

RUNE GADE
SHORT STORIES CONCERNING PICTURES
(EXCERPT)

Between sleep and awake, in my dream, her face gently falls down covering me like a cloud of grey marble dust. A fine granulate slowly drizzling down upon my skin, my sleeping body's skin. Absorbed.

She has vanished into me.

Earlier - in the afternoon - I stand for a long time in front of Giovanni Bellini's picture of Mary with the Christ child at the Gallerie dell' Accademia. The museum is almost empty of people. I am all alone in front of the painting. The Virgin with the Child is flanked by Saint Catharine and Mary Magdalene. Serenely glowing they stand out from the somber base, each isolated in their own world as if they are not at all in the same room. With the one hand Mary is holding her son by the hand, with the other she braces around his naked body. Almost not even a touch, only a light brush. The child looks up towards the heavens that welcomes him as though he was already dying. Mary looks to the right, heavy-heartedly. Her face lies partly covered in shade. The light seems to shine from the figures themselves. They inhabit each their own world, only loosely connected by an unusual, common destiny. And by Bellini's picture which places the figures on the same black base, binds them together by a shimmering darkness. Mary Magdalene is crossing her arms in front of her chest. She stares quietly out of the picture frame.

I am lost in her.

With regular pauses the dark hotel room in Venice is lit up by the small green lightbulb in the alarm in the ceiling. Sharp, brief blinks that surprise me every time. For a long time I lie sleepless, thinking, while I try to predict the rhythm of the blinking light which I almost mistake - hopefully, hallucinating - for the signal of a text message from her on my muted phone. From that moment she is inside me, like a blind passenger, illegitimately occupying my consciousness.

She is still there, now in all openness. We walk together in bright daylight.

Here it is. We are together. Like a Dream.

TONGUE DRAWINGS

She uses her tongue as a brush. Drags it over the paper, the single-logarithmic paper, wet with the color she has filled her mouth with.

The Tongue Drawings contain everything that I love. They are simple and playful gestures that vibrate rousingly of equal parts aggression and love, humor and seriousness; the tongue marking itself as an abstract picture-sign on the paper. In the simplest way, she plays with all that which pictures are made of, insists on the body as the Origins of pictures, instead of a phenomenon of purely optical character. The picture as a continuation of the body, a continuation of the body's most secret places. The picture as a delicate and fragile blob. A dried up lake that pulls the paper's fibers together, makes it warp into a halo which radiates from the blob's middle.

I ride my bike to Frederiksberg and visit her one freezing day in January. This is the first time we meet each other in person. We can meet in a café or in your studio, I have suggested in an email. She answers that her home is her studio, that I am more than

welcome there. Some months earlier I have seen her tongue drawings on her blog, YSPS, and haven't been able to get them off my mind ever since. She offers tea. I have brought muffins. We sit in her studio and eat cake while we look at her works and talk about art.

She talks about the artists she admires. Painters. Formalist painters who have broken ties with canvas and have moved beyond it. I talk about the artists I admire. Performance artists. Artists who have made their own bodies into the primary medium of their art. We realize that her work lies exactly between these positions, our respective starting points. Performative painting. Imprint as well as image as well as action. Most of my work exists only for a short time, she tells me.

A couple of months later I send her a link to Adrian Paci's black and white film *Inside the Circle*. I had come to think of her when I watched it at Jeu de Paume, because she once wrote to me: if you were an animal you would be a horse, a white horse. In *Inside the Circle* the horse is an old white nag which has been saved from the butcher's death and now engages in a touching game of tag with a beautiful young woman who is incapable of catching it, but demonstrates that patience she can easily gain its trust. They are both naked.

I was surprised, she tells me later.

TRUE GRIT & ANIMAL DIALOGUES (CHEST GRID MONO PRINTS)

She catches time, puts her imprint there. She bites a mark in time, sinks into it with all of her weight, with all of the perpetual heaviness of the present. She marks it, Time. Her body drags a tale of blurred and half washed-out impressions after it. Pictures that are created through clashes, collisions or almost imperceptible frictions, featherlight pressures, mild vibrations. Pictures created through engaging. Strange marks and signs. Like runes running over with feelings, they cannot contain, infecting everything.

Her works are a visual log book, in which time settles as imploded ruins and blurry scatters of dreams. Everything connects here, everything is displaced. Everything is entangled by the same intuitive openness, which seems to radiate of its own revelation.

Prints. Entanglements. Weavings. An archive of life. This life's mutating curriculum. A frieze of riddles, connected through visual and conceptual associations, a raving rebus.

