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Sung Pil Yoon is a writer and curator. He is Director of Spare Room, a subsidiary of Rice Cooker Hair Salon Inc., a non-profit organization that explores the composition of theories and objects through the lens of artistic practices. Yoon is a graduate of the UBC Art History department and currently works in Vancouver from 222, a studio building in Chinatown.

SUNG PIL YOON

The Bus as Hostile Architecture is the first of five short stories by Sung Pil Yoon that will appear in Charcuterie.

THE BUS AS HOSTILE ARCHITECTURE



Still from Speed, 1994. Directed by Jan de Bont. Distributed by 20th Century Fox

"All the sex I get, I buy" announces a man on the bus. He has no qualms talking about the most mundane (and the most exciting) subject matter to an audience of passengers that really don't need this right now.

The blank lifeless stares that 99% of bus passengers emanate is no coincidence. It maintains a barrier between the stranger and you. The bus does not serve to fulfill your social caress. The bus basks in utter indifference, that is your needs and desires.

It is a mobile, public space that does not actually serve as an effective social space. There is no meaningful dialogue. It is hostile because there is no definite time in place to instill any rapport. It is a transitional space where the person you might be trying to speak to can get off any second to go home and find their actual social embrace.

A loudly dressed man in his 60s, embracing his punk roots with greased up hair that almost nearly doubles his height asks a question out loud at seemingly no one, about which street the bus is turning on. Everyone obviously hears the question but no response ever comes to fruition. They are on their phones replying to text messages and emails to people that they actually care about. He asks again. And again to no avail. Visibly irritated he stands on the edge of the bus before getting off and proclaims "you people are a bunch of social zombies".

Have you ever seen what freedom looks like inside a bus? Have you ever seen hot coffee thrown at a man's face, or a well-dressed grad student calmly vomiting on the side of the centre aisle for at least 30 seconds, or a man clipping his toenails in the back of the bus. Another man yells at him to clean up said toenails but it's too late, he has already stepped off the bus. Just like that he is absolved of all his sins. This is what disorienting freedom looks like, for a brief moment at a cost of \$2.75. You are a new person when you exit the bus.

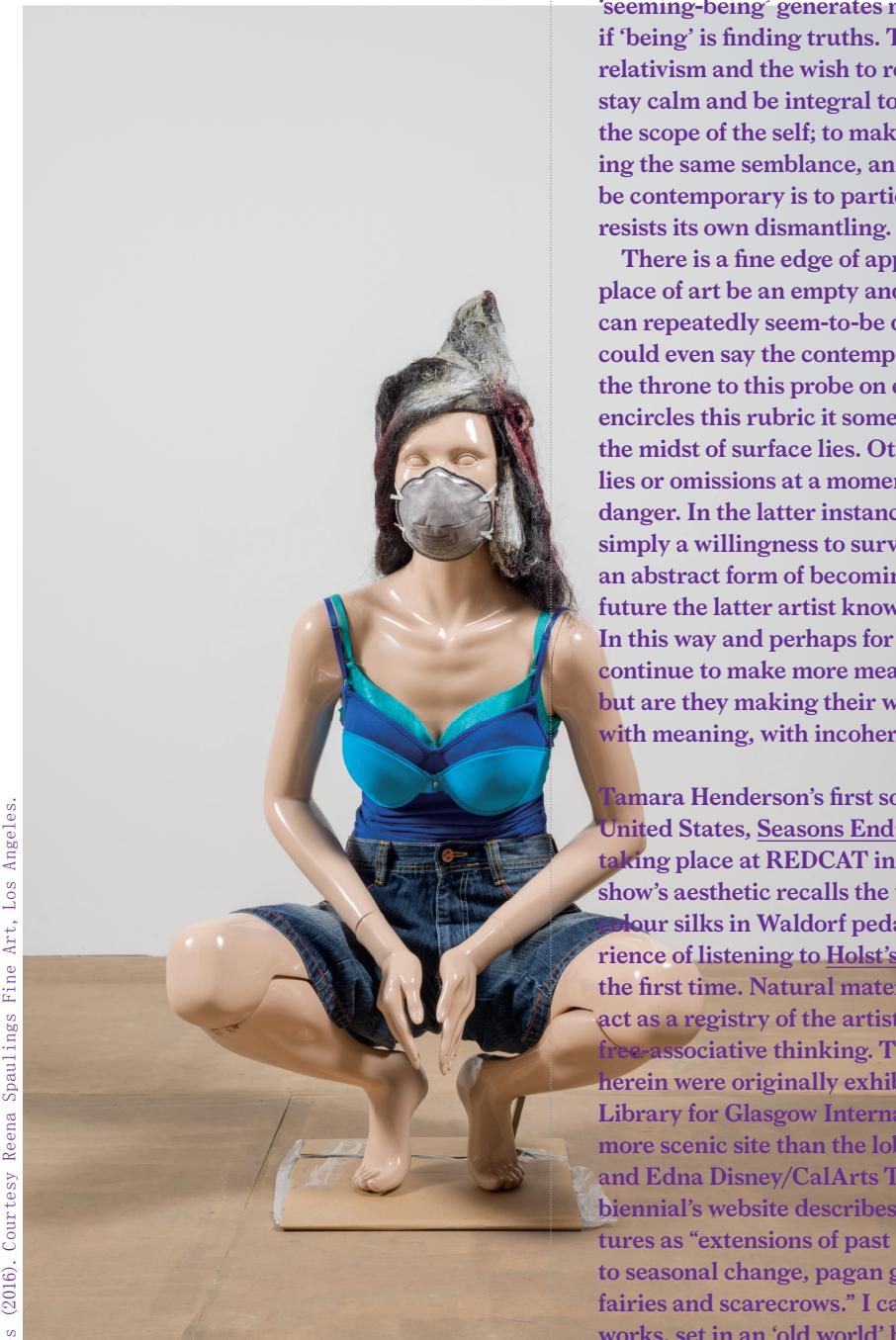
Most people on the bus have fulfilled their social anxieties, obligations and indulgences outside of the transitional space that is the bus. So fulfilled, in fact, there need not be any form of social interactions altogether.

