

Mary Walling Blackburn
Sticky Notes, 1-3

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1.1977

The video editing suite sat directly across from 1607 Broadway. My mother's boyfriend was editing a sequence of two figures fighting with long sticks. They were aiming for one another's heads. Each man, in turn, carefully swung his fragile skull away from a baton, and then a baton toward another fragile skull swinging away. To the right of the screen was a window. From a certain low angle, at a standing vantage point several feet from the sill, the video sequence and a *spectacular* outside the glass read as an operative split screen.

To clarify: a spectacular is an industry term for a neon sign; a split screen is a screen where two or more images display simultaneously. Here the optic of human memory binds two glass surfaces animated by light into a singular "screen." Although each image orders time in light, their rhythms do not come close enough to syncopate. The screens do not operate in tandem. On the left plays documentary footage of *fan a'nazaha wa-tahtib*, and on the right, a neon porn sign looms gargantuan.¹ The marquee was sixty feet wide: the word PUSSYCAT flashed across it. Each letter was six feet high. Add 1,816 additional feet of red, blue, and gold neon.

We – my mother and I – were cutting through Times Square the day Artkraft Strauss workers installed the sign. Each letter, hoisted by crane, dangled in the air. P-? P-U? P-U-S? P-U-S-S? P-U-S-S-Y. Oh, right, pussy. C-A. Cave? C-A-T. In the 1970s, female genitalia is still hairy, still zoological: the hair curling over puffy folds resembles a glossy pelt in thickness and distribution. In the 2000s, adult genitalia mimics hairless and closed child vulvas. But why mimic/perform/... hide? Vagina, why are you so weird and scared?

The vagina is a sword or it's a scabbard [according to Latin translations], or it isn't. The vagina belongs to a small child or it doesn't. The vagina is a small cat or it isn't.²

Attached to a neon woman's ass was a cat's tail. This spectacular, designed by Artkraft Strauss, creator of Times Square's iconic signs and displays since 1897, was favored over all others (giant bagel, giant Budweiser, giant Kleenex) because, the firm joked, "it embodies the Bauhaus ideal of form following function."³ Let me misunderstand the joke: Spasms convert to light? In the night made day, in the artificial illumination of the fake orgasm, let me understand what is underneath the joke: legal and illegal tender made visible. The ideal form, inside the Broadway video editing unit, was dependent on holding the electric screen and the mechanical tableau together in the mind's eye, a feat accomplished by standing purposefully between the two displays. An ideal form because

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Mary Walling Blackburn, *Ol' Vagina Eyes: After Harvey Bell's Smiley (1963) or Boosting Feminist Morale Sans Sheela Na Gig*, 2018. Pencil on paper. 21.5cm x 27.9cm.

the human has a moment to sort real time unfurling against looped time. This can only be achieved if a lone person stumbles upon the right conditions – an accident of surfaces. The conditions must compete for you and cancel out one another and cancel you out. We don't exist to ourselves when we're watching movies.

As long as the electric grid holds.

The city blacks out sometimes. In 1977, when Times Square went dark, the optics of certain economies still pulsed among the dead screens and dead lights. Some said Working Girls lit themselves with flashlights so the Johns could still see enough to buy. This cinematic instant foreshadows the post-cinema of the apocalypse we now nudge. So soon we will replay movies in our memory, long after we have lost the means to watch them. I will sit on a broken thing and hold my VCR head in my hands. Will I mentally replay *L'Ecu d'Or ou la Bonne Auberge* (1908), the first hard-core porn? I can't remember genitals. Will I replay *Diagonal-Symphonie* (1924) by Viking Eggeling? I can't hear the notes. But then again it never had sound. It was just supposed to *be* sound. And we are supposed to just *be* genitals. Pussy, *be*.

In the same building as the Pussycat, the proprietors of a gay bathhouse called The

Broadway Arms built a replica of a NYC subway bathroom for their patrons. Sounds of the subway were piped in: braking; ghost train. Sex in a set. As lovers climbed into lovers, the movie was made in and outside of the participants' heads. No fluffers in sight. But some temporary stars were Working Boys. The Working Boy projected another movie in his mind. Spleen, *be*.

On Saturday, October 20th, 1979, Women Against Pornography organized a march through Times Square. 5,000 throng. We don't march if my mother has to waitress double shifts at The Pomegranate. But we also don't march that day because my mother likes porn. Towards the end, according to the paper, anti-porn activists scuffled with other anti-porn activists. Anti-Choice, anti-homosexual, anti-porn activists attempted to merge into the main march with a banner that read: "PROTECT THE CHILDREN." The phrase was cribbed from singer Anita Bryant's anti-gay liberation coalition.

Almost at the same time, there is a white, bespectacled bald man walking in a city crowd. I see him only now, in an old photograph posted online. His t-shirt reads: I CHOKED LINDA LOVELACE. I misinterpret: that codger is a male anti-porn activist, communicating to us that by watching *Deep Throat*, which played on daily

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Mary Walling Blackburn, *Times Square Anti-Porn Peep Show*, 1979. Pastel and paint on paper. 21.5 cm x 27.9 cm.



rotation at the Pussy Cat Theaters for a decade, he's guilty of suffocating some woman somehow. Perhaps he was converted by Lovelace née Boreman herself, who, post-porn industry, implored the public to stop watching *Deep Throat*. But this man's kelly-green shirt is not a homemade outburst. It's mass-produced. American made? Woman-sewn or man-sewn? I re-interpret, in anachronistic fantasy: when our eyes meet his on the street, the codger wants us to imagine his penis in our throats.

