

# Mirror Lamp Press

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No.4 FETISH



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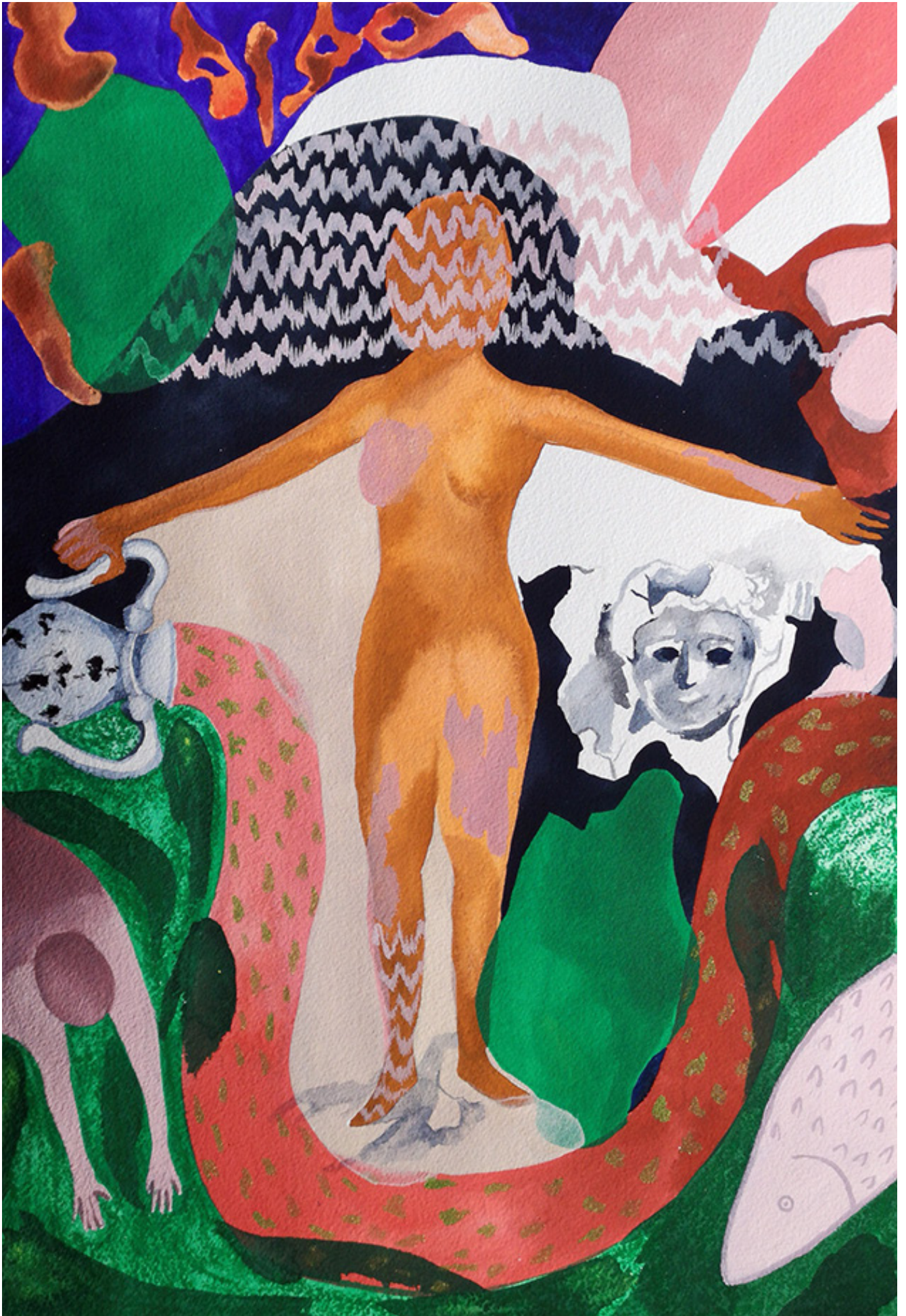
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## Denis Kehoe

Denis Kehoe is the author of the novels *Nights Beneath the Nation* (Serpent's Tail, 2008), *Walking on Dry Land* (Serpent's Tail, 2011) and the novel/art project *Traces of the Flood* (2012/2013). He has created a series of performance pieces and collaborated on a number of photographic projects as his alter-egos Esther Raquel Minsky and Oscar Esterson in recent years. He works as a lecturer in the School of Visual Culture at the National College of Art & Design in Dublin.

## Rosa Abbott

Rosa Abbott is a writer and curator based in London. Her practice is informed by her fascination with pop culture, material culture and literature. Alongside Roisin Agnew and Iarlaith Ni Fheorais, she is a co-founder of Liquid, a curatorial collective exploring expressions of intimacy in the digital age.

## Eimear Walshe

Eimear Walshe (1992, they/them) is an artist and writer from Longford. Their work is made public through video, publishing, performance, sculpture and lectures, often in synthesis between these forms. They are currently a studio member at TBS&S, and Research Associate at CCA Derry~Londonderry. Their work is held in the collections of The Arts Council and IMMA.

## Isadora Epstein

Isadora Epstein is an artist and performer working in Dublin.

## Joseph Noonan-Ganley

Joseph Noonan-Ganley takes as artistic material the lives and work of bisexual and homosexual men (Joseph Cornell, Charles James, Gareth Thomas). Using editing techniques to complexify male sexuality, he aims to expand queer sensory vocabularies. Issues cluster around embodied labour, biographic authorship and illicit/normative sex acts. His exhibitions, performances and publications extensively manipulate the material remnants of artists, designers, sports people, dressmakers and writers.



