

## EYE CONTACT, OR TWO VISIONS, SPLIT

on Nicole Vinokur's *Paridayda* and *Only Thievery Gets Us Here*

by Isobel Wohl

Prologue:

Someone was buried here, once, and then things grew. This is what made the earth as it is now. I learned to see a flower as a body, as a new set of arms, encircling.

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I come by *Paridayda* on 28 June. The space is not yet public. The earth here is select, and a meadow is beginning to tremble forth from it. By this trembling and the feet of the artist a desire line is softly and luxuriously cut. Around the edge of the room the little ferns and grasses make delicate lines against the white wall, which is a flat line that makes the sides, that brings the meadow up against the glass and the faces of people looking in, children, their breath and the way I can see it, their noses and desire. I know they will be looking at the people who will be inside, who will have their feet in the grass. By the time it has their feet in it I imagine the grass will be springy and decisive. By that time my feet will be in another meadow, on the other side of an ocean. That meadow will have different flowers in it.

In between: a network, ordinariness, dirt that does no more than smudge, tunnels I travel through with known objects at the end, tiled walls at which I am not particularly looking, nose in book, teal earbuds in ears, both sides of a river, the feeling of being situated and of knowing the meaning of that. Flowers are sold outside stations, unrestricted. I keep walking by.

Glimpse, or not quite but rather a different time of narrowing. I stand and watch the mist that comes down intermittently from above, the pink glow, the solitude before I look, and afterwards the awareness that I know what is inside and that not everyone has seen where the plants grow. Yes, I watch these also: the awareness, the solitude. This is an architecture of watching. I wonder if the orchids are made from only light in pink light or if they are trapped things trembling between walls; I tell myself that in any case they grow real like an image in a box that makes them possible. I put my eye to the peephole again and admit that seeing is stealing, that when you steal you are stolen by stealing. *Only Thievery Gets Us Here*. This is how we disrobe, or how we lock eyes. I am never sure if it is real.

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Another fable: a man asked a woman to sit on his face; she felt awkward. This was supposed to be a kind of elevation. Power perhaps because she was the one who could look around the room, at the walls, rising over the bare sheets; she could look out the window to the city at a possible body of water and also through the skylight above. She was almost sure she felt his lashes brush her

thigh when he blinked, once, though she may have been wrong. In any case and outside of reason she felt alone in the room, precisely so and with no lavishness, and in the tremulous garden of her mind she imagined the smell, lurid and in structure. I am not there, I am not grown *in situ*, I am neither the thing seeing nor the thing seen; after this they won't talk to each other. I know with his fingers what they draw, where they'll go, that this lone earth has been home to other bodies, and this last part he knows too. She would prefer that paradise mean close is close, and that someone is drinking. She and I won't speak, either.

In the interim I get on an airplane. The circulated air is cold but does not trouble me. I get from A to B in the same long room; the tautness of the seal on this room is a risk. In rare events the pressure in such spaces is disrupted; in rare events they burn. I imagine when they do they catch in a flash. Wrong sun, wrong shape, wrong place. And from the earth this vision: moment, pandemonium.

In the next fable I breathe in and you breathe out and then I tell you I picked all the little ferns, all the little ones, before you could get them; I took them on tiptoes, I put them in my safe, in my safe place. I explain that you are not allowed to be in the same room as the ferns I have taken. It is so safe that you cannot be there. It is so safe that there are no lines, no drawing, no desire. No direction. No curving, swaying, variegation, cultivation no plundering, yet, and this isn't an invitation; you can't come. Really, you can't. Do you know what that means? Really: in a way that is *real*. You are real in the way you walk on the path and equally in the way you press your face to the glass out front. Equally in the way you sit on the bench with me and we talk. There are a few different ways, really.

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A fable is a structure in which to see. Walk through with torches, in your sense, senses bright.

*Isobel Wohl is an artist and writer. Recent projects include a residency at the dust in Paris, France, a solo show at Studio One Gallery in Wandsworth and the co-curation, with Alida Sayer, of a day of events entitled "To Bind, Tear" at Lychee One Gallery. A short story she has written will be included in the next issue of E.R.O.S. Journal. She is currently working towards a PhD by Practice in Painting at the Royal College of Art. She lives and works in London and Brooklyn, NY.*