

the bad

VIFFS

CLUB

A Note on the Texts

Beth Bramich and Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau

Marriage is Punishment for Shoplifting
in Some Countries: Some Notes on Wayne's World,
Cruelty, Kindness and Radical Vulnerability

Tessa Norton

Our Gelatinous Past

Sophie Mallett

The Nerve Disorder: An Interview with Jodie Granger

Hamish MacPherson

Mommy Issues

Kathryn Siegel

Fire

Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau

Residence Kitchen, 6–10pm, 30 May 2018

Jonathan Hoskins and Susannah Worth

A Note from Matt and Beth on the Texts

This publication accompanies The Bad Vibes Club's research over the past year and a half. This work has included performances and workshops at Open School East, ICA London and CCA Derry-Londonderry and a programme of reading groups and events at Flat Time House.

While hosted by Flat Time House, we ran a monthly reading group and organised events with writer Tessa Norton, artist Sophie Mallett, choreographer Hamish MacPherson, film scholar Kathryn Siegel, and artist Jonathan Hoskins and writer Susannah Worth with their Residence Kitchen project.

Most of the texts in this reader come from the artists who took part in the Flat Time House events programme: essays by Tessa and Kathryn, an interview by Hamish with Jodie Granger, some text and images from Sophie's presentation, and some words and recipes taken from Residence Kitchen's event. There is also an edited script of the performance Matt gave at the ICA and CCA Derry-Londonderry. We hope that if you came to some of these events then you enjoy experiencing them in their new form, and if you didn't then these texts give you a flavour of what you missed.

Huge thanks to all the contributors, to our designer Flaminia Rossi, to Gareth Bell-Jones and Flat Time House, and to all of our partner institutions over the past year: OSE, ICA, CCA Derry-Londonderry, Somerset House and the Barbican. Thanks also to Arts Council England.

Beth Bramich & Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau, June 2018.

Marriage is punishment for
shoplifting in some countries:

SOME NOTES ON WAYNE'S WORLD, CRUELTY, KINDNESS AND RADICAL VULNERABILITY

Tessa Norton

Wayne's World is my favourite film.

I mean, I always *say* it's my favourite film, but I do think that 'favourite' is almost as confusing a concept as 'best'. It's still trying to fit a comically subjective notion into a grid of unseen and unwritten rules, because the fact is, there are some things which it are acceptable to choose as a favourite and others which you just can't, even if they're good. (For example, the KLF, although they are surprisingly problematic vis-à-vis their relationship to both contemporary art and collectivist politics, remains a solid answer to the question 'who's your favourite band'. The Velvet Underground, on the other hand, is a terrible answer.) This acceptability operates in a space quite separate from the merits of the work. Having a favourite is also not a critical position, since your favourite anything is generally something which you have long ceased to have any critical faculties about.¹ That's where I find myself with Wayne's World.

I'm not sure I will ever truly understand what public access cable TV is, or why two twentysomething slackers would be making a TV show anyway, but *now*, 25 years later, it's starting to make perfect sense.² No one young really watches TV anymore, but what they do watch is slightly older kids messing around unprofessionally in their parents' basements. Wayne is a vlogger, a content producer, an Instagram influencer. Dena Yago, writing in e-flux recently, said 'social-media celebrity is always already pitched somewhere between the inaccessible and the local; it exists in some virtual elsewhere



that could stand in for anyone's hometown or living room. Importantly, many of these videos are recorded within domestic spaces.' Aurora, Illinois: so close to John Hughes' Shermer, Illinois, that idealised smallish everytown. A virtual elsewhere.

The scene we're going to talk about today, though, is something quite universal: Stacy, and Wayne's cruelty.

Stacy

Well, don't you want to open your present?

Wayne

If it's a severed head I'm going to be very upset.

Stacy

Open it.

Wayne

What is it?

Stacy

It's a gun rack.

Wayne

A gun rack... a gun rack. Shyeah! Right! I don't even own a gun, let alone many guns that would necessitate an entire rack. What am I gonna do... with a gun rack?

Stacy

You don't like it? Fine. You know Wayne, if you're not careful, you're going to lose me.

Wayne

I lost you two months ago. We broke up. Are you mental?

Get the net!

Stacy is Wayne's ex-girlfriend, and she's waiting for him with a large present in Stan Mikita's Donuts. She's significantly better-looking than Wayne, and based on this exchange she is kinder too. Everything about Stacy's appearance and behaviour can be used against her, to better level the playing field. Stacy presents as basic, un-rock, uncool, uncritically feminine. Stumbling in her heels and prom-pink dress, she projects an eagerness to please that is entirely counterproductive since it seems to please nobody. She is pitiable, an injured puppy; but in order for Wayne to be set up as Aurora, Illinois' local hero, someone who punched above his weight and triumphed, needing to punch higher and higher still, she is an adversary.

A few years ago, Gayatri Spivak's concept of radical vulnerability started gaining a lot of ground – on Tumblr, mostly. The internet is so alarmingly fast at turning out these karaoke-versions of theory concepts. So, what began as a postcolonial theory tool to open up dialogue between groups, particularly in cross-border situations by opening oneself up to criticism and so forth, quickly morphed into a hashtag for people to medicate their bad breakups with feminist theory. This is not a bad thing, I don't think! Anyway, it got repurposed as a sort of way forward in art and literature, on that new sincerity axis, you know. Jerry Saltz wrote a column about it which, pinkie promise, you don't need to read. It's a theme in Wayne's World, throughout – from Garth and Wayne's tested friendship, to their friend Terry's regular proclamations of

‘I love you, man’, to which no one knows quite how to respond (the right answer turns out to be ‘thank you’), but I think the Stacy-Wayne relationship can offer the most insight into it. Stacy’s brought Wayne an anniversary gift, a gun rack. The gift casts her in a bad light, it’s true. It is... not a good present. Almost certainly something her dad would like, it makes us feel less guilty about laughing at her. But her gift is bigger than it looks, and far less egocentric. Presenting Wayne with the gun rack, Stacy is handing him America itself, gift-wrapped. Rejecting it makes Wayne grow powerful. Although the pain Stacy feels at rejection is real, she will realise in time that Wayne’s acceptance or otherwise of the gun rack is entirely incidental. Giving Wayne this power, the power to refuse, to reject both it and her, is *part of the gift too*.