Body derives weeping out through pressure and counter pressure, mirroring of mirrorings, until they are dried up, absorbed in the fibers of the paper and preserved for posterity. Like inexplicable bruises that just don't seem to fade.

Naked in front of the mirror, she carefully lines up a grid of acrylic paint on her chest. She reaches for the paper, which has already been marked out with a regular squared grid-pattern, and presses it against her chest. Her heart is beating behind the one breast, deep inside her body. She tries to press the paper gently around the small rounding's of her breasts, without destroying it. Grid against grid. She tries to catch as much as possible of the paint that sits on her skin without ripping the thin paper apart. She removes the paper from her body which it now sticks onto. She becomes one with the picture.

On the paper appears a perfect grid pattern, whose regular linearity is bent by the curves of the breasts and by the two visible nipples that punctuate the lines. The print is a curving contrast to the base's grid: the body's realism put up against a concept of perfection. She then smears the left over paint across her chest before pressing a new piece of gridded paper against her body. This time the print seems muddy, thinned, fragile, and preposterous. Her skin is covered with paint. In this imprint a magical creature appears with two small, round eyes looking out at me.

It dawns on me that this is her primary intention. Not the print or the trace, but the image which occurs as a seemingly random consequence of the print. She becomes another, she becomes an animal. The print is just a means to get to the image. A shape, an outline, a figure, which shows itself through the diffuse fog of the print. A color that makes its way directly into the emotional layers of the memory. The clear image of affect. Like a slap to the face, a fist punch, a casual caress.

SHE IS SOLID

The solid body's clear and unique shape in opposition to the liquids' fluid and changing character. Our bodies are both. Clearly defined masses with skin for outer shells, surrounding us, containing us. Meanwhile also this porosity, the body openings' obvious exchanges with the surrounding space. We are solid, we are fluid. We are ourselves, we are entangled.

Language is a river that overflows us. It flows out of us, always another. Language speaks through us, we learn it, we are languaged. Language is a river that overflows us and almost leaves the muddy bed of the unspeakable out of sight. All that slag of unlanguaged that has settled and makes up the unsafe foundation on which language flows unbroken. Without noticing the unsaid. The sediments of bodily experience build a monument which we can neither see nor escape.

The grid's endless rows of right angled crosses create a sort of window structure, a frame, a web of crosses. The grid as a border and a frame, a perspective machine that can make order of what we see. She punctures this order, this scheme, with a simple splash of liquid. She moisturizes the center of the paper and makes this colored lake an obstruction for the orderly lines to cross. The lines are not succeeding. The strength of the grid is falling apart under the influence of these liquid cores. Aphasia attacking the language from inside, erosion recreating an older order.

SALV

Sitting at a table with friends having dinner in early December, her face carries the green color of disgust and seasickness. The first snow of winter is falling outside. We ride our bikes unsteadily through the cold night, warm with wine. The snowflakes whirl gently down from the sky, icy white crystals that melt and dissolve when they touch skin. I get them in my eyes, can barely see, everything is hazy. We get off the bikes and walk the last part of the way home.

In the afternoon of that same day, she has covered her face in Indian ink. Made prints of her face on pieces of paper. Afterwards the color turns out to be more difficult to wash

off than she had expected. Her teeth have got a dark coating from the color she had in her mouth. A stain on her nasal bridge is particularly strident and stays for weeks while only slowly diminishing from a stain to a spot and finally into nothing.

Like life masks in two dimensions, flattened, outstretched, her face stares out from the papers. A sweat-cloth of ink. Some places frontally, other places in profile. Some places easily recognizable, other places deformed, distorted. She has used her face as a press roll, smothered it with ink and rolled it from side to side, first one cheek, then the other, pressed it down against the paper. Or she has laid only the one side down against the paper. Half profile. She has had ink in her mouth and placed her wet tongue on the paper. She has bejeweled her lips with ink and pressed them against the paper. She points her tongue at you. She kisses you.

Out comes a physiognomy that is both familiar and not. I know her and I don't know her. She looks like a boy, a beautiful boy. Do you like beautiful boys? She asks. Yes I say, if the beautiful boys are girls. As in a dream, the face can take on many shapes, transform from one thing to another. The beautiful boy is a pretty girl is a beast, sticking its tongue temptingly out towards us, wanting us to see everything. Look at these transformations that a human can go through, without ever changing, a self-identical other, all the way, composed and crystalline.

