

***Das ich infektion* and other writings**

Das ich infektion

Preface and translators notes:
Die Augeninfektion¹ / The Cure

It is a truth universally acknowledged within groups of children who grow up in the countryside in England that a dock leaf rubbed on the spot will cure a nettle sting.

For an eye infection medical advice says: *If it's a bacterial infection you might be prescribed antibiotics. But these will not work if it's caused by a virus (viral conjunctivitis) or an allergy. Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can cause conjunctivitis. This type takes longer to clear up.* Homeopathy offers apis mellifica, argentum nitricum, euphrasia officinalis and sulphur. The internet advises salt water, tea bags and honey.

It is considered an old wives tale that to treat an eye infection you must rub the infected eye with gold.

¹ German; the eye infection.

Clotting at Mass

I move my flight² and decide to stay for an *indefinite, uncounted amount of time*. I search the apartment for a sign of *anything*, yet, without knowing what I am looking for it is hard to find the thing. *They* do not return. I walk the streets, read, sleep and stare at my palms³.

Maybe a week earlier we run out of the club, hand in hand and palm to palm; it's around 10am, I imagine, as the light is full of exquisite exhaustion. They, the one that isn't me, take their hand away to roll a cigarette as we reach the river. On their palm, in the centre, is a cardinal⁴-red circular mark about half a centre-meter wide. Looking into the wound, I decide this is not the moment and that I will instead ask *later*; for now and back in the apartment I want them to remain my Christ of the crimson-lit room, of the basement floor, of the club with no sign, on the street just round the corner from the station, 5 stops from the place I once lived. Theirs is closer, so we go there...⁶

Two hours later a man and a woman burst into the apartment: '*sie müssen mit uns kommen*'. Having forgotten a language I once knew I do not understand what is said, but the tall, long-haired, wounded person kisses me on the cheek and complies with being taken away.



² "act of fleeing," c. 1200, fliht, not found in Old English, but presumed to have existed and cognate with Old Saxon fluht, Old Frisian flecht "act of fleeing," Dutch vlucht, Old High German fluht, German Flucht, Old Norse flotti, Gothic þlauhs, from Proto-Germanic *flugti-, suffixed form of PIE root *pleu- "to flow." To put (someone or something) to flight "rout, defeat" is from late 14c., the earlier verb form do o' flight (early 13c.).

³ tropical tree of the order Palmae; the date-palm, Middle English palme, from Old English palma, Old French palme, both from Latin palma "palm tree," originally "palm of the hand;" the tree so called from the shape of its leaves, like fingers of a hand (see palm. The word traveled early to northern Europe, where the tree does not grow, via Christianity, and took root in the local languages (such as Old Saxon palma, Old High German palma, Old Norse palmr); Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, commemorating Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, is Old English palm-sunnandæg. In ancient times, a leaf or frond of the palm was carried or worn as a symbol of victory or triumph, or on feast days; hence figurative use of palm for "victory, triumph".

⁴ A cardinal (Latin: Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae cardinalis, literally "cardinal of the Holy Roman Church") is a leading bishop and prince of the College of Cardinals in the Catholic Church.

⁵ Cardinals, in the family Cardinalidae, are passerine birds found in North and South America.

⁶ Image: The sign for characters having had sex in a PG film.

Back in the city I *current*⁷ly live in, in a fight with my *current*⁸ partner, I pick up a vulnerable glass waiting on the bedside table half-full of clear liquid and smash it on the wooden floor with much satisfaction. My eyes take in the smashed glass reflecting the beautifully distorted room and for a moment I am the glass watching us from the floor, from its fragmented point of view, a dispersed subject on the ground looking up at us. As the glass I see an unnerving wholeness of the two figures. Fragment like me! Fragment! Fragment! Fragment! Lose, disperse!

It's 2am and his housemates must be listening to our fight in the way we both know they sometimes listen to us fuck, and fucking it is because in this relationship the love is left with my clothes on the bedroom floor. There is always an other in sex, watching, listening, observing, I just never thought it to be this literal.

A cathartic satisfaction is reached, I am left on all fours, drunk on a lot more than just alcohol and what I have decided at the time is the definition of love. I pick up my hand from the floor, in the middle of my palm is a perfect circular bleeding wound. I instinctually lick it clean, lap after lap as if milk, like a baby at a breast or cat at a saucer, getting slower, until the blood finally clots.



