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Fan Wu on Yan Wen Chang

32 Failed Fouettés *Ad Nauseam* (for Yan Wen Chang)

I am searching for an origin story that's athletic enough to bear the momentum of the life that came after.

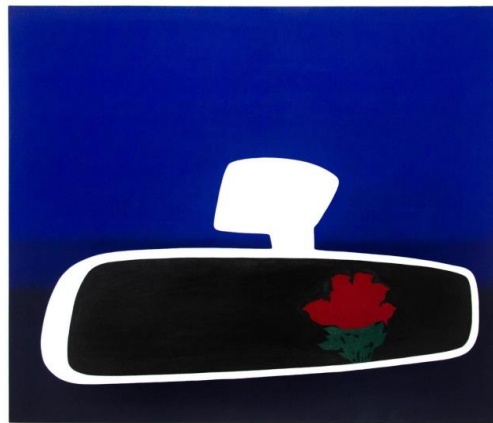
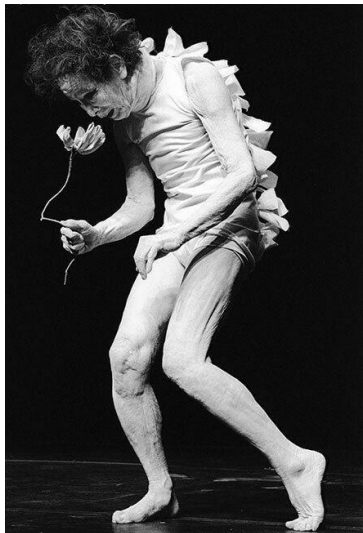
In the beginning there was black and white with no baggage nor moral valuation: just the hard, simple fact of contrast – a first awareness of difference.

It's only having lived through all that dark bullshit that hope shows, in stark relief.

As summer lies latent in winter, as fruit lies in seed, the good girl lays latent in the bad girl, passed out beneath bouquets of cash.

In my mind's eye I contrast the trained body of the prima ballerina, who launches herself on one foot for thirty-two exhausting rotations, with the body of the butoh dancer, whose energy drives inward like a collapsed star. Extroversion and implosion – the diva and the corpse.

They throw a bouquet to Kazuo Ohno and he plucks a rose from the rest. In this way an earnest red pierces through the wash.



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A wall of black stars obscures a multicolour form, as if abstract expressionism became suddenly shy and barred out its own features.

“A star can fold over, placing a skin of the star there, in the small of his back in the heat.”

My sister Lina tells me: *Yan's paintings are silent from afar in their austerity, but when you get up close to them you can hear a motorcycle rumbling.*

I am leaving the life.

They get off it then get on it again then get off *ad nauseam*. They say they're going to get help but sometimes help looks like coming back around. We tell them we “get it” but sometimes we get off on it, all that's abject, otherwise how could we live this life out? We get that bag and when the going gets good we're set for months.

When the going gets bad we bottle our stories in hushed tones.

“For anyone becomes courageous who observes someone despairing. To encourage someone in despair – everyone thinks himself strong enough for that.” - Fred Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

I speak of destiny to smear pity out of the picture.

I place a bouquet of borderless flowers in a vase on my table.

I have nothing else to offer except an arrangement of objects in enclosed space.

What's the cost of playing both *witness* and *victim*? Caught in the undertow of necessity, you're in the midst of it and outside yourself at the same time.

The white die always lands on snake eyes.

I worry that we funnel our taboo addictions into the socially sanctioned addiction of work. I walk around the world trying to relax & play with everyone like a little prophet of leisure. The American

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Dream, no less than shooting up or snorting down, proffers itself as a plug for our life's existential hole.

Swan Lake opens up a twelve-step rehab program for workaholics. Every attempted fouetté ends in a ballerino's wilting. Every rigid plié an occasion for turning butterfly.

“A fantasy can fold over, placing a skin of the fantasy there, in the small of his back in the heat.”

I love to ride shotgun, to be assigned duties of navigation and wakeful company; to hold the gun in my back pocket and smile for the authorities; to drive twenty hours to Halifax or minutes to the bar, infused with the feeling of eternal life across the expanding horizon and the surround of total death.

For my love of playing shotgun shorty, and because every time I die in a dream it's in a car crash, I'm never getting a driver's license.

The loneliness of men, the smell of cash plastic collecting dust – fryer grease and four fingers on each hand counting the thumbs – everyone you meet has a puppet for a nervous system, each string rigged to the electroshock machine.

In Martin Arnold's Disney remix films, the dismembered mouths-eyes-hands of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse are caught in half-second loops that advance in time only when they've been exhausted. Tortured into a senseless & syncopated repetition, a crystal of pure time appears, extracted from their imprisonment.

Cartoon bodies are immortal like our bodies felt in our twenties; they can be distended, melted into marrow, milked dry for pleasure, explode into death and from death rise again into undying flesh.



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The interludes etch themselves onto memory more forcefully than violence.

{Objects in the mirror are closer to the heart than they appear.}

But the life has not left me.

“A loneliness can fold over, skin to star to fantasy, in the small of his back in the heat.”

Put this on my gravestone: *too nice to be a bad bitch, too bad to be [text faded by time]*