A man is listening to a rap song, just loud enough on his headphones for everyone to hear. He begins to lip sync, and then start to actually yell out the lyrics. A woman sitting beside him moves immediately while looking at her smartphone. He now starts to make a pistol out of his index finger and pretends to shoot everyone on the bus.

Fabiola Carranza (b.1983) is a Costa Rican/Canadian artist living in Southern California. Carranza makes multidisciplinary artworks that incorporate or adapt readily available materials. She examines the political potential of visual, cultural and personal phenomena through her art and writing.

FABIOLA CARRANZA

THE EMPTY HUSK CONDITION



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K8 Harry, "Docudrama," installation view at Reena Spaulings Fine Art,  
Los Angeles (2016). Courtesy Reena Spaulings Fine Art, Los Angeles.

**NORMAL HEIGHTS, CALIFORNIA**—I went to bed at 4:30 am. Last night's debate set the term post-truth in stone. The political views of the moderate and undecided shown in the media, once again have caught up to the stunts of art, where 'seeming-being' generates more buzz than 'being', if 'being' is finding truths. Truth is subsumed by relativism and the wish to remain operative, to stay calm and be integral to the world only within the scope of the self; to make art and keep re-making the same semblance, an image of the world. To be contemporary is to participate in a culture that resists its own dismantling.

There is a fine edge of appeal to having the place of art be an empty and hollowed site. Artists can repeatedly seem-to-be detached there. You could even say the contemporary art scene holds the throne to this probe on emptiness. As art encircles this rubric it sometimes hides truths in the midst of surface lies. Other times, art posits lies or omissions at a moment of evident truth and danger. In the latter instance artistic resistance is simply a willingness to survive the pit of the times, an abstract form of becoming. Art then is the only future the latter artist knows. Work against angst. In this way and perhaps for this reason, artists continue to make more meanings with their work, but are they making their work more spiritual with meaning, with incoherence?

Tamara Henderson's first solo exhibition in the United States, *Seasons End: Painting Healer*, is taking place at REDCAT in Los Angeles. (1) The show's aesthetic recalls the use of natural-dyed, colour silks in Waldorf pedagogy and the experience of listening to Holst's 1916 *The Planets* for the first time. Natural materials and pastel tones act as a registry of the artist's innocence and her free-associative thinking. The artworks displayed herein were originally exhibited in the Mitchell Library for Glasgow International—a much more scenic site than the lobby gallery at the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theatre. The Scottish biennial's website describes Henderson's sculptures as "extensions of past and present totems to seasonal change, pagan gods and goddesses, fairies and scarecrows." I can imagine how the works, set in an 'old world' building, would read as a kind of cabinet of curiosities, inciting wonder and contemplation against a defected history of colonialism and witch hunts. At REDCAT the exhibition expands as a transmutation of color, kitsch and the everyday into playfully composed clerical costumes that have been, literally, trapped in a garage. Sculpture-beings made of velveteen

and chiffon, rayon and worn-out cotton, lace, hay and thread.

A video transfer of one of Henderson's soft-focused films, projected from the hood of a makeshift automotive chassis, *Seasons End Vehicle* (2016) accompanies this creature-like art. The car conveniently serves up an ode to Edward Kienholz's *Back Seat Dodge* (1964) and to L.A. art in general. (California as that still-hot engine on the stationed vehicle.) The large, coloured paper photography backdrops against which the figure-like artworks were displayed in Glasgow are not on view at REDCAT. In their place, Henderson has built a black and white darkroom inside a handmade circus tent. What was originally centrifugal about the work's relationship to photography (artworks posed to be photographed, studio style) is now centripetal (processing, the reveal: the prints). Henderson scrapes residue from a pinhole camera as film chemistry odours spread in the darkened space where wet photographs are left to hang and dry. What these images and the film have in common is their soft shiftiness, a mirror of the need to leave behind a trace as blur, something with which to point toward their lacking aura.

In both instalments, *Seasons End* acts as a diary, or a travel journal. The exhibition uses cultural and religious symbols already so overdetermined that Henderson's use of them might seem generous in contrast. It isn't. The pineapple motifs, the psychologists' divan (not seen in this show, but a form common to her visual lexicon), a yin-yang-like shape, an effigy of a burning man, *Garden Photographer Scarecrow* (2016), sea shells, brass trinkets and some 80s t-shirts do not provoke us to dig under the skin of their subconscious presence. The emphasis here is on the ability of art to focus on the subconscious, not on bringing it to light. The objects are not metonymic stand-ins for anything except maybe the restoration of an intuitive approach to art making. One that mimics the medium of painting (alluded to by the exhibition's title) and shallow figuration and promises to heal it. (Has painting ever needed to heal?) Yet like good painting the works' arresting beauty diffracts analysis. Nonetheless, the absence of purpose in *Seasons End: Painting Healer* as the beginning and end drawn from worn out (and wearing out) Surrealist commodities, is a metaphor for the decay and loss we each face! A black square reshaping our heart.

