

# SICK WOMEN CORRESPONDENTS: PRACTICES OF CARE IN CROSS-HISTORICAL LOVE LETTER WRITING

by: Alice Butler & Gemma Blackshaw, March 30, 2023

## I. Sick Women

*Dear Bessie,*

*It is bluebell time. They are opening bell upon bell in the small walled garden of this long confinement. It is a sick spring, a season to be endured, a time to write to you who knew so much of the suspension of sitting, waiting, hoping. Days that slipped through limp fingers, pale faces against the pillows that would name an age: women made such wonderful sitters, especially when sick. How to convey the restlessness of a subject compelled to rest? This is where the art of the portraitist lay, and how still you must have been, Bessie, in the Sanatorium du Mont-Blanc, how suspended in your knowledge of no-time as your time-eternal. The terror, the tedium was yours alone to bear because lovers came and went, friends too.*

*But oh how wonderful it must have been to see him stepping from a motor car to crunch across the snow. Oskar! Vienna! Letters, gossip, life. Did you laugh over dinner in that fine dining room? Did you dance? Did you drink?*

*His portrait of you feels like a morning-after painting. I imagine you quiet, settling into a chair to sit, wait, hope, suspended once more. No words as brushes swish across canvas, your morbid beauty committed to art's history.*

*He painted you as contagion in tubercular blue. It will consume you, this colour. It will spread and seep through your soft tissues; it will spew from your lips to stain your fingertips. It will not be contained in the cobalt spittoon that gave the blue kind their name. It will overflow, running down glass, sleeve, skin, page, infecting whoever comes close.*

*Lovely, lonely Bessie, I write to you in 1910 and 2020, in and out of tenses and time. I write letters to write from the state of suspension: between believing and not-believing in this as our exchange; between knowing and not-knowing there will be no end to your end.*

*Yes, Bessie, another day... What can I say? You will refuse the imminent death Oskar gave you. You will linger on, chronic too.*

*How to bear it?*

*How to repair it?*

*Live, love, write, blue.*



Oskar Kokoschka, *Portrait of Bessie Bruce*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 72 x 91 cm New National Gallery, Berlin. bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders, © Fondation Oskar Kokoschka/ DACS 2022.





Nan Goldin, *Cookie in Her Casket*, Nov. 15, NYC, 1989, Cibachome, 49 x 33 x 4 cm, Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Copyright: Nan Goldin.

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*Dear G, I see their resting, delicate hands conjoined in a chorus line. Enflamed.*

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*Dear A, their skin, paper-thin, glowing from within. Their bodies are the letters we hold up to the light to see.*

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*Dear Cookie,*

*How to begin? So many people start at The End. Of you in your satin-lined casket, a vision in gold. So many people start with your death, the disease. I wonder if this is where I should start. It's hard to believe your heart had stopped beating when your friend Nan Goldin took that candlelit picture of you. It flames like a copper-silk sunset, like an ending, like a farewell that I hope will last a lifetime, in my endless writing to you. You picked out your favourite gold lamé dress to wear for the occasion: with flowers garlanded in your forever-blond hair,*

*a scrapheap of gold metals around your tiny wrists, bronze and pink beads draped at the neck, and gemstones on your clasped fingers. I feel the warmth of your glow, like it was the Summer of Love all over again; those bronzed cheeks: the strange life in your still-life.*

*'We've got to think of ourselves as more than just our bodies,' you once told the filmmaker, Amos Poe.*

[1]

*And so: I think of you as words, pictures, manuscripts, clothes, which ghost my correspondence conjuring an afterlife of you. I touch, with my eyes, those closed, painted eyelids facing the amber-lit vaulted ceilings giving way to the sky in Goldin's corpse-portrait. It was taken at your funeral at the St. Mark's Poetry Project, where you'd given electric readings of your bittersweet stories (I can almost hear the rasp of your cigarette lisp, your eternal-adolescent voice remembering pieces of your past) in the years that came before.*

*In 1922, Man Ray caressed with his camera the closed eyes of Marcel Proust on his deathbed, as he lay submerged within creased white sheets. It was upon those sweat-soaked folds that the novelist—sick with inflamed lungs—continued to sculpt his autobiographical production *In Search of Lost Time* via struggling, spoken citations. In your friend's postmortem picture, I too see you searching for lost time while sleeping, while dreaming, the textures of past memories of adolescence re-surfacing: Baltimore, 1964, San Francisco, 1967:*

*He was very sick, quite contagious, and looked ill, but sexy, like pictures of Proust on his deathbed.*

[2]

*I put on my eye makeup. It was a throwback to the time when I plastered the makeup on thick and teased my hair. No one else wore eye makeup in the Haight... an occasional Dayglow flower or a third eye perhaps, but definitely no eye makeup.*

[3]

*In sickness and in writing.*

Before she made her way to Haight-Ashbury in 1967 aged eighteen, before she ‘accidentally broke into show bizz’ (Mueller 1997: 203), before she became an underground film actress, before she go-go danced in New York, before she began writing (short stories, art criticism, the pieces of a novel), before she became friends with the photographers for whom she sat (Nan Goldin, Peter Hujar, Robert Mapplethorpe), before she got sick (she died of a cardiac arrest caused by AIDS on November 10, 1989), Cookie Mueller was born into Maryland suburbia in 1949. It wasn’t the name her family originally gave her (that was the demurer ‘Dorothy Karen’), but ‘Somehow,’ she writes in ‘My Bio—Notes on An American Childhood,’ ‘I got the name Cookie before I could walk. It didn’t matter to me, they could call me whatever they wanted’ (Mueller 1990: 137).

Bessie Bruce, English rose, cakewalk dancer with skin as white as snow, was hitting the big time as ‘Queen of the Bowery Girls’ when the sickness which must have come and gone (because TB progressed in fits and starts) kicked off its boots to settle in. What a stage name, with its alliterative B’s:

*And now, meine Damen und Herren, the moment you’ve all been waiting for,  
Miiiiiiiiiiiis...*

Bessie Lester was born in 1883 in London’s ‘lung’: the industrious (impoverished, infectious) East End.