The clot at Mass

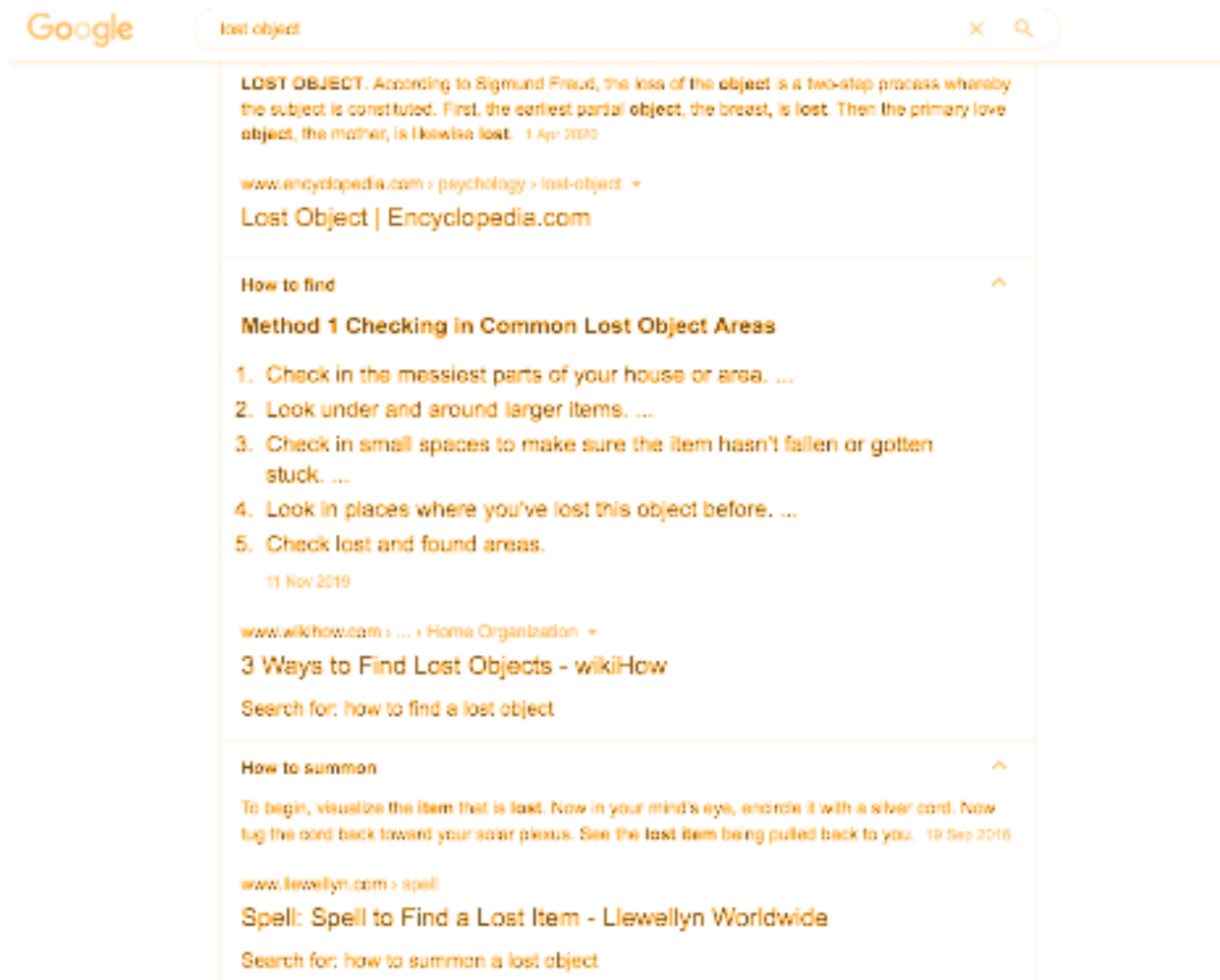
Clot v. - to form in a coagulated *mass*.

Mass - the main eucharistic liturgical service in many forms of Western Christianity.

⁷ A current in a fluid is the magnitude and direction of flow within that fluid.

⁸ An electric current is the rate of flow of electric charge past a point or region. An electric current is said to exist when there is a net flow of electric charge through a region. In electric circuits this charge is often carried by electrons moving through a wire. It can also be carried by ions in an electrolyte, or by both ions and electrons such as in an ionized gas (plasma)

The Carrot and Saint Anthony; Patron Saint of Lost Objects and Phallic Vegetables



Under my chest of drawers I knew it was. It also entered my dreams at night; rotten, anthropomorphised, as my conscience, as a villain. It knew and I knew alone. Orange, rotting, *shriveling and growing*.

The Carrot

It had happened like this: I was given a carrot, scrubbed, whole, fresh, with a tiny green sprout, it was probably whilst I was hungry waiting for a fish⁹-pie supper I could smell all the way from my bedroom. I didn't eat it, and not eating it, and not being able to admit I didn't eat it I hid it in the small gap *under my chest* of drawers (perverting the reality of somewhere between myself and other to a world in which I had eaten it).

⁹ *Fish* (n.) for "person" is from 1750 with a faintly dismissive sense; earlier it was used in reference to a person considered desirable to "catch" (1722). Figurative sense of *fish out of water* "person in an unfamiliar and awkward situation" attested by 1610s. To *drink like a fish* is from 1744. *Fish-story* "incredible or extravagant narration" is attested by 1819, U.S. colloquial, from the tendency to exaggerate the size of the catch (or the one that got away).

