

“Poésie du Théâtre”

The bed is a deeply personal space - the platform upon which we experience some of our most intimate moments and indulge ourselves in the pleasures and challenges of dreams, fantasy, sex, and philosophy. In this space, we are our most vulnerable - sometimes to others, but always to ourselves. This vulnerability is born of the nature of the bed, which requires for all its activities that we be exposed to the deepest, rawest part of ourselves - the unadulterated desires that remain unscathed by the moral and social restrictions of society. This freedom to abandon normative constraints and become whatever characters we see fit for each given dream, fantasy, or sexual encounter is at the heart of my interpretation of the bed as a “theater”.

Inspired by my personal reaction to Marquis de Sade’s *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, I wish to examine the varying ways in which the bed presents itself as a theater or stage, and additionally exalt the benefits and pleasures that can be realized by treating the bed as such. In *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, the bed is overtly displayed as both a grounds for controversial, and often contradictory, philosophical musing, as well as well as a realm of complete sexual and moral freedom. Both of these presentations require the participants to strip themselves of their socially acceptable exteriors and dive head first into their uncensored opinions and feelings. In the theater of the bed, philosophical musings often merge with sexuality, allowing us to explore the realm of arousal with our most powerful erotic organ - the mind. Sade challenges us to consider the possibility that often the most arousing things are those that are not permitted or are considered “unnatural” according to publicly expressed values. Although he extends this to the extremes of sexual sadism, the important assertion is that when we consider the bed to be a stage, we can ignore the expectations of society and express our most primal and uncivilized urges without the negative consequences.

While the circumstance of several characters interacting during the course of *Philosophy in the Boudoir* lends itself to more obvious application to a “theater”, a single mind can participate in the theater of the bed alone. Through the removal of societal and moral pressures, whether consciously chosen or forced by the unrestricted nature of dreams, the individual’s desires, reflections, and fantasies are cast upon the stage, and he becomes both actor and audience. The inherent safety and privacy of the bed allows us to examine questionable thoughts and experiences without fearing the judgment of our peers. Furthermore, the screen of the theater allows us to explore the depths of our beings without compromising our moral and social appropriateness or our self-concept.

If we accept these reflections on the nature of the bed as a theater, then we cannot disagree that this environment is perfectly suited for the creation of uninhibited art. Ideas are their freest, desires their most potent, and restraints are minimal. In light of these exemplary conditions, I decided to experiment with writing poetry from my bed - from the theater - without pausing amidst scrawls to consider appropriateness or tact, in an attempt to create art that would transcend my moral boundaries. In the end, I produced four poems that I feel address and illustrate the bed as theater.

The first poem, "Wounds", is an uncomfortable confrontation with the image of a dead chipmunk on a sidewalk that would not leave my mind's eye as I attempted sleep. The image conjured up disagreeable emotions, and I was compelled to examine the philosophical implications of death, wounds, pain, and silence.

Wounds

The chipmunk, with his vacant eyes,
that flat across the pathway lies,
and lies to me with peacefulness -
that something there is quite serene
and settles, settles
as time sleeps,
as grains of sand on tired dunes
that living things have yet to touch -
That time and passing leave unscathed
like wounds unprodded left to heal,
or fester - whichever pleasure brings -
That chipmunk, with his eternal dreams,
I gently left to acorn fields
and passed, in musing larger things.

This next poem is also a confrontation with uncomfortable emotions, however, it falls in the realm of sexually deviant desires that are not socially acceptable, and therefore are generally relegated to only the most intimate fantasy settings. The poem, although crafted as to be slightly humorous, is also intended to illustrate the isolation created by culturally unacceptable sexual urges.

A Sexual Masochist Reads Sade in the Bathtub

trembling,
dying to be taught and made to feel -
wanton, yes, but voiceless by default.
Cool drops of water slither down the skin,
begging asylum from the wretch.

Trembling,
searching fingers hiding,
seeking - empty hand returns again.
All is shadows cast by milky light
on eyelids closed and naked shaking.
The moon creeps in hopes of peeking at the scene.
Ah, moon - if you could read the lines and mind
and slap her wrists,
all could be blush tremble gasp and death.

The third poem, entitled “The Sandman-ifesto” celebrates the bed-theater in terms of dreams and their exciting and liberating, although often terrifying or uncomfortable, possibility to escape reality. Dreams are most akin to the conventional sense of the theater, as we are (in most cases) merely actors, not very much in control of the plot, characters, or setting. In my personal opinion, dreams tap into deep and often repressed urges that lose their conscious availability due to the suffocating influence of moral and cultural codes.

The Sandman-ifesto

They had all been speaking in magnets and arrows - I grew tired
and felt the night boiling
beyond the window.
Dusk - the cool parade,
ether,
the purple fog.
The nostalgia of the clock hands,
sangfroid of the sleepy birds.
All is quiet, All is building.
Sleep, little grenade, and do not lament the missing of your pin.
The dawn returns it in her sticky dew.
tick, tick.

All is cool and ready now -
the crocodiles' eyes pop through the downy mud
the man with the napalm can begins his chase
bunnies cast their dreamy eyes like hooks,
beckoning with their softness.
Come play come run come cry and die,
give birth and be born a thousand times!
Come fuck and do yoga naked on the banks of the Styx.
But do not sit there dead in sweat,
a thousand Chinese men lost in their dens - without the high!
Live more while your eyelids kiss,
renewing the only happy union of our time.
Breathe in the fury, the deathly orgasmic whirl!
The drone laughs at the gleeful masquerade,
the bright falsetto!
but we laugh back a thousand times from our balconies of silver bones,
our giant baobab castles!
Kneel down drones,
before the playthings of Night's rapture.
Be still.

The final poem, “Ghost of the Theater”, addresses the conducive nature of the bed to fantasy, reminiscing, and reflection devoid of the pressures of reality. The atmosphere of the bed allowed for me to conduct an intense examination of a past romance that was never brought to fruition due to a very complicated set of circumstances. Almost the entirety of this romantic relationship took place in the theater of the mind, and this poem attempts to understand the complexity of emotions and complications that characterized the brief affair.

Ghost of the Theater

The smell of patchouli and its ghost, nostalgia
draw curtains, spotlight on the throbbing stage -
Tonight presenting: remorse - desire -
unexpected Spring of last
when all the splendid flowers were forced to die in wait,
in plastic patienceagony of fermenting lust -
dying to explode!
and to burn,
burn like acid escaping from the vat
but more -
also the burn of bile when there’s nothing left to give.
Nothing more? he asks -
Could I, had I gave myself
and poured redblood on my hands
and guilt for tea?
How could it be I,
who smoldered days at slightest brush -
in bed, alone, but touching you on me.
What then was that glass that lurked between?
That forbid the holiest union -
that of skin and sweat and spit and moans -
What was that icy bitch that bound our arms?
Ah, the fire in the farmer’s hand
punishing the untimely beauty of the sprouts.
But that is all - the curtains know
and take their cue.

It is quite in line that I should mourn the passing of that Spring,
applaud its grace and purity of form,
then - gently return it to the realm
of temporal sighs.
Maybe venture to laugh instead of scorn the flaws of time,

and love the ashes for their less imposing size.