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She took to the stage, finding her way to Vienna where, in 1905, while performing as one of ‘The Four Magnets,’ she attracted the attention of Peter Altenberg, Karl Kraus, and Adolf Loos. Bessie Lester became Bessie Bruce, an alias given by her lover, Adolf Loos. A health tourist from her early 20s, traveling across Europe in search of a cure; hemorrhages would not kill her until the age of thirty-eight.

*Bessie* rhymes with *Cookie*: the sweet sound of the ‘e’ draws a smile across the face. It is the funeral tolling of a bell, without a muffled close. It is a persistent ringing across time. We hear them continually, *chronically*: across ‘the ontological crack between the living and the dead’ (Sedgwick 1993: 257). *Dear(est)* Bessie and Cookie: two sick women—born in different eras, countries, cultures, scenes—brought together nevertheless in the contagious proximities and temporal slippages of our cross-historical love letter writing.

We have looked for our ‘beloveds,’ the ailing recipients of our tender address, in libraries, galleries, museums, and archives; in the streets, apartments, hotels, and theatres they once inhabited—closer, closer, but never close enough. Refusing the phallogocentric logic of linear history, prioritising the role of the subjective voice in historical research, risking proximity and intimacy in our lived and literary visitations, we have approached them differently, as subjects as much in the ‘here and now’ as the ‘way back when.’ Following contemporary queer and feminist work on reparative and erotic temporalities and caring across time (Dinshaw 1999, Freeman 2010, Baraitser 2017), we have asked: how can we reach them, even *feel* them, in affective relation? How can we come to know them, if indeed we ever can? How—in reaching, feeling, *almost-knowing*—might we also *care for them and each other*, expanding our understanding of the interrelation of feminist writing, praxis, and care?

Offering increasingly vital ways of looking after themselves and those they held dear, letters were so much a part of Bessie and Cookie’s writing lives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, which, as Natasha Walter writes, ‘exposed to us that women are still doing most of the caring in a society that doesn’t value care’ (2021), correspondence became part of ours too. Exhausted by caring for ourselves and for others—for bodies, environments, lives-in-confinement, work-in-suspension—we turned from the newly-impossible labor of essays as we knew them—unconditional, continuous, all-consuming modes of writing—to a form of communication that could withstand interruptions and delays, lapses in ability and attention. Letters became, in the words of fellow researchers, artists Ilona Sagar and Adam Walker, ‘moments of necessary carelessness premised on commitment to the work of care’ (Baluch et al. 2022: 17). Notes to and from, picked up, put down, correspondence kept our sustaining relationships with our historical subjects as well as with each other in the foreground, when the gendered inequities of the interdependencies that lie at the heart of a feminist ethics of care (Gilligan 1982; Tronto & Fisher 1990; Puig de la Bellacassa 2017) swallowed the time once reserved for work up whole. Letters kept us alert to what Carol Gilligan has described as ‘the need for responsiveness (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others’ (Gilligan 2011).

If care is relational and directional, producing a relation between persons, for example, which moves in a direction from one to the other, then exchange—*correspondence*—we came to realise, is fundamental to care as a practice, keeping that relation/direction in a constant state of becoming. Our letter writing brought us to an understanding of care as mutuality and reciprocity outside the capitalist economy, ‘a social capacity and activity involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life’ (Chatzidakis et al. 2020: 5), a means of circumnavigating the competitive relations between humans that define the neoliberal project, of being ‘[i]n, but not of, the violent abstraction. Resilient. Resistant’ (Baluch et al. 2022: 14). While correspondence has not been theorised as a practice of ethical care until now, the evidence for such a claim, we realised, was right in front of us, in the publications on care we were editing or contributing to which were already being framed as exchanges between artists/writers/thinkers (Jagoe & Kivland 2020; Blackshaw & Kivland 2021).

We were late to this realization. Late, too, to the work of Johanna Hedva, especially their ‘Sick Woman Theory,’ published in 2016, a cornerstone text for those who identify as sick and/or disabled, which reached a much wider readership through COVID-time: ‘I wrote that piece more than five years ago, and it’s both weird and not weird at all to see some of its passages play out in real life these days. [T]he world’s ableism has always been a thing, now it’s just getting closer to those who normally don’t feel it’ (2020).

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Careful not to subsume the particular experiences of a person living with chronic illness and disability into our own pandemic lives, we sought to activate ‘Sick Woman Theory’ not *for*, but *with* the very subjects Hedva speaks as: the diseased, disabled, ‘deviant’ ones, those made vulnerable by being un-cared for, and who have mobilised alternative means of agency, survival, and protest in their art, writing, and life—Cookie, dying of AIDS-related illness in the 1980s, and Bessie, of tuberculosis, in the 1920s. While writing on ‘our current regime of neoliberal, white-supremacist, imperial-capitalist, cis-hetero-patriarchy,’ which causes the ‘Sick Woman’ to become a chronic subject, repeating across locations, temporalities, and the intersectional differences of identity, Hedva’s text pointed us *backwards* as well as outwards to the sick women of a past that no longer seemed so far behind us, subjects of historical as well as contemporary force.

Hedva, who is non-binary, identifies their use of the term ‘woman’ as ‘a strategic, all-encompassing embrace and dedication to the particular, rather than the universal’ (2020). More specifically, their understanding of who the sick woman is, and what the sick woman can critically effect, honours the experience of their ‘dear’ genderfluid friend who did not want to change her body, who loved her big dick, who wanted only the word ‘woman’ as hers, and who called Hedva’s attention to ‘how it can still be radical to be a woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (2020). Hedva defines the ‘Sick Woman’ accordingly as a subject of ‘many guises,’ representing all the ‘un-cared for, the secondary, the non-, the un-, the less-than’ (2020). It is an empowering, solidarity-making term.

Our correspondence, which we conceive as choral, is composed *with*—and sung *by*—multiple voices from across time, in a similar way. *Dear(est): Eve (Sedgwick); Johanna (Hedva)*: these are just two (more will follow) of the ‘many-gendered’ *sick women correspondents* ‘of [our] hearts,’ to whom we write in response (Nelson 2015: 153). We write in admiration of their lives and works’ entanglements and complexities, especially in relation to how we sicken, care, and are cared for. We write to celebrate the role that dialogic forms also play in their work, which transcends the academic model of speaking of and for others, and which hopes instead to ‘speak with’ (Fraser 2022), or write with, drawing sustenance from the conversations in life that do not just surround work, but also enter it, shaping it from within: *as a practice*.