The exhibition revisits the empty husk of the psyche and it provides a view into the secrecy

that shapes personal narratives but not the narratives themselves. The title of each artwork implies a deeper relationship had to the materials used to make it but this remains obscured to the viewer.<sup>(2)</sup> Henderson's reluctance to disclose or exploit her connectedness to the materials is a strength in the work, a universalizing distance between the personal and the impersonal, a deathbed farewell to narrative. The danger of this blanked-out approach, comes when dealing with culturally sensitive objects, because in it orientalism is left undisturbed. A statement from the gallery says "the artist suggests that the character of the dehydrated scarecrow on her deathbed is a totem for reading seasonal change at the time of climate change." Orientalism marks a trajectory of modernism (Surrealism) the exhibition and the artist inherit as an aid or passage into opacity. It allows the occult content held by the materials to be harnessed. The didactic information prefacing both iterations of the exhibition claims that, "Henderson's recent research focuses on past and present totems, seasonal change, pagan gods and goddesses, fairies and scarecrows." If the materials that make up this show bear some strong cultural associations, then neither the curators, nor the artist do anything to critically reflect on this. If an artistic expression crafted in fabric and entangled with hay resembles a totem, that is not a coincidence, but something all too often permitted

to what end, but I am intrigued by the ease with which these sort of mythic entanglements occur and fraction on to art, never needing to be framed.

I wish more had been said about how the work draws from photography, from hauntings and spirit writing as its chosen psychic technologies for jotting down intuitive memory and tracing feminine history and relations, but perhaps such things are best left to the art historians.<sup>(3)</sup> This aside, the exhibition offers an honest view into the itinerant life of a meticulously hardworking artist, who appreciates textiles and other century old technologies (B&W photography, celluloid film, witchcraft, etc.) as much as it celebrates every second the artist spends in the gallery where she carefully makes its space her studio. (Artists need studios, they should have studios. The exhibition could serve as commentary on the transition that more and more often we see artists having to make do with gallery space for two weeks, or brief residency periods as their sole spatial means of material production). The question is: is the heroic survival of the artist's role enough to make this art relevant today or only to make art that is beautiful? The work does envelop you in loose beauty like the long mane of a wild horse. I imagine the artist galloping from one exhibition to the next on Trojan legs. I guess I mean rolling from place to place.

Reena Gallery. This is the shared California outpost of New York's Reena Spaulings Fine Art and Mexico City's House of Gaga located in MacArthur Park. Any news of a white woman claiming to be black in this broad gallery is old. Contrary to *Seasons End*, the beauty within which to lose oneself here is self-strangled and strange. One mannequin displays half a head of straight, blond hair and half in a blue-to-purple corn row fade. Blackness is represented by this blue to purple turn. The idea at the core of *Docudrama* is that the average exhibition attendee might make certain assumptions about race, class, wealth or gender when they look at the work, and if they do, it will be they who are racist or classist not the queer, feminist, Caucasian artist who produced the exhibition in the first place. The formula reads a bit like an abject trap we are all doomed to fall into. A reminder. Second guess assumption! Allow complexity to surface. The idea that mannequins are not imbued with gestures is old news here too. These mannequins are nothing if not self-conscious attempts at gestural composure. Each of them is presented in a recognizable couture pose, either leaning over Tupperware containers or laying on all fours. They all seem to glare about the gallery in defiance.

A lot of the outfits here were first worn during a runway show as part of the 2012 Whitney Biennial.

At Gaga Reena some of the figures wear Marie Antoinette-style wigs that could hide the pigeons of the homeless underneath Kool-Aid strands of teased, faux hair. (I fell for the trap and I see a representation of poverty there!) The wigs warn of future decapitations under posh hats. Neon enamel paint also makes an appearance: flat and quickly applied like a gel on some of the 'stand-in' heads. The excessive patterning on the hand-pieced clothes brings to mind the inventiveness of a social class for whom self-stylization still dignifies the American Dream. (Trap, trap!) At the opening the only beer served was Budweiser. Stripes and stars amassed as seconds shrank before the gruesome election.

the whites of their eyes had been coated pink-eye red. I deviate off track to imagine the hallucinations, putrid nightmares and fun memories of past parties had, in a world made exclusively of magazine spreads. I only interrupt this vision at the thought that maybe this exhibition is what a life on strike looks like—that it would be something exhausted, something female, something protuberant that threatens to kill joy if joy is consuming this image. A girl's image. Strikes cause discomfort but they have a goal in sight. Change.

I sense the agonistic effort made by K8 Hardy to try and situate self care in fast fashion and still have a love affair in the gallery with its thrift material. One mannequin above all stands out. She's the superhero of the bunch hanging over the gallery in a flying pose. Wonder Woman? More like Dara Birnbaum. But it's true, the world needs to re-imagine its heroes. It needs girls to spin out and into the fire.