Meanwhile, Stacy’s power is greater still: it comes from being able to stand there and just give. This is where Stacy’s vulnerability is radical – when you abandon your ego, and your expectation of reciprocity, loving becomes basically an extreme sport. Stacy has utterly, recklessly abandoned self-care, trading in her personhood to become something selfless, otherworldly, radiating love like the brightest light. I mean, I

wouldn’t recommend it, but it doesn’t mean it’s not brave! What a goddess.

What’s more, I can’t shake a nagging doubt that there is more to Stacy and Wayne’s story. I mean, Wayne says they’ve broken up now, but we have no way of knowing what he has said to Stacy in private and the extent to which they interact away from the group. We have every reason to suspect that his masculinity in front of his friends is a pure performance. (I would bet you anything that they are still sleeping together,



and I'd like to draw your attention to the first of the three endings of the film, the depressing one, which presents a timeline where Stacy is pregnant with Wayne's child even though we know they broke up 'months ago'). Stacy's lingering presence in Wayne's life echoes the other ultimate ex-girlfriend of literature, Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, given the dignity of agency

and a backstory as Antoinette in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As Spivak notes, Antoinette: 'must play out her role, act out the transformation of her "self" into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that *Jane Eyre* can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction.' But there's no house for Stacy to burn down. And who is it that gains when Stacy loses?

If we're going to unpack what a *Wide Sargasso Sea* of *Wayne's World* would look like, we need to understand Stacy's motivations. In 'The Little Shopgirls go to the Movies', Siegfried Kracauer writes of the circular desire loop of everyday life and cinema: 'there is no kitsch one could invent that life itself could not outdo... Sensational film hits and life usually correspond to each other because the Little Miss Typists model themselves after the examples they see on the screen. It may be, however, that the most hypocritical instances are stolen from life'. With her girlish desires of an idealised romance, Stacy represents both Kracauer's little shopgirl, and also the movies itself. *Wayne's World* emerged at a point at the beginning of the 1990s when Hollywood turned on itself: such a small and slight *Saturday Night Live* sketch turned into this massive blockbuster filled with meta-gags about the industry, and multiple endings. It's fitting, then, that Wayne's triumph over Stacy parallels *Wayne's World's* triumph over Hollywood

itself. A victory for the scruffier, smarter, more cynical TV over the mid-century dream factory. We're at a point, in 1992, on the cusp of grunge supplanting rock, at the beginning of the irony wars that would define the rest of the decade. Wayne walks a line here. His aesthetic is old rock but his sensibility is all modern.³ His dreams are MTV, not Hollywood. The moral of Wayne's World, in its proper ending at least, is in a rejection of the idea of being swept off your feet in favour of finding happiness at home with your friends. Stacy is a casualty of the coming decade, her unguarded vulnerability rendered unfashionable and passé.

None of which helps Stacy much. She's just left, hanging there, with too many feelings. But is the aim of life just to get to the end without making a fool of yourself, or is the aim to achieve perfect shimmering transcendence? Dignity is a delicate balance: value it too little and you might end up so paralysed by embarrassment at your past indignities that you shut down, unable to see beauty anywhere. Too much, and you'd never take any risks at all. Now, I wouldn't claim that Stacy is modelling ideal behaviour here, and Cassandra may well be right when she later notes 'she has very nice legs, but no self-esteem'. She might even be exhibiting some symptoms of complex-PTSD. Nonetheless, it still seems that Stacy is further along on the road to transcendence than she would be if she politely followed the rules of correct, non-embarrassing behaviour.

The trouble is, I suppose, that Stacy's emotional courageousness doesn't operate in a neutral space. Even a supposedly charming /disarming act like telling someone you like them, even platonically, is fraught with danger, obligation, guilt. It can unwittingly invite bad stuff, structurally violent stuff, like how poltergeists get attached to teenage girls. But the male /female chirpse-dialectic is like rotten driftwood, and I don't think it'll take much to collapse it. Wayne has a lot to

learn but he is not a villain here, not really, and in some ways he's pushing away at these decaying structures too. When Wayne meets Cassandra, he settles into a role as the tugboat-partner, and though he struggles with the power dynamic initially, he ultimately finds some sort of relaxing sublimation in the groupie role.

There's a song on Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing of Summer Lambs* called *Don't Interrupt the Sorrow*. It's the most vulnerable possible song about being tough. Mostly, I guess it's about having a conversation with a man, where you're really having a secret conversation with yourself that the man can't hear. *I've got a head full of quandary and a mighty, mighty, mighty thirst*. That's the nature of the new consciousness which is growing inside Stacy now. And as the chant inside her head grows stronger and stronger, and more insistent, she'll soon realise that Wayne has just been a catalyst and isn't really all that important. Frankly, I'm amazed Stacy can hear what he is saying at all, over the sound of her own song.

I suppose that's the heart of it. Sometimes loving, especially as early in life as these two, is about process, not object. The love you generate is just packing peanuts, just something you wrap yourself in to keep yourself safe. If I'm right, and that's what is happening here, then the real romance is between Stacy and her own internal dialogue, and what she will use this situation to eventually create. I honestly think she'll be fine, I really do.



(Endnotes)

1 And as to whether you should even have a favourite film – well, I guess we're all just trying to understand what we are, and create assemblages that represent us, whether it's some past timey war belligerents making a really sick coat of arms, or me when I was 14 looking down at my charity shop typewriter and Stargazer glitter dust and copy of Salome by Oscar Wilde and thinking smugly to myself that it meant something! I'm not sure that a list of bestest things is even a particularly fun way to reify your personality, especially now we don't have Myspace.