For us, the term ‘practice’ refers to our *critical* writing—which is somewhere between history, memoir, fiction, poetry, essay, and art—as a *creative* project: a space of making and re-making, of endurance; we commit to give form and texture to ideas, bodies, desires, voices, and writings. Practices are activities that occupy and shape our embodied, collective lives; they are also integral to our research, linking with Audre Lorde’s understanding of the ‘power of the erotic’ as a deeply sensory, emotionally charged ‘lifeforce,’ which mixes doing, feeling, desiring, and thinking, and in so doing, provides ‘energy for change ... in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society’ (2017: 30, 25, 30). As we commit to cross-historical letter writing *in* and *as* our research, we give elastic (erotic) shape to what has come to be known as practice-based research, which comprises a trans-disciplinary web of approaches that is broadly defined as research produced through the development of creative activities that are often collaborative in nature.



In this article, our writing practices also intertwine the theoretical and the lived in our mobilisation of the cross-historical love letter as an object and affective field that seeks to care for the ‘Sick Woman’ subject of history. This embodied-theoretical practice of care depends on a reparative, epistolary writing of love. Indeed, for Sedgwick, to write with the reparative lens is an alternative ‘project of survival,’ that she also calls a ‘practice’ (implying the union of the theoretical and the lived), a practice which is committed to finding and tending to ‘the many ways in which selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them’ (2003: 150-151). Sedgwick’s essay, which was necessitated by the urgencies and legacies of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—its ‘brutal foreshortening of so many queer life spans’ (148)—points toward the queer possibilities afforded by the recognition of how ‘generational relations don’t always proceed in ... lockstep’ (147). It is a recognition that we depart from in our own understanding of cross-historical love letter writing as a practice of care, which involves a working to repair, across time and *through writing*. We identify a number of approaches integral to this practice, which shape this article’s three main parts: on encounters with the letter, on habitual scenes of *sick pleasure*

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, and on non-linear temporalities that we term *chronic-poetics*.

## II. Letter Encounters

*Dear Bessie,*

*I found you locked in a cabinet in the basement of the Wien Museum Karlsplatz, down, down, down in the still, cold air of a dead man’s Nachlass. A German lesson, because you—like me—never mastered the language: nach means ‘after,’ and lassen means ‘to leave,’ and these two words denoting a time (post-) and a happening (departure; loss) when brought together describe the archive of private papers and personal effects that comes into being on the death of the subject deemed singular; meaning him, not you, nor me.*

*Preserved, catalogued, laid on felt, entombed with his checked shirts and sandals, you rest, you turn, you smile in picture after picture after picture after... Altenberg collected you. His framed photographs of you were letters never sent to you, their card mounts inked with*

*adolescent declarations of love, hearts pierced with arrows, your name, written over and over again. I lift each and every one of you from the drawers; I cup the picture-frame as your face, turning it to the light. Love burns. You glow.*

*In one of many lovesick letters to you, Altenberg describes how on waking he would kiss the glass of the photo of you that hung beside his pillow.*

*I am Altenberg as I am you. To bring you back to life is to kiss across time. My letters as lips, my words as breath. I exhale them into you. I wait.*

*When will you reply?*

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***Dear G, I try to hear her unmastered desire—spluttering and spitting—from within the silenced cabinet. I wonder if B, like C, was forever-young.***

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***Dear A, 'For ever panting, and for ever young',***

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***as Keats described the lovesick with their burning forehead and parching tongue.***

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*Dear Cookie,*

*I flew to New York to feel close to you. I gazed at the windows of your Bleecker Street apartment and dreamt of the writing you did there. I hunted out the cheap thrift stores of the East Village, thumbed through ivory satin wedding gowns and antique gold dresses like yours, felt your partial presence in my palm. Loose threads unraveled from the damaged seams, which I twisted together with my fingertips, like the touch of this writing.*

*I picked up a denim jacket that could have sheltered your shoulders; then realized all the blondes wandering these gentrified streets had found one too. Your influence appeared contagious. I spotted the bright turquoise shine of your little last book in an East Village shop window. I carried my own loved copy—creased from years of contact, littered with messages in the margins—everywhere. I feared what would happen if I left the house without it.*

*Not that it could get any worse.*

*But while I sensed your traces all over the city, it was witnessing the funeral picture, cross-legged on a dark museum floor, the sounds of Petula Clark's 'Downtown' piercing through the space and my skin, that the love I feel for you became so bittersweet. I crossed time and space, from life into death, and back again. My heart raced too quickly. I struggled to breathe, as I raged in staggering stops and starts, at the unfairness of you being physically gone.*

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Written by hand on pieces of printer paper given out by nurses on the psych ward of a hospital in Germany, Johanna Hedva describes their 'Letter to a Young Doctor' as a 'document of emergency' (2018). Published online, it nevertheless invokes the intimate, tactile, piecemeal materiality of the sick note, or 'sick letter,' sketched from their sickbed. It is personal, relational; it begins *in the middle* of a correspondence ('You wrote me'), as Hedva replies to a med-student who had asked them how 'healing might happen' from within the oppressive medical-industrial complex (2018). Hedva responds by suggesting that we must think healing and justice *together*: they move between the 'I' and 'you' of letter writing, enacting a strange reversal of roles that sees the patient become 'a specialist... in possession of a set of knowledges' (2018).

Curiously, the doctor whom Hedva addresses in response is not a doctor by whom they have in the past been treated, but a 'stranger.' And so, rather than seek a discussion face-to-proximate-face, 'I directed my voice in your direction,' Hedva writes, 'you whom I've never met, may never meet, who felt very far away, across a distance that was dark and unfamiliar' (2018). Here, Hedva relates the physical distance that separates them (in a situation that echoes more recent medical encounters) to the affective, social blockages of the patient-doctor relationship; in spite of the 'close proximity' they usually experience in healthcare settings (2018).

