

MEETING TRANSCRIPT

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Wednesday 14th December 2022, 7-9pm

FDRG: SLEEPLESS TEXTS BY LEAH CLEMENTS & JENN ASHWORTH
at South Kiosk

For further information about the event please contact
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This session focused on Leah Clements's short essay 'That Other Place,' and excerpts from Jenn Ashworth's 'Notes Made While Falling'. Both texts approach insomnia as a result as well as a cause of physical and mental illness, highlighting the link between sleeplessness and creative output.

In 'That Other Place', Clements outlines eight thoughts on sleep from personal experience, her own practice, and further research. Founded in a crip and feminist context, the text stems from an excitement at the goodies sleep can hold - from sharing collective dreams to carving out a space of one's own outside capitalism, and also faces and to a degree embraces some of the horrors of sleep, such as death-likeness, and sleep paralysis.

'Notes Made While Falling' is an experimental memoir and a critical exploration of traumatised and sickened selves in fiction and film. Visceral, intense, and at times hallucinatory, it delves into questions of creativity, spirituality, illness, and the limits of fiction. The book centres on the author's experience of traumatic childbirth, its long aftermath, and the roots of trauma and creativity in an unusual childhood. The excerpts in this session focus on insomnia caused by and circularly exacerbating physical and mental illness, and its relationship to creative production.

The following transcript...(a brief note on how it decentralises individual voices in order to maintain the intimacy of the original event, and how it exists now. How can people respond? Comment etc. Experimental access and archive.)

Readings

Leah Clements, 'That Other Place,' in How To Sleep Faster, Arcadia Missa, Issue 10: Sleep (2019)

Jenn Ashworth Notes Made While Falling (excerpts), Goldsmiths Press (2019)

Transcript

This reading group has been meeting for seven years now and it tries to meet once a month. We're just since Sunday meeting mainly in person. Before COVID, we'd do it every other month in a sort of venue, generally an art venue but sometimes like a community centre, and then we were doing it in someone's home. And that was actually really nice because we would cook, and have an afternoon of food, but we haven't got back into doing that yet. We've been mainly going to different art spaces. It seems that maybe post-pandemic, the galleries want to have people that - there's a desire to have people in the space, and I think I'm also very happy to be going into art spaces again.

The first year was around Italian feminisms, which was a movement whose work was mainly writing from the 70s and 80s, a lot of it, as Mariana was saying, collectively written or coming out of collective practice. And it was really exciting to me because the groups that we were looking at such as Rivolta Femminile and the Milan Women's Bookshop. We're really interested in group work, and very reflective on collective practice. So that was really inspiring for me. And then going forward, a bunch of people who had been coming said 'Let's keep it going!' Mariana was one of them to come a little bit later.

And so there's a kind of shifting group of about between about five to eight. It's women at the moment - it hasn't always been women - who bring different ideas, and it kind of goes in all different directions really according to what people are interested in. The main caveat is that it shouldn't be dominant feminisms, so we try to see what has been less acknowledged and explore a little bit outside, perhaps a feminist cannon. But other than that it is really driven by the curiosities of people who come.

So yeah - good to be here. I really like the show, congratulations for developing a session.

Thank you. Yeah, I feel almost cheekily lucky to be able to do this. It feels really indulgent in a nice way. The texts I've chosen relate to a lot of elements of the exhibition, particularly the odd headspace you can enter into in that state of insomnia, where you're in the same place you're in during the day, but it feels kind of like a parallel world, and that's slightly otherworldly. Originally I was going to share a completely different text, but then with a bit of encouragement from both Helena and Mariana I chose to share one of my own alongside an excerpt from Jenn Ashworth's 'Notes Made While Falling'. I guess it felt like it was cheeky because it's my own work, but I keep coming back to this feeling that once you're outside of art school or education, you kind of don't get that close reading of your work, and I do really miss it. So since I was told 'Yeah, go for it, do it' I thought 'Okay!'

So the text of mine about sleep, and then Jenn's book: I have a lot of ideas myself about how those two texts connect and how they connect with the show as well. But I don't want to over-frame it, because I think it's all in there. I'm gunna want to hear what everyone else responds with before I put in my own stuff.

So maybe we'll just introduce ourselves a bit? It'd be good to know your name, your pronouns, and also what brought you here tonight.

Hello, I'm X. I started coming to the Feminist Duration Reading Group during lockdown. I first joined online and found it a really wonderful and enriching space to be in. What brought me here tonight is coming back to the group. Really I feel like I've sort of drifted a bit. This feels like the ideal opportunity to drift back in. I'm very happy to be here today especially, and I think it was through Mariana that I'm doing this session because she's been involved in FDRG. And then we met up to have a chat and yeah, it just seemed like a very lovely, lovely thing.

I'm Y, I'm an artist. I've been coming to the Feminist Duration Reading Group for many years on and off. And I came to this because I'm very interested in falling, and falling asleep, and not falling asleep. I missed your last show at Eastside Projects, and I kept trying to come at a time I was coming to Birmingham a fair amount, and had these many missed attempts. I probably didn't quite belong for various different reasons. So I'm certainly glad to be here.

Z, my pronouns are she/her. I've been dreaming about coming to the Feminist Duration Reading Group for about five years, but too many times I've never made it. You're the one I'm afraid - I am really pleased and excited to be here! But I also want to mention that I have been speaking to Helena recently because I'm part of a group called the Department of Feminist Conversations, and we are working together on an event on the 24th of January. That's the day it's on, and it will be in Brixton, and it will be reading at Marie Brown, and doing a walk, and doing some writing, and thinking about the future. We haven't actually written it up yet but we will do that and circulate. We should probably get it up before for Christmas for our diaries.

AA, I am an artist from Mexico city. I came here to do a master's degree, and I'm here tonight because I am working here doing invigilation. I'm doing a Master's in Computational Arts.

This is my first time. I've been also wanting to come many times and failing miserably. And I went the extra effort to get up tonight because Leah - we haven't met in person but we've worked online together - I curated okay to the ground. And this text is very similar to the ideas in that.

Hi, everyone, I'm BB. This is like the fifth time I've come to the FDRG or something. I joined the Feminist Duration Reading Group online over the long term. And I think it initially started because I'm always on the lookout for feminist spaces, safe spaces. And in particular in combination with the arts, which is where I work. And I think coming again and again kind of gives me a sense of habits as well, and routine, like it's something that's part of my life.

Hi everyone, my name is CC and this is my first time to come here. And I'm actually currently studying at Goldsmiths, MFA Curating, and Helena is one of my tutors. So I'm quite interested in the topics like sleeping and dreaming. So I talked to her and she highly recommended me to come here today, and I'm happy to be here.

Hi, I'm DD. I also come from the same programme: Curating. So I'm doing a project on the overlap of feminism and neurodiversity. So I'm quite interested in the area of sickness or disability. So here I come.

I'm EE, she/her pronouns, also in the same class, and have come to a few events that Helena has organised. And Leah, I saw your film that was at the Barbican a few weeks ago that our friend Charlie curated, which was so much the full review, so I get it as well, because I really appreciate it. It was a film that Leah had made that both kind of documented and maybe moved beyond the piece that you did at Eastside Projects, and it was such a great way to think about both being underwater but also in space at the same time. And already, I see a lot of connections here. I'm so excited to learn more.

I'm FF, she/her. I'm here mostly for a sequence of coincidences. I was working in Southwark, and I was in Lighthouse and there was a flyer from an event for some reason that pointed to this group of which I didn't know anything. And I was immediately intrigued by it. I am Italian. And the second coincidences that I know. And all that work I saw I didn't do in the group back in time, but I know there was some planning from silver price to publish the work, which didn't happen. And I'm also a translator and I co-run and co-direct the festival return literature here, and am an independent researcher. So feminist issues in literature and art is just part of my daily life. And I was looking like EE for a space to engage in more conversation, intimate and private, where we can also unpin things.

