

Zine **Verschenken**

#2 | july 2022 | eggs



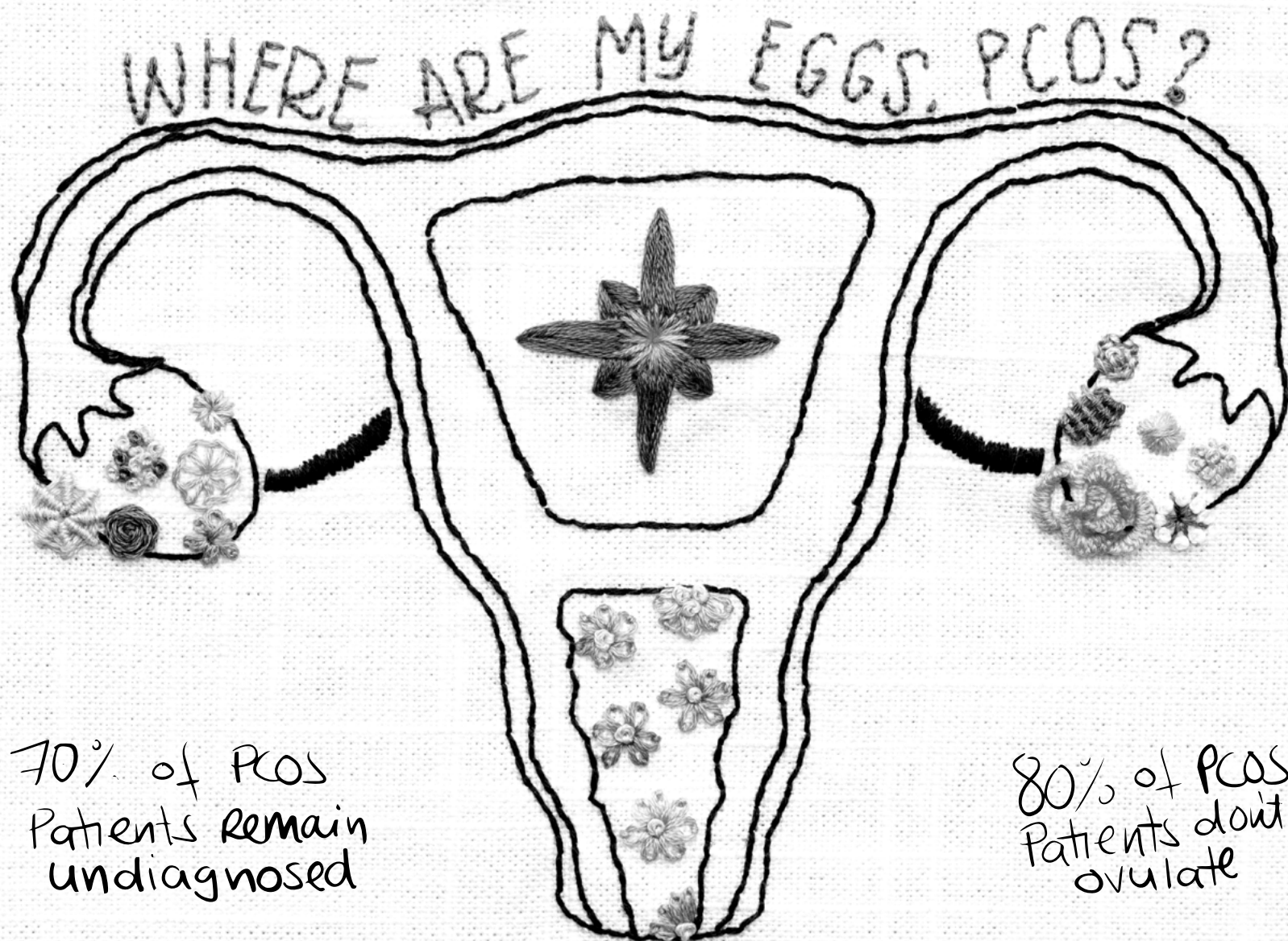
Editorial

Welcome back, readers. As we begin to embrace the new season upon us and dare to venture out without the mandatory overnight bag full of clothing for the constant weather changes, let's take a moment to remember the season that came before. Spring.