Within our own work, we do not want to assume that the epistolary relations we seek to shape in letters to our beloved sick women could ever build the 'trust, intimacy' that Hedva says a 'long-term relationship needs to work' (2018). And yet, could the affective reciprocity implied by the letter's second-person address—its capacity to bridge distances that are often-geographical and sometimes-temporal between two subjects, 'two voices testifying differently in an "event of utterance" through which self and other define and redefine each other' (Gilroy & Verhoeven 2000: 15)—

constitute a reparative practice that cares for the sick woman long-gone? As Emily Dickinson marked in cryptic, careful, pencil upon the unfolded pattern of a faded envelope, ‘Long Years / apart – can / make no / Breach a / second cannot / fill –’ (Dickinson 2013: 66). The poet implies that in the briefest of moments, the writing of a letter makes room for the breach of time to be swallowed up: it summons a distant body *closer*, activating cross-temporal kinship relations in this transference, through which correspondents can come to care, affectively, for one another. Like Dickinson’s delicate, thrifty, tactile encounters with epistolary materials scribed and sent by more-than-one body, our letters shift the boundaries of authorship. They are as much our own as they are our beloveds’, folding into each other as a sheet of paper turned and turned again to fit inside an envelope. In this relational encounter, there is solidarity across place and time, the touch of at least two hands: sending, receiving, returning: a never-finished practice of care.

Coming centuries after Dickinson’s intimate correspondences written within isolated, sick contexts of care-work, the social distancing that people experienced—in vastly different, particular ways—as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a new inflection to letter writing’s distance-crossing magic.

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When the body’s material border threatens the risk of contagion by touch, the embodied, erotic, thrilling, desiring, connecting, shaming, flirting, domestic, everyday, even boring, act of letter writing, offers a promise: it conjures erotic scenes and experiences of proximity beyond the physical union. In many ways, to touch through correspondence is charged with a similar risk of exposure as touch itself, but perhaps without the risk of death. And so, we turned to letter writing during COVID-time—by practicing it, by scrolling online, by absorbing the epistolary novels and critical works that surround us—to consider the ways it *carefully* cares for risky desire. Paul B. Preciado’s description of the post-viral love letter he decided to write to his distant ex-lover demonstrates such possibilities. It was, says Preciado, a ‘poetic and desperate declaration of love’ and a ‘shameful document for the one who had signed it.’ But it never entered the postal network, slipping into the pitch-black night of his garbage bin instead: the limit of his quarantined confinement (of care) (2020). Following this strange, wilful stoppage of the letter-sent, we are similarly interested in the ways the pleasures of writing itself can open out erotic spaces of imagination, fantasy, and love

within feminist critical writing; and how such affective positions care for the receiver (our sick woman subjects), even when they are ‘unable’ to receive it or respond in literal terms.

Preciado reckoned with the humiliating, undeliverable effects of his letter-too-late, [9]

calling to mind Kathy Acker’s expression of a similar hesitancy to become a letter writer in an epitaph written for Robert Mapplethorpe following his death from AIDS-related illness. She describes wanting first to write it as a love letter to her friend, but then falters when she becomes embarrassed at her emotion. ‘Is embarrassment a sign of love,’ she asks, ‘and so not allowable in commercial magazines?’ (1989). Acker links such a gesture with emotion, emotion with shame, and shame with love, registering in the expression of her nearly-letter the ways in which letter writing has been gendered ‘feminine’ because of those ‘feminised’ affects. The association of letters with female sexuality, intimacy, and domesticity, with confinement, disclosure, and desire, with writing as spilling, staining, spurting, sticking excess—unmanaged, unhinged, unwise, *unwell*—comprises what Gilroy and Verhoeven describe as ‘a rhetoric that equates epistolary femininity and feminine epistolarity’ (2000: 1). To literary lovers of Acker, it might come as a surprise that she expressed such a fear of exposure in her epitaph for Mapplethorpe, given how far she wrote *with*, rather than *against*, this much-historicised, often-pathologised conflation of women with letters in her interdisciplinary epistolary writings. And yet, even when Acker wilfully spills, stains, and spurts as part of an embodied, epistolary practice, that does not mean there is no space for the vulnerable, for moments of hesitancy, pause, contradiction, ambivalence, withdrawal. Judith Butler recognizes this too, writing that, ‘[v]ulnerability is not exactly overcome by resistance, but becomes a potentially effective mobilizing force in political mobilizations’ (2016: 3). For Acker, and also for Hedva, this makes room for other kinds of revolution to take place: from ‘the historically feminized and therefore invisible practice of nursing, nurturing, caring,’ to the other no-less feminized, lived and literary practice of letter writing (2016: 8).

Our love letters often begin in close proximity to Bessie and Cookie’s material paraphernalia of correspondence. We have touched their dry, papery bodies in archives, opening their folds and spreading their pages. We have breathed them in, working with the archive as a material site of affective encounter, where body meets



body through paper *across time*. Letters are contagious like this, in the ways they travel beyond the host's body, furrowing deep inside another close-but-distant body. Contagion also occurs through the multiple ways in which we can 'feel' the archive: here we can fall in love, sicken, grieve, *revive* (if only momentarily). For if love is, as Daisy Lafarge has written, a 'microbial intruder,' which 'moves in and colonises all available space, reorienting everything to itself' (2020), then it is a pathogen we welcome, into our bodies, affects, the textures of our thinking and writing, as we give careful attention to the particularly risky bodies of Bessie and Cookie.

It is possible that minuscule droplets of saliva or blood—body fluids of fetishisation and fear during the TB and AIDS epidemics Bessie and Cookie lived and died through—could have made their mark on their cut, creased, discoloured letters and archive objects. *But we hold them*: these letter-bodies (who have led us by the contagious hand to others, too, as we know in our searches for the traces of Bessie and Cookie in the archives of notable others they are entombed within). And so, we ask: could love be, or could care be, or could *love with the urgencies of care be*, the desire 'to hold anyone / who seems contagious,' as Maggie Nelson says in a poem written while watching a man with a chronic cough (Nelson 2018: 64)? It is an energy that shapes the reparative desires of our infected, obsessive, attentive, but also risky, cross-historical love letter writing practices.

Inspired by Dickinson's opening to the poem, 'A Word dropped careless on a Page,' we think of our letter writing practices as both careless (with no barriers, no track and trace, no protection against the material contagion of archive work, the infectious sentence), and paradoxically full of care for the letter's ('folded in perpetual seam') 'Wrinkled Maker.'