So hey I'm Mariana again, and she/her. I started coming to...I don't really remember how I found out about FDRG. I found out I think because I lived near Space Gallery and you were doing the meetings there at the time. And I was just looking for something to do near me. It was very coincidental and I loved it. Because at the time I was working at a gallery and I was very...I had no time to research or read or do anything for myself, really. And I've always enjoyed a more academic or research side. So I started coming to the group and doing the readings and even if I couldn't come to the group, I would get the readings and do them at home and that really made me feel like I kept learning. That was really important to me. And then I actually ended up going to study the Curating course. Through that, meeting Helena and making up my mind that I wanted to go do a master's instead of continuing working like that. And then organising this - it's been so nice that we can collaborate on this. Thank you.

Hi, my pronouns are she and her. This isn't my first time coming to this group. I got a notification for the Kinetic readings - I went, I loved it. I was curious about the last one, but couldn't actually make that date. So I liked the idea of a meeting together and collective breath and all of the

work that goes into that, and also looking back on the topics that the group seems to touch on. And I've come another time, and that was Onyeka Igwe's moving image archives. Although I'd met Onyeka, I never knew her work. So that was a really nice entry point. And then yeah, I'm a fan of Leah's work. I nearly didn't come tonight because I didn't sleep so I could get part of my research done!. And yeah, I'm really interested in access as poetry, the audio description and images, and I'm gunna keep coming back here.

She/her. I don't remember how I first came to hear the group but I assume it's through Helena who was my PhD examiner. And I started coming during lockdown. And I've been to one other live event one. Yeah, I've just felt a lot of FOMO around all the ones I've missed.

So yeah, I mean, which one should we start with? Oh yeah - so if it's not already clear, we read out loud and we do it one person at a time. Sometimes we read together actually. But I think that for tonight's readings, it probably makes sense to read one person at a time. And one of the reasons we do that is because it means you don't have to read before you get here. We can just come. And since we don't always have time to finish, sometimes we run out of time, but that's alright. We just read what we read. And we talk about what we read. And we try not to go too far away from the text. It's absolutely fine if you want to bring in stuff, but we don't really want people to go off on monologues about how much they know about other forms, because we're here to read together. And so let's do it one paragraph at a time. If it gets to you and you don't feel like reading then we can skip to the person next to you.

Well, let's maybe start with Z to save Leah from reading herself.

That Other Place, Leah Clements. Sleep as a coping mechanism: A few years ago, I watched the heavy-handedly titled 1993 documentary 'Multiple Personalities: The Search for Deadly Memories', which follows the therapeutic journey of a woman named Gretchen as she tries to minimise the occurrences of her other identities or 'alters' coming forward. The film makes clear that these switches have had a debilitating effect on her adult life, but as a child served her well as a way of removing the self that is Gretchen from instances of traumatic abuse. Gretchen does not remember the abuse, and when asked by her therapist to confront the trauma, she disappears and another alter comes forward. There's a scene in which to counter this defence her therapist films one of the alters recounting the abuse, then asks Gretchen to watch the footage with him. With her normal coping strategy removed, Gretchen repeatedly loses consciousness, and her therapist tells her to 'stay connected here'.

It struck a chord with me, reminding me of my own coping mechanism of falling asleep at times I feel overwhelmed or particularly depressed. It's not such a dramatic exit of cognitive presence as Gretchen's in this scene, but a definite retreat into unconsciousness as a way of dealing with unwanted emotions. Thinking I couldn't be the only one who recognised myself in her particular reaction to distress, I started looking for others who might share the same or a similar experience. A friend of mine, Elena Colman, got back to me with: 'Anxiety naps!? I dunno if that's a thing or just a thing I call them'. She agreed to be filmed watching something she'd find

difficult to sit with, and the result was 'Protection', a seven minute long film work that's a portrait of Elena repeatedly closing her eyes and covering her face with her hands in response of an off-screen stimulation, with a looped audio clip of Gretchen's therapist repeating 'stay connected here'. With the footage combined with this voice, complex in its tone and nature as both caring and authoritative, I wanted to ask questions about what forms of coping, self defence, and self-protection are considered acceptable, when and where, by whom, and for whom.

Sleep as resistance: Wanting to discover more about this, I posted another call-out to which twelve new people got back to me. I interviewed seven of them who have varying degrees of control over their sleep attacks - from feeling very drowsy and going to bed as soon as possible, to completely passing out despite any attempt, no matter how extreme, at staying awake. The seven voices emerge in the film 'Collapse' to speak about their experiences, and to consider whether their distress-responsive sleep episodes might exist as a political act in itself; a physical demonstration of a systemic failure of care. Can the act of collapse present an articulation of personal and political un-coping? I asked if it can embody the potency of the 'narcoleptic presence/absence' that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick puts forward in her essay 'Interlude, Pedagogic', where she describes fainting at a protest:

'Yet I like to brood over the reconstruction of that moment when I fainted partly because, through my absention, it seems to place me, however briefly, at the centre of the work of protest - as though I were Alice Walker's luminous vacuum of a heroine Meridian, say, whose narcoleptic presence/absence seems the perfect condensation of her contagious unconsciousness of fear, her uncanny talent for crystallising loss and rage as socially embodied defiance and movement'

The voices respond to the idea that collapsing might act as a form of resistance differently. Two people who both talk about falling asleep uncontrollably at work have almost opposite reactions. It rings true for one:

'I think when you're asleep it's the only time that you're not expected to engage with something on one level or another ... I don't want to engage in wider capitalist systems, I don't want to give up my labour, I don't want to give up my time, I want to completely opt out. I don't even want to be conscious.'

The other goes some way towards it, but stops short of actually taking it up:

'The reason it bothers me is because the resistance is almost my subconscious and body resisting my waking consciousness, and the resistance is played out internally within me. I'm the battleground as a person.'

My hope is that collapse can do something helpful for collapsers beyond a momentary removal, by pointing unavoidably, with our full body weight, towards intolerable or insufferable conditions. But I don't know if there's a right time and place to fall that will have the right kind of impact, and

not harm the collapse with its physical, social or economic consequences.

It just reminds me of when COVID first started - I feel like people who don't experience hypersomnia in their life started to experience it. And I feel like it happened to me. I just kept falling asleep all the time. I don't normally have a challenge with that. And so I started Googling it and I found so many people who were like: I'm also struggling with this all of a sudden. And it was in that period where we didn't really know what COVID was. So people were like, 'Hey, we have COVID and we don't know what it is, what is it?' And I think eventually people were like 'No, this is an anxiety response to the deep unknowingness and fear and isolation of COVID.'

'I don't even want to be conscious' feels like something bigger. Something much closer to depression as a kind of absolute. Like depression is a kind of...

That's the primary protection, including protections from every form of consciousness. That resonates very powerfully with me. And lots and lots of personal and professional and creative sides to every kind of opting out of capitalism. And opting out of productivity and consumerism.

But then that made me think - there's always something - I haven't really thought about who's making money out of sleep up front off of this, like people who sell sleeping pills.

I'm sorry, just a slight confession. I've been living with insomnia for a very, very long time and have a very curious relationship to wearables: that they can be useful but then I'm also concerned about the quantity of data that I am literally giving away for free. It's like feeding consistent data. It's monitoring me and vast numbers of other people in terms of their sleep regulation.

Absolutely. That's really valuable data.

And so this is going off the reading a bit: actually I was originally given a wearable to help develop a research programme that was designed to help people with pathologies and mental health, so that you can use your own data to identify when might be those points where you're becoming unwell. And that was the original source. But then, the problem with knowing all of that data is also that the knowledge creates its own form of sleeping in the right way. And what are the political aspects?

There's a bit about that later in the text about the monetisation of it.

You don't have any extra papers?