It works. I imagine. I choke, too. I wish to bite off. I wish, instead, a beautiful one in my mouth – clitoris or icicle, shaft or sugarcane.

Perhaps, through psychedelic magic, the machinery of the t-shirt factory heeds Lovelace's objections: the white ink migrates outside of the boundaries of the letters in the silkscreen, imprinting each I CHOKED LINDA LOVELACE shirt with only a puffy cloud.

Jokes accumulate. Operation MiPorn: the Federal Bureau of Investigation chose Valentine's Day (1980) to raid the Pussycat Cinema. Owner Michael Zaffarano's heart burst as he fled through an underground tunnel into a splicing room. The FBI had started in Florida where the same crime syndicate was making illegal copies of *Snow White*. The investigation led them to New

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York City. *Wet Rainbow* was one of the flicks on rotation. The title is lovely. Drenched pigments flow. Relax. But then there's the IMBD description: *A married couple's lives are thrown into turmoil when they both find themselves attracted to a beautiful hippie artist.* Across the street, while *Wet Rainbow* unspooled, my mother's boyfriend edited documentary footage of a Bedouin wedding in the desert, dancing horses, and martial stick fighting, in a suite generally used by Sheldon and Maxine Rochlin. These two downtown filmmakers released the resulting video under their company Mystic Fire in 1986. But not before adding a voiceover at some point, which they described in the video's ad copy as "delicately infused with the ecstatic Sufi poetry of Rumi." It appears that Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), published during their editing process, wasn't taken up by the white, moneyed, druggy downtown avant-garde. What flows back across the street instead is the quality of pussycat voices. A type of pussy speaks – like the white star of *Wet Rainbow*? An ecstatic dancer named Gabrielle Roth utters some translations of thirteenth-century Persian poet Rumi with the comport of a breathless pornstar, all synced to Portapak footage of contemporary Egypt. This pairing doesn't hold



Mary Walling Blackburn, Karen
*Silkwood Becoming A Cooling
Tower*, 2018. Pastel and paint on
paper. 21.5 cm x 27.9 cm.

even if the viewer is a stoned American Boomer standing in a video suite facing an adult movie theater, bombarded by light.

My mother was sometimes a camerawoman while the crew shot footage in Egypt, Sudan, and Lebanon. She was nineteen and I was two. She was gone a long time. She returned with a small boy's galibayah for me. It was cotton and striped. We were oblivious to our resuscitation of the colonial trope where white women like Isabelle Eberhardt adapt the clothing of men and unwittingly deepen the imperialist projects of Europe and the United States. I wore it around. My childish adaptation, for me, meant that gender, like screens, could also be split. I felt split-screened. I watched myself become subject to a biological time, articulated by a uterus-in-waiting; I sensed myself operating within technologies, articulated by particular clothing and stick weapons.

A couple years later, I wore hand-me-down lavender corduroys. I began to chew the corduroy off the knees because I planned to chew off every part until the pants were entirely smooth. At the same time, I remember using broom handles to fight. My hands vibrated with each strike of the stick. I don't want to exit this loop – an infinite loop where genders as conditions are never met. I want to terminate a cognitive loop where the sex of the human is fused to advertisements, to exchange-value, to bone breaking fury, to illness ... to a certain kind of death.

I self-diagnose apophenia. This is because I read up on the neurological structure of meaning making. But a Nazi gets caught in the wires; WWII frontline military psychologist and neurologist Klaus Conrad defines apophenia as “unmotivated seeing of connections (accompanied by) a specific feeling of abnormal meaningfulness.”⁴

In an apophenic haze, I lash together: Neon women are nude. In silhouette, they have no distinguishable features. Men fighting with sticks wear galibayahs; only faces and hands are visible. The porn of split-screen Orientalism: neon American women light the nude faces and nude hands of men.

I ditch the Nazi for a Skeptic Libertarian: I self-diagnose: *patternicity*. Michael Shermer, skeptic libertarian, coins patternicity as “the tendency to find meaningful patterns in meaningless noise.”⁵ Or meaningless light.

Meaningless is a tactic. I am meaningless if you are the military; the police pretending to be military; the security guard pretending to be police; the citizen pretending to be security guard; the consumer pretending to be a human citizen; a human pretending to itself that it is a

discrete unit (not a symbolic pattern produced by cognitive processes between organisms). Meaningless meaning that you don't even register *me*, slouching between 1 and -1. I hope.

2.

There was no glass front to this diorama. Within: a nuclear power plant of clay was painted gold. A cotton ball rose like smoke from the stack. A small fence of glued coffee stirrers. Hanging from the fence's rungs swung a miniature nuclear hazard symbol. The plant was encircled by a painted backdrop of red barns, pasture under a 3 p.m. blue sky. It was a generic America. It was any nuclear power plant with a whatever amount of radiation. I, twelve, made it. The teacher had asked for any diorama: any set, any scene – any eye (lazy, mine) into any fake cave.

