

ever beards you have. We're going to sniff your emissions and must while we're penetrating (with our fingers) your ears, nostrils, and eye sockets. To ensure that you'll never again know sleep. . . . In the future, we'll never conceal anything about ourselves (unlike you) because our only purpose here is the marking of history, your history. As if we haven't. Because you said that we hadn't." (MM 51) A manifesto for—let's call it—*femmunism*.

Revolution

I want to break my habit of refusing to refer Acker back to precursors, to lineage, just once. I want to name one lineage that's not often perceived as part of her provenance. It's the postindependence African novel. It's her connection to this particular version of postcolonial literature, one that appears on her horizon mostly in her years in London. I'm not a well-situated reader to explore this. I want to leave the Acker-text open at this node as an offering for readers to come who might be.

This Acker: "So it's hard to talk about my experience politically in the United States; it's maybe not more than here, but to me, there it's so much about black and white. . . . Anyway, there's this series of Heinemann books which are incredible and I would go through them. Collett's of London used to have a whole series, and I'd go there to get books, and I pick up all of the Heinemann series, and there's some amazing writers in there. There's Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence*, and he was actually exiled. There's a writer called Armah . . . I think *Why Are We So Blest?* was the one that most influenced me. . . . [Cyprian] Ekwensi. Again, he was solving problems for me about how to be surprised, how to write something that's not dogmatic, how to be political." (LI 31)

And this Acker: "In *Bound to Violence*, Yambo Ouologuem (Heinemann 1971) joins historical facts to passionate and imaginative truths. So much of our education is the process of separating our reasoning faculties from our emotive and imagining ones. Ouologuem is of the greatest kinds of writer, a healer of the wounds of a faulty society has made." (22.35) This interest connects to those of other Ackers in Black and anticolonial revolutions, from Haiti to Algeria. The wounds of faulty societies are those that revolutions replicate rather than overthrow. Her interest here is in writers who

know themselves to be implicated, in and against revolutions, who write in and against the crucial moment of restoration, where power resumes its old habits in new livery.² Where the new power turns against its marginal figures, much as the old one had before it.

This Acker: “To what extent to do we remain obligated to a world even when our presence is no longer desired in that world?” (*BW* 102) Artists, poets, punks, whores, knights, pirates, sailors, girls: makers of the sense and sign and heat of their own bodies. But who find the signs they emit captured and owned and used against them. And that’s at best. That’s when their bodies and minds are not violated and gas-lit and punished and imprisoned. So: “Why’re we asslicking the rich’s asses?” (*DQ* 123) It’s time for “a revolution of whores, a revolution defined by all methods that exist as distant, as far as possible, from profit.” (*PK* 30) It’s time to declare: “I won’t accept that this world must be pain: A future only of torment is no future for anyone.” (*DQ* 163) A revolution that has to be made, over and over, even in and against those that succeeded.

“1968 is over. 1981 is over. Future is between my legs ha ha.” (*LM* 290) There are a lot of revolutions in the Acker-web. It is not obsessed with nostalgia for the Eurocentric myth of Paris in 1968. Revolutions happen all the time, but mostly against colonialism, as Ackers come to know from attention to African writers. “Suddenly the people in this city were free. They were free to experiment.” (*ES* 13) Revolutions attempt “the only thing in the world that’s worth beginning: the end of the world.” (*PK* 27) But they are always caught in a bind. “Intention: escape this horror as I know it and am made by it.” (*PE* 136) How can revolutions avoid becoming the law they oppose? “When all that’s known is sick the unknown has to look better.” (*ES* 33) Until that too becomes part of the known.

Revolution within and against post-capitalism can’t ignore how intimate commodification has become, how close it presses its exchange-value carving knives into the flesh. “Is liberation or revolution a revolution when it hasn’t removed from the faces and bodies the dead skin that makes them ugly? There’s still dead blood from your knife on one of my cunt lips.” (*IM* 46) The dead skin of dead time, commodity time, of the death-in-life of having the information stripped from our bodies and sold back to us, masks the possibility of other lives, other cities.

