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Endnotes

1. RA. I Want My Time With You. *Terrace Wires*: Tracey Emin RA. April 10, 2018. January 28, 2019 <<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/terrace-wires-tracey-emin>>

2. See for critique on Emin: Fanthome, Christine. 'The Influence and Treatment of Autobiography in Confessional Art: Observations on Tracey Emin's Feature Film *Top Spot*.' *Biography*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2006): 30–42. And: Femmes, Outi. 2009. 'Replaying the Old Stereotypes into an Artistic Role: The Case of Tracey Emin.'

10 *Women's History Review*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2009): 559–575.

3. Stallabrass, Julian. *High Art Life: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*. Revised and Expanded ed. London: Verso, 1999 (2006): 42–49.

4. Davis, Kristina. 'Neon Light Fetish: Neon Art and Signification of Sex Work.' *Visual Culture & Gender*, vol. 12, 2017: 26.

5. Laermans, Rudi. 'Publieke Intimiteit.' *De Witte Raaf*, 2017. March/April 2017. January 2, 2019 <<https://www.dewitteraat.be/artikel/detail/nl/4346>>

6. Katz, Vincent. (2011). 'Tracey Emin: Love is what you want.' *The Brooklyn Rail*, July 11, 2011. January 2, 2019 <<http://brooklynrail.org/2011/07/art/tracey-emin-love-is-what-you-want>>

7. Winterson, Jeanette. *Tracey Emin: Works 1963–2006*. New York: Rizzoli, 2006: 6–8.

What Else?
Summer Notes After a Love Lost

1. Last summer, long and hot, I repeatedly failed at remaining optimistic about loss. This sentence needs testing. It is certain that tears came easily, frequently, and in moments of despair seemed endless. They came in moments of felt disparity between the new and future everyday and the ghostly reminders of the affective world I left behind with its familiar promises of care, reciprocity and being known. Desire however remained on the side of the break in between that moment of ending our relationship and that definitive move to London, which would separate me from friends and many accumulated comforting habits. There was time to improvise and to be inattentive to the self as coping strategies; there was space for desire to be “imprecise and impractical”.¹ Never final, it is now too early to reflect on where desire has led me. These are merely refractions of my summer notes after a love and a world lost: the experiences, without the luxury of wisdom that accompanies autobiographies written with hindsight.²

2. It remains inconceivable that our last day as partners was spent on a Flixbus from London to Ghent. Nothing sensational happened apart from the erratic behaviour of the bus driver upon which we both frowned. We could have continued the next day, yet we ended it. Similarly, we could have ended it before, but we chose to continue the next day. A break-up needs to be rehearsed, someone said later. The contingency (that evening) and the banality (that bus) bared it nevertheless of all drama. That academic year I had been commuting each week between London (where I work) and Ghent (where we lived) on the Eurostar. Starting again at the other place demanded energy anyhow, but during that year our love got more and more entangled with doubt. Doubt is not detrimental to love: the obstacles it creates come with the promise that, once overcome, love will be fortified. Doubt can fire theatrical scenes ending in passionate reconciliations. *Tomorrow is another day* to reach utopia together.

But at one point body and mind get worn out. Deborah Levy writes in *The Cost of Living* (2018), the second part of her “living autobiography,” that she did not want to swim back anymore to the boat: “My marriage was the boat and I knew that if I swam back to it, I would drown.”³ Now I tell people that I felt tired of having swum back to the boat many times.

3. In the preface to her essay collection *On Not Being Able to Sleep* (2003) Jacqueline Rose comments on how all her reviews are on women’s writing whereas the psychoanalytic essays deal with men: “In this collection, then, it is men who struggle with institutions often of their own making, women whose words travel on more unofficial paths”.⁴ I was sitting in the sun-drenched garden of the London house where I rented a room for three evenings a week, and I too wanted to travel those paths. The way we learn to understand female love is, after all, part of the male institution which is femininity, as also Levy contends:

Femininity, as a cultural personality, was no longer expressive for me. It was obvious that femininity, as written by men and performed by women, was the exhausted phantom that still haunted the early twenty-first century. What would it cost to step out of character and stop the story?⁵

What Lauren Berlant calls the female complaint is that “women live for love, and love is the gift that keeps on taking”.⁶ The phrase denotes a scene of disappointment about lived intimacy not living up to romantic fantasies but does not entail a detachment from that fantasy because it holds the promise of conventionality and of sharing a world with others. Along those lines we might think of the male complaint as “men do not live for love, but love is the gift that never gives enough.” The phrase suggests a scene of disappointment about lived intimacy not living up to romantic fantasies but does not entail a detachment from that fantasy because it is not up to men to change. It is women who cannot be read transparently, act strange, criticize patriarchy or no longer wish to sacrifice or endure, are “frigid,” act pathological because of the contradicting impulses society imposes on them and refuse to be saved by men – in short, do not confirm male presence. This is a simplifying, only partial statement but not false: if love will ever overcome social hardships, it will do so for hegemonic men as only for them nothing social needs to be overcome.