2 If you're going to watch any film from the early 90s, you owe it to yourself to try and replicate the experience by watching Warner Brothers chain's bespoke "how to behave in the cinema" cartoon, which they used to show at the beginning of each screening. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILaNAblbqIY>
Surprisingly, the Youtube commenters reckon it actually is Mel Blanc doing the voices here, but they've sped him up so he sweetly sounds like he's doing Bugs Bunny for the first time, although it was probably nearer the last. (It also sounds like he is saying the word "theatre" when he's only ever seen it written down, but perhaps that's cultural differences).

3 Sitting on the cusp of generations, Wayne's World has an awkward relationship to temporality, I think. It's full of weird arcane references to 1960s light entertainment. The bit where Wayne goes "Dick Sargent, Dick York...Sergeant York", refers, by the way, to the two actors that played Darrin, the husband in 1960s sitcom Bewitched, and Sergeant York is a 1941 first world war film with Gary Cooper. These jokes can't possibly be aimed at its target audience – and might be explained in part by Mike Myers' two co-writers on the film both being jobbing sitcom veterans, a husband and wife couple who were 20 years older than him. But I think these references (and the tie-in book, Extreme Close Up, is even worse by the way) serve to lend the Wayne's World universe a strange opacity, making it seem somehow a site of resistance against wider 1990s culture.

Our Gelatinous Past

Sophie Mallett

I've heard stories of the early days, when the blooms would extend for miles and miles and create big problems for them. In the thickest spots there was more of us than water.



I think the ones that they cared most about were the blooms in Japan. There, our biggest sisters (they used to call them refrigerator-sized gelatinous monsters) swarmed the seas every year. They clogged fishing nets, overturned trawlers and their interventions cost the Japanese fisheries billions of yen in losses. But they saw it as more of an anomaly rather than a precedent.





ダイバーが1人隠れてしまうほど巨大

Understanding what was happening wasn't easy because gathering data on us was so difficult for them. Even though 70% of their planet was covered by ocean, they really only had a hazy idea about most of the life. Our ancestors mostly inhabited open oceans and deep waters, so, they could remain an enigma in many ways. There's no way they could monitor individuals or family blooms by satellite because we're so transparent – we have very low biomass, and anyway we swam in deeper waters than their satellites could reach.



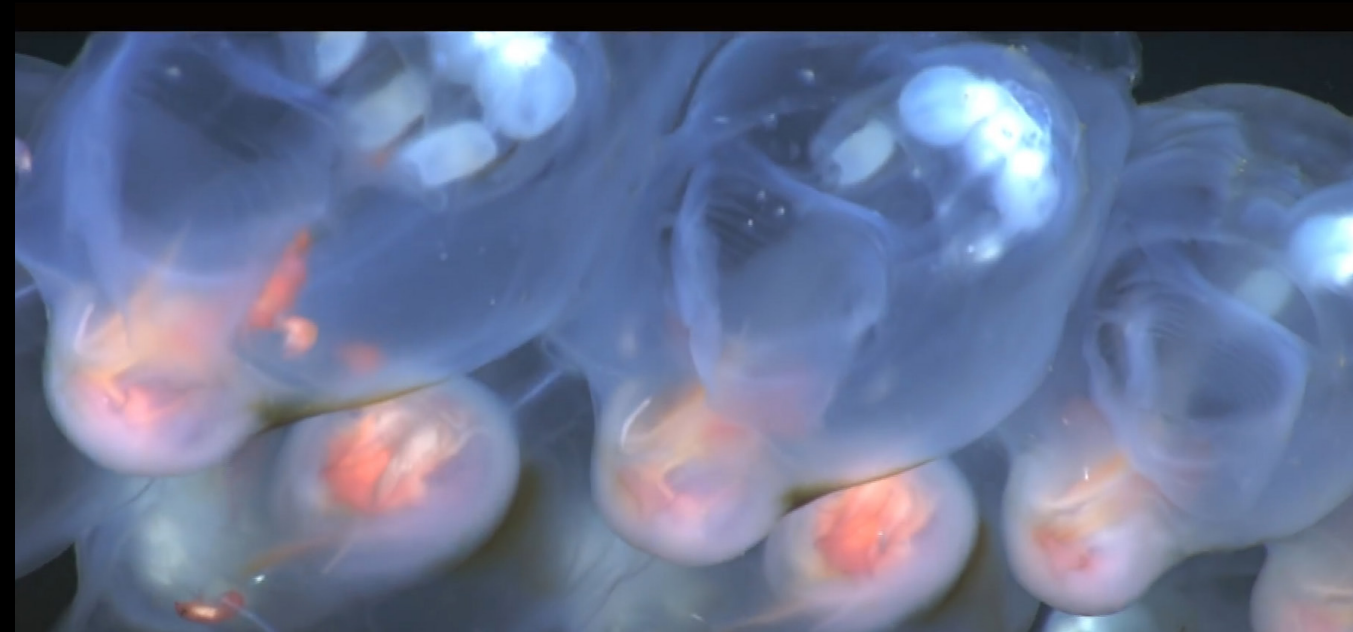
The fisherman are basically working for free

What you learn in school is that in a way it was nothing to do with us: the fables talk about the ballasts of ships that ejected us in to new waters; the crazy aquarium trade; but I think the most likely origin story is that the ocean currents changed, and that changed everything for them. It's possible that they're all true and together they led to those early blooms. What we know for sure is that they didn't understand how non-native species thrive in places where we have no competitors or predators. Once we're there we can dominate so easily.





We can make millions and millions of copies of ourselves and clone asexually – they never learnt how to do that with their bodies. That's really the secret to our success, the reason we've been around for so long.





For them the problem was that they really didn't know what caused the blooms. For us now though, it's obvious: we were simply better prepared for the ways that the world changed.



The Nerve Disorder: An Interview with Jodie Granger by Hamish MacPherson

Jodie Granger is an artist. In 2017 she was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system. The syndrome is rare, affecting only about one person in 100,000 but it can affect anybody. It can strike at any age and all genders are equally prone to the disorder. Around 1 in 20 cases is fatal but most people will eventually make a full recovery. This can take weeks, months or years and some people are left with long-term problems. This is an extract from a longer interview by artist Hamish MacPherson, first published in Still Life magazine (stilllifemag.org) that he edits.

