Dark Pool Party

Hannah Black

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DARK POOL PARTY

Press For Service

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"The work is not an autobiography."

Leslie Feinberg

Why write life as fiction? We were maybe one-third of the
way through *Stone Butch Blues* before we realized it was a
novel. In an interview Leslie Feinberg said, "I have had a much
richer, fuller life than Jess." Moved to defend Jess against her
creator, we cradle our image of Jess, which is also the back
cover image of Feinberg, close to our heart. What could be a
richer or fuller life than the fullness of longing, than the ruin
of being a man/being a woman? Why write life as fiction?

> A fictional character stands in a room at a window
> smoking a cigarette and directing exhaled smoke
> out of the window. People pass by in winter clothes,
> on bikes or on foot. The character feels how the eye
> receives each passing figure like woman, man,
> woman, woman, woman—a split second of cognitive
> sorting that the character resents, a little, and is
> awed by, a little, silently sorting the passersby into
> the four basic categories of M, F, unknown, and baby.

These thoughts feel like factory thoughts, as one might sort
nuts and bolts dividing each into each, fast-moving hand like
the will of a totally degraded god. All that is left of the gods
is their power of division

> In general, a line drawing would be better than
> writing to express the movements and the experi-
> ences of these passé gods

The character is an accumulation of the character's encounters with the world, which in reality are zero, because the character cannot go anywhere without its writer, has no register of meaninglessness. Its meaning is not lifelike. The character must be the accumulation of my encounters with the world and the fullness of the life of the character must correspond to an equal thinness in the writer's life

> The character steals my thoughts or I donate my
> thoughts to the character because what else am
> I going to do with them I don't wear dresses I
> don't wear baseball caps I don't wear skin I don't
> wear history

The character thinks of the character's body as an uneven surface on which gender seeps in or disperses, collects in pools like water in the creases of a tarp: the chest is saturated with gender, obviously, but the elbows get off lightly; the jaw, undoubtedly, but what about the eyes? An image in the mind's eye of the character: a sheet pulled taut on a bed

> The blank surface that we will dig our fingertips
> into in order to make enough texture for fiction

The character's eyebrows are unkempt, for days or years now the character has not noticed

The first thing that arrives of the character is the words we will use. That's because we can't write fiction

> These are the four genders: male, female, unknown,
> and baby. There are five genders: male, female,
> unknown, baby, and black. There are no genders.
> There are no characters. There are no black peo-
> ple in Berlin or there are no black people in the
> art department or there are no black people in the
> room. In this case the sum of zero can mean any-
> thing from one or two to several hundred thou-
> sand. Whatever, who cares about the room! Who
> cares about the art department! Who cares about

Berlin! We are all on the internet now. We are all
on Tinder or its cis male supremacist counter-
part Grindr. The first question the character is
asked by the men on their dating app of choice is:
where are you from? The second question is: are
you a man or a woman? Yes, says the character, or,
no, depending on the character's mood. The women
say nothing or are polite. There are only two
genders on the popular dating app. There are like
seven thousand on Facebook but the character
quit Facebook eighteen months ago and only uses
an impoverished account to manage a company
page for work and find people to have or not have
sex with

The character's moon conjoins the character's Chiron, which
means an open wound on the moon, which means the char-
acter doesn't know how to write fiction. This is a small step
for one wound, a giant leap for woundkind. The character is
formless and nameless, the character is concentrated into
the gesture of smoking and looking out of a window, or are
those two gestures, standing and smoking and looking, or are
those three, smoking standing looking thinking, four? The
question of what's a gesture and what's a subset of a gesture
is as complex or more complex than this process—woman,
man, baby, unknown, black—but the life of gesture has yet to
come and even the wildest sci-fi struggles to describe a world
in which the first interpretation is nothing like race/gender

> Dead is not a gender because you bear a gender
> even in death: beloved wife, devoted husband, the
> character once pissed in a cemetery in an emer-
> gency, whispering to the ground all the while,
> *I'm sorry*

The harder I try to keep myself from becoming the charac-
ter the more the character becomes a white woman, as

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if that is the destiny of characters in the age of the famous
TV show *Girls*