No, sorry. I'm gonna get my laptop.

Luckily more printed.

And I just said no matter where collapses or maybe kind of coping out to people with that, and then also I like the way that, I guess if this would normally be seen as a problem, that you should be resisting sleep, rather turning it around and seeing sleep as resistance from something else. You can tell I was also going to pick up on the language. I really liked the many ways there's different ways of describing: whether they're anxiety naps, or coping mechanisms, or distress-responsive sleep episodes, or narcoleptic presence/absences...or they said even 'her absention' is a really interesting word. Actually how many words it's needing to, to describe this action, but it's a sort of passive active action that defines itself.

When you mentioned the collapsers, I remembered that there is a film, a fairly mediocre film that is called 'The Fall' or 'Falling', something like that. It's with younger actors and a very young girl, I don't remember her name, and it takes place in a school in the UK, where girls just start falling out of nowhere. And it kind of parallels growing up, or first periods or first anxieties. And it's also a religious school, and they don't know how to deal with girls falling. It's like a disease that's against normality. So I kind of made the parallel with that. But not a great film about it - it sounds like the material could be but yeah, the direction was very boring.

There's another film called 'The Fits' which is similar, an American one. It's about that contagion in school, of which there are real examples as well. But yeah, just thinking about real examples of people...I don't know about falling, but developing behaviours as kind of coping mechanisms in a contagious way. It's usually girls at school. Real groups of people who are totally narcoleptic.

It is interesting because if we look at non-human animals like goats, their coping mechanism towards fear is collapsing and reacting with our sort of manifest. It's interesting, because in that case, it's triggered by fear.

Yeah, I mean, that's kind of part of the language thing and the collapsers thing. All the people I spoke to for that film didn't think that there was anyone else in the world that did this. And because there's no name for it, there isn't a diagnosis - maybe some of them have narcolepsy, but with narcolepsy, you're more likely to fall asleep when you're experiencing joy, like intense pleasure or like laughing. You can have it through other extreme emotions, like sadness. But yeah, it's pretty cruel that it happens more when you're happy. But yes, there isn't a name for that, which I think has a lot to do with why people couldn't connect with each other, and why they think that they're the only one.

I think that's interesting. There seems to be some sense of relating a lot of sleep with teenage girls, whereas a lack of sleep with menopause. So women, actually there's a funny thing going on in the menopause. I mean, it is sort of I think biologically what happens isn't it? Because the pod you get typically needlessly?

Yes. Yeah. I just thought: why is it that kind of naps come for me? I do sleep resistances because I often, as someone who struggles with sleep, I often think of sleep as potentially

nightmares. And not being able to resist or actually wanting desperately to sleep, and not being able to. This resistance reminds me of The Nap Ministry, which is an incredible project in the US that really sees rest as a form of really important restitution and restoration, not only physically, but also particularly for people of colour. That to take a rest is to really both resist, but also restore.

Yeah, there's Black Power Naps in the same journal that this text is from, and that was called How to Sleep Faster. The journal is called How to Sleep Faster but there's many issues of it, but this is the 10th issue. And that was on sleep. The rest of them aren't about sleep, they're always about, I guess capitalism. You know when you're sleeping you're not working. Yeah. Sorry, keep going.

Sleep as a place: Hinterlands keep showing up in film and TV recently: 'The Upside-Down' in Stranger Things, 'The Sunken Place' in Get Out, the dark space in Under the Skin ...though these are often nightmareish, it feels there is a current need for some alternative space, a desire for some parallel reality that's manifesting on our screens. In dream-like realms such as these, other possibilities exist. The normal rules of physics, normal social rules don't apply. Sleep is a place you 'go to'. Maybe for more than just us collapsers, it's somewhere you can go to escape when no other option is available, the room you come to when you take the fire exit.

As well as existing as a shadowy recourse from our current stark reality, the zone of unconsciousness can also function as a rehearsal space. From a neurological perspective this idea is proposed as 'Threat Simulation Theory', which states that:

'...dream consciousness is essentially an ancient biological defence mechanism, evolutionarily selected for its capacity to repeatedly simulate threatening events. Threat simulation during dreaming rehearses the cognitive mechanisms required for efficient threat perception and threat avoidance'

Evolutionarily selected for its capacity to repeatedly simulate threatening events -

- Threat simulation during dreaming rehearsals, the cognitive mechanisms required for efficient threat perception and threat avoiding. Just, that feels frightening, accurate and also desperately unfair. That dream space should be an environment that is deliberately designed to make you feel threat - then I wonder why I have such difficulty sleeping well! This is evolutionary...no wonder I don't want to be there.

I think it's also a space in many schools of thought to process your memories. So that's why they say that if you don't sleep well, you don't remember well, or you have problems with memory, because you replay all the memories. And that's how a lot of our dreams can be a random mix of memories that don't make sense - like a baby, I don't know, your mum with your aunt's hand or something like that. So I think it can be a place of something like positive emotions and negative emotions, depending on the place you're in and your anxieties as well.

Or maybe that's me trying to think that there is a balance, so I can keep myself saying it's really interesting. Isn't there really an emphasis on dreaming? Is that what sleep is for, for your health? For your well-being, connected and resubmitted within the learning data? That's most restoration and repair. But this is saying it's putting you through the works as well. Like dreaming is a threat training.

But is that partly then the kind of direction of science? That it has to explain things in terms of an evolutionary purpose, right?

Yeah, because I've been reading about dreams recently. Apparently all land mammals dream. Isn't that crazy? And the same for sea mammals I don't know. I didn't go into detail about sea mammals.

Dolphins sleep with half their brain at a time so they're never fully asleep.

Often Orcas switch off their brain and on it and then other signals do?

Yeah. So maybe they do.

But yeah. Different things are extraordinary. Some whales sleep upright, you just get those extraordinary pictures of them just hanging there.

Yeah.

Oh, wow.

And so they're all dreaming, and for them, I wonder if sleep is a place that all mammals go to? But we are the ones that decide whether or not dreams are real or important. And you know, if you think about it in history, people would go to war on the basis of a dream. It's only really recently in human history that people have stopped thinking that dreams were our cause of the future, or parts of real life, or messages from the gods. For most of our lives, that's what they've been. So I wouldn't say I'm sceptical about the scientific narrative, dreams are just a way of...It's not that I'm sceptical about the science. I'm sceptical about the fact that everything about our bodies has a purpose, because evolution doesn't have a purpose does it? It's like maybe, maybe it's just something that happened because the brain evolved. And it's a side effect of consciousness.

For the past five or six years I've been having a recurring post-apocalyptic dream/nightmare where my sister and I have to fight a lot of zombies to save ourselves and others. At this point I'm pretty convinced we'd do a good job if it happened in real life. By creating, saving, and frequently opening this realm of alternate possibility, my subconscious is both providing me with an escape from capitalist realism and preparing me for a post-capitalist survivalist situation, or

perhaps for ushering this situation in.

Sleep as a commons: In 2016 I held a workshop at Jupiter Woods, London, called 'Morphic Resonance', where I taught a group of people to dream lucidly. Morphic Resonance is a theory posed by Rupert Sheldrake - a controversial figure in the field of science due to debate over the veracity of this theory, which states

'Morphic resonance is a process whereby self-organising systems inherit a memory from previous similar systems ... Thus each individual inherits a collective memory from past members of the species, and also contributes to the collective memory, affecting other members of the species in the future.'

I liked the idea, and wanted to see what would happen if we tried to discover prehistoric memories by focusing our group subconscious on the ancient past. We each practised lucid dreaming for a week, trying to direct our dreams to a deep excavation of time, and on the last night of the week we attempted to meet in a group dream. Most of us dreamt of bodies of water and lizardy things. All of us had moments of standing atop raised structures and looking down from these buildings, mezzanines, platforms, and then descending down to meet everyone or to find something. Some of us made the meeting and some didn't. One person flew over it, saw that they were late, and being too embarrassed to interrupt, flew away again.