# Eleanor McCaughey

Eleanor McCaughey is an Irish artist, living and working in Dublin. McCaugheys practice is an evolution of multi-faceted installations, including painting, sculpture, video and sound. Selected exhibitions include Woman in the machine, Visual Carlow, 2021, Super Market Art Fair, Stockholm, 2021, Vignettes, Richard Heller Gallery, LA, USA, 2019 and Tulca, Sytonic State, Galway, 2018.







It has been a year of tumult and as we reflect on our inaugural year of publishing under the remit of our chosen themes; happiness, loops and myths, we turn towards that which we value most; obsession, pleasure, and wayward compulsion, to keep us company as we tread cautiously into another bleak winter.

In the essay ‘Gothic Horror’ from his book *Shadowings* the Greek-Irish author Lafcadio Hearn questioned what it is about gothic architecture that has caused its association with horror and the supernatural. In occasionally overwrought but compelling terms Hearn links the pointed arches and ribbed vaults of gothic buildings with vegetable growth. This aesthetic combination is, for Hearn, a source of dread; “Even though built by hands of men, it has ceased to be a mass of dead stone: it is infused with Something that thinks and threatens;— it has become a shadowing malevolence, a multiple goblinry, a monstrous fetish!”

The difficult and problematic history of the concept of the fetish has generally centered on the relationship between people and objects. Usually

this involves attributing properties to objects that they do not *really* have, or *overvaluing* them. In his exploration of the gothic architectural motifs Hearn detached the idea of the fetish from the academic, as well as from negative judgement, exploring fetish as a productive imaginative space; “And the horror of Gothic architecture is not in the mere suggestion of a growing life, but in the suggestion of an energy supernatural and tremendous.”

This fourth issue of Mirror Lamp Press is a response to the fraught notion of the fetish, containing texts and artworks that are variously academic, absurdist, and intimate, with reference to film history, literature, visual art and traditional Irish music. This is deliberately fluid and unsystematic, and not intended to be either rigid or complete.

For word, the writer and curator Rosa Abbot meticulously outlines the complex and changing use of the word fetish, beginning with an analysis of the denouement of the Billy Wilder film *Sunset Boulevard* and Gloria Swanson’s iconic performance.

Isadora Epstein's *Household God* discusses things which have inadvertently been made divine, in a reflection on the deification of household objects.

For place, Denis Kehoe looks at Queer Embodiment, the first in the Irish Museum of Modern Art's four-part exhibition series 'Narrow Gate of the Here and Now' with reference to his own performance practice and the histories of IMMA's site in Kilmainham, Dublin.

For object, Joseph Noonan-Ganley writes of the experience of sharing beds within the narrative of Piers Paul Read's non-fiction novel *Alive*. Noonan-Ganley attempts to bridge the gap with his readers by carving out a space for them in a text that is already written. Read's spectacularisation of the players' survival through cannibalism becomes Noonan-Ganley's bed-making as a structure of living.

In *The Piper's Grip*, Eimear Walshe narrates a fetishistic transcendental encounter with an Uilleann piper at an all-male trad session.

Eleanor McCaughey's artworks punctuate this issue, each one a memorable and lasting depiction of singular and unreal objects.

The varied contributions to this issue open up fresh perspectives on how the concept of the fetish is used within cultural production and exposes commonalities across traditions, genres and forms. Running throughout are meetings with objects of a particular intensity. This is how we want to end the year; akin to how Hearn describes the experience of looking at gothic buildings; drawing out ‘an emotion too powerful to be called wonder, too weird to be called delight.’

Enjoy the issue.

*Gwen & Eoghan*





# Through the Tower Gate

*Denis Kehoe*

Between 2014 and 2018, I lived in a rented house on Inchicore Road in Dublin and each day passed through the tower gate at IMMA, moved from the junction of Watling Street and Victoria Quay to the Royal Hospital in 1847. Whilst working on a novel set in Warsaw, Dublin and Rio de Janeiro in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, two alter egos emerged as a sideshow to the main event; Esther Raquel Minsky and Oscar Esterson. Many of the concerns explored in written language in the book—family, clothing, walking the city, sexuality, gender, nature, identity and migration—would come to be examined in visual and performance terms in an ongoing series of photographic images and dramatic monologues by and through these new personas.

A recent visit to the Queer Embodiment exhibition that forms part of IMMA's The Narrow Gate of the Here-and-Now prompted me to think of how this body of work is bound up with the body of the museum and its grounds,

itself a queer space that has had several functions and identities in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial Ireland. In much the same way as I circled the grounds and the galleries of IMMA while living in the area, the following text circles moments and impressions from the past, from imagined fictions and from the current exhibition.

For much of the time that the Royal Hospital functioned as a retirement home for soldiers and an infirmary, Ireland was in another domain, part of a land with another name, different identities at flow in these grounds by the River Liffey. It is said the building was based on Les Invalides, a retirement home for war veterans in Paris. As such it is a kind of simulation, a form of a copy, much of the building a series of Chinese boxes of rooms, now galleries, full with ever-changing stories, both imagined and real.

But the site is much older than the late seventeenth century when the Royal Hospital was built. The land was once home to ancient burial grounds, a Viking settlement, a monastery. Sometimes as I passed through IMMA on my way to and from work and town, I would look down at the meadow and time would fall away. That

meadow is overlooked now by grey apartment blocks built on the opposite side of Saint John's Road West at Clancy Barracks, in a complex once inhabited by the British Army and known as Islandbridge Barracks. In more recent years, before this land was developed as fully as it is now, the space acted as a set for the television series *Ripper Street*; itself a simulation, a copy of the Victorian East End of London made in the old second city of the Empire.