The four genders of character are: pretext, archetype, self,
and fantasy. Some real people have the capacity to desire
the people they invent. Once, coming late into a class at film
school, the character realized within ten or twenty seconds
that the students were discussing real people, not characters.
This was because the students hesitated, they searched for
the right word, they hovered respectfully or resentfully at
the threshold of the description as if following the rules of
an unfamiliar house, as if taking off outer clothing and shoes

The character cannot be a baby because the rules of the
house of babies seem so complicated and long lost... The
character cannot be a woman because the word "she"
drags centuries of kitsch behind it... The character cannot
be a man because there is a shame in always defaulting
to the regal "he," the writer hides the writer's face in it...
The character cannot be unknown because the task of
writing is to know something... But maybe each moment
of writing is an opportunity to know less and less... Maybe
writing becomes more and more like itself, like writing, like
the autobiography of writing... Leslie Feinberg says, "This
is not an autobiography," then later dies. The character
says, "This is the language planet," to the character's grand-
father. The grandfather held the character as a baby and
melted down his planetary grief on the warmth of the baby's
breath until it flowed like blood into the baby, helping to
transform the baby into a "her," for which the character
remains furious and grateful

This is not an autobiography, this is not a pipe, this is not the
internet, etc. A mystical tradition the character knows very
little about says god is a thing that both is and is not itself,

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and is and is not nothing, and is and is not everything. God
is not an autobiography, but nor is race or gender, though
they threaten at all times to become the full extent of one

   The gender of the universe is a single human life
The character opens a gchat box and types to a close friend,
"The amazing thing about *Stone Butch Blues* is the vividness
of the descriptions of violence and the aftermath of violence"

       The character notes that literally every word is
       misspelled but presses return anyway in the hope
       of being understood
The character writes in the gchat box: "it's like someone
writing from inside the place of their forgetfulness"
presses return

       writes "someone who doesn't know how to forget"
minutes pass then in a sudden moment of embarrassment
the character types, "I always forget it's fiction," and then
draws a sad face with punctuation

Perhaps the character is one hundred years old and a man,
and we have still not fully rescued the character from the
endless plain of whiteness

       because the character is how we have received
       them, all that is left of the character is the
       character's powers of division
The character's skin darkens almost to black at the creases

       The shame of invention is like the shame of being
The character stands at the window as a rebuke to me,
frozen in the one unified gesture I have yet been able to
give him, her, them, the baby

       Sarah Harrison said, don't think of it as fiction,
       think of it as lies about the truth
What useful lies can I tell

       The character becomes a woman between the
       hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The character can tell
       she's a woman from the way that others seem

to anticipate that she will do as they say. Perhaps
this state of being-woman is like being a switch or
button with a polite sign above it saying PRESS
FOR SERVICE and the state of being-man is like
being a lever behind glass to be touched only in
emergencies. Would the character no longer be
compelled to try to love men sometimes if men
were only a button?
Perhaps the character could inhabit a world in which it
would be finally possible to really write fiction, but the char-
acter only dares to even imagine that world at three o'clock
in the morning, the witching hour of being a woman

    Someone else in the room says to the character,
    don't cry, and until now I didn't know that the
    character was crying. I'm crying because I'm happy,
    the character says. I'm crying because I'm unhappy,
    the character says
the character turns around they are hugely pregnant
    the character has a tattoo saying FTP that the
    character's friend did when the character was
    in school
the character is eight or nine people looking encouragingly
at you while you discuss your experience of taking hormones
or growing very old or living on less than £30 a week
    the character is fully cognizant of the complexities
    of the situation but wants to go out dancing anyway
the character is bleeding out in the stairwell
    the character is on my clit
the character is thin
    the character is loosely based on your mother
the character is relatable
    the character has no money or a million US
    dollars, it's easy
the character is all the love the character wasted over time,
expressed as a number

the character is still pretty young relative to people
who are dead
We leave the room the cigarette the manifold gesture, the
street or we are left with only the room the cigarette the
manifold gesture the street without the momentary coher-
ence the character promised to give it just by appearing or
appearing to stand in it

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ARCADIA_MISSA   DOMINICA

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