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We will never know if our love that is contagiously expressed in letters 'will ever be reciprocated,' as Nelson has also mourned in a short piece on Hervé Guibert's writing of the sick 'body-in-time' (2021: viii & x). It is that ambiguity, we suggest—the shame, the waiting, the delay—which sustains our love for them, giving life to our embodied-theoretical practices of care. In this unfinished state of in-betweenness, we encounter the impossibility of ever cohering, completing, or healing our beloveds. And yet, we *write*; we gesture *towards*; we wait for replies; some of which we know will never come—because, as Carol Mavor has also found out, 'to wait is to love' (2021: 44).

Waiting is so much a part of what it means to care for a body *in a body*; it is also a symptom (and a cause) of lovesickness—meaning that our affliction is intertwined with our practice of care. In endlessly *writing to*, in inhabiting the cross-historical love letter, our beloveds' sick pleasures move to the foreground and into the light.

### III. Sick Pleasure

*Dear Bessie,*

*Your clothes, oh your clothes. The perusing, the choosing, the twirling; the puffing, the buttoning, the ruffling. I imagine the porter at your hospice of a hotel ('Home!' you once exclaimed in a letter of delight), tottering under the weight of parcels from a shopping trip to Lausanne. A boutique here, a boutique there... Trunk upon trunk of dresses, blouses, hats, furs which no one could sell on, no one would touch. Were you too abject in your coughing? Did the blood stain too bright?*

*Your canvas is filthy, your white collar and cuff smirched rust red, a surface so foul that critics will talk of its secretions and contaminations. A stretched cloth half-saturated in black and burgundy paint as if pressed against soft internal organ—heart, gut, lung—to staunch its leaking flow. Who could survive this eviscerating portraiture, with its picturing of inside as outside—your interior, the interior? Who would sit to have their skin scraped back, its paleness, its tenderness, scratched with the sharp tip of the brush? I think of the sick pleasure in picking at a scab, in coughing up phlegm; in splattering pigment, in peeling paint with a fingernail; in painting as 'burning forehead and parching tongue,' as desire for the most contagious of bodies: yours.*

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***Dear G, she purloins forget-me-not-blue; we purloin letters. Our hand-held pleasures.***

\*

***Dear A, how to hold a hand across time?***

\*

*Dear Cookie,*

*I'm drawn to your antique crochet gloves; its cream threads the colour of your manuscripts, delicate lacework hidden by the small bouquet that you hold in your hands. Spring flowers for your spring wedding: hellebores and eucalyptus leaves, white tulips scattered on the floor with scalloped, soft petals as light as the clouds above. I love to think of you marrying Vittorio in the sky, reaching for the pleasures of the divine, amidst the pain of diagnosis.*

*Are there Madonna lily flowers in your grasp; could you feel the grey of an incoming funeral? I see all kinds of tears in your concentrating eyes.*

*I scrutinise your wedding dress with x-ray vision, looking for the safety pins holding the pieces together. I look and touch; I feel your gauze over my eyes. It is delicious, but it is also painful. I have eaten your textiles up: the silk-satin bodice, the striped bolero, the lashings of tulle, and its pretty embroidery, the perfectly cinched ribbon at your waist, the cocktail dress beneath it. Did you slip the whipped-cream skirt off to dance and party?*

*It is the antique glove that I pocket closely in this small letter, suggestive of bygone pleasures: how you cared and were cared for, always in writing.*

\*

They loved their clothes, our beloveds. Attentive to the joys of dressing that Bessie and Cookie described and displayed in letters, postcards, photographs, portraits, writings, our eyes have alighted on the details they pondered and fingered: flower, ribbon, bangle, bow. For us, for them, these details are our sensual, scenic punctums, pointing to the pleasure-seeking habits that sustained their sick lives. It is the close inhabitations made possible by the love letter, which helps us to see them more clearly.

To linger on the forms, textures, and glints of these details is to re-inscribe the pleasure they found in the wearing, with the pleasure we find in the *writing*; a re-inscription we theorise as a reparative practice of mutually constitutive care. Both forms of pleasure—textural and textual—revel in an excess of decorative effect (the accessory; the adjective), which is transgressive, lying beyond the limits of what is socially, sexually, and intellectually acceptable. In their essay 'How to be a Person in the Age of Auto-immunity,' artist Carolyn Lazard writes 'to be sick and to desire is a faux pas' (2013). To be critical and to desire is just as unseemly, inappropriate—even *risky*. (Maggie Nelson's description of Jane Gallop's 'lashing' by art historian Rosalind

Krauss as a ‘quarantining of the feminine or the maternal from the realm of intellectual profundity,’ as a *shaming*, comes to mind (Nelson 2015: 52).) As Rita Felski has argued, academic protocol advises against such disclosures, warns against such over-identification or loss of control manifesting in emotional, emotive responses that cannot be supported with a footnote to source (Felski 2015). Descriptions of advances in scholarly discourse do not tend to make use of the language of feeling, though to make an advance on someone—even, we would say, across time—is to make one’s desire for them *known*.

Embracing the permissiveness of the letter, in order to write differently, by which we mean not just affectively, or affectionately, but also *affirmatively*, we turn instead, echoing Felski, to Sedgwick’s theory of the reparative impulse, introduced (for the second time) in *Touching Feeling*, which works by contrast *to attach*, which seeks to ‘assemble and confer plenitude on an object’ (Sedgwick 2003: 149); which ‘looks to the work of art for solace’ (Felski 2015: 151). Sedgwick describes the reparative impulse as ‘additive and accretive,’ motivating the reader, like Proust, to help himself again and again (Sedgwick 2003: 149-150). Returning, again and again, to the silky, flimsy, lacey details of the images of our sick women subjects; to the textures and transformations that provided them with some sort of sustenance; that replenished them, bringing them, however fleetingly, to a sense of themselves, to a feeling of being full, we foreground the pursuit of pleasure (theirs; ours too), the expression of the appetite *for*, as a mode of no less critical inquiry.