Early one morning, walking through the grounds, I was met with the sight of several maids in black dresses, white aprons and caps bustling through the darkness into the courtyard. They were extras preparing for a scene in *Penny Dreadful*, another television drama set in Victorian London, a series that brought the gothic creations of Victor Frankenstein, Dorian Gray, Dracula and others together in an imagined past. If the idea of the double is central to the gothic, then Dublin is perfectly cast to imitate its estranged big sister of London and IMMA a beguiling body double for a fine building from the English capital.

I journeyed back in time when I lived in Kilmainham, bringing to life a girl who moved



through three cities to womanhood and life as a photographer, in a drama peopled with opera singers, criminals, orchid lovers, clothes hunters and queer uncles. This still evolving novel is a space where identities are never singular, are always plural, and can ever be seen in a different light.

Though the idea of Esther, a double in a way for some of the characters in the novel, was born in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, it was in the grounds of IMMA that she was given her full name; Esther Raquel Minsky. ‘Hysterical Minsky’; named for the hysterics, some of the most famous of whom were framed in photographs from Pitié-Salpêtrière University Hospital in Paris where Freud once trained under Charcot. Named for how I love the word ‘mince’ that is sometimes used to talk about some gay men and can take the form of a verb, a noun, an adjective: to mince, a mince, minced. Minsky. Only later did I remember all the Esthers that lay behind her name, chief amongst them the great Yiddish actress Esther Rachel Kamińska, laid to rest in the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery where I spent one Sunday pulling up weeds.

On a morning in early winter, Esther wandered the grounds of IMMA and photographer Aniz Duran framed her again and again. Esther asleep beneath a cluster of mushrooms. Esther by the cemetery at Bully's Acre. Esther in a lilac shawl and a long, colourful dress, with a basket of flowers on her arm and the hands of the great clock of the Royal Hospital frozen behind her. It was November, the month of the dead.

The second time I saw Amanda Coogan's long yellow dress, the visual focal point of her 2008 performance *Yellow*, was more startling than the first. One afternoon she was there, washing out the great stretches of fabric, hands and floor covered in suds, her body strained with the tedium and frustration of the endless task, her pale thighs appearing when she lifted the cloth and shook it, and then she was gone. There was just the yellow dress left without a body inside it, making me think of all the empty pairs of shoes you find abandoned on the streets of Dublin. Bringing me once again to Freud's uncanny, "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar."

In Doireann O'Malley's *Prototypes I*, a male

who might once have appeared as female walks through Berlin. He lies on a couch that looks like one that once belonged to the father-in-law of Lucian Freud's mother, a woman who lies on a bed in another room in the gallery. I had seen this man and this couch and this city before, at another exhibition in the city, but still it kept me captive, pulled me back to it. Back to Berlin and eastward. Back to where Esther, and the ancestors of the Freuds came from. Once upon a time, in Europe.

It was in the grounds of IMMA also that Oscar first appeared, given life and brought to light by photographer Aniz Duran again. Oscar Esterson; son of Esther, or lover of Esther, or the male that Esther once was, might still be, sometimes. Oscar at harvest time. Oscar smoking a cigarette. Oscar, Esther and me; a set of Russian dolls, each living inside the other, layers of time and meaning accumulating as we passed, each day, through the tower gate.



# High-Temperature Visionary Obsessions: Towards an Aesthetic Theory of Fetishism

*Rosa Abbott*

The final scene of *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) has lingered long in filmic imagination. Norma Desmond, a former silent movie star, has shot dead the scriptwriter she hoped would bring about her comeback. Police interrogate her as she sits at her dressing table, gazing at her own reflection; she only agrees to exit her boudoir when she learns about the cameras gathered in the hall. Mistaking the amassed fleet of crime reporters for a Hollywood film crew, Norma slowly descends the staircase – illuminated at last by the cinematic spotlights she craves. Dripping with jewelled paillettes, and with a contorted expression on her face, Norma is at once regal and grotesque when she drifts towards the cameras and declares, “Alright Mr DeMille, I’m ready for my close-up.”

Some 25 years after Gloria Swanson's performance as Norma Desmond, the close-up – that pervasive shot where the camera gets close to the actor's skin, rendering their face supersized – was singled out by feminist film theory as the sexualising essence of cinema. In her 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey argues that close-ups destroy narrative and freeze action in a timeless gaze. They transform the actor into a set of dismembered body parts, rather than a complete human being. For Mulvey and her generation of post-war second-wave feminists, this fetishisation of film's female heroines is symptomatic of a wider culture of objectifying women, of watching them without their consent. Film, and in particular the close-up, has only allowed us to get closer to women's bodies, and this fetishisation creates the visual pleasure of cinema. Norma Desmond is acutely aware of this when she invites her close-up. A one-time star of the screen, she is using the camera to try and recapture her allure – or to convince herself she never lost it. In this, she captures the double burden of the fetishised woman: painful to bear the gaze, but even more painful to lose it. Yet, contrary to Mulvey's argument, could there be

a liberatory potential in fetishism as an aesthetic theory?

Anthropological in origin, the word ‘fetish’ has a troubling colonial history – originally used by European colonial forces to refer to what they considered the false icons worshipped by tribal people in West Africa. Most sources point to the Portuguese word ‘feitiço’ (spell), itself derived from the Latin ‘facticius’ (artificial) and ‘facere’ (to make). And so ‘fetishism’ is inherently bound up in artifice, unnaturalness, witchcraft and illusion, in making meaning through the construction or decoration of objects. In essence, it is about the perceived supernatural, spiritual or captivating effect of an object, particularly one that is man-made. While used in a derogatory sense by the colonialists, as a curator I can’t help but think there is a value in recognising the supernatural, talismanic properties of objects: isn’t that the ‘aura’ of the art object Walter Benjamin would later talk about? The idea of an object being able to captivate us, or unlock spiritual powers, has value.