My attempt at creating a shared space to access communal knowledge through collective lucid dreaming was essentially a bastardised usage of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. He summarised this idea in the lecture 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious' given at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London in 1936:

'My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents'.

Most Jungians are generally appalled by the idea of lucid dreaming because your conscious intervention might block any revelations your dreams would otherwise bring you. One Jungian psychoanalyst I spoke to about the workshop said:

'In general I take the view that individual dreams are natural, and should not be interfered with nor controlled, but respected, valued and reflected upon, for what they can tell us about ourselves; like looking into the mirror of our soul...Any attempts to control this material (which is a natural function of the unconscious) would run counter to their true purpose, which is to provide guidance from the unconscious to the conscious, to increase self-awareness, and to

further the individuation.'

The way a Jungian therapist would facilitate access to the collective unconscious would be through a social dreaming matrix, where participants share their dreams and others in the group feedback with their associations. But maybe it's worth trying to go beyond shared archetypes and symbols, and think of the collective unconscious as a site; an openly accessible commons. If sleep is somewhere we can escape to individually, maybe we can also do that communally, and realise this drive towards parallel words. And my feeling is that if the collective unconscious is a public realm, then we should be free to access it by whatever means are available - whether we've been given a key to the door or have to climb in through the window.

What do you think of that? That idea is deep. I mean, I have always had these thoughts. My grandmother on my mum's side had Alzheimer's for as long as I had conversations with her. So she always, as I remember, told me that she was five years old and introduced herself to me. We never had a real relationship. I never got to know her that way. And I'm absolutely convinced that I have knowledge and memories that she passed on to me, and that her mother passed on to me, and things that are that I don't necessarily want to share with you but you know, that create my fears. And I've always been obsessed with it. It's like this idea of memory in your DNA. And this text really kind of validates this theory that I have, but I never researched whether it was true or not, or possible or not.

And I'm interested to know if other people feel they have that kind of connection somehow through their families, even with people that would have not been able to tell those stories to you? Have you ever spoken to people sometimes in the same way that, if you're someone who has a period you might, if you're with other people who do, you have a period at the same time? People are picking up on dreams at the same time, like a period, even if they haven't actually discussed things. So I think there probably are connections that maybe we're not aware of that maybe science doesn't pick up.

I find it interesting that you brought up periods because that's one of the things that I feel connected through these mothers and grandmothers, because I have endometriosis. And even though they weren't diagnosed, my mum and my grandmother, my great grandmother, they've all have similar histories of health to mine. So therefore I relate. You know, these kind of myths around them, the things they went through. I relate my body to this history even though you know, it's all kind of speculation. But yeah, so I connect this sort of DNA memory and dreams and knowledge that comes with you through also kind of body symptoms are helpful.

I started writing but didn't finish a piece earlier this year, about my mother's body living inside me, and thinking about my own responses to being child-free, or thinking about all the mothers that kind of inhabit me, that sort of connecting to that thread that ties back. And that thread that ties back through ill manifestations of mental health, as well as manifestations of joy or gesture or you know, something, and I'm wondering whether there's a relationship. The thing that's coming to mind, and thinking about the collective unconscious, is kind of thinking about sleep as

a potential space for this - a little bit more space than intergenerational trauma, which is the thing that I think probably all the time. So intergenerational trauma has been this thing that repeats and repeats and repeats until somebody decides to find a way to close the loop. I guess that's exactly it, that you're thinking about: physical and emotional trauma that you're living or reliving, or you've been warned, or you haven't even lived it, yet you know of it, or there's something about it. Things that you know you don't know, I was thinking about that.

My grandma died last year and I absolutely adored her, and I was thinking after she died a lot about how I'm first generation middle class. The whole rest of my family is working class, and in terms of inheritance there's no money. There's no records kept really, except, you know, the death records or something. You can't get much history going back in my family because everyone's working class. But I know that there's - she would just burst into song and dance around the kitchen, and I do that as well. And that thing of inheriting, like you were saying, you can inherit joy, which is probably partly through being around her but then yeah, I don't know what else gets passed on.

But I've never met her but I don't know. Maybe the fifth day starts the sleep is the record from our current reality. Because from my experience I can share some secrets because name knows that I have some so-called disease. I don't know how to put it, my doctor told me it's called 'writing spasm'. Currently I can't hold any pen to write. But the weird thing is that I can if I use the talk, I can write. I know how to read. And like five years ago I can write. I can use the talk right now. But I just don't want to use any pen like to use to write I don't know what that is. But my daughter told me it is a disease, some new disease. I feel like maybe it sounds totally different with sleep. But for me, I feel like they are the same thing, because sometimes my wife will say I've filled up a physical body and mental valley maybe. So I'm actually not the reader because maybe I hate my job beforehand. So sometimes I need to write down something I really don't believe it. So I had to write it down. So my soul, I know I need to write it because it's my goal, but mentally the mental body, the mental kick, you don't want to write a lung. So my body told me that he's failing or failing. She don't want to do it. So this is my understanding.

Just a little separate point. Are you familiar with that artwork by Susan Hiller when she got lots of people to sleep in the field and drink together? I don't actually remember what came out of it, but images of everybody sleeping outside. I think it might have been in a sacred site. I can't remember. Maybe it was nice.

Yeah, I was thinking of her earlier as well when we were talking about teenage girls and what is it about them...you know that work she made which was like clips, each in a different colour, one red and then yellow and kind of goes through the rainbow. It's young girls and teenagers in films that are witchy or have powers and like kinetic powers and stuff.

It's a bit out of context, but it made me think that there's one volume of research by Proust, which is, I think it's one with the other 10 and Uncas and a Canadian poet. She has written this work called Albertan. Workout. And she analysed that entire volume of other research,

featuring other things lips pretty much 98% of time she appears in the novel. And then there's an entire study on the fact that it's a female character in the entire church, but actually sleeping all the time as a form of like, I'm not probably a resistance and all of that. So I'm thinking about oversleeping, the concept of oversleeping and what is the political value in that? Because in this specific case, a woman always be paying the writer is a man. Why is that characters because so much then we have the sleeping beauty that way. That's a very, very central story. I don't know Boston, but there's also talking about work works about this was the idea that aestheticization of sleep and I'm thinking about the work - it was that work that Tilda Swinton slept in a cage in a museum.

The idea of the performance...is it the idea of, the concept of this living room is clearly a contest of different ideas, but it's also the same sensation of art in our process. And what is also interesting is your current currency of softscaping. It's not just about unconsciousness, or consciousness in memorisation, but it's also, can't see yourself doing that. Or going from Zealand since I was living in what you call mirror yourself. Come see yourself, I mean, yeah, it's that thing of presence and absence. But then you're physically present. Some of the people, if you close your eyes can see your concern yourself, with the eyes closed apart from the consciousness.

But it is just all kinds of interesting that the sleeping body is a threat. Or like because I used to work the night shift in the library and you weren't allowed to sleep. It's so funny that you're allowed to be in the library, but you have to be awake. So yeah, I guess it's also a resistance. It's kind of weird that the sleeping body becomes something else to when you're not asleep. It's when you stop taking any input from anyone else.

Completely. It's like a power in a way because it's so interesting in the world, but you're not responding to things that are around you in the same way that you would normally, because they describe your consciousness as like, a controlled hallucination, like it's all happening inside your brain. Anyway, but you're just constantly correcting your sensations with real sensory input. But then when you're dreaming, that sensory input is also your memory. So I thought of how in libraries, libraries that are open, for example, at night, which are very, very few. You're allowed to be there all night awake as long as you don't fall asleep, because if you fall asleep, even if it's accidental, they will wake you up.