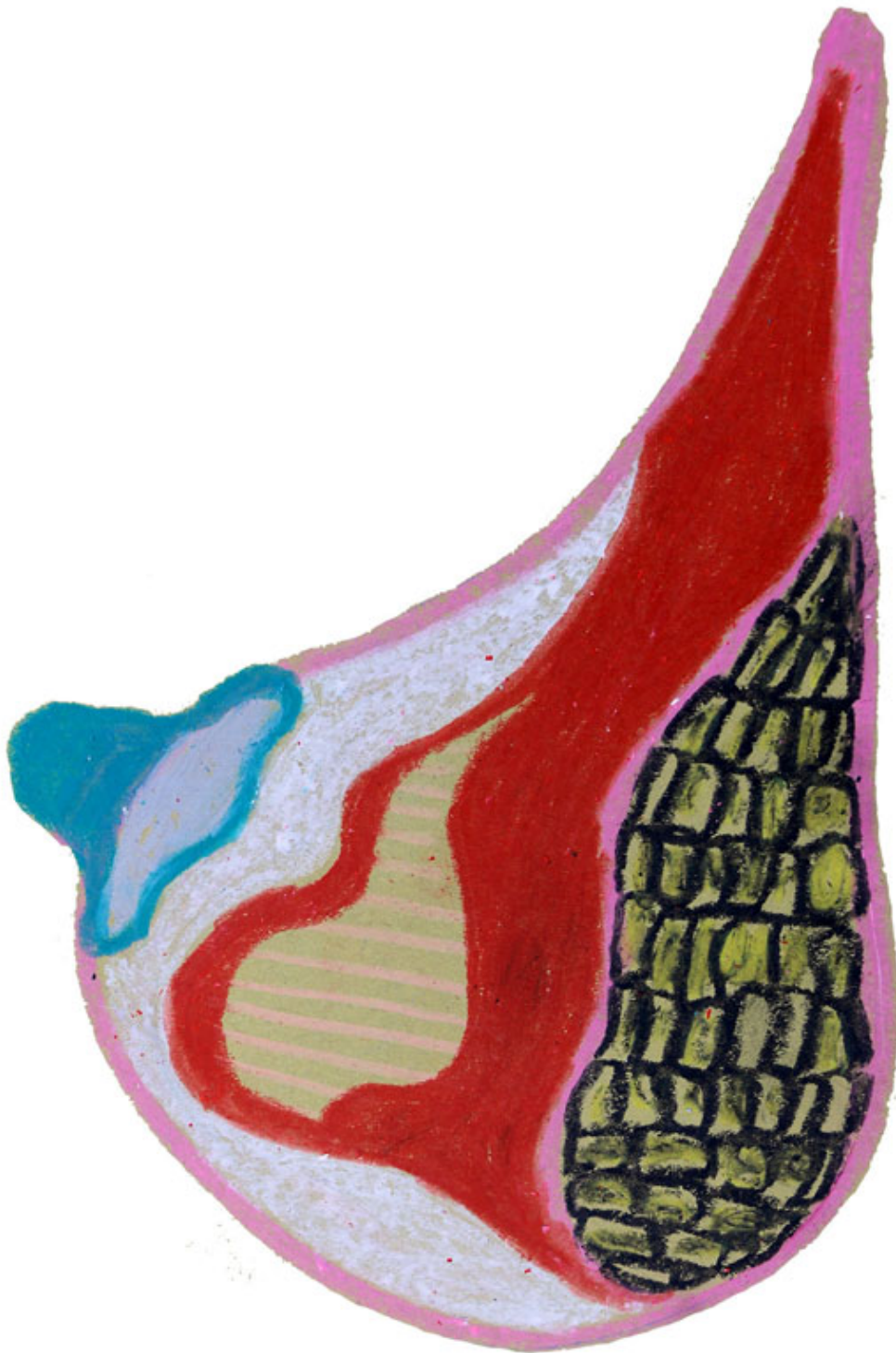
The year before, our family unit borrowed a small television set to watch *The Day After*, a made-for-TV movie depicting a full-scale nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States. In pre-production, the Pentagon requested that the script be altered to better suit their outward messaging. Director Mike Nichols resisted; the government subsequently withheld the use of US Army helicopters as props and a US Air Force Base as set. A month prior to its public release, President Ronald Reagan recorded his feelings after watching a Whitehouse preview copy. *The Day After*, he said, “left me greatly depressed. So far they haven't sold any of the 25 ads scheduled and I can see why.”

November 20, 1983: 100 million people watched together and this included me. Sixteen commercials ran; they could not be delivered even as they played, because no one could see past the after-image of a nuclear Other, which each ad ran between. We consumers, as a category, were temporarily devoured by our glimpse of a totalizing end. Reverend Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, attempted to organize a boycott against advertizing companies. At that point, he objected to any reining-in of End Times. Falwell, along with other evangelical groups, incorporated nuclear apocalypse into their dispensary eschatological structure – some claiming that their sort of heaven on earth is only realized through holocaust. But within these explosions, church and gender also end. In my mind's eye, Falwell has burned past maleness and my own uterus has exploded into light.

I sieve the fallout for a positive in my nuclear end – the end of my femaleness, but more specifically femaleness as *the* reason for my particular end. My whole life, local news reports, from 1974–2018, informed; femicide

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Mary Walling Blackburn, *Breast Implant: Ground Rubber and/or Beeswax*, 2018. Crayon on paper. 21.5 cm x 27.9 cm.