The sick woman’s sartorial gaze is often ambivalent, involving pleasure which is sick, which disturbs, even disgusts; a desire suspended between attraction and repulsion. The first publication of Hedva’s ‘Sick Woman Theory’ in *Mask* magazine was accompanied by a series of portraits of the artist in a red kaftan, jewels at their throat, lips painted black, nails cobalt blue, surrounded by a blanket of medications while reclining on their bed. Invited into the bedroom of the sequestered, invisible-ill, we are seduced, and disquieted. Kathy Acker’s breastless body covered in diamonds communicates a similar message; and so too does the image of Eve Sedgwick dressed in tight Lycra black crop top and shorts, her oversized frame exceeding the elasticated edges, not long after being diagnosed with breast cancer. As embodied extensions of their sick woman writings, these photographic portraits depict their clothing-habits,

which become a type of what Erin Manning theorizes as a ‘minor gesture’ (2016), a slow, often overlooked, accreting force that in their case helps to subvert the feminising, pathologising impositions of chronic illness.

But these dressing practices also take effort; they fail, disappoint, even deceive. In their essay ‘Colostomy Fanny-pack,’ Lazard describes a moment when—standing at a bar in a suede cape edged with mink trim, physically thin from vomiting—they receive a compliment from a girl on how fabulous they look (2017). The dressed body, they conclude, is not a suffering body; clothes conceal, disguise, fool not only the world but also, *almost*, for the briefest, most heartbreaking of moments, the sick subject: perhaps they, too, in this most gorgeous of outfits, belong in the land of the able and the well (Lazard 2017). ‘Linen and silk—’ Lazard continues, ‘my placebo, snake oil and armor. I am walking, eating, talking, being in the world—passing, DUPING everyone into thinking that I am one of them!’ (Lazard 2017). The subversive, seductive, minor-sartorial gestures of the sick woman, which are habitually present in their embodied images and writings, once again signify, as Butler argues, how vulnerability and resistance can ‘work together’ (2014: 15).

This embrace of the ambivalent sick pleasures of dressing, which is shared by Bessie and Cookie, illuminates the radical, reparative potentialities of self-care: small habits and gestures that become resources of sustenance, survival, and joy. Such habits accrete, flourish with excess and ritual. And within this extended space of the erotic, which Lorde described as a path to making social transformations possible (1978/2017), certain haptic, serial habits repeat: from the autoerotic textures of clothing, to autoeroticism itself. In Lorde’s 1980 *The Cancer Journals*, for example, which seeks to understand breast cancer as a Black, lesbian, feminist experience (full of sick pleasure), she describes wearing a kenetecloth tunic to the doctor’s office ten days after having a mastectomy. ‘I was rather pleased with myself, all things considered,’ she writes, ‘pleased with the way I felt, with my own flair, with my own style’ (2020: 51). And from the ‘touch’ of her Ghanaian textiles, to the autoerotic self-touch of her body, Lorde engages with the restorative return of desire, on discovering she can masturbate once more: ‘[t]he flame was dim and flickering, but it was a welcome relief to the long coldness’ (18).



This echoes the conversations had between Sedgwick and her therapist on the autoerotic in her dialogic cancer memoir that folds poetry, essay, and case notes together, *A Dialogue on Love*. Sedgwick tells her therapist how she would ‘spend hours and hours a day as a child in my bedroom masturbating,’ but that the intensity of this ‘autoerotic life’ has disappeared with the diagnosis, her ‘quasi-medical’ fantasies only now ‘warmed’ by the masochistic effects of the waiting room (1999: 45-48). While the temperature of Sedgwick’s fantasies is at a more comfortable rather than ‘horrifying’ level of heat here (47), relational linkages between the sick and the erotic are nonetheless carved out in these scenes, when Sedgwick’s perverse fantasies are pleased by the exposing effects of the hospital intercom calling her name (48). This hints at the room—or ‘the fullness,’ as Sedgwick describes in *Touching Feeling* (2003: 24)

[11]

—the sick woman can make for gestural glimpses of erotic relief, in reparative resistance to the punishing surrounds (within and beyond the body) of sickness itself. In response, we *glimpse*—touching, looking, tasting, *writing*—their pleasure-seeking habits within the painterly and photographic scenes our beloveds move within.

#### IV. Chronic-poetics

*Dear Bessie,*

*What did it feel like to turn the corner and find yourself on Single Street, back where you had started off the Burdett Road in Bow? Back to your mother’s bed to die as you’d been born in dirty sheets, in shrieks, in squalor; back, back, back to the beginning of you, gasping for the first breath as you gasp, now, for the last. I find your name in the district’s cemetery registers. I find your grave.*

*You lie in woodland, in unmarked ground. Any stone that might have been there, bearing the fact of your life, was cleared decades ago. Back, back, back, the cemetery turns to earth, tree, bramble, flower. I find you in the autumn cyclamen, upswept petals that push pale pink through the dark undergrowth. I pluck you, press you, your body fading through the weeks from pink to blue, a change in hue I am told is another part of the flower’s perpetual cycle of life and death, which I do not believe, knowing it instead to be a word from you, my flower-letter-body.*

*You are the hardiest of a hardy species of plant, withstanding the cold, the frost, the snow. You are vigorous too, self-seeding abundantly, spreading in the impossible dark under canopies of moss and leaf and bough. You return each September. You are unfailing. You are true. Your tenacity is celebrated in the language of flowers which claims you, the cyclamen, for the mother's unending, chronic love.*

*I hold you now, up to the light, back, back, back to the endless beginning of an endless becoming.*

*'Your skin, paper-thin, glowing from within.'*

*You replied.*

*You replied.*

\*

*Dear Cookie,*

*Not yet even 9 AM—the time of 'work,' the time of suits, the time of extra-large caffeine containers to be held efficiently in one's hand—the library was not yet open. Books, as you know, like novel manuscripts, are slower to rise. Your sick time made it harder, but also necessary. And so, I kept walking—as I keep waiting, as I keep writing, for you—further west than Washington Square. I reached your railroad building, stopped at its dried bloodstain exterior. I picked at yesterday's paper cut. Swallows circled above, returning from elsewhere, slipping between the clouds like the passing days. The stench of savaged meat raged below in the local Italian butchers. I held my breath, as your absence etched deep. And yet, when I gazed up to your apartment, on the second, third, or fourth floor, I thought of you writing there, making time, when time was kept from you—by taking the past inside.*

\*

Towards the end of her life, as she felt the grip of the disease that had come to her, Cookie Mueller was tweaking a manuscript that comprised a 'compilation of autobiographical short stories,' the stories 'all true, sort of like episodes from a diary'

This manuscript would materialise soon after her death as *Walking through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black*, the first in Chris Kraus's Native Agents Series for Semiotext(e). But before it became this, Mueller was *attempting*; she was drafting and re-drafting, making lists of stories written, and then re-written, along the way in real time, the real time of her *sick time*. As Hedva reminds us, chronic illness derives from the 'Latin *chronos*, which means "of time" ... and it specifically means "a lifetime." So, a chronic illness is an illness that lasts a lifetime ... it does not get better. There is no cure' (2020). This knowledge of sickness can cause time to feel weighty and hard, wherein the present moment becomes 'soaked in illness' and the 'future gets further and further away,' as Hedva has recently written in the context of COVID-19, and as Cookie also felt in a different way with the mortal frame she *tried* to write through, needing *more time*.