Several images come to mind with spring. It is the season of rebirth, of fertility and of new creation. As the weather warms, the city comes back to life again. New growth shoots out of every crook and crevice and melts the hostility of even the coldest-hearted Berliner – at least until we reach the soaring 36-degree weather!

Spring is certainly a spiritual time and with it comes our theme for this edition, in the form of an egg. Seemingly humble at first, the egg has become one of the gatekeepers of present-day and historical traditions. Cultures throughout history all over the world have used eggs to aid in their practices, from new beginnings such as in France where a bride will break an egg upon entering her new home for fertility, or in Germany when a farmer will smear an egg onto their plough to sew a good crop for the year. The egg was also an integral part of many final traditions for the deceased such as in Greek and Roman customs where eggs were left in the tombs to represent life after death, as well as in Maori ceremonies where the dead were buried with a Moa egg in their hand. Some are still carried out today, including Jewish families eating eggs after a burial to respect the circle of life. Superstition and mythology have also played a large part in the historical culture of the egg. European folklore across several countries has told us through many generations of stories of the sinister supernatural power that can only be destroyed by the breaking of an egg, leading many people to continue today's superstition of completely crushing the entire shell every time they eat a boiled egg to avoid bad luck.

There is so much through our history and in our future to inspire us about eggs. We hope this month's edition will spark ideas, jolt memories and embolden you to ask your own families about their histories with eggs.



SNOBBERY, VICE AND EGGS ROYALE

Sometimes my best friend and I like to act as if we were in the old Sex and the City. For instance, we like to keep this stupid tradition to meet for brunch every Sunday morning since we met in my last year of college. No matter the rain or the hang-over, every Sunday we push our asses out of bed high on aspirin and with smeared make-up to enjoy what Marge's Simpsons famous french lover Jacques defined as "not quite breakfast, not quite lunch, but [it comes] with a slice of canteloupe at the end". Jacques used to live in these creepy apartments, but I can very well picture me and my friend in etilic trance making wild party with the singles of Fiesta Terraces and then repenting the day after. For that moment of regret, there's brunch.

On Sunday, my friend and I like to explore. We try different places, the dishes are always the same though. Eggs are always the main character. Scrambled, in omelet or boiled and inside these glasses Queen of England style. Exotic shakshuka, *huevos rancheros* and of course, the classic Benedict and all its variants; the floury Florentine with spinach and and my favorite, eggs royale. Oh, deliciously poached with erotic liquid egg yolk on a toast or even a waffle and slices of smoked salmon for the touch of pink, all covered by a lascivious layer of hollandaise sauce to make you lick the plate and also lick your fingers, wherever they have been before. To follow, some mimosas or bloody marys, or even better a whole 1 liter jar of margarita to keep up the rhythm of the night before. We like to dress up for the occasion too and wear hats, boas and sunglasses that make us feel like glorious hookers at a fancy tea party. We give it all.

In fact, brunch is an intrinsically decadent concept. Commonly attributed to Victorian writer Guy Beringer, brunch goes back to the XIXth century and owes its origins to hordes of drunken aristocrats who, doubtful and afraid of the consequences of their own etilic acts, would just order massive buffets to spend Sunday healing the hangover with food, sharing their debauched adventures of the night before and drinking again. Tradition spread throughout the XXth century and up to the present day, because we all love -and deserve- to start the day like a XIXth boozy countess. Since then, brunch was popularized by Carrie Bradshaw and her minions as well as other horrendous pop culture figures, such as Ernest Hemingway, who used to hunt helpless bears with his own hands on Sunday morning and run for eggs royale afterwards claiming they were his invention - don't bother, Hemingway, we all know it was not you!