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Mary Walling Blackburn, *Glass Eye with Segmented Heterochromia: Modeled After My Left Eye*, 2018. Crayon and pencil on paper. 21.5cm x 27.9cm.

was the ostenato. An end could be made by a man: child abductor | mass shooter | boyfriend | serial killer | incel. I collated, in real time, the white men skulking in vans, beating off in cars, punching walls, peeking in, staring into space/chests. But an atomic end curtails that trajectory; a serial killer doesn't locate me and my vagina to carve until there is nothing left to carve. Serial killers, and their stocks of ASP tri-fold disposable restraints and duct tape, melt, too.

In 1983, TV-less again, we drove a half hour down the mountain. We lived in a mountain village that serviced ski areas and their tourists. My parents worked as a lift operator and a groomer respectively. At the movie house, two film posters were tacked to the exterior: *Hot Dog ... The Movie!*, a sex-comedy ski film, and nuclear flick *Silkwood*, based on the actual events surrounding the death of labor activist Karen Silkwood. The plot of the movie we watched that night revolved around Silkwood, who, as member of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union, investigated faulty safety practices at a Kerr-McGee, a diversified petroleum corporation that owned a plutonium processing facility near the Cimarron River, Oklahoma where she worked as a lab technician.

I, eleven, thrilled when she, smartass – as channeled by Meryl Streep – flashed her little tit in defiance; *Silkwood* blew bubblegum while she processed plutonium. It was a poor kid's relief to see an unruly, sexy, poor woman fighting and fucking and fucking herself to a moral end. And a micro-relief came when Karen becomes a new kind of Final Girl (the last woman murdered in a slasher film – not to be mushed together with technocapitalism's End User).⁶ Ah, to watch a woman killed through her activism rather than her femaleness. Ah, to be that one.

As tween, I mentally melded plutonium processing facilities, nuclear power plants, and nuclear war because they share materials; plutonium (Pu) is generated by nuclear plants and repurposed after processing. The Pu that *Silkwood* processed was used to power the Fast Flux Test Facility in the Hanford Reactor. Recall Fat Man in Nagasaki: Eleven pounds of Pu became an atomic bomb. And more Pu will become other bombs. Parts of the film I had watched in 1983 were being made solid, were migrating into the diorama. Without movie equipment, I could not make a movie and I could not replay the movie. Is a diorama a poor kid's VCR? I re-spool my mind by way of dried and painted clay.

1990s. I was a laborer working on a contract archeological dig near Grants, New Mexico. In the past, I had dug ... some. My aunt and uncle were archeologists in Utah. My aunt was the co-

director of the excavation. My uncle, a member of the Paiute tribe, was in charge of the reburial of Ancestral Puebloan remains dislocated by the archeological work on the Corn Grower's site. Corn Grower's site was located in the village of a polygamous Mormon community, as well as downwind of the Nevada test site.⁷ It was possible that the soil was contaminated from nuclear fallout. It was also possible that archeology students were sometimes greedy to locate a grave – perhaps it could be framed as a spiritual contamination located in their own soft tissue. But no burials were excavated on the Corn Grower site; there was an agreement with the Kaibab Paiute, that as soon as the dead were detected, archeologists were to leave them in place and undisturbed.⁸ For five summers, I primarily watched my cousins. I didn't brush dirt away from a flexed skeleton but sometimes I unearthed a burnt sherd, drew a diagram of an unearthed wall, or scrubbed artifacts at dusk.

In New Mexico, an archeological site was slated for eventual uranium extraction. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) establishes that federally owned or developed land must excavate historic and Ancestral Puebloan sites before development.⁹ We dug. We camped. The certified archeologists and myself, a hired hand, were authorized to sometimes use the uranium mines' shower facilities. Standing, naked and sunburnt under the water stream in a concrete room, I remembered the previous evening: sap coagulating in fresh bear claw marks in the trunks of pine trees growing at the base of a nearby volcano (extinct); the afternoon before, unearthing artifacts and glancing up to an explosion on the horizon; taking a photo of the fresh dust from the open-pit uranium mine in the distance; then a shower scene from *Silkwood* supplants: a contaminated Karen/Meryl decontaminated. She is scrubbed raw multiple times.

That pink human, she is flown to Los Alamos, where the atomic bomb was invented, and they sample her live. After *Silkwood*'s death, the local Oklahoma coroner balks at her radiated body and outside technicians bottle her parts. Fragments of her skull return to laboratories that are situated on the acreage that once housed the Los Alamos Ranch School. This is the same place where a sixteen year old William Burroughs was weighed on arrival by his new headmaster. I chart the toxologies. They multiply. Screen interpretations flip the icon; my transference is destroyed by my examining stills of *Silkwood* today-- Google search pictures revealing that the set designer has strung a confederate flag above Karen/Meryl's bed in the shack she shares with Dolly/Cher, her lesbian housemate and

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contaminated co-worker. The set designer thinks its a starry red pattern but its a bloody symbol. The flag brushes up against what was a holy, feminist thing and makes it a white nationalist thing and it falls apart for me.

I shower today, in an empty house in an empty neighborhood; I am surrounded by new-growth forest. Despite my perpetual ambivalence regarding heteronormative femininity, I buff and sweeten my smell. At the mirror, I leave the black hairs around my lips in place. While the reservoir water runs down the sink, I mentally assemble female half-lives, atomic in sublime canyons – irradiated and gated. Are these conjured beings with sparkling clitori and warrior half-chests my guiding constellations? Or rather, is this gooey commune the rearing of vestigial and misguided Second-Wave essentialism?