It all kind of started randomly on a Monday. I just remember feeling... the very first thing that I noticed was when I washed my hands it felt spiky. I remember having a bit of hypersensitivity to the temperature in the water and I remember if it was particularly cold it would be, like, spiky so I was a bit like, 'ooh that's a bit weird, maybe I'm just having a weird moment'. And then it stayed there, it progressed on the next day and it felt like there was something going on. So it was my hands and also in and around my mouth and then my feet started feeling funny as well and I could particularly notice it when I would get into bed again... it was a change of temperature... to the touch of the sheets it felt spiky and weird and cold like a flash of cold or something.

So on the Tuesday I went to the doctors and I was like, 'this feels weird'. They checked my reflexes and they had no idea. They were like, 'you can go, have a blood test if you want'. I just went home and hoped it would be better the next

day but the next day that weird change in sensation had spread all over my body so that was when I realised there was definitely something wrong going on and I found it difficult to get out of bed or to start walking so I then went straight to King's College Hospital to the walk-in blood test centre.

I kind of panicked and they brought me to A&E [accident and emergency] and I stayed there for a bit and then had my blood tests and it all came back fine so I was sent home again and then the next day I didn't want to get out of bed and I was throwing up. I was finding it difficult to get out of bed and go to the toilet: I had to push on... use my arms more... I remember using the wall to try and get there and then I was on the phone to my mum and she said, and I don't really remember this but she said I sounded slurred so she was worried. She came up to London that evening and thought that I had a really bad fever of something so she was going to take me home until I got better but I got worse and the next day I really, really didn't want to get out of bed because I couldn't. I'd be grunting with the effort... 'why are my legs not...' the legs just weren't... I couldn't connect to them so it was a really big effort to do anything.

Pins and needles was another thing that came along with this as well... especially from the extremities up, from my feet and hands up and in and around my mouth outwards. So at this point I rang the doctors and they said go to A&E because you can't walk very well and that was that. And then at 3am I was finally put onto a ward. A week sort of sounds fast and slow... it just got worse and worse.

Just normal bodily functions were becoming less and less in my control and then a few days after I was admitted to ICU [intensive care unit] and they gradually explained to us what might happen. The connections to my muscles weren't happening. They were explaining all this to me. I was getting

worse and worse, weaker and weaker, tired and tired. And they explained that at some point, 'it's probably going to become more difficult for you to breathe because you're not going to be able to.' The simple action of moving your chest up and down is essential to breathing and the speech and language therapists were involved quite quickly because my swallowing was becoming non-existent so I would have had the NG [nasogastric] tube so I could be fed and they were like, 'you're going to have to be intubated soon because you're probably going to find it more and more difficult to breathe on your own' and that's what happened as I got weaker.

So I was intubated and at that point I was sedated so this is the hazy part where for a few days I was conscious. They still needed me to be conscious because they needed me to react to stuff because they were still testing me for things and they still needed my response but I don't remember. The drugs I would have been on at this point... the effect is to erase your memory because when you've got a tube going down your windpipe in your mouth it's uncomfortable so I have weird memories of that.

And I would have been sedated in order for the tracheostomy to happen. The ventilator was keeping me alive because I couldn't breathe and it was essentially breathing for me – pushing air into the lungs and taking it out. The tracheostomy was essentially where I was going to be breathing through... so a tube attached to here [indicates throat] attached to the ventilator so at this point I couldn't talk and I couldn't move.

So communication was the very first thing after that... the way I was having to communicate was with a spell chart board. They would have to hold it... my eyelids wouldn't close when I slept either so I had to have droplets to protect them... really thick coating on my eyes so my eyesight was

really blurry... it was so hard to communicate this. So they had to hold it [the spell chart], obviously I was lying down so I couldn't put my neck up, they had to hold it here and I would have been like this trying to read it and they would have had to go, 'one, two, three' [moving finger along the board] and then I would have had to nod or shake my head.

I must have had a bit of movement in my head and my eyes were all... even though they had to protect my eyes with droplets, my eyesight wasn't damaged apart from the muscles. When they checked my eyesight, they checked it all the time, if I looked up that would hurt. When I could start moving things... imagine everywhere in your body has been bruised and it is all strained. So I could communicate with the spell chart, spelling out words letter by letter.

I would be communicating about in what way am I uncomfortable, what I need them to do. Part of the pain, it was a kind of neuropathic pain... I wasn't actually hot but my entire body was burning, it was the nerves doing that as they were being fixed or damaged so I would be repeating, 'burning, burning' so there would be a lot of input from pain management saying we need to try this concoction of drugs. At this point there's something called IVIG – Intravenous Immunoglobulin – which you get treated for GBS with. It's basically full of other people's antibodies and it kickstarts the healing process. And I had this course and then I eventually had another course.

I would say if I needed changing positions or something because I'd still feel uncomfortable all the time and obviously in ICU if you're bed-bound they need to turn you every four hours and that was quite a painful experience. And the more I was starting to heal the more pain I would experience like stiffness or bruising pain so when they would move me, it would get more and more uncomfortable and painful but it



was really hard to communicate. I just had to explain it by spelling it out.

When you have a tracheostomy there's lots of focus on mouth care because you're not getting any water going in or around your mouth so to begin with I would have massive amounts of saliva being produced so one of the things I'd spell out would be 'suction' and they would have to suction my mouth a lot. And I had mouth thrush, I had pneumonia. They would talk about managing your secretions... so the reason why I had pneumonia in my chest was because there was a lot of mucus not being cleared because you can't cough yourself you have to spell out 'cough.' With the trachey

there's a little tubey thing, they push it down your trachea. It sounds horrible but it became a very normal thing so they put a little tube down your trachea which irritates it and then you involuntarily cough and they would suck up the mucus. I could not control any of this hygiene aspect of mouth, mouth care and lungs.