But like my adored friend Ernest, we all like to pretend. At least, my friend and I do. We always say we could have been magnificent aristocrats. Generous, fancy

and merciful with the servants. Rich people, trapped in the bodies of poor persons though. Instead of luxurious queens with pearls and diamonds and a cup of tea, on Sundays we stare drooling at a buffet of food-porn and wander starving like wild dogs in search of a slice of ham to put in our mouths and gobble. Not just on Sundays, but everyday. Even if for a couple of hours on Sunday you manage to feel glorious, above the rest of the mortals, there's nothing fun about being unemployed and broke and still trying to look divine and bless the perks of the gray middle-class we were born into. So before you go back to your slum, remember first of all, that a woman has to eat - more than eggs royale-, that everything that goes up must also come down and that life's just a carnival. Remember to treat yourself while you can, because the next breakdown (economic, spiritual, mental) is right behind the corner and enjoy your eggs royale as long as you have teeth. The worst thing about brunch is, indeed, not being able to do it everyday, not being for everyone. So either we all fuck, or the whore goes down the river.





Breakfast in Berlin

I am not an egg-in-the-morning person. For one thing, there are far too many pitfalls involved in cooking them! Is it fresh? Is the white completely set - no 'jelly'? Is the yolk piping hot? If it's an omelette, is it crispy with upturned corners? If it's scrambled, has it been judiciously seasoned? Am I even in the mood for it?

In Berlin, you can be sure that there are always eggs hiding in an unlikely places. Under a Kartoffelpuffer, uncooked in a raw Mett Brötchen, floating on your Linsensuppe, nestling in a Früchtekorb. How many times have I been presented with a cheerful mixed platter of unlikely pairings with an egg-on-the-side? Where does this obsession come from?

Yet every time I'm in town, I put misgivings aside and head for my favourite breakfast spot: outside a cheap and cheerful DDR-deco cafe on Frankfurter Tor. Here, I sip my weak cappuccino with its plastic froth, waiting for the sun to appear between the twin towers of communist style on either side of the 'Allee'. Invariably, I am presented with the classic offering: a melange of random tidbits designed to awaken the jaded palate. Has this been thrown together to appease the haphazard tourist? Is it, as I suspect, compiled of cheeky off-cuts from the day before (waste not, want not), or is it just an innocent, if misplaced, creative endeavour? Well, here it is anyway: an egg, wrapped in embroidered felt, nudging a slice of watermelon that has seeped its juice onto said scrap of fabric, which, in turn, is sticking to a piece of soft cheese on one side and a roll of limp salami on the other, additionally moistened by the blood of a pickled beetroot - a texture freak's number one nightmare! How to disentangle the egg from its wrapping without getting fluff, melon juice and egg yolk over everything... I contemplate it gloomily, put it to one side and order something without frills. Looking around me, I see that every plate bears an egg, and that everyone is eating theirs with apparent enjoyment. Am I the only one who can't quite rise to the occasion? That said, a posy of little flowers graces my wobbly Formica-topped table, its crow's feet wedged between weedy flagstones; subdued strains of Turkish techno drift in and out of my musings as I half-listen to the muted chat of my neighbours, the chink of spoon against saucer and the distant rush of traffic on the boulevard beyond. It's reassuring, it's familiar, it's breakfast in Berlin. Over the rim of my newspaper, another day dawns, spreading its milky yolk over the urban horizon... sunny side up. This time it's perfect.



Eight-year-old me

I was eight when I first understood that we came from an egg, not precisely but the closest that an eight-year-old can get. My brother was the one to open that door for me; he said, “you also came from an egg, similar to the one that you are eating.” Please bare in mind that I’m the youngest of three kids and the one that looks different from the others; because of that, I grew up hearing that I was found in a garbage can on a stormy day.