From where could it be sourced otherwise? Akin to the glimpse of sick pleasure, Hedva describes the rare, miraculous 'blissful moments of oblivion' that removes them, *temporally*, with the flash of a rupture or rapture, from the relentless hardening of their days (2020). And while Cookie expressed anxiety about achieving continuity and completion in the cover letter that accompanied one version of her manuscript—she says that the episodic collection needs 'segues,' 'flow,' 'a lot of work,'

[13]

which, as Alice Hattrick has recognised, must be navigated differently when writing during the time of chronic illness (2021)—she also offers a description of its composition that glimpses an alternative, reparative relationship to time:

This is something like an impressionistic anthology, and all of these pieces here fit together the way weeds and flowers do in an overgrown eclectic garden. The things in this garden are memories, that are now sort of like ashes ... the past seen after the flames.

[14]

For Cookie, the 'manuscript-garden' nurtured pieces that also escaped the regulations of capitalist 'well' time by embracing nostalgia as a critical turn, a reparative mode of looking back on past lives for what they reveal about queer joy and sick pleasure. Her description, which calls to mind writing and structures of writing that move and shift *across* time, that involve wild knots and woven entanglements, that exceed formal,

material, and temporal boundaries, that fold life into death and death into life, also has implications for our own work, in *how* we attend to and *care for*: her, Bessie, all our sick women correspondents.

This is *chronic-poetics*, which we have been slowly tracing—over the last two pandemic years: across late-night email exchanges, mid-morning telephone calls, tentative paragraphs, image-attachments sent quickly, pieces of writing belatedly caressed in an envelope—as a particular approach to doing historical, reparative work. First, it defied neat theorisation; this methodology *of time*, conjured by the seductive charm of a portmanteau that suggests a form of writing and research beyond genre; that brings poetry into prose into essay into theory. The compositional folding of one into another is durational itself, we countered, involving seams and slippages between formal and temporal elements. Believing that a practice of care in cross-historical letter writing is underpinned by a particular, feminist relationship to time, we have absorbed the work of others into our chronic-poetic field: Elizabeth Freeman’s emphasis on the role of bodily pleasure in contemporary encounters with lost or fragmented objects, in particular; this as central to an erotic, affective, reparative, and queer historiographical approach that allows us to think ‘that history is not only what hurts but what arouses, kindles, whets, or itches’ (2015: 95 & 117).

[15]

But it wasn’t until we began practicing it; also gathering cross-temporal writing by collaborators, beyond our intimate configuration of two twos, feeling our way through these papers that engage personal and collective pasts and presents together, as we have also felt our way through Bessie and Cookie’s correspondences, collecting our own pieces in the process, that the clarity of chronic-poetics—as a *method* of writing *on* the sick body *in* and *with* not-linear, not-developmental, not-straight, not-fully-‘well’ time—came into sharper focus.

***I love the fragments that circle, loop back and forth. Yes! This is chronic-poetics!***

[16]

We propose chronic-poetics as erotic cross-historical writing that comes, *by necessity*, in staggering stops and starts, that extends and repeats, that is often belated, or nostalgically re-traces its steps. Exhausted by continuous essay writing, we piece together pithy, pleasure-glimpsing letters instead, the only practice of care available to

us within ‘our time of overwhelming and confused chronicity, when each hour is amplified post-circadianism, quadruped in the quarter-hour’s agenda ... productivized’ (Boyer 2019). And yet, it is also within the belated, warped, interwoven spaces of time opened up by the love letter’s affective, relational field, that it is possible to, as Lisa Baraitser articulates, live and move more freely ‘in its seams’ (118). We do so to reach Bessie and Cookie differently, to return to them, to experience the joy they made and re-made in precarious times, and bring them to life, however late we might be—such is the ambivalence to this gesture of care. ‘Endurance within the impossible,’ as Baraitser writes, ‘might be best thought as a practice of a care, if we can extend care to mean a form of knowing that keeps safe and preserves the truth of the endurance of human suffering even as one seeks to alleviate it’ (121). Our care-practice in writing *endures*, involving endless, looped love letter fragments feeling for, and with, the sick pleasures of the past. It is durational, this practice of maintenance that begins with love. In chronic-poetics, affective communities of survival across time, space, generations, epidemics, the positions of writer and subject, are formed. This is the context of our care-practice, which gives texture to the pleasures of the sick woman who endured her own sick time; her own specific but shared ‘loop of pain’ (Hatrick, 2021: 320).

## V. The Risk of Approach

On 6 August 1885, Dickinson wrote a note to her correspondent of many years Thomas Wentworth Higginson. She had opened the morning paper to read, ‘with alarm,’ that the poet Helen Hunt Jackson, sick with stomach cancer and recovering from a fall, was at the point of death: ‘She wrote me in Spring,’ Dickinson said, ‘that she could not walk, but not that she would die ... What a Hazard a Letter is! When I think of the Hearts it has scuttled and sunk, I almost fear to lift my Hand to so much as a Superscription’ (Dickinson 1885).

To write a letter is to take a chance, to try your luck, to throw the dice (the word ‘hazard’ derives from the Turkish ‘zar,’ meaning ‘dice’). It is to attempt, as the ailing Hunt Jackson had done, to bet against Death with a note of cheer. Above all, we propose, it is to risk. The letter, and especially the private paper which so much of our work revolves around, has an ever-present, often-latent sense of something or someone in jeopardy—the potential of an order threatened, a trust betrayed—which makes it as thrilling to read as to write. We have sensed our sick women



correspondents' calculations of what is at risk, and what *to risk* (what to threaten, request, retain, disclose; what to *hazard*) in their descriptions of diagnoses, their bids for health, and calls for care. We have appreciated the textures of these deliberations (how far, how much, how to...) in their scratching-outs and tearing-offs, their balling then smoothing of paper, their frantic folding. We have noted the cost of such efforts too, in their letters' hazardous forms: the handwriting that fails; the paragraphs that peter out; the ink that smudges with tears.