Oh, yeah, I think that kind of relates a bit towards the social stigma and hate towards hard sleepers. So trying to avoid any homeless people sleeping in there.

Oh, yeah. So 'on the ropes' means- isn't it that you could pay to sleep in a line against the rope?

Yeah, there'd be a rope in front of you so that you could sleep over it. You'd see that collapse. But yeah, I thought you meant you were not allowed to sleep while you were working and I was thinking, I was in gallery assistant at Serpentine when Marina Abramovic did a show that - I

don't know if anyone saw it? But part of it was you could put people into bed, but we were also allowed to get into bed and have a bit of a rest sometimes. I fell asleep in one one day and then woke myself up laughing. And it was a completely silent space, and I'm at work, it was just, yeah!

Next section:

Sleep as work: During the week of lucid dreaming, one of the participants told me she'd had a dream where I said 'I've got to stop doing this, because now I've found a way to work in my sleep!' Much as it might offer a commons to collectively escape from capitalist structures, it's probably also co-optable by them. Jonathan Crary states in his influential 2013 book '24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep':

'Sleep poses the idea of a human need and interval of time that cannot be colonized and harnessed to a massive engine of profitability, and thus remains an incongruous anomaly and site of crisis in the global present.'

But maybe capitalism doesn't need to get rid of sleep to conquer it, perhaps it could just infiltrate it. Robert Louis Stevenson famously dreamt the story of 'Jekyll & Hyde', and Dmitri Mendeleev the periodic table of elements, along with many other people's dreamt inventions and works - why wouldn't capitalism seize on this precious space as an exploitable site of creative productivity? It's also been demonstrated that practising motor skills in lucid dreaming can improve your ability to perform it in real life, and has already been pointed to as a way to achieve productive self-improvement, such as in the Harvard Business Review article 'Practicing in Dreams Can Help Improve Your Performance' (Daniel Erlacher, 2012).

Hopefully this won't actually catch on, but perhaps if it does, dreaming of your teeth falling out or talking ferrets will become a radical act of resistance, and those who don't remember their dreams will retain the sole right to rest.

Yeah, that reminded me of when I was training as a dancer super intensely, 10 hours a day, no break. And when I'd get home I'd be so tired. I'd just want to sleep. And then I would dance in my sleep. Both as a dream, but also sometimes I would wake up and I would be dancing. I'd be like, Oh my god, I just need to sleep! I just need to take a break. There was no rest. So sleep didn't feel restful, in that super intensive space.

Thinking back now, you all know Twilight, the film, the books, etc. So it came out, the film came out when I was like 13 I think, and I remember seeing the films, and as early as 13 years old I was so jealous of the vampires that could not sleep because I was losing so much time sleeping. Where I could read a book or study or watch a film. When at that point in my life, I had zero commitments, obviously apart from like, the very basic, and it's very interesting how ingrained it is in us: losing time and productivity, at such an early age.

So there is this joke that I have with friends when we drink, we say what is the superpower that you would like to have if you could have just one? So one will say flying or something, and other things, and for many years, I would say not needing to sleep. But I don't say it anymore. So I always say to stop time, which is maybe the same, or for similar reasons.

Yeah, sorry, I was just thinking about stopping time and what I would do. I think I would sleep.

When would I want to stop time? Points that I find the most stressful-activating so that I could take a moment to self regulate, and then come back to the things that don't kind of push me into that zone of overwhelm, and say that I've got that moment of taking a breath, but rather than taking a breath taking a chunk of time.

I'm sure there was a TV show, because I have this distinct memory of a scene and everyone's still, and then the protagonist has left the scene and is kind of hovering above. But I can't remember. That stuff came back to me.

It was Bernard's Watch, which was a kids TV show.

The Queen's Nose as well - she can make wishes - maybe there was an episode where she stopped time?

Or there was that terrible Adam Sandler movie where he has a remote, and he was kind of meeting women on the edge of time.

Firstly it's a very nice book.

Yeah, fantastic - a Latin American woman who in one version of reality is in the process of being institutionalised, for protecting her niece against her violent partner. And then in the other sets of reality she's capable of moving backwards and forwards in time, into a very far future. A utopia which is built around communal anarchists coming as models of sustainable practice and learning. Intergenerational care...it's amazing. There might be good parts of it that might be good to read here too.

Sleep as death: There's a meme I first saw on chronic illness social media that says 'I love sleep, it's like death without the commitment'. The exact quote has unclear origins but may have morphed from something Fran Lebowitz said in her 1978 book 'Metropolitan Life':

'I love sleep because it is both pleasant and safe to use. Pleasant because one is in the best possible company and safe because sleep is the consummate protection against the unseemliness that is the invariable consequence of being awake. What you don't know won't hurt you. Sleep is death without the responsibility'.

Here sleep seems to offer an alternative to suicide, by functioning as a temporary equivalent of

death. Earlier this year I interviewed Dr. Guy Leschziner, a sleep neurologist at Guy's Hospital Sleep Disorders Centre (and one of the few doctors at the clinic whose direct care I hadn't been under), for a film. I asked him what he thought about the notion of sleep as death, and he responded:

'Sleep is anything but death, it's actually a very active state of being. It's a form of housekeeping that's when we do lots of things that allow us to live properly during the day.'

Thinking about the collective experiences mentioned above, about the vividness of dreams and the occasional intensity of their emotional residue upon waking, this feels true. But the opposite sensation, of cutting your ties with consciousness and disintegrating into oblivion, the feeling of closing your eyes and ceasing to exist as the person you know yourself to be, also feels true. Wondering about this I email my partner George. He replies:

'The curtains drawn, under the sheets, in the dark; there is a softening of the felt distinction between the organism and their surroundings. The tangible and painful experience of separation is diminished, pillow-head-body-bedsheet coalesce'

I recognise this, this sleep/death that isn't a not-existing exactly, but a returning to some basic everything, some aether, retreating from the lived experience of searing individualisation that is wakefulness. Whether this death-drive form of sleep is a desire for dissolution into the primordial soup, or a 'consummate protection' through an eradication of any knowledge of this reality, the meme is widespread enough that sleep does seem to offer to many a safe and desired simulation of death, to act as a slaking or postponing of a suicidal intention.

The man in the hat: I'd barely turned thirteen when I started hearing noises in my room at night. The first time it was the sound of someone breathing, and it definitely wasn't me. The next day, clearly terrified and convinced my bedroom was haunted, I told my parents. My Dad came to check my room, thinking maybe air was leaking out of the radiator and making a hissing sound, but coming up with nothing he calmed me down with the idea that our cat had probably spent the night in my room and it was her I'd heard. The next night though, there was undoubtedly more than one person in my room. I could make out three voices and sense their bodies behind my head, all whispering to each other about me, and though it was hard to make out what they were saying exactly, I knew they meant me harm. In another morning panic I told my parents about the ghosts in my room, but this time my Mum asked me a few questions including 'Could you move?' (no, I was frozen) and she clocked - it was sleep paralysis.

Sleep paralysis is a sensation where the person experiencing it wakes up but can't move, and is often accompanied by aural and visual hallucinations. These sounds, visions and sensations are crucially different from dreams - you are in an almost conscious state and very aware of where you are and what's around you, sometimes you can even open your eyes and see the room you're in - as well as some (usually scary) additions. This was something my Mum had been experiencing since she was around my age but, with no-one to tell her what it was, had

discovered the name of this thing as an adult.

As the SP developed, I began seeing a man in a trilby hat, dark glasses and a trench coat at the bottom of my bed. Always the same man and always bearing me ill, staring at me in the dark while I was totally unable to move. Much later as an adult I discovered that I'm not the only one to have seen him. 'The Man in the Hat' visits a lot of people at night with sinister intent. Hundreds of unconnected reports describing the same shady figure have been picked up by researchers as well as posted in online communities. There are other shared figures too, and they tend to be culture-wide and culture-specific, such as the dab tsog who visited Hmong refugees in the US in the 1970s and 80s, or the Old Hag of Newfoundland who sits on sleepers' chests.