When my brother said I came from an egg, my brain immediately followed this line of thinking:

“I came from an egg, so I’m a bird. I look different from the others, so I’m the ugly duckling. I’m the pretty one. YES”

I remember the following moment like this: I politely said to everyone at the table, “That makes me the pretty one.” And I continue eating my food.

My family remembers like this: I desperaly get up on my chair and yell to everyone at the table, “I’M THE PRETTY SWAN. YEEEEES” (evil laugh) I jumped out of the table attempting to fly, fell on the floor, and lost two baby teeth.

Choose the storyline you want, but at the moment, I felt free and empowered; besides, it saved me at least two years of therapy, the damage could have been worse.



Birdman

Onkel Helmut had a secret. Between dawn and dusk he was a self-respecting tailor - but in the early morning and late evening he was a birdman! He didn't exactly grow wings, neither was he completely 'cuckoo' - no, he kept pigeons in his loft. Racing pigeons, messenger pigeons, wood pigeons, and plain old pigeons who'd blown in on a stray wind but soon felt at home and determined to stay.

Every evening, he would leave his tailor's workshop, his pin-cushion, chalk and shears, in the basement and climb up to the eaves to settle his feathered friends for the night. My little sister and I would clamber up the stairs behind him, his wooden leg creaking with every step. Before the loft door was even opened, you could feel their presence: a muffled rustling, a beating of wings, the soft coo-roo of roosting birds. Fingers on lips we crept into the warm 'nest'.

All at once there was a little flutter of recognition as sixty or so birds settled back into their alcoves, pearly eyes peering inquisitively at us out of the shadows.

"Good evening, my beauties," murmured Onkel Helmut. "We have visitors". They cooed softly in response as he charmed them off their perches one by one (he had 'the gift'). Pouring golden seed into our cupped hands, he showed us how to scatter it sparingly. "We don't want to over-feed them - or waste it by throwing it into corners," he added sternly as a little shower escaped my fingers.

We stood entranced as the pigeons flew down from the rafters, criss-crossing high above our heads before alighting at our feet. "Look at how they wear their little coattails pinned up under their wings," he said, his tailor's hat on. And sure enough, they strutted about, hands tucked into their back pockets, their little hammer-heads tap-tapping as they pecked the grain, making dust-pools in the moonlight.

"And now I think it's nearly time to say good night," he said, "but first, let's make sure they're all here..." So we counted as the pigeons began to line up on the ledges, ready for the roll call: "...56, 57, 58, 59... Hmm one's missing.. We'll wait a bit longer".

"What if it's lost?" my sister wondered.

"My pigeons never get lost, you'll see," answered the birdman, puffing out his chest proudly. Hopping stiffly on one leg, he lifted us up in turn to close the shutters - just as the stars came out, pricking the velvety sky like tiny silver buttons. Then, as if by magic, there was a sudden clap of wings as the last pigeon fell from heaven through the open window! "Hopla!" he said, "Alle Vögel sind schon da!"

"Shall I sing them a lullaby to send them off to sleep?" I enquired.

"Of course you can, my sweet. Just make sure you sing like a little bird, won't you?"

We don't want to frighten them away."

"Weisst du wie viel Sternlein stehen an dem blauen Himmelzelt?" I trilled extra-softly. Was I imagining it, or were all the pigeons tucking their heads under their wings?

"A-haa!" yawned Onkel Helmut, "I think their eyes are almost shut, nicht war Schätzchen?" he said, stroking the sleepy pigeon perched on his finger.

Then one last birdman trick: just as he popped the little bird gently back into its pigeonhole, he swept the ledge lightly with his hand.

"What have you got in there?" my sister wanted to know, trying to pry open his fingers. "Can we see?"

And there, nestling in his palm were two perfect ovals; a clutch of tiny eggs glowing opal-white in the darkness.

"Can I carry them?" she whispered, watching round-eyed as Onkel Helmut wrapped them in his handkerchief and popped them into her pocket.

"Goodnight pigeons, sweet dreams," we cooed, lifting the latch.

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