In a solastalgic¹⁰ moment of absolute grief I exit the earth. I am ficto-disassembling Orion and dippers, big and little. No Messier 45 (a cluster of hot blue and luminous stars fouled by Greek rape fantasies).¹¹ With these deletions ... outer space begins to match my inner space. Satellites made of lamb's wool and silicone breast prostheses junk orbit the earth in a geo graveyard belt. This spacemare is undergirded by Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* – a work that points at contamination and identity, raced and classed and sexed, that makes a sense of amputation and her rejection of breast prostheses – their false cheer... the corporate profit of female cancer.¹² The Institute of Medicine's *Safety of Silicone Breast Implants* lists the substances inserted or injected into women's breasts from the late 1800s to 1945:

ivory glass balls
ground rubber
ox cartilage
paraffin
terylene wool
gutta percha
dicorapolyethylene chips
polyvinyl alcohol-formaldehyde polymer
sponge (ivalon)
ivalon in a polyethylene sac
polyether foam sponge (etheron)
polyethylene tape (polystan) or strips
wound into a ball
polyester (polyurethane foam sponge)
Silastic rubber
teflon-silicone

Is this a comprehensive list? What can't you stuff in a human?

After WW2, substances inserted or injected include:
radiolucent hydrocarbons called

“Organogen” and “Bioplaxm”
certain forms of petroleum jelly, such as Vaseline
beeswax
shellac
glaziers' putty
epoxy resin
industrial silicone fluids.

Adulterated silicone oil, adulterated with: 1% ricinoleic acid, 1% animal and vegetable fatty acids, or 1% mineral and vegetable (perhaps castor) oil, 1% olive oil, or to contain

croton oil
peanut oil
concentrated vitamin D
snake venom
talc
paraffin

This list is not an artist supply list for a feminist work. Nor is it a band rider, a prepper's checklist, a witches' spell.

When my grandmother was dying of cancer, my siblings and I were gathered in Anaheim. She would ask us to fetch things from the bathroom vanity countertop and bring them to her bed: blue Gatorade, white dentures, red lipstick. My half-brother slipped her falsies under his shirt and danced around the room. His bright orange curls were shaking; he shimmied. She laughed because he was her; his feet and butt were shaped just like hers; this Final Clown moved like her. But was he also a brownfield Final Girl – like our uncles that had died just years before her of cancer, too(!) – contaminated by SoCal dirt (one tested urban soils for a living) and SoCal electricity (another worked for the grid)?¹³ So far so good; my half-brother lives contentedly.

Once, in college, a stranger walked up and tossed a VHS tape in my lap. It suffered from “seventh generation loss.” It was copied from a copy from a copy from a copy from a copy. The color signal was weak enough to destabilize the color. Its sound had rotted some. I recall a thick watch of *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* and instructional footage of a breast implant surgery in a room colored robin's egg blue. I remember it as a carving. Some human chests became dioramas: strange structures rising globular and hard from the plain. A theatre's stage? An amateur porn set? This parcel was courtship, punk and libertine? *Quietus est. She is quit.* I wish to quit sexual differentiation.

Instead, shall we free-associate poetic bodies in nuclear lands? Kazakhstani poet Olzhas Suleimenov, initiator of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement, called for a moratorium on all nuclear testing in Nevada and

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Mary Walling Blackburn, *Anus Braid: Post-Freud: Opening Modeled After My Endoscopic Photograph of My Colon*, 2018. Crayon on paper. 21.5 cm x 27.9 cm.

Kazakhstan (at that point subsumed by the Soviet Union). Semipalatinsk became the first nuclear test site in the world to close.¹⁴ For one year, at the Nevada National Security Site (N2S2), poet Fred Moten wrote 1,000 sonnets while cleaning toilets. Is it quiet out there? William Burroughs, a contaminated poet – but not an irradiated one – writes in *The Soft Machine*: “Uranium Willy The Heavy Metal Kid. Also known as Willy The Rat. He wisened up the marks. His metal face moved in a slow smile as he heard the twittering supersonic threats through antennae embedded in his translucent skull.”¹⁵

Audre Lorde washed the crystals in carbon tetrachloride and read the charge of the crystals on X-ray machines.¹⁶ Charges lodged both ways: cancers from the crystals in Lorde; crystals permanently lodged in military radio and radar equipment flying elsewhere. Lorde, the poet, is not the thousandth Final Girl but an Extra Chemical Female; she announces the damage to greater audience: she was contaminated while working at Keystone Electronics in Stamford, Connecticut. The details about the site aren’t found in *The Cancer Journals*, but rather in *Zami*:

Nobody mentioned that carbon test destroys the liver and causes cancer of the kidneys. Nobody mentioned that the X-ray machines, when used unshielded, delivered doses of constant low radiation far in excess of what was considered safe even in those days.¹⁷

A Toxic Woman’s public life begins when she, as a teenage girl at the turn of the century, is admitted to Salpêtrière. Marie “Blanche” Wittman becomes public in the Parisian asylum for the female insane; she becomes Dr. Charcot’s hysteric model and another doctor’s lover. Later, two of her legs and one arm are amputated. Her end – blonde head and a buxom torso wheeled about in a wooden cart – is not the stark work of a madman or mad doctors, but the result of Marie Curie’s explorations. Marie Blanche’s career as a hysteric follows her position as Curie’s technician, a role in which she extracted radium from the mineral pitchblende. Sane Marie poisons insane Marie. Like Silkwood, each woman loves the work but it does not love her. Unrequited: Radium can only be itself. (Self-helped and self-employed, I happily scratch my itch.)