But then also my mouth would be unbearably dry, my lips would be chapped all the time and no amount of lip balm could fix that so that would be irritating. And the weird thing about what was happening with the senses and my mouth was that I felt like there was always something in my mouth like a hair or something when there wasn't. I was obsessed. That would be another thing I would try to communicate about I'd be like, 'I've got something in my mouth, there's something in my face' when there wasn't at all. It was something that I felt because as the sensation was starting to come back – this is what they explained – I would just have every weird feeling you could possibly imagine with temperature, touch, all that pins and needles weirdness, I would experience that everywhere.

Some of the nurses knew exactly how to use it [the spell chart] and they were great, every single one of them but I remember a nurse would have held it there [at right angles to her face] and I couldn't tell them to move closer without being able to see the spell chart so it would be insane.

I've never experienced such intense anxiousness about sleeping, about pain, about going to the toilet. If I felt a strain or pins and needles or something I needed to explain to them where it was that I was feeling it and how to fix it but it was so hard because I didn't know myself where it was because I had no sense of orientation of my body because it was all just disconnected.

* * *

I was discharged after eight weeks, and recovery for the most part has been extremely positive; I have been able to work on my physical strength since last summer and have been happy with the progression, although I do still have residual symptoms in my feet, of partial numbness on the surface of the skin, which now and again causes clumsy incidents. It was also very difficult to handle the ‘bureaucratic nightmare’ as I like to call it, in terms of liaising with Student Finance and University admin and such. It essentially left me in a state of high anxiety of feeling helpless in a similar way it did in hospital when I was unable to communicate. Overall I am proud and aware of how amazing the body can be, but also aware that because of what happened due to GBS, and from the events that followed, my mental health has been heavily affected, so there are definitely areas of my health and well-being to be considered, which is quite a normal phenomenon as a consequence of things like this I’m sure.

MOMMY ISSUES

Kathryn Siegel

I have a desire to get inside a certain feminism — psychoanalytic feminism — that has a reputation for being difficult. So, when Beth proposed that we look at Julia Kristeva’s ‘Women’s Time’ for The Bad Vibes Club reading group, I knew I was in. Kristeva can be a hard sell as group material, and this is coming from someone working in academic film studies, an area that has historically been a safe space for feminists of the psychoanalytic persuasion. Even there, I sense an eagerness to relegate this *féminisme d’un certain age* to the past.

I am thinking not only of Kristeva but of the many, many scholarly pieces of writing that begin by namechecking the significance of Laura Mulvey’s most famous essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ before ultimately dismissing Mulvey and her cohort of second-wavers as outré. *The problem with psychoanalytic feminism*, these essays begin, *is that being so obsessed with the phallus, it has ended up reinforcing the same gendered hierarchy that it sought to upend. Or, psychoanalytic feminism was so focused on signs, symbols and ideology that it forgot about the body. Or, psychoanalysis was the terrain of white, bourgeois, women whose vocabulary was elitist, and whose*

investment in binary gender effaced the identities of others. Or, simply Freud was a misogynist and the Oedipus complex is wack, so why should we continue to pay attention to his convoluted ideas?

Should Freud be required reading? Is it obvious why feminists should make castration and lack central to their theorization of the subject, or indeed why feminism needs a theory of the subject at all? Probably not. And yet. Instead of picking apart the ways in which psychoanalytic theory as such is wrong or problematic, it strikes me as worthwhile to ask why it was so valued as an instrument of critique by a whole generation of women writers working across the arts, film and cultural studies. Mulvey, after all, rather than merely celebrating Freud and Lacan states that her essay intends to ‘appropriate’ psychoanalysis as a ‘political weapon’. Kristeva talks about Freudianism as a ‘lever’ produced by and yet destined to pry open the question of sexual difference within the modern social machine.

I like these instrumental takes because they counter the idea that ‘theory’ lies outside the sphere of action as a form of ivory-tower contemplation. True, Mulvey and Kristeva were both writing in the context of elite institutions — the university, literary journals, and in Mulvey’s case the state-supported British film industry. ‘Women’s Time’ was first published, in the words of its English-language translator Alice Jardine, in a ‘small, modest, but excellent research journal to be read (obviously) first in Paris.’ As such, she warned, the polemical content of the text, its writing style and cultural assumptions, its evocation of the ‘European woman’ as a hypothetical object and addressee, might be alienating even to those English-speaking feminists already inclined to read theory. Yet, cultural institutions are not islands; rather they are politicized territories

from which women have historically been excluded, and in the project of psychoanalytic feminism I sense a desire to hijack the academy from the inside.

Dare we depart from Audre Lorde's famous formulation? Is it possible that the master's tools *can* dismantle the master's house? Maybe a better way to frame the question is to ask whether, as a tool, psychoanalysis fully belonged to Freud in the first place. Here is my favourite passage from 'Visual Pleasure'. Mulvey has just gone on at length about the compromised status of the female subject within a Freudian logic of the unconscious. 'Woman' is framed there as a screen of projection for male anxieties and fantasies. She is silenced and disenfranchised, proscribed from full participation in the order of Law and language. 'There is an obvious interest in this analysis for feminists', Mulvey writes, 'a beauty in its exact rendering of the frustration experienced under the phallocentric order.' Kristeva meanwhile admits Freud's reputation as an 'irritating phallocratic' while also insisting that his clinical interviews with patients actually captured something of the distorting machinations of language, alternately neurotic and hysterical, that served to police sexual difference in bourgeois, interwar Vienna. Put otherwise, Kristeva and Mulvey (and many others, I think) tap an uncanny resonance between a Freudian account of sexual hierarchy and the concerns being voiced by their contemporaries in the women's liberation movement half a century later. The language of psychoanalysis, in Mulvey's words, 'gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of the arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy.'