This summer I found myself reading, apart from one old novel by Don DeLillo, only fiction by women. Maybe I did not want to read any male writing in which a woman is presented as the cause and another woman as the solution to the male protagonist’s issues. The accounts of female desire and agency animated my own desire to desire and to want another story, and this, I hope, in a way attentive to the different parts men and women were and are forced to perform.

I’ve read these stories in gardens, on the beach, in trains and planes, on the couch, in parks and always in a cleansing sun.

4. I would like to think of my reading practice this summer as resurgent. It is related to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s notion of reparative reading that understands the reader’s task is not to focus solely on hidden injustices and power relations – as paranoid reading proclaims – but to hold a more intimate relation to the text and to perceive it as an object that allows for sustenance: “a reparative impulse (...) wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will have resources to offer to an inchoate self”.⁷ The danger here might be that we focus on the private individual and private emotions as a means to understand the social and no longer perceive them as things that need to be explained socially.

That is Berlant’s interest: “the impersonality of the structures and practices that conventionalize desire, intimacy, and even one’s own personhood”.⁸

Whenever we feel at loss there is a repertoire of “conventional forms of the social” that help us to cover up our anxiety and guide us to “recognize only some of our attachments as the core of who we are and what we belong to”.⁹ In its therapeutic gesture, reparative reading risks repeating and affirming impersonal structures that might be adverse to one’s flourishing.

Therefore, a resurgent reading. There is no wounded self that needs to be healed, but a self that needs to rise into life through an understanding that one can be emancipated from social narratives and characters and through searching for openings and forms that allow the self to thrive more.

5. It is hard to keep one’s space and time open. “In fact, the first thing people sometimes did with their freedom was to find another version of the thing that imprisoned them”, it says in *Transit* (2016), the second book in Rachel Cusk’s masterful trilogy, flanked by *Outline* (2014) and *Kudos* (2018).¹⁰ In these novels the narrator Faye mostly just listens to her interlocutors. Their stories form echoes and mirrors of each other and these outline the figure of Faye without filling her in: it is the impersonal shape of a personhood without the actual experience. She however wishes to step outside of that form: “But what other people thought was no longer of any help to me. Those thoughts only existed within certain structures, and I had definitively left those structures”.¹¹ She chooses to embrace her passivity as a virtue and abstain herself from desire: “I was trying to find a different way of living in the world”.¹²

One of those impersonal structures is growth: “They were both still young enough to believe that this principle of growth was exponential; that life was only expansive, and broke the successive vessels in which you tried to contain it in its need to expand more”.¹³ This is not unrelated to what Elizabeth Freeman calls “chrononormativity,” the implementation and naturalization of historical time schemes on bare life: “These are teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing and death and its attendant rituals”.¹⁴ It certainly haunts the narrator in Sheila Heti’s *Motherhood* (2018) who questions through the whole novel whether or not she should become a mother. Heti as well incorporates a lot of voices in her novel as the many social forms of conventional life that want her to recognize which attachments are important. As a counterweight, Heti introduces a technique of randomness derived from the ancient Chinese *I Ching* text, in which the flipping of three coins gives her yes or no answers in an imaginary conversation that she wishes to reveal a truth about herself.

Through posing all those voices beside each other, these novels train us in the ambiguity that love (or its absence) creates and in the mediation of the many norms, voices, desires, opinions that are (mostly) unsolicitedly laid upon us. At the same time, the novels imply a more active shaping of life instead of waiting for the conventional narrative to befall us. Faye moves on from impassivity to a certain anger in *Transit* and is remarried in *Kudlos*: "I hoped to get the better of those laws (...) by living within them".¹⁵ In Heti's *Motherhood* the narrator aims to set herself a similar task from the outside by turning the lack of particular conventional life events into a positive choice through which one shapes life:

14 particular conventionally ordained life events into a positive choice through which one shapes life:

But how do you describe the absence of something? (...) My lack of the experience of motherhood is not an experience of motherhood. Or is it? Can I call it a motherhood, too? (...)
 Maybe if I could somehow figure out what *not having a child* is an experience of – make it into an active action, rather than the lack of an action – I might know what I was experiencing, and not feel so much like I was waiting to act. I might be able to choose my life (...).¹⁶

6. I was struck by the speed with which I unconsciously seemed to want a new relation. As a "beautifully shaped web of lyrical mutuality," the couple in its commercially romantic guise offers a promise of life completed and balanced.¹⁷ It presents and makes love hierarchically highest in what we need for the good life. Therefore, promises and desires can turn into obligations. *I Want My Time With You* (2018), Tracey Emin's artwork that hangs above the Eurostar platforms, gets at this duality. I long to be with you, but equally: the other's longing as an order in neon letters cannot be ignored. If the couple is what one needs, to not want to give most of your time to being a couple might make one feel guilty, awkward, inadequate, doubtful, stuck. Berlant however reminds us that it is not about loving or hating the couple. Rather: say 'here's what being in a couple can do, and here's the other things I need in order to flourish.' Then you start to think of yourself as having a capacity to produce many kinds of patterning and attachment to the world.¹⁸

"What else" opens a space for the indefinite and the incomplete, for love to be lateral and not hierarchical in what you need to prosper. It might also crack our narratives.