Floating deadweight, heavy of unused possibilities. Weave of wounds, slowly bleeding their experiences into a mash of beauty. Barely two square meters of skin that can be dyed, imprinted and create yet new images. She lends body to anything.

GET BETTER/FEEL SO DIFFERENT PT. 3

Or the other way around: her entire body turns not into prints but becomes a container. She discovers concavities from where images can be lured out. She documents this whole process. She is a mother-body wherein the child grows. She is a mother-body that expels the unfertilized egg in a stream of blood. She becomes a tree like Daphne who escapes the approaches of Apollo. She becomes a greedy-mouth overflowing in a stream of color, a mellow flow of vomit, a blue creek or fluent foam of tooth paste. She becomes a mute talking in tongues through painting kisses. She is blinded by painting with her lashes.

She turns herself into a picture, a container of images. A corporeal developing tank that patiently lets images grow out of her fluids, of her life, of all her openings. A source of never ending transformations, a fold that unfathomably and miraculously folds out of itself - like the childhood sock of Walter Benjamin. Hiding and hidden is the same.

She becomes a woman whose navel is a lagoon from where color can flow. Like a horizontal canvas her body lies on the floor while she slowly cradles from side to side, the navel filled with color, until it escapes its safe pit and runs out across the skin, out across the curve of her belly, down on the floor. Blue navel, green navel, red navel. The primary colors of the additive color system. The system of darkness. Blue and red in a distant perspective, green up close. The colors shimmer like the surface of an ocean in sunlight. She overflows with all this. Lying on the floor like a convulsive breathing cocoon full of surplus color waiting to turn into a trickling fountain amid her pale body. She runs over.

She unfolds her caves so that they change from openings with volume and depth into one-dimensional surfaces of mysterious signs. In this way, the physical body with its springs, openings, caves, its special traits, is a matrix for all these flat images which are without depth, without distinct recognizability, but which are direct traces after her, direct traces of her. Like fingerprints that don't look like their owner, but are still, unquestionably, evidently pointing towards that same owner. Like indications. Like metaphors sprouting out of the rubbings of metonymy, creating still new images. Catches fire off flint. As said by Rudolf Broby-Johansen in the defense speech for his poems - *Blood* - in the Copenhagen City Court the 22nd of January 1923: "The artwork is a new organism which doesn't look like anything, but is something".

OPEN UP AND BLEED COCK IN MY POCKET

She extracts pictures from herself in a lustful, corporeal inquisition. She is lying on the bed with her legs widely spread while she presses a vibrator into her vagina. She is bleeding, it is that time. She pulls out the vibrator, bloody, dripping, and places it on the paper where it - without the soft walls of her vagina to hold it - bounces happily around and leaves a chopping ornament of brownish menstrual blood. I help to control it so that it doesn't leap across the border of the paper. She pushes the vibrator back inside her, pulls it out again, fetching paint for more pictures. Every time, the vibrator creates new patterns on the sheets of paper. She alternately laughs and moans, finds excitement, fun and arousal in this game of picture-making. We have fun trying to identify shapes and figures in the bloody prints. They look like cave paintings of sacred animals, magical inscriptions. An eagle, a cat, a colossal bull-like beast.

It is not difficult to see the motives. They step forward willingly, as if eager to be seen. They are multiple and ambiguous, in opposition to unique regular representation. Perhaps they can best be seen through love's prism that vigilantly catches them, desiring. Like a swarm of signs of us seeing the same things, seeing together. A shared madness here confirmed, a shared love. It's a game we have. Love blends unnoticed with art. The double Eros. The sun bursts through the east window in that early midday hour. It is in the beginning of the month of May. We carefully place the papers in the windowsill. The sheets with the fresh blood patterns dry quickly in the heat.

These are also cultural imaginations. They enter into dialogue with our thoughts and with our ideas of the pure and the dirty. On the one side the deflowering, the proof of virginal pureness in the shape of the blood from the burst hymen membrane, traced on a white sheet, triumphantly held as documentation in front of the gazing family the morning after the wedding night. The white veil of the bride as the symbolic representation of the virtue and unspoiled body, which only the blood can ultimately signify. On the other side the menstruating woman's shameful blood that forces upon her social isolation, an impenetrable hideaway, the absolute concealing. The impure woman cannot be shown, her blood must be invisible. Or blue, if ever, as in the commercials for menstrual pads. This blood, which flows if not from the same source, then from the same opening excreting the proud blood of the wedding night, is the opposite of triumph. Shrouded by the same mythical force, perhaps, but shooed away by an unbreakable taboo. No social applause here, only the radical contractual silencing.