From this anthropological root, the term ‘fetish’ promiscuously migrated into Marxism (‘the commodity fetish’, the illusory relationship

between an object and its production), and into psychoanalysis, where Freud argued it stemmed from the (almost always male) child's fear of castration after being confronted with their mother's lack of a penis. In *Stranger Faces* (2020), a book of speculative essays on the pleasures of looking at the face, fiction writer and critic Namwali Serpell makes the point that "in all three realms of knowledge, the fetish describes when something is lost or absent – our relationship to a god, to the conditions of production, or to an imagined phallus – and a significant object is recruited to stand in or make up for that loss or absence. So, a shiny statuette, an idol, stands in for a god; the shine of a commodity conceals the labour that produced it; the shine on a nose sparks arousal in a fetishist who associates it with a penis."

'Fetish' only began to be used in its contemporary erotic sense in the 1880s, with the publication of some of the foundational texts of sexology: Alfred Binet's *Le fétichisme dans l'amour* ('Fetishism in Love', 1887) and Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), one of the first serious investigations of sexual pathology, notable for coining the terms 'sadism' and 'masochism'.



In this context, fetishism refers to a fixation on a non-living object, non-genital bodypart or secretions – again, a stand-in for the loss of something else. Rubber, leather and latex all mimic but conceal skin; feet might give a glimpse of a person but not reveal their whole; watching someone smoke or apply lipstick might spark phallic associations, while tantalisingly removed from the act of fellatio. Again, it is associated with fragments, close-ups, removed elements, and artificial substitutes. It breaks a person down into their composite parts, as exemplified by the cinematic close-up Laura Mulvey argued against. This close-up might represent a form of oppression, of dehumanisation, or it might represent a transformation into something superhuman: true to the anthropological meaning of fetishism it might transform the subject into an ‘icon’, literally rendering them iconic.

In aesthetic terms, ‘fetish’ stands in opposition to ‘beauty’ which, in a Ruskinian or Victorian sense, relates to truth and wholeness; a moral language created by God. If beauty is truth and wholeness, then fetish is deception, duplicity and glamour. Beauty is a fresh face and pinched cheeks; fetish is drag. Beauty is a landscape painted *en plein*

*air*; fetish is the ambient glow of a neon light reflected in a puddle. Beauty is the classical nude, basking in its natural state; fetish is a humanising tangle of clothes to accompany a state of undress. (Think how a black velvet collar and basket of laundry transform Manet's *Olympia* from a Titian-inspired Venus into a contemporary prostitute.) Freud's concept of the fetish was articulated in response to his patients' weird and wonderful attachments, the non-normative nature of them and the arbitrariness of whether the objects of their fixations were conventionally attractive. In this sense, the fetish makes a space for the ugly to become desired, to disrupt the norms of what is beautiful or truthful, and to make space for bodily modification and transformation. Fetish celebrates the bizarre, the uncanny, the crooked, the misshapen, the non-normative, the queer, the perverse and the deviant.

In her 1967 essay *The Pornographic Imagination*, Susan Sontag draws a link between the visionary fervour of the 'religious imagination' and the 'energy and absolutism' of the pornographic imagination. Though the religious imagination is losing power, she argues, it remains one of the few roads to access "an imagination working in a

total way”, and thus lends its vocabulary to other attempts at ‘the total imagination’, including fetishism. In this sense, the fetishistic impulse is directly related to the “vast frustration of human passion and seriousness” left by religious decline (is it a coincidence that the concept of erotic fetishism emerges shortly after Nietzsche’s 1884 declaration that ‘God is dead’?). Pornography is not a response to ‘sexual damage’, Sontag argues, but to “the traumatic failure of modern capitalist society to provide authentic outlets for the perennial human flair for high-temperature visionary obsessions”.

Shouldn’t art create the space for ‘high-temperature visionary obsessions’? Georges Bataille, the philosopher and erotic writer discussed at length in *The Pornographic Imagination*, had a quip for that: “I defy any art lover to love a painting as much as a fetishist loves a shoe.” Fetishising people might carry a web of ethical issues, as feminist theory points out, but fetishism as an aesthetic approach might still offer radical potential. Rupturing constructed notions of what is truthful or beautiful, fetishism has the power to subvert standards of taste, and to travel to the extremities of lived existence, exploring

the marginal, obscure, perverse or dangerous and reporting back. As an aesthetic, it is artifice, not naturalism; depth, not breadth; actively constructing, not passively observing; close-ups, not grand narratives. Restoring power to images and objects, it uses material culture to access spiritual heights, embarking on a transcendental pursuit: one in which an enticing aesthetic universe is constructed not by God, but by the obsessive and visionary power of individual (or collective) imagination.



# The Piper's Grip

*Eimear Walshe*

There are no women here tonight.

The publican waits on the crowd assisted by his young son, who reaches to operate the taps with the aid of a footstool. The child takes my five pound note into his tiny hand. I ask after Áine, his eldest sister who usually works on a Saturday night. He says he is to make his First Holy Communion in the morning and his mother and sisters are occupied with preparations. I suppose that's where all the women are. He carefully places my lukewarm pint of stout and stack of change on the counter.

Jim, a long-time regular of the session, and already far along, is elbowing towards me. It has become my weekly task to deflect his petition for a song. I enjoy singing for my own amusement, but I am not sure that anything I know is up to scratch. Anyway, he thinks me very covetous for not sharing.