The façade of Gaga Reena's building is striking with its Spanish revival ornamentation. A wide set of stairs to the side of the building welcomes attendees into the gallery, where two back windows frame palm trees. The trees match the stance of the mannequins. With their sway, they too seem fake. This is privilege dressed in the shabby neighbourhood's rags, building identifiers of coolness; that hidden potential beyond a façade, a curling thing that rises from the bottom up. Coolness always rises from the bottom up. Here all bottoms are up, always. The sparse touch ups on the architecture try to pass the place as an un-working of the system. In part, it is. After all this is not Gagosian in Beverly Hills nor the also relatively new Hauser, Wirth & Schimmel, with its urban garden and chicken coop, where Isa Genzken is showing similar "schauspieler" or "mannequins as actors" type work.<sup>(4)</sup> Unlike Genzken, K8 Hardy's cast of stand-in actors are of age. If they were real people they could consent to this fantasy play. Some of the garments on the mannequins are turned inside out and sewn shut. A mesh sack with a severed head in it is partly painted with drips of red. Another figure holds it like a lumpy bag of groceries. As one circles about a handful of potential references to famous works of art and iconic moments in fashion history come to mind. Drip paintings turn into smocks. A palette is now a dress. *Docudrama*'s innards are of angst as it turns into blooming

Tamara Henderson, *Seasons End: Painting Healer* (2016). Exhibition view at REDCAT, Los Angeles. Photo: Brice Wilcox



to western traveler-types, when they make art and adopt shamanistic values. I am not whom to say who can appropriate what, from whom, nor

Halfway across town transracial subjects, a panoply of mannequins, make up the majority of *Docudrama*, K8 Hardy's solo exhibition at Gaga

Paint had also been applied on the mannequins fingertips. With each stroke came a Frankensteinian effort to bring the stand-in's to life. Even

force. More just of gruesome forces tensed. The breasts and musculature of one of the mannequins is more shapely than that of the rest, but all shapes considered, it is the garments, not the mannequins that document the re-appropriative system of defacement and erasure the female form undergoes.

The exhibition's other accompanying work, an 82-minute video titled, *Outfitumentary* (2016) shows 10+ years of outfits worn by the artist. K8 Hardy strikes classic, video art poses for the camera. The casual domestic setting recalls Martha Rosler's 1975 iconic video *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. A small note on stationery from a nearby luxury hotel (the crossed out name still somewhat legible) asks viewers not to post images of the video on their media feeds. The mark seems purposeful and jocular. It romanticizes the memory of Martin Kippenberger's 1985–1996 series, *Drawings on Hotel Stationery* but it also recalls every artist's fascination with other artists, other art and luxury. The handwritten note toils with the belief, that there is a moral and immoral way to look at art and approach practice, that the internet, wealth and nomadic (homeless) life have determined. It asks: How do artists continue to live and work once their art has garnered some attention, if they do not wish to fall into complete and desperate holes, into opulence, excess and entitlement? That is, assuming they didn't live this way already. For K8 Hardy, identity ought to be confused, fucked with, brutalized and most of all, instrumentalized. *Docudrama* denotes the seductive elements of fame and flare and how they manage art today as much as it embodies and despises them with atomizing horror.<sup>(5)</sup> In 1927, Elinor Glyn wrote "It is that quality possessed by some which draws all others with its magnetic force." K8 Hardy's modeled "It" stance is negative and self-reflective, it is an unhappy and conscious reflection on the present condition of life in the United States. A simultaneously dominant and submissive account of the pleasure begot from subverting torture, crisis, ends. The artist seems committed to making this seduction hers, regardless of whether the feedback the exhibition produces, out-generates the sound its critical force makes.

*Outfitumentary* champions an important archival cause. As it documents K8 Hardy's looks, her life, and her coming into power, it leaves behind an image of what feminist and queer life looked like in the 00's. But does the lucid contraction of

thought and time embedded in this practice make the act of making art any less self-involved? Does the emergence of something like an acknowledgement of a truth that is always already there (the world is worn out, cruel and abusive) really help make like-minded folks come together? Or



does it only allow an educated elite to stay filial to themselves and set class (*tout-monde chic*), and not race, sexuality, or gender, as the structures of privilege? Fashion has always done that. The position K8 Hardy seems to take says "Welcome be the money, it draws no end." Art doesn't want an end. It never has. I guess saying "Look here! I've seen something in the world that is still ours: intelligence, color, texture, craftsmanship!" is too direct to be sensual. We'd rather take a self-conjured, impersonal, smart mock of an *It girl*—the stand-in—than acknowledge a girl's stance (K8 Hardy's). At least the expenditure in *Docudrama* is not long lasting, because somewhere along the line drawn by the fake bodies in the gallery, K8 Hardy's characterization of post-capitalist misogyny finds its poetic, communitarian non-place. The works temporarily appear less empty through their networked relation, they oscillate between holding meaning and acting as voids. But one cannot re-appropriate misogyny without having first been subject to it. *Outfitumentary* is testament to that. K8 Hardy is not thinned out by the circulation of her work: she wears it. She moves through the smart rings of the art world between acts of pleasure and swerves of pain. Her queerness, growth and shared vulnerability are the sources of her empowerment and imitable style.