The Bad Vibes Club promises to be a space to get to grips with uncomfortable feelings. Second-wave feminist texts are difficult to read in part because, while vehemently lobbying for women's *equality*, they also affirm the deep-seated nature of women's *inequality*. The uneasiness of this position goes beyond the problem of identifying with a portrait of womanhood that is, to borrow a word from Juliet Mitchell, 'unflattering'; it also raises the difficulty of thinking women as a group united in solidarity in light of intersectionality and throws into relief the reality that some people clearly bear the brunt of sexual oppression more than others. Even scarier, Kristeva wants to talk about reproduction. Does this mean that women are to be united politically by their status as baby-makers? Shouldn't any gesture toward a politics of female biological specificity stand out as a backward feature of 'Women's Time', clearly situating it in some other generation not our own?

In fact, one thing that makes this text so compelling for me is its framing of sexual difference as a murky yet persistent configuration at the interface of biology, fantasy and the social order — one that, historically, has been a thorn in the side of emancipatory politics. Kristeva wrote of the failure of the political systems in France and Eastern Europe to either practically or ideologically account for women's work as real work (that is, as truly productive) from the perspective of egalitarian socialism. In a section called 'Living the Sacrifice', she asks: what if women refused to surrender their time and energy spent as mothers, wives, nurses, doctors, teachers, cleaners, (she doesn't mention sex-workers, but one might infer,) to the maintenance of a socio-symbolic order within which their labour is routinely un- or under-compensated, and from which they are denied full symbolic participation?

One function of ‘Women’s Time’ was to diagnose a mounting extremism amongst a new generation of women in post-’68 Europe in reaction to this state of affairs, as the repressed return of the reproductive in the form of a new militancy.

At The Bad Vibes Club reading group, a lively discussion came out of Kristeva’s idea that the phenomena of lesbian and single motherhood were, at the time of writing in 1979, amongst the most radical, socially disruptive manifestations of the women’s movement in France. From her perspective, making families without fathers is a deeply politicized act because it follows through on the threat of this militant feminist separatism: women withdrawing their bodies and work from a patriarchal system in which they can find no chance of redemption. ‘[W]hat an unbelievable force of subversion in the modern world!’ she writes. ‘And at the same time, what playing with fire!’ Matt’s instinct was that this stuck out as one of the more out-of-date sections of the text, and this in turn set off a tangent of woman-splaining. I was keen to point out there is still juice in the claim that single mothers cause friction to the social order. How else to explain their vulnerability and risk of economic hardship? In England, the cost of childcare can easily wipe out the earnings of a lower-income woman. I was thinking about Focus E15, the campaign launched by a group of young mothers who were evicted from the East Thames Housing Association in 2013 after the local council cut funding for homeless youth. The group faced relocation to other towns and cities (Manchester, Birmingham, Hastings) in order to remain eligible for the housing benefits that are crucial to survival for unsupported women, who must otherwise choose between waged work and caring for their kids.

Reading the text again, however, it strikes me that the

vision Kristeva had in mind corresponds less to the situation of the E15 Mothers than to a final scene from VALIE EXPORT’s *Menschenfrauen*, in which two mature women, one of whom is pregnant, stroll off into a beachy sunset in order to raise the child of a petulant and entitled male lover who had thwarted them both. Ultimately Kristeva disapproves of such a cult of femininity, galvanized less by desire between women than by frustration with the raw deal of patriarchy; but, the fact that her writing calls such images to mind is, I think, part of its lasting provocation.

Fire

Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau

Dust

It's not good manners. You can't talk about humans as if they were things. You can't talk about people as though they were objects. But they *literally are* objects, they literally are things. You'd be a thing too if you'd been burned to dust, literally burned into ash and dust and nothing. Shit fucking nothing.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. They say that but they don't mean that. Most people are human before they are dust. Normally it goes human, corpse, dust. That's the way it normally goes. But some people start as dust and end as dust. Start as shit and end as shit. Start as nothing and end as nothing.

I don't think I know many people who would get turned into dust: literal dust. Atomised, disintegrated into dust and nothing, mixed with the dust and ash and nothingness of 100 other people. I don't know *you*, but I just can't picture *you* as dust, with men and women in hazard suits and breathing apparatus scrabbling around *in* you — literally in you as nothing, dust, ash, shit, nothing. Literally kicking you up in the air as they scrabble around trying to find something in the nothing. Some tiny fragment of bone or tooth that might give them some indication that amongst this dusty ashy nothing there might once have been a person, a human with a name and a life and a haircut. A person with something to say, something stupid to say, something disgusting to say, some grudge from the past, some petty resentment, some problem to put elsewhere, some moaning, wailing, aggravating claim to personhood denied to them by a cruel system or a world out of balance.

Dusty ashy shit nothing blowing around the streets, into houses, blowing out across the Westway. Burned human corpse dust blowing across the traffic, into Westfield Shopping Centre, into the food court. Human corpse dust landing in sheets on your Nandos, sprinkling across your Byron burger, decimated fragments of mingled humans shaking down onto your Caffè Nero. Ashy human shit on your Five Guys, on your Franco Manca, on your Itsu, on your Jamie's Italian, decorating your Lola's cupcake, sprinkled on your Millie's cookie, dusting your Mister Pretzel, onto your Zizzi, laying like fresh snow across those little domes covering the plastic plates in Yo Sushi as they go around on that stupid fucking conveyor belt.

Other People's Feelings

It's tiring, it's very tiring, it makes me feel tired. All this death, all this death, all this dying. Reading about this death, watching this death, thinking about this death, googling this death.

Trying to think of reasons, trying to think beyond reason, trying to think beyond what is reasonable.

How far can empathy go? How far can anger go? Can you resent something on behalf of someone else? Can you resent yourself on behalf of others?

What should we talk about and how should we talk about it? What should we see and what should remain hidden? What should you feel while you watch a video of a fire in a block of flats in West London?

Let's talk about cruelty.

Cruelty is in the details. Cruelty is not just burning 100 people to death but saving £100,000 by installing flammable cladding. Cruelty is not just burning 100 people to death but taking 6 months to identify the remains of those who died.

Cruelty is not just burning 100 people to death but refusing to pay for the installation of sprinkler systems that might prevent further death.