I don't see The Man in the Hat any more, mostly it's people outside trying to break into the house through the windows or back door, and the panicking thought that the paralysis might spread to my lungs, maybe marking some sort of transition of fear in my grown-up psyche. I try to prevent it from happening, and to resist it, but there was a time I indulged in it ...

Laura Palmer's picture: When I was sixteen, I watched *Fire Walk With Me*, and saw my own experience of sleep paralysis so well described in Bob at the bottom of Laura Palmer's bed. At this point I was having SP around four nights a week, and often several episodes in one night. I kept finding myself falling into this inbetween world. In the film, Laura is given a picture by a masked boy and elderly woman who says 'This would look nice on your wall'. The picture is of a dark corner in a room with a bare wooden flooring and dingy flower-patterned walls, with a door just next to where the walls meet, resting ajar. Once home and after some hesitation Laura hangs it on her wall, and a sequence of varying and confused states of reality follows, taking her inside the picture until she wakes up.

I identified with Laura, the same age as me, her subconscious being dragged to what looked like the same place as mine, and through some morbid teenage desire to feel out the edges of my consciousness and all the weird scary shit it was doing at night, I found the picture Laura was given in a car park through an online image search, printed it off, and put it up on the wall at the end of my bed. The picture stayed there for about a year as I tried to be open to these experiences, blue-tack grease slowly bleeding through the corners, the door resting ajar.

Yeah, yeah, I don't get it that often anymore, but I still get it occasionally. I had it last week: I kept trying to wake up and I couldn't, and then I couldn't move. I kept worrying that I was going to fall - because this is my fear now - is that I'll fall on my face, and because I'm paralysed I won't be able to breathe. I don't know whether that can happen or not, but that's where it's got to now. But yeah, it used to be like this.

This man, did it make you scared to fall asleep?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

This person moving or just?

Yeah, yeah. And he'd grab my ankle and sometimes talk to me. And there were other things, and other people, and a version of myself once. Sometimes I'd have nicer versions. I was absolutely convinced once that my friend had come over, and that my Dad had checked in on me, and said to my friend 'Oh, no, she's napping', and closed the door. And then I came downstairs and I was like, 'Where's my friend?' But nope! He wasn't there and that hadn't happened. So there have been a few nicer things, but usually it's this terrifying presence.

Did your Mum have the same experience with the same man?

No she didn't actually, she would have spiders...I don't know what else actually. I should ask her.

Is there research on this? Is there any research about age, like why? You might have changed from seeing the view.

There's not actually that much research into it. There has been more and more recently - there's this research to suggest that there are culture-wide and culture-specific figures. There's this book written by two researchers, one of them is at Goldsmiths actually. And they have a chart, this table, that has places and times where there's been a name for somebody or something that comes to you at night.

(toilet break)

Christmas boyfriend has been great it's quite nice to see some more environmental issues. this is really Western connected through working so we're not even after the type things so it's but they're not in mostly. I just think that any kind of what's going on, you know sort of getting here because I can't remember the last positive I feel like I can read somewhere like you know yeah, in order for us to get together so they said that they're gonna be so they just, they didn't even understand was like it was too service to say more than me so it sounds like it's just like a formality like that.

Yeah. I mean, I want to be known for my propensity to be nice. I don't think I've done it yet.

Do you think my dream like many devotees are recommended to have a whole new sense you us? know

Yeah, I mean, nobody's sharing anything. Will see you wondering why now lines were.

Interesting yeah, that was funny though. I was completely blown. They weren't in Canada or they were giving me. Money I wrote about in my one and only Patreon supporter really bad like I

feel like every month she's you know, she's giving me money I know I tell her like I really wish I could say I have like as well can you afford? Like I did the last few years, I said right. So to begin if you haven't been around, you know, where to find a lot of fun and then they have a lot of work to do you know although I think you know what? Used to be difficult to do. I just like laid back it's very, very high you know, it's, you know, it's because of the way to do it I didn't know who to love it. I mean, it's I still have it so we are with you.

So let's move on to the second text. This is by Jenn Ashworth, and is a couple of years old now.

Isn't that awesome?

Yes.

Yours is a different copy. But it's page ()?

Oh, no. That's the second part. The first part is page ().

Yeah, it's that little bit and then after that there's another section on off-topic derailment.

Two Excerpts From Jenn Ashworth's 'Notes Made While Falling' How to Begin: The Cut
ii) Insomnia

Lying down brings on a cold, crushing sensation in my lungs, a kind of suffocating paralysis that terrifies me. Sometimes it feels like fingers in my throat, sometimes ice inside my chest. Sometimes concrete. My arms and legs shake. I sweat. I breathe too fast - so fast that sometimes I see spots or lights.

So I don't sleep. Lots of people say they don't sleep. But I really don't sleep. Sometimes in the late afternoon the walls start to curve and I'm not entirely sure if I'm thinking, or speaking out loud. It becomes hard to tell the difference between trees and their shadows on the afternoon drive home. Parking becomes impossible: I abandon the car in the middle of the street and demand the man I live with brings it to the kerb: I can't tell how far apart things are anymore. In the small hours, I chatter to myself, teeth clicking. Sometimes I walk up and down the stairs in the dark, counting, as if I am in labour.

I'm in good company with this. 'However much of a stir John Bunyan made as a preacher, he laboured as a wounded soldier,' Kevin Belmonte writes, in a biography that suggests Bunyan was as traumatised and sickly as he was faith and fervour filled. Bunyan's turmoil, his insomnia, his bad dreams, paranoid delusions, epiphanies and nightmares became *Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress*. / That's what I've got to do. Make a book out of it. Make a book out of it. Cut a hole in a life and through it, pull out the story. But I can't.

Off Topic: On Derailment #1 Having failed to find a beginning and failed to get better, I proceed. In the underwhelming aftermath of my healing I attempt to write an academic essay about the history of prayer and the physical. I begin the work quite interested in whether prayer is something you do with your body, or your tongue, or your hands, or your mind. In that sense, it seems very like writing to me - which is about silence as much as it is about 'voice' and has a peculiar relationship with the writer's body, and disembodiment. I decide there might be some mileage in characterising prayer as a type of work, and comparing the products and processes of spiritual and creative labour. But the essay goes nowhere. I abandon it halfway through and drag and drop the file into the folder buried deep in my Dropbox I call 'the graveyard':

The man who I live with tells me the reason I can't write the story I hope will become a novel about the woman who has a baby and then sets about the work of going mad, praying and writing is because I don't sleep and that one of the reasons I don't sleep is because I insist on watching serial killer shows on YouTube before bed. It's not just the subject matter, he says, it's the quality of the light on the screen hitting my retina that suppresses my melatonin, or something like that. He says I have no sleep hygiene. That I read and work in bed and my mind does not associate this place of ours - our white sheets and Ikea pillows - as a place for sleep. I need to compartmentalise more (I can't stop connecting things, I want to say, it's part of the problem). It's past midnight (I hadn't noticed) and he turns out the light and all night long my head pins like Shelob, weaving sticky threads.

I'm thinking about shapes, I think, or containers: the things we build to hold other things, and I am nearly there but there's something on the radio about fracking along the Lancashire coast; there's going to be a protest in front of the County Hall in Preston. I should go, but my mind slips and I can't hold it. Too late. And I can't hold it. Now I'm wondering again about dead babies: guilt washing over me like tar. The protest is planned for October but it won't help; Cuadrilla has already brought in the drills. There's something I had in my hand - I could feel the shape of it, I remember holding it, but not what it was.