*Do they not teach you to sing in The Pale? Poor young lad.*

I jest with him until he becomes distracted. I am not here to sing. What I love to do is to watch, and to listen.

He catches me and pulls me over towards the players. They are midway through a set of reels and Jim presses me in among them. I hold my pint with both hands, to feel occupied. Though the line between players and listeners shifts constantly, with instruments appearing and retiring in cycles, I cannot stand to be in the middle of it.

I keep my head down through the reels and a rowdy slip jig. Jim sets into one of his endlessly long comedic ballads, riddled with double entendre, wordplay and various kinds of nonsense that stirs jeering and whoops from the men, who join in for the chorus. I am very fond of Jim but I find this kind of thing a bit mortifying and look forward to the drawn out notes that signal the end is coming.

I had not noticed the elderly man sitting beside me until he began to dress himself in a very

strange contraption: a many-limbed article of leather, wood and brass. He fixed this item to his body with a leather strap around the waist and another under the bicep, and in doing so he set a reverent hush among the men. Blow-in though I am, I know this old man with his starched shirt and wool suit is not from the village.

*What is that?* I mouth to Jim. He says nothing and points back to the man.

Slight and dignified, the old man sits upright beside me, his soft grey hair combed back behind his ears. He raises his right hand and places it in his mouth to put some spit on his long fingers. This he transfers down onto a wooden pipe of about fifteen inches held on his lap, sliding his dampened fingers across the seven holes along the front of the pipe, and thumbing some onto the hole at the back.

He adjusts his posture and wraps both hands around the rod. His shoulders drop, and his wrists tilt inwards, allowing his fingers to stretch, for the broader pads to cover the holes. This is not the dainty finger-tip grip of the penny whistle, but something more of a softwristed wranglehold.



The base of the pipe he holds is pressed firmly to his knee at a cocked angle. Behind this, an ornate cluster of longer pipes lies across his lap. Each component is draped or hangs about him, with the entire form of him seemingly inclined to cradle the thing.

A few flaps of his elbow start up a deep continuous HURRRR sound emitting from the instrument. His body undulates, and another higher melodic voice cuts in with a slow air. The melody seems to emerge from the fingering of the pipe, thumbing the hole at the rear, and jerking up the entire piece from the knee with a flick of the wrist. All the while his face holds a sombre and open expression, like someone who has just asked a question and is listening out for the response.

The pipe in his hands is fed wind from above which streams in from a bag through a swan's neck of leather. This bag under his left arm is fed, in turn, by a bellows strapped to the right arm, the entire operation like a set of lungs, only if lungs ventilated in series rather than in unison. He stares into the distance and blinks slowly, the pad of his ring finger quivering over the second last

hole creating a long gut-wrenching vibrating call. Jim gives me a nudge to draw my attention to this part, as though I am n't already riveted.

The old man was only warming up, as it turns out. He transitions into a jig of considerable pace, lifting some of the men off their seats, and into embrace and collision, a few attempting the Siege of Ennis on the small free space on the lino.

I can pay no attention to the commotion. The white of the webs between his stretched fingers flash at me, the long bones inside his hands protruding and vanishing beneath his skin. He plays quite vigorously now, the pipe bouncing and whipping up off his knee, his elbow pumping and pumping frantically to fill the bag again as soon as it goes slack. His face betrays nothing of the whirlwind around him.

I notice a smell emitting from the instrument, potent and heady and hard to name. The smell of sweat-blotted leather, the musk of wood, the blood-bitter metal, but then another sweet, dusty smell pushed out from the blind space inside the bag through the air circulation: the smell of the man himself, and the places he has played before.

I count the pipes. Six lie across his lap, the longest with a curved end. He hammers a rhythmic accompaniment upon the topmost three of these by slapping the butt of his hand against the stepped rows of brass levers. Six pipes, and a seventh held upright, but I am sure that more than seven voices call from inside the instrument.

I close my eyes and hear an engine labouring, an organ murmuring, a gate creaking, a distant train, a hound yelping, a turkey scrambling, a curlew stuttering, hooves thundering, a mill wheel churning, a stomach rumbling, a deluge gurgling, and the voice of some wild and starved beast, beyond the description of any myth, heaving and gurning, bellowing and choking on its own spittle.

He might have taken flight with the flapping of his elbow. The sounds of his trilling and warbling flush together, he produces embellishments on the double, the triple, and four times over, in movements barely visible to the eye. His jaw is set out to the side and his eyes turned to heaven as his finishing notes blast through the onlookers.

When this was all done the men flew into a sensational applause. He gave no smile back

to them, but a quiet nod. Moments later, the instrument was unbuckled and stowed away, and the man gone from beside me.

*He's something else isn't he? Says Jim. We're lucky to get him in once a year, he'll be moving on again now to grace some other locality. I remember the first time I heard him...*

Jim's chat fades from my mind. My eyes wander around the jostling crowd, the stained wood and stained glass, signs for drink and fags. I stare down at my own pint, still near full, and finally my eyes fix on the door the old man passed through only moments ago. I stand up, and without another thought, I rush off after him into the night.



# Household God

*Isadora Epstein*

**THE WORSHIPFUL:** Today, I want to talk to you about Household Gods  
I have been spending a lot of time indoors, at home recently  
In the past, I tried to always be out and about: very busy & very important!  
Admittedly, I did not take the time to get to know my own Household God  
or *Lar* as they are talked about in Ancient Rome

The Ancient Romans were always very worshipful of their Household Gods or their *Lares*  
The Ancient Roman domestic dedication to their *Lares* was why the Romans were so successful and  
conquered everything!  
Now I am also very Successful & Conquering.  
How do I do it?