'Why don't you open up and bleed?' Iggy Pop asks. We listen to The Stooges while we drink red wine one late evening. *Open Up and Bleed. Cock in My Pocket.* She dreams of a pocket cock, each night undressing or dressing itself according to whatever need, desire, wish. 'This ain't no romance.' Abstract expressionism with vibrator and chorus. 'Gonna whip it on you honey, taste your blood today.' Fourteen days later she adds all the broken quotes from the songs to the now dry but still bloody sheets of paper. She lets the scraps of quotes run wild about the picture-surface, circular or in waving traces around the blood patterns' figures which she also marks up, indicates with some guiding lines. 'Open up and bleed.'

Masculine aggressive bloodshed is heroically cheered as if it is a nervous, pulsating energy that could stream as electric pouring around the Universe, seizing the world, recreating it. A waste, whose costs paradoxically poses as a prize. Completely opposite to the woman's cyclical blood loss, that does not contain the potential of expressive, revolutionary recreating of everything in its own image.

In the early midday sun, she plays with the thought of heroizing the woman's blood. She plays with the blood as a concrete, expressive material, plays with the idea of adding lust and desire to the blood. To mirror it, to show it in full daylight with its possibilities of happiness instead of shame. The white vibrator collaborates eagerly, dances around the sheets of paper while leaving rhythmical blood traces behind.

SALVE REGINA

We have just spent some hours in a dense crowd, seeing an exhibition of Egon Schiele's works on paper depicting nudes at the Courtauld Gallery in London. Naked self-portraits with gesticulating hands and grimacing faces. Little girls and young women with bushy genitals and skinny, boney bodies stare out at the beholder with large, tiresome eyes. Their skin appears yellowish, reddish, poisoned green. Sickly and unhealthy like thin and fragile sheets stretched across too large skeletons. A tainted erotic mask wrapped tightly around death. We stroll slowly up Kingsway directed towards the Holborn underground station, while cars at high speed drive by. It has gotten dark while we were in the gallery. It is late October.

In April and May of 1912 Schiele spent 24 days in jail in Neulengbach, accused of having instructed minor models in posing indecently and of having touched the models in the same incidents. Furthermore he had let children see the drawings he made - an indecent exposure for which Schiele was punished. While he sat in his cell in Neulengbach he made a series of watercolors and drawings. A motif from that period shows the prison hallway with the doors to the cells to the right side and a row of broomsticks leaning against the wall to the left side of the picture. In the bottom of the picture, Schiele has written: Nicht gestraft sondern gereinigt fühl' ich mich!

The show at The Courtauld Gallery is called *The Radical Nude*. We stroll along while discussing whether to still call Schiele radical, when seemingly just about any random person is ready to stand closely packed in oxygen deprived museum halls to get a glimpse of his works. If so, he is a highly appreciated radical who has gained common acceptance among the public.

Then her phone rings. We stand in the street on the pavement. I listen to bits and pieces of the conversation. As much as I can, through the noise of the cars. The conversation sounds more and more puzzling, disturbing. Apparently someone is standing in our hallway in Denmark, outside our apartment door. They want to enter our apartment. They want her to let them in. She asks how many they are and how they got into the building. She tells them that she is in London that she won't be home until several days later, that her son is with his father. She then says: So, you think that I want to kill my son?

It is The Capital Region of Denmark's Family Emergency Team who has been contacted by the police about her blog containing indecent pictures of her son and a poem that says that she wants to kill him. An anonymous person has reported her work to the police. It is so ridiculous that it is almost impossible to take seriously. It is so serious that it is impossible to laugh.

She spreads the big squared sheets of sewing-pattern paper out across our kitchen floor some months later, on a Saturday evening in the end of January. She rubs her back, her shoulders and the backside of her arms in red acrylic paint. I help her down onto the floor, onto the paper, so that she can make prints of her back and her arms, which she holds stretched out from the body. Like a crucified angel, a fallen angel, she lies there. When she gets up I hold on to the paper so it doesn't stick to her skin. It is a difficult and vulnerable maneuver, the paper would rather not let go of her. She is clumsily entangled with the image, clings to it.

She makes a series of prints. With my help she experiments with pressing the paper against her skin to get more coherent prints. She hasn't quite taken into consideration the volume of her body, its concavities and curves, meaning that it doesn't leave a full print unless one massages the paper gently onto the skin in its full extent.