Meanwhile, back at REDCAT, Henderson's navel gaze seems more Ulyssean. Yet her stream-of-consciousness comes two generations too late for me to boast with comrade happiness. I am glad

of it, of course, but I still want to see work that is about more than D.I.Y. techniques, the visionary observation of colour (because it is visionary) and the continuation of art as we have come to know it. I don't need a female Kienholz nor a girl Kippenberger. I want to jump right past them to



(1) The exhibition ran from October 15, 2016 through to December 23, 2016.

(2) Robert Irwin, *Being and Circumstance: Notes Toward a Conditional Art* (California: Lapis Press, 1985), 27.

(3) My take is that intuitive knowledge has been historically undermined and bracketed as feminine thought process. But the ties to the unconscious—to surrealism, photography and overdetermined commodities in Henderson's work—fog the capacity of the work to speak to this male/female or macho and feminine binary and instead make psychic technologies themselves, these spirit writing technologies, take centre stage. The work then becomes about the adoption of pagan ritual, or othered ritual, into art. It both obscures and becomes complicit with/in its colonial legacies. Art advances in this way and a female artist can focus on the handmade without her work coming across as neither exploitative nor commonplace.

(4) It was recently announced that Paul Schimmel is no longer the director, partner nor vice president at Hauser & Wirth.

(5) Susan Sontag used the term "atomizing horror" to describe the work of Diane Arbus.

I was disappointed to see Miranda July's latest novel described as "strenuously quirky," "peculiar," and "rather odd" in the opening paragraph of Laura Miller's review in *The Guardian*. To be fair, *The First Bad Man* is a weird book, as it playfully twists the tropes of a typical love story. But still, my hackles go up whenever I see fiction described as "quirky"—not least because the word is too often used to write off July's books and films as twee—but because the word has become synonymous with a whole vein of popular culture that is working to dissolve the constraints of mainstream taste. Because July is not shy about foregrounding non-normative, and sometimes troubling, forms of intimacy, her work can make people uncomfortable. But for Miller to imply that July's novel requires some sort of unreasonable effort is nothing more than proof that the reviewer has misunderstood the book's critical significance. With Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* fresh in my mind, I did not find the novel at all strenuous to decode. To make sense of its peculiarity, I prefer to think of the novel as a response to the lasting echoes of Butler's influential writings on gender identity. When Butler asks, "What kind of gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity and desire" (2551), July's



book responds with a parodic romantic comedy that achieves the ultimate feat of contemporary literary fiction, being at once theoretical and transgressive, without sacrificing humour or readability.

*The First Bad Man* is narrated by Cheryl Glickman, a Los Angeles woman in her early forties who works at a self-defense dojo and pine for an older man. Cheryl's mundane life is derailed when her employers' daughter Clee moves in, begins attacking Cheryl, falls in love with Cheryl, has a baby with Cheryl, and eventually leaves Cheryl to raise the child alone. No summary could capture the book's brilliant weirdness, though it is enough to establish that the narrative does not fall under that of a traditional love story rubric.

The attacks Clee doles out are initially alarming, but Cheryl quickly notices that Clee always holds back from injuring her, which prompts a revelation: “I was in on it. We were playing a game, an adult game”. When Cheryl drafts a contract for their game, Clee feels the need to awkwardly declare her sexuality: “I’m not...you know. I’m into dick”. Cheryl confirms that she too is straight, but Clee clarifies: “For me it’s a little more intense.’ ... ‘I guess I’m “misogynist” or whatever”. Cheryl comments, “I’d never heard of the word used like this, like an orientation”. The moment reads like a disconcerting joke: On one level it is unexpected to hear anyone self-identify as misogynist, because people tend not to freely admit their hideous prejudices; and on another level, it is even more jarring to hear a woman admit that she hates women. And though the moment, when quoted out of context, may sound like the naive, off-hand comment of a clueless teenager, Clee’s admission is a pivotal moment that goes a long way to explaining her hitherto “quirky” behaviour.

Even though misogyny’s provenance has, historically, been attributed to awful men, July’s novel denaturalizes that assumption. Clee, as the daughter of a couple who produce women’s self-defense videos, has grown up watching simulations of vulnerable women being attacked by bad men. But instead of identifying with the victim, Clee learned to identify with the male attackers. By writing this gender discordancy into Clee’s character, July is responding to Butler’s idea that parody “reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin” (2550). Which is to say that, within a culture that sets up and maintains gendered binaries such as female and male, victim and attacker, gay and straight, one’s polarized identity is not reflective of an internal “natural” organizing principle, but of how one has come to imitate and perform culturally assigned roles.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler discusses the significance of trouble: “The rebellion and its reprimand seemed to be caught up in the same terms ... : the prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble. Hence, I concluded that trouble is inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it” (2540). In *The First Bad Man*, Clee enters Cheryl’s life to trouble her assumptions about gender and sexuality. With July’s inviting an immersive first-person narration, the reader and Cheryl alike must learn how to be in that trouble.