There's a name for this: the flight of thought, the derailment of the way the brain interrupts itself; the leaps and breaches of association that used to be the prelude to a novel but is now a type of sickness. A doctor told me I have intrusive thoughts and because he said that, I now think of the threads my mind makes not as woven things I fashion while sitting staring out of windows, but as foreign objects forcing themselves into my body from the outside, like knives, or bullets. R.D. Laing in his poetry collection *Knots* made an attempt to commit to writing these sort of sickened thinkings, claiming in his introduction to the pieces that they have a kind of 'formal elegance: It does not feel elegant to have them: there is little of literary interest in my paranoid imaginings. I have to defend myself against them - the constant inward jumpcut. Is that why I am thinking about containers? I remember knowing but I do not know now.

Recently in *The Paris Review* the literary critic Jeff Dolven described the rail of the sentence as 'an image of sanity: These sentences, and perhaps the novels made out of them, are 'capable of organising the parts of speech into a whole; a logical subject, capable of managing the rules of

argument, premise and consequence; a rhetorical subject, aware of self and audience and the difference between them. Each sentence released into the world: he says, 'is a little promise that the person it comes from has an analogous integrity. But my sentences will not do this. / I can't make a novel out of this. I must write about myself without the fig leaf of story or expertise or authority. So be it. I have been trained to do that: to write autobiographically. To keep a record.

Once upon a time, my mother, who once had a poem published in Jackie, but had chosen babies over books, had a daughter whose name was Jennifer. She wrote a poem for her daughter: the firstborn.

A head so wise for such a size,
A mother's pride and joy.
Put down your books,
Your knowing looks,
And play with just one toy!

The daughter was neither one thing nor the other. At sixteen, she'd wear cut-up clothes and black T-shirts held together by safety pins and shiny plastic trousers then carry a Barbie backpack with a teddy she'd had when she was a baby sticking out of it. Or he'd spend a lot of time doing her makeup with lots of eyeliner and purple and green eye shadow, imagining that when she closed her eyes her lids looked like a peacock's tail. She'd spend hours over it, but she couldn't sustain things. She'd make all that effort, then go out in a jumper with holes in and her hair all sticking up at the back because she'd not washed or brushed it that day or for many days.

And the room where she shut herself away from her mother was like that too. No compartmentalisation. No follow through. She'd insisted on painting it herself when they moved in: a sickly shade of baby pink, with a bright pink feather boa draped around the lampshade so even the light was a sticky pink colour but there was no coherence to the theme because she also had a giant poster over her bed that was a blown up version of one of the police crime scene photographs taken at the suicide of Kurt Cobain in the garage of his Seattle home in 1994.

Cobain, miserable and heroin-addicted, had shot himself up and then shot himself in the head - a perforating gunshot wound, which Dr. G: Medical Examiner teaches me means in one side, and out the other. The hole out of the back is always bigger than the one in through the front because the bullet is deformed and its trajectory made uneven by its passage through the skull.

Regard it: they took the photograph from outside the garage door. The shot is enclosed by the outline of the wooden door frame, the eye led by the geometric patterns on the tiled floor along the line of his leg and outstretched arm, hand in a loose fist, towards a crouching figure. This is a shiny-shoed police officer, head out of shot, hands wrapped around a clipboard. He's writing:

taking down the detail perspective hides from us voyeurs because as far as we're concerned, peeking through that garage door, there is no smashed-up head, no skull fragments and sprayed-around brain tissue, not even any blood. He's the punctum in the picture - this writing man. Note taking at the scene of horror. The way even a bullet through the head won't stop the endless telling and being told about. Elsewhere in the picture you can just about see the cigar box Cobain kept his spoons and syringes in. But if you knew what had happened to him and when the photograph had been taken - and everyone did, they were selling T-shirts printed with his suicide note within a year of his death - the smashed-up head and blood were there anyway, in your mind, which was worse, and it was an awful poster to have stuck up like wallpaper over your bed where you could stare at it every time you lay down to sleep.

When the daughter was shut up in her room she was writing. She was far from being a good Mormon girl but even bad Mormon girls are encouraged to keep journals and she excelled in this area, hoarding every detail of every conversation, every trip to the shops, every interesting song lyric and funny thing her brother said and detailed outlines of Sunday school classes and Mormon Youth Conventions and Fast and Testimony Meetings and Firesides and Ward Socials and all manner of other activities. The journals were huge hard-backed notebooks that bulged open because she taped in receipts and bus tickets and all the ephemera that provided evidence that the events she had recorded were true: she really was there and this really did happen.

In the front of one of these volumes Jennifer has taped in a handout from a Sunday School lesson. The handout is festooned with 1990s clip-art: books, inkwells and old-fashioned quill pens. There's a filleted list of quotations from a talk about journal keeping given by President Spencer W. Kimball, the man who was prophet of the church when she was born. The talk is called 'The Angels May Quote From It' and if you think that sounds like a threat, well, you'd be right - it landed that way for Jennifer, who even in her private moments felt observed. Kimball reimagines Moses as a diarist, the first five books of the Old Testament his personal record. He quotes passages from the Book of Mormon, where Jesus tells the Nephites and Lamanites (in Mormon mythology, the native inhabitants of America - Semitic peoples, chosen ones) to make careful records of their lives, their societies, their successes and failures. The church itself, Kimball claims, is based on the personal, detailed records that the first prophet, Joseph Smith, kept of his seeking after God, and which became another holy Mormon book: the Doctrine and Covenants.

'Accordingly, we urge our young people to begin today to write and keep records of all the important things in their own lives: he says. Kimball is quick to define what is important and to list what belongs in a journal, which could be the private story of a life, a way of speaking and listening at the same time (that's how Mina Harker puts it), and what does not. 'Your own private journal should record the way you face up to challenges that beset you: Kimball says. But success stories only, please. 'Personally I have little respect for anyone who delves into the ugly phases of the life he is portraying, whether it be his own or another's. The truth should be told, but we should not emphasise the negative. Even a long life full of inspiring experiences can be

brought to the dust by one ugly story. Why dwell on that one ugly truth about someone whose life has been largely circumspect?' (What if ugly truth is all you have?).

Jennifer took Kimball's advice seriously. She wrote daily. If she'd been out and about too much, she'd panic to get back to her journal, knowing that she couldn't live too much, or there wouldn't be the time to write it up. Experience had to be halved, then doled out in manageable portions because recording it in proper detail took much longer than living through it. And a detailed, complete record was important because the purpose of the journal was to record inspiring experiences for her posterity - it was assumed and expected that she would have children - and that this record would, if she wrote regularly and honestly - constitute a piece of living evidence of God's hand in her life. Experience, translated into words, could corroborate theology.

While she knew the purpose of the journal was to be read by her children, she still worried about her day-to-day privacy. In the late 1990s, Jennifer experimented with codes and alternative alphabets. The writing needed to be inaccessible to her mother, but easy enough for future generations to decode and access the theological confirmation they were entitled to inherit from her. She tried to learn Pitman's shorthand from a library book. She invented a numerical code that was too laborious to use. Eventually, she trained herself to write mirror style, producing a reflected replica of her own handwriting quickly enough to be able to knock out a few pages a day, and perfectly legible when viewed through a mirror.

The solution seemed perfect and her anxieties about longevity were quelled until the day she flicked back through an earlier volume and saw that the cheap paper in the notebook had caused the fountain pen ink to blur and fade and bleed between the pages. Months and months of work - tens of thousands of backwards words - were decaying before her eyes and though she could read them now, just about, if she didn't do something about it her as yet unborn children would be presented with nothing but a yellowed set of Rorschach tests.

The daughter did what she could, which meant buying an old manual typewriter from a charity shop and attempting to type up the pages. She'd sit on the floor, leaning against her bed, with her legs stretched right out like Kurt Cobain's and the typewriter on the floor between her knees. The noise of it clattering and banging was something incredible, and this apparent solution bred several more problems for her.