You don't have to *intend* to be cruel to be cruel. You don't have to *mean* it. You don't have to *want* it. You don't have to *enjoy* it. You don't even have to know you're doing it, not only that, but you don't even have to *be a you*. You could be a structure, you could be a circumstance, you could be a government, a society, an ideology, a tendency.

Cruelty doesn't have to have an outcome or a reason. It doesn't have to mean anything. It doesn't have to have a purpose or be an answer to a question unless the question is 'what is cruelty?'.

Cruelty, therefore does not require intention at either end of the process and in a way this is what makes cruelty so cruel. People suffer acts of cruelty whether or not the people committing the cruel acts know they're being cruel, and they suffer cruelty despite there not being any *particular* purpose to their *particular* suffering.

Cruelty makes its mark on bodies. Cruelty is cruel to bodies. Single human bodies. Single tiny pathetic human bodies. Single tiny fragile human bodies with muscles and bones and organs wrapped up in delicate skin. Single beautiful human bodies warm to the touch. Single smiling talking laughing human bodies holding onto each other in flats filling with smoke, in stairwells filling with poisonous smoke. Waving phones out of windows. Texting friends and family. Waiting for help that won't arrive.

The scent is nauseating and sweet, putrid and steaky, or something like leather being tanned over a flame. The smell can be so thick and rich that it's almost a taste. You never really get the smell out of your nose entirely. No matter how long you live.

Burning muscle tissue gives off an aroma similar to beef in a frying pan, and body fat smells like fatty pork. But a whole body includes all sorts of parts that wouldn't be cooked, and therefore can't be described by analogy. For example, cattle are bled after slaughter, and the beef and pork we eat contain very few blood vessels. When a whole human body burns, all the iron-rich blood still inside can give the smell a coppery, metallic component.

Full bodies also include internal organs, which rarely burn completely because of their high fluid content; they smell like burnt liver. Cerebrospinal fluid burns up in a musky, sweet perfume. Burning skin has a charcoal like smell, while setting hair on fire produces a sulfurous odor which can cling to the nostrils for days.

Murdered

I think about being killed. In public places I think about being killed. I imagine a man with a long knife attacking people, attacking me. I imagine people screaming. I imagine my own terror. I imagine being gripped by animal urges, lizard desires to escape and to get away whatever it takes.

Recent places in which I have visualised my own killing include: in the Japanese salt inhalation steam room at the day spa in Center Parcs, drinking a flat white at an artisan coffee shop near King's Cross station, eating McDonald's alone in an open plan service station on the M4, and waiting to be shown round an ex-local authority maisonette in South East London by an estate agent so young that at the end of the viewing he is picked up by his grandad in a red Toyota Yaris.

Isn't it nice to think about being killed? Isn't it nice to think about being killed instead of actually being killed? Isn't it nice to visualise your own death at the hands of a crazed killer instead of being actually, literally killed? Being actually killed by the people you thought were there to support you? Being

actually literally burned to death, burned until you turned into ashy shitty dusty nothing by the people who promised to help you?

Crime

There are two types of crime, and the difference between them is a difference of intention.

An *acquisitive* crime is committed in order to acquire something. The crime is committed in order to attain something else. In a bank robbery, money is what the bank robber wants, and robbing the bank is the way to get the money.

An *expressive* crime is a crime that doesn't have any other meaning outside the content of the crime. In an expressive crime, the crime itself is the desired outcome. In a murder, the act of killing is what the killer wants. With an expressive crime we can read the logic of the criminal in the nature of the crime — the remains of the body allow us to understand the reasoning of the killer.

But what about an expressive crime with an absent criminal? Can there be a murder with no murderer? Can there be a crime scene in which the only logic to be read is negative: failure, negligence, ignorance, a turning away, a denial of responsibility, an indifference, an abjection, a disgust?

Tower Blocks

The problem with tower blocks is that they remind us of our failure. Tower blocks were supposed to be the future of our cities: a future of community, a future of fairness and of a civil society.

That future didn't happen, but the tower blocks are still there. And now the towers, and the people who live in them, are an obstruction to the real future of our cities: security, separation and hidden power.

People who live in tower blocks are people out of time. They are a reminder of an old history and an abandoned future. They are an obstruction to a new future. They are populations that cannot be processed by time — and the only way to deal with them is to make them disappear. To hide them, to pacify them, to limit them. To subjugate them, to incapacitate them, to kill them.

Necropolitics

Death is a state of being, it is a process and it is a form of power.

Necropolitics is the political power to decide who lives and who dies. This power is the ultimate power, the most powerful power, the last power. But it is also a debased and perverted power. It is a one way power — once you have killed someone they cannot be made alive again.

Necropolitics is a politics that can take away but cannot give back. A politics with the power to kill is a politics at the end of its tether, at the last of its resorts.

A politics can become necropolitical in two ways.

The first way to become necropolitical is intentional. It is ISIS, it is the Nazi party, it is any totalitarian regime that craves complete power. Little by little, a group acquires the power to decide who is a subject and who is not, who is a person and who is not, who gets to live and who has to die.

The second way to become necropolitical is unintentional. It's a mistake, a side effect, a by-product. The state slowly builds up the trust of its members, offering rights and assurances to its citizens, taking on responsibility for their welfare until it

supports many lives. And then, slowly or quickly, through ideology or ignorance, the state sheds its responsibilities, and removes legal infrastructure designed to stop it neglecting its own citizens. It gives away power until the only power left is the power to kill.

But unlike ISIS or a totalitarian state, we don't mean to kill, we don't even necessarily want to kill. We just didn't think it all through, and now it's happening. Killing is a shrug of the shoulders, a shake of the head. Killing is killing someone else, someone who is other, someone who is certainly not us. Are we *really* killing anyone if we're not killing ourselves? Killing is a sigh, a burp, a fart of the system. A bodily function we don't talk about and can't control. But those who are killed are bodies too and their remains remain killed and remain a reminder of their killing.

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The Grenfell Tower fire broke out on 14 June 2017 at the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block of public housing flats in North Kensington, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, West London. It caused 71 deaths, including one stillbirth, and over 70 injuries. Occupants of 23 of the 129 flats died.