This sick letter writing is writing-as-testing, writing which centres on the perpetual posing of two questions: what can the letter-writer and addressee bear; what, then, are the limits of care? Bessie and Cookie's correspondence—both real and imagined because we work, too, with the contents of their wastepaper baskets—has brought us to an appreciation of the affects of this writing-as-testing, of sick letter writing as the holding of one's breath, as the burning of one's cheeks, as the trying of one's nerve, as fear, as shame. We have honoured this by *replying*, by taking a risk too, in work that sometimes feels precarious in its intimacy.

We write letters so that we may write with our hearts in our mouths, steeling ourselves to invite others, too—readers of our own, open letters—to suspend their disbelief in our summoning of Bessie and Cookie as our beloveds, as subjects between life and death, then and now, to whom we offer our care, testing the limits of our discipline's capacities. We have paused as they once paused (what can our readers bear; what are the limits of care?), wondering how much letter-writing is *too much* letter-writing; how to strike a balance between writing letters and writing about the writing of letters, between what some may distinguish as practice and research, which we understand and offer here as coupled by care, as research-through-practice. We have kept our second person pronouns out of the room of academic discourse, but oh, how they have been hammering at the door, our letters in their hands, demanding entry.

*Knock, knock, knock...*

Bessie, Cookie, we write *you* letters to bring you close, to telescope time. We theorise letters by writing letters, a practice that has brought us closer than we ever imagined possible to the understanding we now know you had of them: as devotions, dedications, supplications; as survival, as retrieval, as critical. In our embodied-

theoretical writing to you, we have turned not only to the history of the word ‘correspondence’ but also to that of the word ‘approach’ meaning ‘to go’ or ‘come near in time,’ ‘to be close in quality or character, to resemble,’ or ‘become similar.’ These words feel connected to us, alike, akin. The early usages of the word ‘approach,’ which are so rarely drawn upon, have encouraged and sustained us—as, indeed, have you—reminding us that an approach to a field of research can be the opposite of what is often surveyed in the studies of methodology that are framed by critical distance. We write you letters to approach you, by which we mean to come near to you, to advance, to attempt, to hazard, to risk touch without physically touching, refiguring the relationship between scholar and subject as that of carer and cared-for, as a position of attachment which is as warm and inviting as it is jeopardising, which reminds us of what and how and why we love, which replenishes, reviving us if not you. We write in order *to risk caring for you*, in all your glorious and contagious excesses (how else could we glimpse them?), against distance, against caution, against reason, and at a time when all three are of paramount importance. In the process, we have realised how you have also come to care for us during separated times.

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*P.S. Do we know each other as writers?*

*My sense is that we are beginning to.*

*Do we know each other as magpies?—stealing this and that because look how they glint!—yes, we do, and from the very first moment, as I like to think.*

[17]

Notes

[1]

Amos Poe, “‘Triple Bogey’ [Cookie Mueller School Fund],’ 1991, Amos Poe Papers, MSS. 203, Box 22, Folder 35, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

[2]

Cookie Mueller, ‘Two People—Baltimore—1964,’ in *Walking through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black* (New York City: Semiotext(e), 1990), 2.

[3]

Cookie Mueller, ‘Haight Ashbury—San Francisco, California—1967,’ in *Walking through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black*, 6.

[4]

As characterised in Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (New York: Macmillan, 1903).

[5]

Johanna Hedva [@bighedva], March 15, 2020,  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B9wdUvBIps6/>.

[6]

We are grateful to artist Marita Fraser for coining this term ‘sick pleasure’ in relation to our work.

[7]

John Keats, ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ in *Poems* (London: Chiswick Press, 1897), 236.

[8]

See Kate Zambreno, *To Write as if Already Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); *Queer Correspondence*, curated by Eliel Jones, Cell Project Space, London, 2020.

[9]

See Paul B. Preciado, *Testo-Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, which opens with ‘Your Death,’ an epistolary address to Guillaume Dustan; also the opening and closing of Preciado, *An Apartment on Uranus*, with letters (from

Virginie Desportes to Paul, as a preface, and from Paul to the ‘Sexual Ancien Régime,’ as a conclusion).

[10]

Emily Dickinson, Amherst Manuscript 121, [https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image\\_sets/5122](https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/5122). See Daisy Lafarge’s discussion of this poem in ‘On Contagion,’ June 8, 2021, [wellcomecollection.org](https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/YKvIfxQAACIA7UcA), <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/YKvIfxQAACIA7UcA>.

[11]

Sedgwick, ‘Introduction,’ in *Touching Feeling*, 24. The photographic portrait of disabled textiles artist Judith Scott conveys, for Sedgwick, ‘an affective and aesthetic fullness that can attach even to experiences of cognitive frustration.’

[12] Cookie Mueller, ‘Working Titles: Garden of Ashes, Messages from the Edge,’ cover letter, undated, Serpent’s Tail/High Risk Archives, MSS. 86, Box VII.1, Folder 3, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

[13]

Cookie Mueller, ‘Working Titles: Garden of Ashes, Messages from the Edge,’ cover letter, undated, Serpent’s Tail/High Risk Archives, MSS. 86, Box VII.1, Folder 3, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

[14]

Cookie Mueller, ‘Working Titles: Garden of Ashes, Messages from the Edge,’ cover letter, undated, Serpent’s Tail/High Risk Archives, MSS. 86, Box VII.1, Folder 3, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

[15]

See also Robyn Weigman, ‘The times we’re in: Queer feminist criticism and the reparative turn,’ *Feminist Theory* 15(1) (2014): 4-25.

[16]

Email from the author to the author about a draft of ‘Touching Death,’ published in *Carelessness: A Supplement to On Care*, ed. Gemma Blackshaw & Sharon Kivland (London: Ma Bibliothèque, 2021).

Letter from the author to the author, Tuesday October 26, 2021.

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