As a BIG SUCCESS,  
I want to share my success with you, to give advice on how to get to know your own Household God!  
We will even hear from my own Household God, Larry

Before I met Larry, I knew I was doing something wrong with my Household:

-The drain kept blocking  
-My flatmate regularly confused objects  
which were not ashtrays for ashtrays  
We lacked a certain piety,  
a cleanliness that might be next to Godliness?  
A lot of things were sticky  
Also, my key stopped working in the front door

One night, wiggling the key around for an hour  
I kneeled in humility at the door  
I pleaded for entrance  
*I was so pathetic*  
I did not expect sympathy and locksmiths are so expensive!  
Then Larry's voice resounded through the keyhole—

**LARRY:** I am the emblem of hospitality and good housekeeping  
Right now I am standing on your Table  
So winsomely  
In my long sash  
In my ancient laurels

## Household God

I carry cakes!  
I gracefully grasp grapes!  
Frequently, I hold whole horns of plenty  
Plenty would be a big interest of mine:  
Plenty!  
Pulchritude!  
Politeness!  
But not property  
No, never property.  
Frankly, greed bores me.  
I am *not* your Landlord  
I am your Household God!!!  
I don't own things, I just benevolently rule over them  
Here is my big dominion:  
Cutlery, Cut Flowers, Guests  
I am in cahoots with pets and also pests:  
Fruit flies are my battalion!  
Cats pee where I bid them!

It is fitting that I who stand on your table should be your guardian:  
Terrifying to strangers  
Or Gentle and Mild to the Holy and the Just  
For as you see years, I see but moments:  
Libations overturned, the oil, lit and spreading  
Here is some advice:  
All I want is persons to be dutiful

I am always just looking to see how dutiful you are:  
If you eat your meals at reasonable times  
I like square meals at square tables

This is not a threat but  
*Things could go well or they could stop going well.*  
Grime goads me!  
Mildew makes me morose!  
I serve but also can be served  
because I am the creator of all the well being and all of the Gifts of Fortune  
How do you get my gifts?  
Well, there are certain Offerings  
That I like laid at my feet  
In the Past  
I demanded more barbarous bites:  
Hogs sacrificed at public crossroads  
But now at home, here on your table  
All I ask for is:  
-Wine, Incense, the heads of young poppies  
Sometimes even humble images of straw will suffice!

**THE WORSHIPFUL:**

Thanks Larry!

Isn't it nice to know how easy it is to hold a household well?

This Winter, really get to know your own Household God

And big success and conquests will come your way!





## Bed Text

*Joseph Noonan-Ganley*

The Book: The book arrives aged, brown and dogeared. My handling transforms it further: notes, messy and expressive lines, stars, exclamation marks and arrows in black ballpoint Bic; folded corners of the top and bottom of many key pages.

The Plane in The Book: The military aeroplane was chartered for civilian use. Upon the erroneous descent in poor weather conditions, its wings and tail section were smashed off. The remaining section of the fuselage was further wrecked when it fell onto the mountain top.

The Beds in The Plane in The Book: The interior of the fuselage was full of loose materials, broken and dead bodies. Plastic and metal panels, seats, insulation, clothes, aeroplane fuel, blood, electrical wires – everything was violently dislocated. Materials from this mess were

deconstructed and processed by the survivors in order to make enough beds for them all.

The Reader of the Beds in The Plane in The Book: The irony of thinking and reading about beds in the cold and formal archive reading room of Leeds University Library<sup>1</sup> is not lost on me. The tension is generative – difference provides the opportunity for escape. Mentally inhabiting the beds, and their associations, while physically prohibited from getting into bed, provides some transgressive enjoyment and exercise in joining in with the book. Reading in my bed did not help me bridge the gap with the beds of the survivors. It is the inhabitation of reading and re-reading that afforded me this.

On Friday 13th October 1972 the Fairchild F227 aeroplane carrying a team of Uruguayan rugby players crashed in the sub-zero Andes. The survival of sixteen boys after seventy-two days became a global sensation. Speculation on how it

was possible without a source of food fuelled the attention. Despite hordes of journalists jostling to talk to the boys, English author Piers Paul Read succeeded in making contact. He reached out to create a shared textual space (letters, transcripts of interviews, etc), using his experience as an author to document their experience on the mountain. The resulting book *Alive*<sup>2</sup> produced a continuation of the boys' experience. A growth upon it, necessitated by the world's demand to know the details of how they ate their dead friends.

This method of reaching out, and of growth, can be perpetuated. I want to reach out to Read's book and create an extension with my desire and hopeful speculation. The space I make will be like a bed, inspired and drawn from the numerous beds the boys made on the mountain. I want to make room for myself in Read's book. As close to pillow talk with the boys as I will ever get. Read's text was written 48 years ago, the boys are 67–78 years old now, but will always be in their late teens and mid-twenties in the book. I can visit them there because they are not able to leave on their own. Although I don't feel them as passive objects, they are somewhat lodged without proper

agency in my life: on my bookshelf, awaiting visitation; in my bags, serving as my companions. From the book they are unable to speak back to me with any other words than those cast in the narrative of Read's text, fixed in ink on paper. Despite this, alternative lives for the boys are triggered by my presence and attention. I conspire to collaborate and produce amendments, animations and manipulations – all necessary preoccupations to make space for myself in the boys' beds.