She goes out into the bathroom, gets in the bathtub to wash off the paint. It only slowly disappears and paints the whole bathtub red. It looks like a little blood bath, a suicide with cut arteries. Blood sin.

Later she writes sentences and fragments around the back prints on the large sheets. She has made an interim hanging in our kitchen. She writes with her menstrual blood which she has carefully collected in a little box. She writes sentences, outbursts, curses, spells. Writes with a fine small brush. The wet letters are running a little. Some of the blood spills over the lower edges of the paper and continues out onto the white wall where it draws a line, a still thinner trace down toward the floor.

The sentences are there for some days, perhaps a week. Then she crosses them out with a thick block of almost coagulated menstrual blood so they become indistinguishable. A fallen angel, crucified, surrounded by outbursts under erasure, a sort of censure, self-censorship. A fallen angel eating her own words, muted, swallowing herself while the world tortures her, lets her suffer under their verdict, their condemnation. She dies a little, there, under their back-turned and anonymous verdict, their Judas-betrayal. She is the mother, there on the cross, the son crying at its foot. Son of blood. A displaced pieta.

They point at her with their faces hidden behind masks of stiffened smiles.

I know it.

Later she flies. There is still strength in her wings and she flies. We are lying together on the living room floor when I feel it. In the background Andreas Scholl is singing *Stabat Mater*. I feel her rising. She says that she must remember to tell her mother about this version of the *Stabat Mater*; that her mother will like it. It is Marco Rosano's new composition written for the voice of Andreas Scholl. I kiss her forehead. Kiss her mouth. She lets me do all this while she takes off. She has had enough. It is all too little.

The year before, on a Saturday afternoon in April, we are sitting alone in a black box at KunstWerke in Berlin. On the screen in front of us the work *Via Dolorosa* by Mark Wallinger is shown. We have entered the film right at the point where the sentenced and tortured Christ carries his cross to Golgata. This is something only slightly tangible to us because ninety percent of the picture surface is blocked by a black square and stands completely censored. Just a thin edge around the film's margin is visible. Christ hangs on his cross, blocked from our sight by the black square, but present as a strange cut-off and distant passion deep in our flesh. Afterwards we walk home to our hotel room and make love while the sun shimmers through the thin drapes.

An idea can be so strong that it cannot be removed by destroying its image. And why in the first place destroy the image, if it doesn't mean anything? If it means something, why then destroy it? The black crossings of censure are like iconoclasms, paradoxical recognitions, back bended and troublesome. Like a sudden outburst you try to take back: a hand to the mouth, delayed, telling. Spoken words you can't swallow no matter how hard you try to push them back down your stupid mouth. Just as that you can't make unseen what you have seen. Even so, we overlook almost everything. We are blind-seeing. Our gazes filter through a politics of images for which we have no words.

We talk a lot about that. This blindness makes people lose their self-insight. This politics of images, causing blindness to be the dominating perspective. We lack words.

STRETCH OF WINGS

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. One morning, while having coffee, we talk about what the difference actually is between an angel, a cherub and a seraph. We talk about the small, winged *amoretto* swarming about Venus. We talk about the angels of the Old Testament who without wings move amongst humans without being identified as Different. We talk about Satan, the presence of Satan all over and everywhere.

As a Christmas present that year I give her Jeanette Winterson's *Art Objects*. She has spread out two pillow covers across the small round table in our hotel room to make it a little joyous. The celebration of Light. We exchange presents while we sit across from one another at the table. We spill red wine on the pillow cover-come-table cloth, Zweigelt, local grapes. Earlier that day we visited Mumok in the Museum Quarter and watched Simon Starling's *Black Drop*. Starling has filmed the passage of Venus across the sun from Honolulu in 2012, but the work is more about instruments of sight, than about the passage itself. It is more about *how we see* than about *what we see* even though this piece perfectly demonstrates that these two perspectives are contingent with one another: we see through vision machines, we see through ideas.

She makes eight prints of her behind on squared paper and afterwards adds a black edge. During the application of the black acrylic paint to her thighs she has dragged her fingers tightly across them. The traces of the fingers come to look like feathers on the prints. Her buttocks are wings, folded pairs of wings whose full extent one can only ponder. These are images full of promise, full of the idea of weightless movement through wind.

One of the first things she says to me is that she has nothing to give, but that I can take everything I find. Jeanette Winterson writes that art is not capitalism: whatever you find in art, you get to keep. Not the smooth comfort of flight, because art is not escapism. On the contrary it is a widening of the territory.

All that is hidden, all that which we don't know.

All that which we think, we cannot look at.