This text was adapted from the script for a performance and video called Fire, originally presented at ICA London and CCA Derry-Londonderry as part of The Bad Vibes Club's 'Feeling Bad' events in Summer 2017.

I use ideas and words from Jean Franco's book 'Cruel Modernity' (2013), Achille Mbembe's essay 'Necropolitics' (2003) and Marina Warner's essay 'Back from the Underworld: The Liveliness of the Dead' (2017).

Residence Kitchen

6–10pm, 30th May 2018

Jonathan Hoskins and
Susannah Worth



Welcome

Gin Sting invented by Susannah Worth.

Front Room

Nibble

Nettle crisps made by Jonathan Hoskins.

Kitchen, Back Room

Plant

Bad tools chosen and sourced by Beth Bramich.

Shiso chosen by Jonathan and Susannah.

Back Room

Listen

Original short story The Substitution for guests of this

Residence Kitchen by Jonathan.

Back Room

Cook

Seitan Katsudon recipe by Jonathan, improved by Susannah.

Kitchen

Read

A copy of The Substitution for each guest to take home.

Seitan Katsudon
1 portion

Put Japanese rice on to cook to bag instructions.

Mix the dry ingredients in a medium bowl together:
¼ cup vital wheat gluten
1 tbs nutritional yeast
1 tbs gram flour
good pinch garlic powder
good pinch onion powder
good pinch salt

Doesn't look like much but makes a big portion
Smells oddly like pickled onion
Monster Munch at this stage

Mix the wet ingredients in a small bowl together:
¼ cup warm water
1 drip Marmite
few crumbs mushroom stock
few drops liquid smoke
1 tbs olive oil

a nice, cohesive ball
Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and mix to a taught doughball.

Add wet mixture slowly, just enough to bind the dough — not too wet or sticky
Turn out onto a work surface and knead for 3 minutes.
If too wet, add more wheat gluten

Add to a medium saucepan and bring to simmer:
2 cups water
¼ cup soy sauce
3 garlic cloves — peeled and left whole
2 bay leaves
¼ mushroom stock cube

Wait about 10 mins between 1st & 2nd knead.

Knead doughball for 30s. Shape into cutlet: roughly teardrop, 1cm thick.

It's hard to get it thin enough — can try rolling pin (or wine bottle as rolling pin)
Drop cutlet into simmering pan for 30m

Lid on.
Cutlet shouldn't be completely submerged.

Thinly slice ½ onion and 1 scallion. Leave separately to one side.

Put in three dinner plates:
1. Plain flour
2. 1 beaten egg
3. Panko breadcrumbs

Remove cutlet after simmering for 30m and drain excess water off it.

— use kitchen roll

Put cutlet through flour, egg and breadcrumbs. Press breadcrumbs into cutlet surface, all over.

Put frying pan on at medium heat with more than enough vegetable oil to cover the base.

Test oil with panko crumbs. When the oil is hot enough for them to sizzle straight away, put the breaded cutlet in the pan. Fry each side until golden (not brown) and remove to chopping board. Slice into 1cm strips.
only takes about 1min each side

Mix flavouring in a cup:
¼ cup hot water
1 tsp sugar
few crumbs mushroom stock
1 tbs soy sauce
1 tsp mirin
Could make in bulk together or in advance?

Beat 1½ eggs lightly in another cup.

Fry sliced ½ onion in a new, small frying pan with a little oil until translucent. Then add flavouring mix. Simmer 30s. Then add cutlet all in one go, so it keeps its shape in the pan. Then pour in the egg around the cutlet, and a little over the top. Put on the lid and reduce to medium-low heat until the egg is just barely set.

— cook fully if preferred

Meanwhile, put rice in your serving bowl.

When the egg is set, slide the pan's contents undisturbed onto the rice. Sprinkle with chopped scallion and eat it.

We're very happy to welcome you to Residence Kitchen. This event is the second in what we hope will be a long-running project. We started Residence Kitchen to make a space for two things we've long been interested in.

The first is: "how to organise". We mean this broadly; anything that requires people to maintain a relationship towards an end that is held in common between them. Making an album; studying together; taking a road trip; being in a room together.

The second is: "how to empower introversion". By this we mean how to organise for and value those qualities that everyone has to a greater or lesser degree, of sensitivity, introspection, a need for connection, but also a need to be away from other people to recover your energy.

These problems are nothing if not practical. They need to be 'done', with others, repeatedly, differently, and with reflection, in order to be done better. We realised that we don't have many spaces in our lives where we can do it. As we talked to friends, we found many feel the same way. This is what Residence Kitchen is for.

We ask that you don't take any photographs, or make any recordings, at the event. The things we're doing don't travel well: they will be done differently at different times and in different places. This is why we called the project 'Residence Kitchen', because we're concerned for what is at stake in this place, at this time. All your food and drink this evening is covered by the £10 you've already paid.

Jonathan Hoskins and Susannah Worth

We would like to thank Beth Bramich, Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau and The Bad Vibes Club; Gareth Bell-Jones and Flat Time House; and Eva Rowson for her wisdom, advice and support.

The Seitan Katsudon recipe was prepared by making alterations to recipes from the following places: <http://www.thatwasvegan.com/2012/01/30/my-favorite-chicken-style-seitan-recipe/> – <https://thewoks oflife.com/2015/04/katsudon/> – <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-recipe/chickn-style-seitancut lets/> – <https://yupitsvegan.com/basic-homemade-seitan/> – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhRIO 2HILo4&t=1124s>. The ambient sound in the back room is excerpted from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_7f14NkOyU.

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The Bad Vibes Club is a forum for research into negative states. Founded by Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau in 2014, The Bad Vibes Club hosted a lecture programme and reading group at Open School East from 2014-2016, has produced one-off events at the Barbican, ICA and CCA Derry-Londonderry, a long-term research project, Interruptions, with Field Broadcast in 2016, and was in residence at Flat Time House in London from November 2017 to June 2018 where they hosted a regular reading group and a programme of events.

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The John Latham Foundation

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