During the attacks, we [Bourneville and Regnard] traced on the chest, with the point of a pin, the name of the patient [Marie] and the name Salpêtrière on the stomach. An erythemic band of several

centimetres of elevation was produced and on this band the letters were drawn in relief, having about two centimetres in length; the erythema disappeared slowly, the letters lasted [longer].¹⁸

Blanche Wittman wrote, after being written on. Her yellow, black, and red notebooks, found after her death, have not been translated from the French into English. Before she was a technician and a writer, male physicians induced a trance and *traced on her chest, with the point of a pin*. Their words are subtitles? She is an object within the animation instigated by their hypnosis? There is nothing maieutic about my line of inquiry; no men will give birth to truth.

Later, blank (page) again, Blanche (white) lives as irradiated hunk in Marie Curie’s apartment. In the living quarters is Marie Curie’s cookbook. It is still too radioactive for contemporary researchers to leaf through. Academics, bankrolled by research grants, enter the archive. They cannot touch where Blanche touched without protection. But some don’t care to investigate; they find the white body, the white female body, the dead white female body, dead white feminism, white feminism, feminism tapped out, over-researched, and over-resourced, at best.

From the Audre Lorde Collection:
1950–2002, Spelman College Archives¹⁹

A Western Union Telegram from an early lover—Happy Birthday from Miriam, February 18, 1953
Remarks for the Society of friendship of Uzbekistan (Russia)-(Handwritten notes, air ticket, hotel info, notes, general information) October 4, 1976
A Female Landscape by Mildred Thompson (drawing) 1977
Cards and Letters from friends following mastectomy 1978
Stomach/Liver Healing Exercises [n.d.]
Temple of Light Religious Shop Catalog, [n.d.]
Choral Reading—Need: A Choral of Black Women’s Voices, [n.d.]

Box 44: Publications
Article—Former Silkwood Friend says she’s OK, [n.d.]
Article—Nuke Activist Karen Silkwood’s ex-roommate reported missing, [n.d.]

Dusty/Dolly/Cher.

Dusty Ellis is first spotted in Audre Lorde’s archive as “ex-roommate of a nuke activist.” Deeper into the archive, Dusty is a lesbian and a

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lab technician in the Kerr-McGee plutonium plant, and daughter of a professional rodeo rider. Dusty became *Dolly* as performed by the actress Cher in *Silkwood* – the Hollywood screenwriter softens the taut edges of a living, working class butch by assigning a name whose previous meanings include female servant, prostitute, mistress. The true Dusty leaves Oklahoma to protest plutonium in NYC's water. Later, Dusty's own anti-nuke manuscript will disappear, not to be found. On a cinema blog, a flashing .gif of Dusty/Dolly and Karen lolling on one another on the porch of their shack loops their nectarous grins and goodly affection. These *Silkwood*/Ellis clips in the Lorde archive predate the .gif and its source.²⁰ By saving the clippings, Lorde preserves the butch environmental activist missing and found. After reading Lorde's inventory, I digitally locate the same article from her stash. It reports that the wind blew away the scrap of paper requesting someone feed Dusty's farm animals. I find another clip. In 1975, Dusty scaled a plant fence at the Kerr-McGee Cimarron Plant with an unloaded rifle, reportedly screaming "I want to be killed." A woman puts in her request. Opposed to ... murder simply happening to her.²¹

3.

A (Semi-) Final Woman thinking through the Internet pleads with interface. Browser, please: erase history. (An array of open tabs reveal a trite Google | an insecure Google | a toxic Google | a secret Google.)

I, American-on-online-record, "turned" each "page" of Carl Ven Vechten's scrapbook, now uploaded. Cheesy double entendres (*CAN'T LICK EM ... CHAMP TAKES TWO AT A TIME*) are pasted against cut-outs of naked and muscled men. I am glad to see the slather of his male on male desire, but am cold to Ven Vechten's racialized fetishism. Distancing myself, I mutate each image into a twentieth-century .gif (est. 1987), jerking almost-live. Is it micro-cinema when it is one second? One second (of movement) ... in my head?

I spy another slender volume: the young Walt Disney's WWI scrapbook from his time as a Red Cross nurse. A trench rat, proto-Mickey, and proto-Willy interface with explosive cheese and a big-breasted battlefield nurse who in profile resembles white Christian Sunday school depictions of the Madonna before conception. This scrapbooker will go on to animate; go on to dine with Mussolini and Leni Reifenstahl; to dutifully braid one daughter's long hair; to urge and enjoy swollen distortions of any race but white; to gently console another white daughter when her first menstruation distresses her; to testify against his former employees before the

House of Un-American Activities Committee. Disney, the man, tacks between atrocious American and gentle American gestures. Subconsciously, perhaps he thinks one move repairs the other but really he just brings that which he brought to life – to death. Now Dennis Cooper's digitized private scrapbooks, initially compiled in 1981, are comprised of careful clippings of dead boys gleaned from newspapers (his visual preparation for *Frisk*, his nihilist novella) I do not consult but only recall; I superstitiously refuse to re-open his scrapbook. Because I now have my own young child that must be kept living and intact, an irrational fear of transitory evil floats – that an entity, demon-like, will inhabit a human and kill me or mine – even if my reasonable mind knows that the online and archived scrapbook is no trailer for my biopic.