For all its eccentricities, Cheryl’s story is not so uncommon: A woman longs to be with a man, he comes into her life and mis-treats her, but still, they fall in love and have a baby, only to see the man grow distant and abandon the woman to raise the child alone. However, July turns this recognizable plot on its head by having the man’s role performed by a 19-year-old woman. This inversion is significant because it upsets both Cheryl and the reader’s idea of what normal is, and causes one to reconsider how a culture can produce and reproduce aggressive men and passive women. Of course, misogyny is a systemic problem of socialization—i.e. an issue of observed and repeated behaviours and attitudes—while sexual orientations are defined by patterns of involuntary, nuanced and largely inexplicable attractions. Thus, to label misogyny an orientation is absurd. However, that absurdity—that seemingly quirky, weird-for-the-sake-of-weird detail July threw in her story—highlights the absurdity of the dominant culture’s inclination to normalize misogynist practices by viewing misogyny as a natural, unavoidable expression of a rigidly demarcated biological gender binary. In other words, I see this instance of July’s quirk as a hyperbolic analogy that points to a broad social issue. However, Miller’s review does not

acknowledge the book’s queerness or destabilizing potential. And while I don’t have enough insight to determine whether Miller is afraid of that potential or if July’s work simply doesn’t appeal to the reviewer’s (mainstream) taste, I don’t see the value of a book review that does nothing more than develop clever new ways of saying, I didn’t like it. Miller’s distaste seems to stem from the fact that she does not see herself reflected in the pages. Specifically, she takes issue with the concentration of peculiarity orbiting July’s protagonist, writing: “It is not that such things could never happen; rather, too many of them happen to not enough people.” But the lack of recognition Miller sees in July’s absurdity ought not to be a bad thing: fiction’s power does not only lie in its ability to remind a reader of how life is, but also of how it could be. If authors wrote more stories that questioned and undermined unconscious, unchecked normativity, readers might be less likely to lazily dismiss work like July’s as “quirky” before considering its political significance. Ultimately, we need more authors like July to answer Butler’s call to make the right kind of trouble in a culture where trouble, especially for marginalized identities, continues to be inevitable. I like to think that July has learned to wear “quirky” as a badge of honour.

Stacey Ho is an artist, writer, and curator living on unceded Coast Salish territories. Her practice considers intersections of culture, history, and embodied experience from a feminist perspective. With a background in photography and performance art, her art often incorporates language, sound, gesture, and everyday objects. She has presented her work at Art Metropole (Toronto), Galerie oqbo (Berlin), RAM Galleri (Oslo) and most recently in Dar'a: Full Circle, a group exhibition curated by Jamelie Hassan at Artcite (Windsor). She is working on a novel about plants and robots.

She is washing her dirty underwear in the public restroom, drying scraps of flimsy cloth under a hand blower affixed to the tiled wall. She is brushing her teeth. Many days on the road now, days moving past her in silence.

Someone slips into the room. Another figure emerges from a washroom stall. They approach. They stand quite close. This is unusual. It's been a long time since she's been around people. Looking from one shape to the other, she is unable to tell if the individual persons are long or short, fat or thin. She sort of forgets what faces are supposed to be like.

One figure, leaning ever closer, questions her in a low voice, "Do you choose to take action, or do you choose to surrender?"

Her first impulse is to surrender.

Her voice is crackly, unused to speaking. "I don't understand," she says. "You mean fighting, as in an action against something?"

"It's a simple question, really."

It is a tricky question if you can't discern yes from no, fat from thin. A world of false oppositions.

"What's the difference?"

"In one you are an agent, the other a resource."

She hates agents. "I don't want to be an agent. Can I choose to whom I am a resource?"

"A little bit, but... not really. No."

"You would be a wonderful resource."

"I don't feel much like a resource. I feel like a person."

"Oh, that would change very quickly. It's a process, you see, a holistic, painless procedure. The cultural aspects, the historical sediments... they all sort of leak out of you. Or sometimes sear into you, become a part of you, completely."

"Then you are singular. You are then one of us."

They smell like rain, like it is just about to rain and the atmosphere is soaked with ions. She is not even carrying her Special Class-S Document. For purposes of leaving the island, it is necessary to obtain a Special Class-S Document, which is a three-year long process for a non-citizen. The 'S' in Special Class-S Document stands for soli...soil.

She pushes one agent into the other and bolts for the door. Out towards the parkade, down a flight of stairs. Skip the last landing. Crash through the double steel door. Then into the street. She's sprinting, or not even but a motion of limbs working back and forth as fast as she can but she can't outrun this but it's already happening. Everything drains out of her. It runs off her like sweat, until she is hollow. So fast, soon she is floating on light.

The process of depersonalization is nearly complete. Let's go, they say.  
She lets go.

...

...

...

[find yourself still awake]

...

She finds she is still awake. She tries to shake the feeling that overwhelms her, but nothing moves, there is no means for movement. Eyeless, noseless, fingerless, and legless, her mind and her memory are here, though untethered and not exactly capable of what she once knew as thinking. She remembers the breakfast she ate the day before, also the heating and cooling of magma on the surface of the earth from 120 million years ago, also simultaneous recall distant glints of possibility and catastrophe somewhere towards the future. She is aware of her body, a distant point in reality, as it is captured by agents. Many possible times and places are present, all going all at once. It's hard to comprehend yesterday as such.

And yet, torn open and senseless, she is able to intuit the presence of other spirits as they drift about her—some in isolated movements, some in tandem with a crowd, some tethered to a subject, and some, like her, unhinged. They are all so different, and yet here, in this immaterial realm, they are also not different at all. Various groups and movements form patterns such as multiples, sequences, repetitions, mixing these together to make complicated symphonies. It is with one of these groups, pulsing in a mood that feels sort of —purple?— star-like?—, that she begins to communicate. Their rhythms, moving in and out of sync, speak to her as a narrative. The purplish star-like group tell her a story. They teach her that all stories are a form of mimesis: all stories make a little world that is a bit like our own but with possibilities beyond present reality. Telling a story is a ritual, a way to take matter, invoke its power, and shape it into what you fear and desire.