Bed making as a structure of living is not a widely practiced experiment. The surviving boys that I can find information on (many have published memoirs) went home to forget the beds that they had innovated and shared with their male teammates, to recreate normal nuclear families. While on the mountain, however, they made at least three different types of bed, three different models of communal sleeping that drum up homosexual desire in me. When reading about their beds I feel the boys in them, spooning tightly, holding onto to each other to decrease the gaps between themselves. Awkwardly rolling over, torment arising from closeness or distance. I think about them thinking about each other's

movements and touch, how they likely spent a great deal of time guessing what these may mean in terms of need, affection or love. This naturally leads me to think that I am in bed, which involuntarily motivates my feelings and my body. I cannot help it. This is how I make images and texts meaningful. The book peels away, I stop seeing and sensing my surroundings, as I feel the encounter take hold.

Most of their beds were made inside the fuselage, which accommodated all the initial survivors: twenty-six boys and two women. In one section, eight lay head to toe. The arc of the plane's hull cupped their bodies together under a communal patchwork quilt made of layered coats and other clothes pulled apart at the seams so as to cover a maximum flat surface area. The textiles overlapped, their intersections minimising gaps and openings that threatened the temperature of the bed. The bed had strips of metal, suitcase covers, the backs of broken seats and other rigid and flat objects as its base, raising them above the gully of fluid at the bottom of the fuselage. In order to make a bridge with this bed-of-eight-boys I made a list of some experiences they may have had:

- Speaking to someone who isn't listening. They are not hearing. Nothing enters their ears. They are asleep, or have disappeared for some other reason.
- Anticipation of sex. Seeking bed because they seek sex. Being in bed may be an assumed signal of possible positive sexual reception.
- Relieving themselves of wanting to have sex. Being bored of sex in bed because it has led to sexual norms.
- Enjoyment of the horizontality of the bed. The boundary between horizontal and vertical polices the types of expectations while in these states; when horizontal one may be passive while when vertical activity is required.
- Refuge from the relentless labour of consciousness. Slumber. (Slumber sounds deeper than sleep. Is slumber a safer refuge than sleep?)
- Speaking while asleep. Answering those who are awake while half asleep. Half speaking.
- The sick bed: waking to return home to their bodies, their ailments and pain. Falling asleep to relieve themselves of their body's management.

The destruction from the wreckage was furthered by the boys' daily activities: decomposing material remains and processing them to solve practical problems (seat covers turned into blankets, pilot's manual cover turned into the lenses for sunglasses). The beds were made of the plane and the plane itself became a sort of communal nest. They designed beds to hang directly above those on the floor using webbing, straps, poles, nozzles and caps that previously held a wide range of cargo in this military aeroplane (chartered privately for the boys' rugby match in Santiago, Chile).

On an expedition three of the boys slept together in one sleeping bag, in a pile, directly on top of each other. Only the middle one maintained any heat, so they rotated throughout the night. Upholstery, cushion covers, aeroplane insulation, scraps of material stripped off the insides of suitcases, electrical wires – everything was used to put this sleeping bag together. Most of the front or the back of their bodies must have been in direct contact with each other's (excluding their clothes) in this pile of boys. Picture the boy on the bottom, whose body is both suffering from the cold of the mountain beneath him and the



weight of his comrades on top. If I was in this pile I would wonder about which way I was facing the other boys. If I was facing one of them our genitals would likely be pressed together. If we faced each other's backs, we would have one of the other boys' genitals pressed into our asses (apart from the bottom one). Whoever is in the middle would not only have the erotic protrusion into his ass but also be the provider of this lump for the boy on top (or bottom). There is no final configuration in my mind – I continue to turn us around, playfully, not knowing the outcome, like the rotation of the attached but moving parts of a Rubik's cube for those who do not know a strategy to the solution. Each new composition produces different effects, and feelings, which signal new dilemmas for the boys and myself.

Despite most of the space in the plane being a bed, the division between bed and non-bed was breached (therefore reinforced) regularly. Having the system of passing the bottle of piss from one to another until it reached the entrance did not stop some of the boys wetting their beds. While invalidated and depressed other boys refused to leave and therefore had to piss inside the plane. Wetting the bed can be more public than wetting

yourself. It has the possibility to wet others, and to catch their attention when cleaning up. During a period of a lack of motivation Canessa took to defecating onto a blanket on a rugby shirt inside the fuselage. There are plenty of examples of ways that these boys have had to refashion their rugby culture but Canessa's inside toilet seems different. It is direct and explicit, like burning a flag – it is reactionary. Rendering their collective uniform into a receptacle for his faeces is a spectacularly nihilistic gesture that relegates his life as a rugby player as having no better use than a toilet.

The boys' lives on the mountain were saved by their innovative beds – by sleeping together. The rugby players did not intend on sleeping together for seventy-two nights, they were surprise bedfellows. Regardless of their lack of intention I assume the experience changed them, generated something unexpected, something different in them. The boys encountered new forms of community and intimacy over and above that which they were familiar with on the rugby pitch. They invented complex sleeping patterns designed around personal friendships, social allegiances, medical needs, expeditions and trust. Arturo, when half in a coma slept in Pedro's arms;

Inciarte was Paez's sleeping partner; Fito, Eduardo, Daniel, Fernandez and Gustavo slept together; Canessa and Mangino; Algorta with Turcatti or Delgado and Sabella slept with Vizintin. Carlitos had the job of shutting the homemade door when everyone was inside in exchange for a warm spot next to Inciarte.

They resemble sailors in the photos they took of each other, not only because of the appropriated pilot's hat that has nautical associations but because of the intimate relationships they had established to their environment. This is especially visible in the photos they took of each other in the shared bed in the hull of the aeroplane. Four boys sit upright with their backs to the outer wall of the fuselage, facing another four. The eight boys interlock their legs below the shared blanket. Their arrangement is similar to the seating plan in a boat. They are assembled; ready for travel to begin. They invented their shared rules and responsibilities on the hoof. This is one difference between the life of a rugby player and the life of a sailor – the extent that the sailor lives with other sailors and the necessity to participate in shared everyday duties. Each of the boys were allocated certain tasks (overseeing equal distribution of

food, preparing food, sourcing water etc), through collective decision-making.