What is reckless is to believe that providers erase client searches. I have a personal IP scrapbook. You, an unwitting Scrapbooker, have an in-progress, personal IP memory book. It is preserving, arranging, and presenting the digital path you beat down, your pathological internet use. Our internet *Anti-Memories* have now been archived long after our enzymes broke down the dopamine generated by our internet usage, legal and illegal, brilliant and stupid.

I remember other sources of DA. I remember before the internet. Heavy beige offline computers were assembled in a basement room of our high school science building. People were seldom there because they rewrote their final drafts by hand. A girl, maybe coding, was raped there once. But for the most part, pupils worked above ground and together. I remember a beautiful boy there who would wander the surrounding fields with headphones on, shirt off. When I asked him why he never wanted silence or bird song he replied that the music pumping into his ears turned him into the star of his own movie (or now his own spazzing .gif?) On the other hand, his sister and I, sister anorexics, walked around campus without fame or food or music. Ultimately, here was a flesh-and-bones boy in an unreal realm circumambulating flesh-and-blood girls. It felt like a teen movie feels to teens: portent, sensual, possible. Now it feels like a teen movie feels to adults: flat, goofy, not possible.

I also feel like trying to feel what is after the internet. Like an actress touching prop plutonium through prop gloves: I sense a life sans *digital humanitarianism* and *immutable ledgers*, sans *women's economic empowerment* through *philanthropic capitalism*. I fake touch a phantom limb of downloaded PDFs I never read. I presage the oldest "living" disaster robot, a rare earth hero, shorting out. Outside of a locked

internet, my partial-photographic memory serves me up a screenshot, not elective:

Browse All: Murder » NYC Department of Records and Collection Services (1916--1920)

To return to the visual record of femicide is my neurological rut; it's no zoetrope disinterred from early cinema, but rather my own private thana-trope (to animate death). It is hard to know whether this ocular pawing is towards revival or persists in order to establish and reestablish that the one pawing – the pawer – has not met the same fate. Still, I can't linger on the bloat and the blooms of blood, so I suss out the visible camera equipment in 311 photographs of the dead. The camera and me, wide lens and wide eyed, look so you don't have to ... ? There is the bare wooden leg of the elevated platform, a contraption for the documentation of crime scenes popularized by Alphonse Bertillon, my dis-associative apparatus. The living leg of the photographer is beside and parallel. The platform's dead leg, this time, is stanchioned to the mattress, the empty side of a double bed. This time, a stool is wedged between the right "leg" and the bloody floor. Now, the right leggy tripod is dug into the sand and the left is spiked through the vegetation. Murder in the grass, when a creature is far away from her possessions, operates on another register than indoor slaughter. Inside a room, a greasy mirror and factory-made blanket are witness and prop; the mud under fingernails and pollen in the stomach had and has a generative trajectory independent of human dramas.

But the turn-of-the-century women offed and left strewn around New York City's industrial hinterlands (say the banks of shipping channels or the final field beside the factory) are not the sacrificial northern European bog bodies, like Huldremose Woman and Yde Girl, and Elling Woman, ritually hacked and/or strangled in the spring and buried in the peaty moss in possible fertility rites (as suggested by P.V. Glob in *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved*). What cycles are these New Yorkers sacrificed for?

Purportedly, some detectives were instructed to throw graphic forensic photographs from closed cases into the Hudson River; this record is incomplete. In the surviving photographs, when the head wound permits facial recognition, one sees the domestic slaughter of what often appears to be poor Italian and Irish women. Where is the documentation of Asian, African, Caribbean, Latin American ... immigrant dead? None belong to the temporal, agricultural life of the first bog-body catalogue, composed by German prehistoric archeologist Johanna Mestorf in 1871. Instead, conjure an informal Industrial Age "catalogue" produced at the dawn

of consumer capitalism; every dead New Yorker is featured within. Braided rope around the necks of our hometown victims are never hand-stitched animal hide, like the material composition of several ropes found wound around bog bodies. These industrial American bodies are not deposited in spaces "particularly suited to establishing contact with gods, spirits, and ancestors"^{22, 23} Then again, let's not "fantasize" about the existence of a totalizing compendium of dead, poor women. To what end would industry's slush pile of women be revealed: Can the data be felt in a city studded with bitcoin-operated latrines?

End of Part A.

To be continued ...

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e-flux journal #92 — June 2018 [Mary Walling Blackburn](#)
Sticky Notes, 1-3

Mary Walling Blackburn was born in Orange, California. Walling Blackburn's artistic work engages a wide spectrum of materials that probe and intensify the historic, ecological, and class-born brutalities of North American life. Recent publications include *Quaestiones Perversas* (Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, 2017), co-written with Beatriz E. Balanta; "Gina and the Stars" published by Tamawuj, an off-site publishing platform for the Sharjah Biennial 13 and "Slowness," a performance text in the sound-based web publication Ear| Wave| Event.

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Sticky Notes, 1-3

1
A Google search on Egyptian stick fighting offers this phrase and a translation: "the art of being straight and honest through the use of stick." Is this a valid source? Where is the second source for confirmation?

