / As long as u don’t make me look lame / I wanna be jealous of myself”

Bats and Roses
Pati Hill

**Bats climb up out of the chimney
And wheel off.
Roses stick close to the house.**

**Bats have other bats
With other lives and other faces.
Roses have only themselves.**

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