First, the time she had to actually do things had to be reduced. She couldn't live a day, write up that day, and type up a day or two from the spoiling pages. There just wasn't enough time. Something needed to give.

Second, even presuming she did have the time; there was the problem of recollection, completeness and accuracy. Very often, when copying up the events of a day, she'd remember things that she hadn't recorded at the time. Should she add them to the record, for the sake of completeness? Or should she retain the record exactly as it was set down at the time?

Thirdly, if much of a day's activity involved typing up a previous day's record, and thinking about that, re-remembering it, for example, did that typing and thinking and worrying count also as something she'd done today and if so, did it need to be recorded again, and if so, how might she do that?

(She did not go out much, this Jennifer. She would not go to school. She refused Girl Guides, and most of the church camps. She declined regular music lessons and a book group. She preferred not to type indoors, but there was work to be done.) The answer came. Some of the service work Jennifer did for her church involved typing up old census records from paper facsimile copies into a digital database the church was creating at their Family History Centre. Helping to digitise these records was another way of preserving the facts of the past for the children of the future and all the young people doing this work were told, very clearly, that if there were repetitions or spelling mistakes included in the census records, they needed to type them into the database exactly as they were and should not make any clarifications or additions. The handwriting was old-fashioned and cramped, and they must also be extremely diligent in not adding in any errors of their own caused by misreading.

Jennifer thought for a while and eventually came up with a solution to the fading journal problem by using the red typewriter ribbon. She typed up the journal exactly as she had first written it, and any amendments she wanted to make, she did in red, to indicate they were later additions. The work became a tangled and evil set mess of today's writing self talking back to yesterday's writing self, the most narcissistic (and lonely, as all self-centred people are) of sub-literary collaborations.

The American novelist and essayist Heidi Julavits started out as a diarist too. In her meandering, time-out-of-joint collection of daily meditations *The Folded Clock: A Diary* she wrote about looking back over her teenage diaries and expecting to see an embryonic writer there. She fantasised, as I have, as every teenage diary writer has, of the posthumous time when her 'literary fame might bestow upon them an artistic and biographical value: What she found was the mind, 'not of a future writer, but of a future paranoid tax auditor.

There are about three years of my journal entries that are basically unreadable, that look like a bad draft of *The House of Leaves*, that record, even though they desperately did not want to reveal it, the ugliness of a troubled mind. When I read the journals I find a girl who was writing, not for the posthumous literary biographers, but for the angels, who were always there with their calculators and weighing scales and ledgers. She does not narrate her misery, but it shows. I am astonished, now that I must write in bed, through the night, in order to have the time, at how many hours Jennifer spent on this work.

I stopped writing in my journal when I was twenty-seven and in the middle of writing *The Friday Gospels*. The work on that novel involved three years of examining a story - I think of it sometimes like the long white dress I was baptised in - I had inherited that would not, no matter what damage I did to my body, ever fit me. I cast the dress and my journal aside at the same

time: the entries tailed away in the first few weeks after the birth of my son and I wrote to the church headquarters and resigned my membership when he was six months old, which is a kind of self-excommunication or act of spiritual suicide. I was entering another ugly phase of life: there was no good news fit for the angels to quote, and the angels weren't listening anyway.

Sometimes I think about starting it up again, but the six/seven/eight-year breach in the line of my daily train of thought would bother me forever: it's too much to get over. There are fifty-six notebooks stacked into towers - like Babel - and they gather dust, waiting like tubes of radium on the very top of my office bookshelves. Even now the old-fashioned sound of a typewriter carriage returning makes me feel anxious and guilty: when I'm not typing, I'm playing truant. When I'm typing, I'm truanting too. A girl can't win.

It's kind of exhausting.

Yeah, I just have this thing with this kind of willing intelligence. And it's not always really interested in that. She starts off talking about insomnia and not being able to sleep and thinking too much as a result of not being able to sleep, and then relating that back to other ways of not being able to stop thinking.

Yeah. Not being able to live because you have to record it.

Monitoring and watching yourself, because then people are watching you and then measuring, like the angels watching you. Kind of punishing you. And it's a bit like, I've just really taken with the idea of how - because - I have a visceral hatred of Fitbit, although I've never had one, because I just can't bear the thought of knowing so much data about my life. Because in no other spirit in my life does monitoring help me. It's always used against me ultimately, although I know it's useful, but it kind of reminds me of that as well, the kind of monitoring yourself or big data, or like Apple Watch or whatever and monitoring yourself for the angels.

That just acknowledging that the act of observation changes? The act of self monitoring? I guess.

What I was gunna say reminds me of what you said earlier about when you have data, like they collect the data about your sleep. Your sleep isn't something separate to the rest of your consciousness. So once you know that, it affects your sleep. But it's the same thing that when she talks in here about what I thought was the beginning of a novel. I've not been told by doctors that I have a clear disease, but what I thought was my mind reading things together, I've now been told this is intrusive thoughts. So it's very nightmarish, isn't it? That whole sleeping as a kind of death, and if you go 11 days without sleep, there's a dissolution of your mind. When she was driving the car that was scary. I know that when I'm sleep deprived, I went into distress, massively overestimated in every respect, where I just didn't have scale - my ability to recognise spatial coordinates just departed.

Yeah, no. It's like trying to have an average chicken or egg, maybe more action versus just trying to make it into a novel. And I think there has to be something going on, but then also a spiritual dimension or just meaning, like trying to make meaning out of something.

I'm sure in that way, we read this confused enough. And she has this idea of not writing, but the not writing is working, but she can't write. But then she actually produces something great about not writing, and all the material conditions that prevent her from writing. So similarly, she says 'I can't write the novel', but she's writing about that. I think that's a kind of brilliant and actually very feminist way of dealing with these impossible conditions. Writing to them anyway.

Sounds like you could say, but doesn't come through in the first sentence, because it's really harmful, basically. And it also makes me think of very traumatic, terrible things that happen in order to manage them. Extremely difficult.

Oh, yeah. Like gets off topic, this writing. Call, this time writing in the sort of neurotic achieving Junior forums and every single thought close friend. It really reminded me because just always reflect on our lives and our creativity and our power you tried to get meaning out.

But she literally represents, tries to present this process in writing constantly, to the point that whole sentences are up to three pages long. She just engages a tunnel of force, and you follow that - if you don't follow that you can't get to the end of it.

One of the things that I have is a seven year gap where we really travelled. If she were to start working again...what I'm interested in is always in the space that writing comes from, like, conceptualising what you thought, or realising what was right and actually giving it shape on the page. And how quickly can language follow?

Experience, in my experience, always comes first. And language comes up that, this is the big question, is experienced like last season. The language in this piece that I wanted to take is the experience of what's happening right now. As always, and actually that kind of gets back to this idea of celebrating about what happened yesterday. Or tomorrow. It's about the writing the writing and the experience of writing.

Look at that, you have to get to read - there's a line...I don't necessarily think it's really interesting, but there's a moment I was having an argument with Harry words. The naivety said something like words in fake records that was everything. Everything has worked. And Harry's take his net worth of traitors. And I have always felt that words were always portrayed or whatever it is. And what's their amazing beauty and magic information quality?

Yeah, it's a question about experience and writing the words, the words in the record that you're chasing.

I'm just wondering, as a person who lives between languages, my native language is Tanunda, I

live in English. I always have this feeling. Is my understanding correct? What I'm picturing in my mind from a description or when someone tells me something exactly. Can I trust my own intuition?

I'm very interested in diagnosis and that sense of naming experience. The good stuff that can bring you, you know, that you can put it into systems that mean like you get stuff at work that you wouldn't be able to otherwise, because there's a system based around that. And you can find other people as well, which is the best thing you might get out of the experience. But then, it depends on your circumstances, but it could take things away from you, and it could stop you living your own experience as well. It can be oppressive rather than hopeful or it can be a bit both.