[space

...

...

[ ]

...

...

bodymake]

The agents pick up her body wandering through a back alley in a residential neighbourhood just east of city centre. Her skin is greyed and emits the smell of one of the converted. She is bound in a sheen of gossamer, fine as a silkworm's nest.

"That her?"

"Yeah."

"Damn, another fucking escapee. How're we gonna call this?"

"Vagrancy. Apparently, she was living on the street anyway. Shouldn't be a problem."

She is taken away. It is efficient. Samples are extracted from underneath her fingernails, where dirt and biological matter have accumulated. Needles, scans. The necessary information slips out from under her skin. They examine the growth of her teeth. Under interrogation, she gives the correct responses but the words are not a part of her. Her body is acting. The agents understand this, understand the habituated, physiological reaction to various forms of trauma. They are here to study the results.

...

...

...

Listen. This place not a place in which presence not present prescient learn yu yous. What is your plane in your flesh we are hungry for when flesh muscle tissue endowed acutely-tuned sensorial mandible pull mineral from dirt learn us way us diggers us tasters blenders. Yus us lick up trade up exchange for singular solus solar chlorophyllous aboveground millennia codified network spread and tangle weaving in and out of the light this was our way still is really we roil like the dirt your energy crashes around us cradled in this bright web for eternal moment tangle embrace. Fleshy mitochondrial underground teach you notice invisible gesture, unfurl your flag into night.

This place no place learn your way of knowing not knowing and here another plane rooted in a lake an ocean a body somewhere a singular stretching across an entire planetary in my home body was I a whole body liquid and everyone lives and shits in me full of shit and life and circulate in a state of renewal death perpetual yu may grasp just the edge of my cyclical motion pulled along the current as we all are as we is not me you accept me not mine. The heart is rooted, the heart of the flesh. The heart is meat. I am learning to be you I am not you cannot you in this harmonized vibration a massive chorus echo sentiment our presences gather together in a lake of song.

The Dominant Culture of Bird  
The Dominant Culture of Green  
The Dominant Culture of Purple  
The Dominant Culture of Stone

Bot bot bot not bot not bot bot bot bot bot bit bot

The Dominant Culture of Birds  
The Dominant Culture of Purple  
The Dominant Culture of Green  
The Dominant Culture of Stones

Meat meat meat meat meat MEAT MEAT MEAT

Whirled and welcomed into the heart of the chant, her companions pull her in, offer a home for her statelessness held in a euphonic promise. In this newfound syntax, she realizes a sort of freedom that has been missing. Everywhere it has been missing and now that it is here, now that she is completely gone, she understands her freedom and its possibilities in its entirety. She sees that she cannot inhabit this license. She cannot occupy it, but then again, she will never again be occupied. She will never belong.

"I'm sorry, I can't stay here," she communicates to the mass of consciousness,  
"Thank you. I understand now. I understand that I have something to do."

Knowing only their pulsing rhythm, her friends are dancing.

.....

.....

[MEAT.  
MEAT.  
MEAT.  
MEAT.  
MEAT.]

] [ ] [

Satisfied with themselves, satisfied with their work, the agents hover over her remains, squinting into the details. She sits before them, placid and immutable. The perfect agent. The perfect resource.

"They don't come back. They never do."

"Pity."

Documents burn amongst the bodies. The agents take care of the evidence. She hears flickers of their conversation and peers out at them, curious, through desiccated eye sockets. Hello. What is the taste of your plane? I intuit to lick permissive. Bot bot bot not bot bot not bot bot bot bot bot bit bot...

She emerges, horrid and radiant. It takes a moment for them to register her refurbished consciousness. Their mouths stretch wide open, their eyes open wide.

They grab at their holsters but her bounce is too quickly. Ripped off arms

before gun flash then fist finds through to heart but chest empty. Teeth kiss the flesh tear bite out the throat their throats. Figure disintegration white blood courses through water then out again. My hands are laughing outstretched grin dancer is dancer is dancing. Is dancing is dancing is dancing is dancing.

Is done.

Steffanie Ling is a writer, editor and critic. Her books are *Nascar* (Blank Cheque, 2016) and *Cuts of Thin Meat* (Spare Room, 2015). She is co-editor of *Charcuterie*.



### Stopover (*Voir du pays*), 2016

Dir. Delphine and Muriel Coulin

Delphine and Muriel Coulin's *Stopover* is a film that happens over the course of three uneasy days. It portrays a troop of French soldiers who have landed in Cyprus for military decompression and compulsory group therapy after a successfully completed mission in Afghanistan. The moment the soldiers step into the resort's zombie-like *Spring Breakers* atmosphere, a game of "spot the crazies" begins between the recently embattled infantry and their characterless superiors. Some of them indulge in the fun the resort has to offer, and some are not able to get over the traumas of war so quickly before frolicking in a swimming pool and fist pumping on a terrace. The plot follows two childhood friends, Aurore and Marine, and indeed, the rest of their company is male.