"It sounds like you are already plotting your divorce," my friend said while I was chopping vegetables in his kitchen. I told him about the woman I slept with a couple of nights before, but how I thought the narrative would proceed betrayed that I was keeping my desire on hold. It is difficult to resist unfolding the moment into a narrative, to not tie present actions to possible unwanted future events, but to just stay beside the moment and leave it as a lateral incision in time: this happened, what else could follow? To let the narrative beset the scene before the contingency of encounters gets the chance to play itself out – it makes one passive and fatalistic. Loosening the impersonal structures involves freeing ourselves from anticipating the narratives we grew up with and from the supposed expectations of others who share those stories.

"Where had I got to in my own life by trying to please everyone all the time? Right here. Wringing my hands," the main character Sophia remarks in Levy's novel *Hot Milk* (2016).¹⁹ As a therapy to this inhibition, the novel offers an aesthetic of boldness: "I have to find more courage and purpose and chase my thoughts".²⁰ It is a means to speak up which is "not about speaking louder" but catching your thoughts and "feeling entitled to voice a wish."²¹

7. Levy writes how a friend gave her a shed to write in and how that friend insisted that no one was allowed to interrupt her and to leave her autonomy and time. "To be valued and respected in this way, as if it were the most normal thing in the world, was a new experience."²²

I want love to be the mutual gift of a shed in which one can be alone or invite, beside the partner, whoever and whatever one wants to spend one's time with in order to flourish.²³

¹ Smith, Zadie. *NW*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2012: 36.
² This paragraph makes abundant use of the following sentence from Lauren Berlant's *The Female Complaint*: "One might conclude (...) that the hardest acts of changing are acts of breaking, even when desire is on the side of a break they require being optimistic about loss and about the undoing of an affect world, with its promise of reciprocity." Berlant, Laurent. *The Female Complaint*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 266–67.

³ Levy, Deborah. *The Cost of Living*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2018: 8.
⁴ Rose, Jacqueline. *On Not Being Able to Sleep*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003: ix.

⁵ Levy, *The Cost of Living*, 85.
⁶ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 1.
⁷ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003: 149.

⁸ Berlant, Laurent. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011: 125.

⁹ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 125.
¹⁰ Cusk, Rachel. *Transit*. London: Vintage, 2016: 69.

¹¹ Cusk, *Transit*, 70.
¹² Cusk, Rachel. *Outline*. London: Vintage, 2014: 171.

¹³ Cusk, *Outline*, 14. For a more extensive analysis of *Outline*, see Hans Demeyer, "Verlangen & inhibie: schuld & depressie; thuis & wereld. Drie variaties op uitputtende hechtingen," in: nY#35, 2017, 33–46.

¹⁴ Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010: 4.

¹⁵ Cusk, Rachel. *Kudlos*. London: Faber & Faber, 2018: 225.

¹⁶ Heti, Sheila. *Motherhood*. London: Henry Holt and Co, 2018: 159–60.

¹⁷ Berlant, Laurent. *Desire/Love*. New York: Punctum Books, 2012: 92.

¹⁸ Berlant, Laurent and David K. Seitz. "On Citizenship and Optimism." *Society and Space*, 2013. February 7, 2019. <https://societyandspace.org/2013/03/22/on-citizenship-and-optimism/>

¹⁹ Levy, Deborah. *Hot Milk*. London: Penguin, 2016: 66.

²⁰ Levy, *Hot Milk*, 104.

²¹ Levy, Deborah. *Things I Don't Want to Know*. London: Penguin, 2014: 15.

²² Levy, *The Cost of Living*, 44–45.

²³ I would like to dedicate this essay to my friends, whose hospitality this summer has picked me up when I felt to have fallen down.

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is for W.R., to whom
I wish all good things
Sophie Sanders

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*De reis is getijde aan
de afstand tussen ons*
Dan Afrifa

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Drawing series
Marjolijn Rijks

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van het beminnen
*Laatmiddeleeuwse
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Simulacrum

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...aps, for instance, that
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...ers is not for us to see or even
...erstand.

anna Steenbergen-Cockerton
and Sara-Lot van Uum

“These machines are so alive, while these humans are so inert!”
schreef Donna Haraway in *A Cyborg Manifesto* in 1985. In de
huidige tijd waarin de scheiding tussen mens en technologie
steeds meer lijkt te vervagen, komt het humanistische idee van de
mens als rationeel en kennend subject op losse schroeven te staan.
Wat het betekent om mens te zijn in een wereld waarin digttale
technologieën op fundamentele wijze onderdeel worden van ons
bestaan, is een vraag die via de kunsten onderzocht kan worden.
In het volgende nummer van Simulacrum, *Posthuman*, zullen we
reflecteren op de versmelting tussen mens en techniek.