Some Ackers dream of a libidinal revolution. “If we lived in a society without bosses, we’d be fucking all the time. We wouldn’t have to be images. Cunt special. We could fuck every artist in the world.” (PE 201) And: “Soon this world will be nothing but pleasure, the worlds in which we live and are nothing but desires for more and more intense joy.” (PK 32) And for some: “Love’s the only revolution, the only way I can escape this society’s controls.” (PE 195)

Others are skeptical. Even a brief experience of sex-work and of the so-called sexual revolution as it was practiced (mostly for the benefit of cis men) in the late twentieth century rather cools an Acker’s ardor for it. It can’t be as imagined by penetrators, as the availability of the world to their dicks. Those dicks can now be detachable, interchangeable, or optional: a sexual politics in which dicks aren’t central. “In the future, I will be the sun, because that is what my legs are spread around.” (PK 116)

Some Ackers have a more destructive character, but hold on to the fragmentary potentials that the negations of this world hide in their shadows: “Revolutions or liberations aim—obscurely—at discovering (rediscovering) a laughing insolence goaded by past unhappiness, goaded by the systems and men responsible for unhappiness and shame. A laughing insolence which realizes that, freed from shame, human growth is easy. This is why this obvious destruction veils a hidden glory.” (IM 45)

There are many Ackers who start to dream of revolution not from the events of pleasure but of pain. “I am a masochist. This is a real revolution.” (GE 52) “Masochism is now rebellion.” (DQ 158) “Masochism is only political rebellion.” (ES 58) “Freedom was the individual embracement of non-sexual masochism.” (DQ 118) Because: “Pain is only pain and eradicates all pretense.” (DQ 140) Masochism is not just kink or a pathology: “Each time I slice the blade through my wrist I’m finally able to act out war. You call it masochism because you’re trying to keep your power over me, but you’re not going to anymore.” (LM 300) The masochist takes over the assigning of control over the body and makes a gift of it, which like all gifts, entails on the part of the recipient certain obligations. The masochist may be bound in rope but the sadist is bound in obligations.

And yet there’s no attempt to make the sexuality of whores, pirates, and perverts something respectable, each with its own flag and T-shirt. The

goal is not queer citizenship in the existing state through legitimizing its various identities. Rather, as the mad captain says: “Valiant beasts; because your sexuality does not partake of this human sexuality . . . I will now lead you in a fight to death or to life against the religious white men and against all of the alienation that their religious image-making or control brings to humans.” (DQ 178) Being inside the enclosure is not the objective.

It will be a revolution of the penetrable, or perhaps of the reversible, of surfaces that can open but also swell to fill corresponding voids. It will be a revolution against ownership by that which gives away ownership of itself. It will be a refusal of the penetrated to be just the voided object for dick to fill: “They said it was a hole, but it was impossible for her to think of any part of herself as a hole. Only as squishy and vulnerable flesh, for flesh is thicker than skin. She was wet up there. When she thrust three of her fingers in there, she felt taken.” (IM 140) For those of us who know we are holes, whether cis or trans, gay or straight, or none of the above, we can learn to top each other—and ourselves.

Holes

The penetrable are not nothing, not voids for their master’s voice or dick. “I see his cock enter me, slide into me like it belongs in my slimy walls, I tighten my muscles I tighten them around the cock, jiggling, thrusting upward, thousands of tiny fingers on the cock, fingers and burning tongues.” (PE 100) They—we—are not the other, the lack, the supplement, the second-sex organ. “I can feel your cock moving inside my skin skin I can begin to come the muscles of my cunt begin to move around your cock my muscles free themselves swirl to the tip of my clit out through my legs the center of my stomach new newer muscles vibrate I’m beginning to come I don’t know you.” (PE 7) The penetrated body comes to know itself, not its penetrator. The hole, which is not nothing, not a void or absence, comes into its own.

We don’t *need* their dicks, even if we *want* them, sometimes. To want to be fucked need not be to want all that comes with it. In the post-capitalist world, the hole without the dick is labor without capital. It is also art-work or sex-work without the extraction of surplus information. It is a refusal of all the dick signals and being dicked by signals shorn of the writhing, pullulating, concentrating bodies that make them.