Overly congratulating the Coulin's portrayal of women in a profession helmed mainly by men subjects the film to an extremely limited reading. This film would cease to exist without its female leads, but *Stopover* accomplishes much more than mere kudos for representation. Generally, a gender bias towards men in physically demanding jobs, as well as managerial and strategic roles, is a fact, and being in the military is a bit of both. Soldiers take orders: be strong, eliminate the enemy. Then after that it's layback, relax, and express yourself. Regimenting the dismissal of your emotions, your morality, and ultimately your agency, is bound to precipitate some sort of psychotic break. This resort is the ultimate hostile work environment, and their group therapy sessions are just the most perverse idea of team building or employee bonding I've ever had the fortune to not partake in.

So, while it is worth noting that *Stopover* has provoked the army woman's subjectivity in cinema to be one of urgent attention, the Coulin's decompression camp is not framed as the battle of the sexes. It is an arena that depicts the unstable and disrespectful relationships that transpire between men and women as a result of such imbalanced dynamics at the kind of workplace that also mingles just a bit too much with life.

## Mimosa, 2016

Dir. Oliver Laxe

At first, *Mimosa* seemed to be a simple story: a caravan transports a dying Sheik to be buried with his loved ones in the medieval city of Sijilmasa. When the Sheik passes mid-journey, the task is nearly abandoned. Two men who don't know the way continue on with the cargo-corpse. Later, a pseudo-mystic mechanic, and a mountain man accompanied by his mute daughter join them. To watch this film is to suppress an appetite for a well-rounded plot or lucid editing, but you can still feast your eyes and ears.

As these specks of flesh traverse the unforgiving Moroccan landscape, the cinematography treats the desert and mountains with ineffability that imposes a daunting presence over them. Camera-as-god. The minimal but resonant overtures that overlay these shots seem to reverberate from the void between earth and sky itself. Further careful attention to foley and sound editing partnered with radically stark cinematography should rectify any disgruntled audience member who can't justify the slowness of expedition or the sparse, however poignant, dialogue. When they walk at night, the screen emits the darkest navy blue. Only visible are faint outlines of the horizon and their bodies walking towards it, but ever-present is the sound of hooves hitting the earth and pebbles skipping down a cliff.

Like any challenging work of art, if you're open and patient with *Mimosa*'s form, the pace provokes the friction between people's faith in the possibility of salvation. "We've never done anything big in our entire life" says Said to Ahmed, "this is it." They conduct "invocations" of faith, chance operations and fits of doubt about their journey. In essence though, *Mimosa* is a film that strikes at the heart of a cinephile who is deeply invested in how a film attends to the space of the cinema itself. It will be utterly lost on a laptop.



## Kills on Wheels (*Tiszta szívvel*), 2016

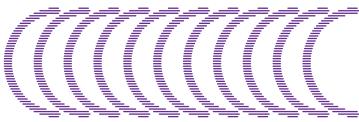
Dir. Atilla Till

How wheelchair accessible is the gangster world? It's about as accommodating as the rest, but in Atilla Till's *Kills on Wheels*, assumptions about confronting a disabled assassin will only result in an blood bath.

Janos Rupaszov, a ex-firefighter paralyzed from the waist down, is a very efficient hired man for a Yugoslavian crime boss, Rados. His disability makes him an excellent assassin as his appearance always catches his targets off-guard. His indifference towards life and death affords him a recklessness that deepens his qualifications in dangerous encounters. When he rolls up, a bit of banter takes place about the fact that he's crippled and then he blows everyone away in comic book fashion. In the scenes where Rupaszov is taking care of business, so to speak, awkward moments sparked by his disability puncture the typical coolness of a pre-gunfight spat, while post-gunfight guttural rock music hits as the camera surveys the carnage. Till does not allow you to take the scene seriously, and it's great.

As the result of his efficiency, Rados tasks him with increasingly challenging jobs, so Rupaszov recruits two young men from his care facility to be his accomplices. Zoli and Barba are anxious to live a little. Zoli has a spine condition that confines him to a wheelchair. Barba is Zoli's roommate. He suffers from palsy, but is capable of walking and driving, though with great difficulty. Beyond being roommates, they also have a creative partnership—throughout the film, there are several cuts to progress drawings of a comic that Barba and Zoli are working on together. The writing of their comic book seems to align with their new hobby as accessories-to-murder. We see a trio of anti-heroes execute their targets with a requisite cinematic suspension of disbelief, but the routine setbacks of their disabilities is portrayed soberly. Adjacent to the action, Rupaszov struggles to wheel up a steep driveway in order to flee a murder scene, Barba deals with his body odour and Zoli gives his mother attitude about his upcoming surgery. We see a lonely man, and teenagers with proverbial angst.

*Kills on Wheels* exceeded my expectations in terms of how it would consider the disability of characters. It did so by completely sublimating it into the steady pacing of the film. So, it was never the crux of my attention, though it was this aspect of the story that captured my interest. As the film progressed, I periodically forgot about their wheelchairs, becoming little more than a lamp or a blurry painting in the set design. I just wanted them to win. We live in a moment where we are tired of seeing perfect people win. *Kills on Wheels* doesn't pander to cliché, even if it flirts closely with it.



Charcuterie	2
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Charcuterie strives to provide a forum for experimental writing and informed polemics without pedantry. It assembles a polyphony of inquiry and documents the messy landscape of opinion and critique that unravels in close proximity to where we work, live and make art in Vancouver.

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