2
The colloquial use of *vagina* extends the anatomical parameters to include the vulva. It is not in keeping with anatomical glossaries or the Oxford English Dictionary, which defines the vagina as "the membranous canal leading from the vulva to the uterus in women and female mammals." I have elected to initially use the technically correct *vulva* and then revert to common usage.

3
David W. Dunlap, "Column One: Changes," *The New York Times*, October 9, 1986. "The Artkraft Strauss Sign Corporation has fashioned many blazing extravaganzas. But the Pussycat remains a favorite of Tama Starr, the company's executive vice president, 'because it embodies the Bauhaus ideal of form following function.'"

4
Apophany (Greek apo (away from) + phaenein to show revelation); Aaron Mishara, "Klaus Conrad (1905–1961): Delusional Mood, Psychosis and Beginning Schizophrenia," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* no. 36 (2010): 9–13.

5
Michael Shermer, "Patternicity: Finding Meaningful Patterns in Meaningless Noise," *Scientific American*, December 1, 2008.

6
"Simply, the end-user is the consumer of a good or service, but with a slight connotation of know-how innate in the consumer. In a literal sense, the term 'end-user' is used to distinguish the person who purchases and uses the good or service from individuals who are involved in the stages of its design, development and production." See: Read More: End-User: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/end-user.asp#ixzz5F1a6XjCQ>. See: "Follow us: Investopedia on Facebook." A sticky note to readers: Would you say that The Final Girl operates as the ideological book end of the End User? Does the Final Girl belong to the pre-digital world and we are only haunted by her? Is the End User gender fluid?

7
"... A lady come out once who offered to bring her Geiger counter with her so we could see if we were encountering fallout in our trenches, but I decided that I just didn't really want to know, as I was still going to have to be in trenches ..." Personal correspondence with the author's aunt, June 18, 2018.

8
In the same conversation with my aunt, she mentions that NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) was instituted in 1991. After NAGPRA, swift changes in practices and attitudes regarding First Nations graves and sacred objects were implemented in the field.

9
See a summary of Section 106 on the Advisory Council on Historical Preservation's website: <http://www.achp.gov/106summary.html>

10
Solastalgia is defined as the "loss of solace from the landscape" in the abstract for: D. Eisenman et al, "An Ecosystems and Vulnerable Populations Perspective on Solastalgia and Psychological Distress After a Wildfire," *Ecohealth*, vol. 12 no. 4 (December 2015), 602–10, accessed from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26302957>. See also: H. Stain et al, "Solastalgia: the Distress Caused by Environmental Change," *Psychiatry* no. 15, suppl. 1: S95–8 (2007).

11
See, for example, the myth of The Pleiades or The Seven Sisters.

12
According to the Institute of Medicine in 1999, 1.5 million to 2 million US women had by then been outfitted with breast implants. Institute of Medicine, *Safety of Silicon Breast Implants* (The National Academies Press, 1999): <http://doi.org/10.17226/9602>.

13
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a brownfield as "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." Brownfields, however, can be located anywhere and can be quite small. See: "Overview of the Brownfields Program," on the EPA's website <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/overview-brownfields-program>.

14
Dow Corning Medical Grade 360 fluid was used extensively in Las Vegas and resulted in complications. At least 12,000 women (some have estimated as many as 40,000 women) had breast injections in Las Vegas by 1976 when the practice became a felony under Nevada State law. Practitioners reportedly charged \$800 to \$2,000 for a series of injections in 1966, according to *Safety of Silicone Breast Implants*. Breast injections were banned in Nevada prior to the

banning of nuclear testing.

15
William Burroughs, *The Soft Machine* (Paris: Olympia Press), 56.

16
Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1982)

17
Lorde, *Zami*, 126.

18
Bourneville and Regnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, (1879–1880), 19.

19
Spelman College website, "About Us": "Founded in 1881 as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, we became Spelman College in 1924. Now a global leader in the education of women of African descent, Spelman College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools." <https://www.spelman.edu/about-us>. Side note: A smaller Audre Lorde collection is also housed at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies in Germany at the Free University of Berlin, where Lorde was a Visiting Professor of African American Literature and Creative Writing in 1984. See <http://audrelordeberlin.com/>

20
They are found amongst scores of poems and sketchbooks, articles and books read, syllabi for courses taught by Lorde, conferences attended, reviews of her work, publications of her work, translations of her work, drafts, her diaries, and audio reels.

21
Because I locate the clippings in Lorde's archive I sort Dusty's demand to be killed through Lorde's evocation of analysis based on *difference*. Each factor reorganizes Dusty's assertion – be it qualified as the demand of a white woman, white lesbian woman, white southern lesbian woman, or white southern poor lesbian woman. When is which killed for which reason? Later, Ellis' white privilege activates as she cycles through, and survives, a series of interfaces with the law including a standoff with police while holding senior citizens hostage and charges of domestic abuse against Ellis.

22
Timothy Taylor, *The Buried Soul: How Humans Invented Death* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

23
In the Big Smear, as turn-of-the-century hobos called NYC, there may be workers' or paupers' or runaways' graves, or now just their compressed anti-form, located under a new museum or its fresh wing; can spirits rise up and through the white box,

roiling the overlying economic surface that scooped them out? Might they arrange powerful donors in a pyramid in the air – like the spectral arrangement of chairs on a table like in Spielberg's *Poltergeist* (1982) ? **No, it's up to us to introduce our rich to Hell.**

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