The boys' beds were a shared apparatus of sex: they said they had no desire for sex when they were awake, but in their dreams they met their lovers. As cannibals, and as survivors, they are captive in their type cast. In my version of events the beds are the boys' technology of escape, their transportation away from the mountain, and out of the book. In each other's arms, in their dreams, in death, or finally in Read's book, while in bed they can all find escape routes. I want to aid them to continue to live in vicarious, unknown ways, as they have aided me and I have lived through them. As sleepers, dreamers and sexual beings I feel them, and therefore they continue to live.

1. I've come to this library to visit the archived correspondence, interview tapes, transcripts, manuscript edits and drafts surrounding Piers Paul Read's 1973 book *Alive: They Overcame the Impossible by Doing the Unthinkable*.
2. Read, Piers Paul. (1973) *Alive: They Overcame the Impossible by Doing the Unthinkable*. Mandarin, London. Ridinghouse.



Cover

*Family Hour*: oil on canvas, 2017,  
70x100cms

Page 04

*Bone Digger*: gouache on fabriano, 2020,  
29x42cms

Page 06

*Typhonian Highlife*: oil on board, 2017,  
80x60cms

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*Mask*: oil on canvas, 2019, 18x24cms

Page 08

*The Chaos*: oil and gouache on fabriano,  
2020, 70x100cms

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*Disturbed Brains*: oil and gouache on  
fabriano, 2021, 70x100cms

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*Mountains*: oil and gouache on fabriano,  
2020, 70x100cms

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*Tinfoil Figure*: oil on board, 2017,  
80x60cms

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*Raku*: gouache on fabriano, 2020,  
29x42cms

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*Ways of Telling*: oil and gouache on Arches,  
2021, 56x76cms

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*Wizard*: oil and gouache, 2020,  
70x100cms

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*The Vision*: oil and gouache on fabriano,  
2020, 70x100cms

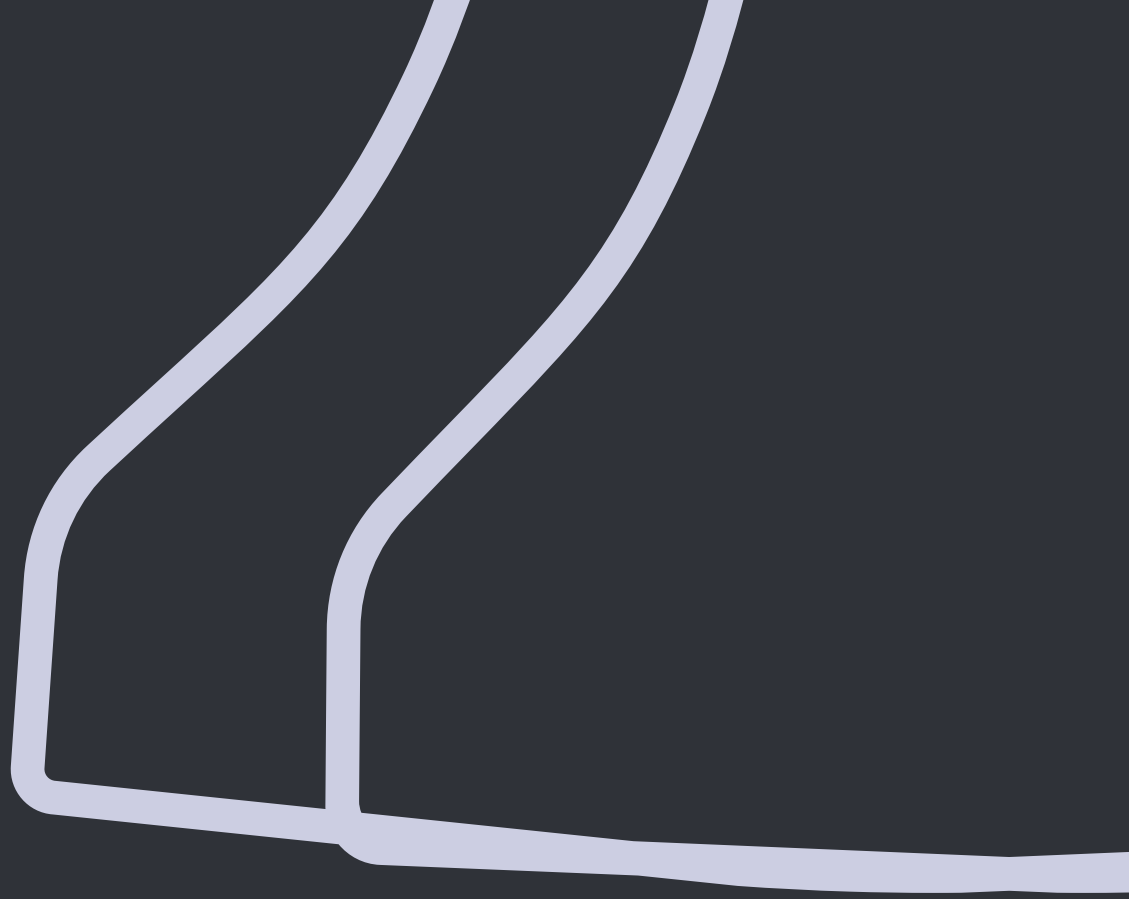
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*Study One*: gouache on fabriano, 2020,  
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