Later, when I went to find the darn thing that was already causing a shiftiness in my behaviour and an irregular pace in my *chest*, to dispose of it properly, it was *lost*¹⁰. Could it have had its own agency? If so, it was the only thing that could tell the horrid truth; not the one of having not eaten the carrot, but the one of having *lied* about not having eaten the carrot, hiding the carrot and allowing the carrot to rot; a line had been crossed many actions back. The, now lost, carrot had power over me, entered my dreamworld, distorted my bedroom into a dungeon of shame, both rotting and *unlocatable*. Scrodiner was wrong; whether the ca(rro)t is or isn't there - the ca(rro)t is always only there.



*Saint Anthony*¹¹



My mother now loses things in their house all of the time, though I think she always did and asks me as a serious joke (as are all references to religion in *this house*) to pray to saint anthony. In the kitchen conversation turns from *lost* things to veg from the fridge for dinner and the ones planted, with hope of what they might one day become, in the garden; courettes, cucumbers, pointy

peppers... We joke of Saint Anthony as the patron saint of phallic vegetables. Everyone in *this house* is obsessed with saints¹².

¹⁰ The scattered body parts of Osiris are found and pieced back together by his lover Isis, with the exception of his penis, which remains lost and to which she constructs a memorial.

¹¹ Anthony of Padua (Portuguese: António de Pádua; born Fernando Martins de Bulhões; 15 August 1195 – 13 June 1231), also known as Anthony of Lisbon (Portuguese: António de Lisboa), was a Portuguese Catholic priest and friar of the Franciscan Order. He was born and raised by a wealthy family in Lisbon, Portugal, and died in Padua, Italy. Noted by his contemporaries for his powerful preaching, expert knowledge of scripture, and undying love and devotion to the poor and the sick, he was one of the most quickly canonized saints in church history. He was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church on 16 January 1946. He is also the patron saint of lost things.

¹² Anthony became sick with ergotism ('ergo', therefore); symptoms include painful seizures and spasms, diarrhea, paresthesias, itching, mental effects including mania or psychosis, headaches, nausea and vomiting. Usually the gastrointestinal effects precede central nervous system effects. The dry gangrene is a result of vasoconstriction induced by the ergotamine-ergocristine alkaloids of the fungus. It affects the more poorly vascularized distal structures, such as the fingers and toes. Symptoms include desquamation or peeling, weak peripheral pulses, loss of peripheral sensation, edema and ultimately the death and loss of affected tissues. Anthony is buried in a chapel within the large basilica built to honor him, where his tongue is displayed for veneration in a large reliquary along with his jaw and his vocal cords. When his body was exhumed 30 years after his death, it was found turned to dust, but the tongue was claimed to have glistened and looked as if it were still alive and moist; apparently a further claim was made that this was a sign of his gift of preaching.

New life

Under the ground, I place the seed, hidden for now. It'll arise at some unknown, indefinite, un-counted amount of time later. But I am impatient, I want the seed to rise. Oh little plant why won't you grow for me? What did I do wrong? Why was I not enough? I don't mean to call you little, sorry, oh big boy, location of my desires, why won't you grow for me? Did I over, or under, water you? What did I do? I demand you seed - tell me! what I am, (what I am to you)!¹³

The phallus is imaginary in the sense that it is associated in the child's mind with an actual object that has been lost and can be recovered.

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¹³ Discourse of the Hysteric – Despite its pathological aura, hysteric's discourse exhibits the most common mode of speech, blurring the line between clinical image and the otherness of social settings. Object a truth is defined by interrogative nature of subject's address (Who am I?) as well as tryst for satisfaction of knowledge. This mutually drives the barred subject and turns on the agent's master signifiers. It leads the agent to produce a new knowledge (discourse's product) in a futile attempt to provide a barred subject with an answer to fulfill subject's castratedness (Lacan in Discourse of the Analyst breaks the pathological cycle of it by purposefully leaving the question unanswered, reversing the discourse and putting an analyst in a place of hysteric's desire). However, object a of the subject is search for the agent's object a, thus without being a subject like in the 'Discourse of the University' the Hysteric ends up gathering knowledge instead of their object a truth.

Diagnosis

I might as well have been 7 as I rolled under the gate, less like James Bond and more like a baby in a cot or cat on the carpet, lay in the saturated meadow with grass so long I became small, and rolled back under an indefinite, un-counted amount of time later. But I was a *grown*¹⁴ *up*, it doesn't matter what age because I was, in the terms of a child, a *grown up* - a static age you hit at some unknown point which means you have both stopped and arrived. I haven't stopped and I'm always arriving, but that wasn't the point.

7 years old I knew it, and had known it many times, but I am *alone*¹⁵, against the curve of the field, which I feel as if the curve of the earth. What if '*leave*¹⁶ *me alone*' was always hiding '*I am alone*'? *Alone*, and scarier now than it was when I was 7, in conflict with sex in ways that made sex of great importance and interest... which I may only bring up to make you think of sex - the no-sweat, facile, easy-peasy, piece¹⁷-of-cake, money-for-jam, duck-soup, of interruptions. For if I say this three letter word I know you have a wealth of universal and personal thought, images and conflicts to fill in the space in your attention I may be lacking.

What I do know is I love people for the fact that they are also *alone*. And maybe here, and everywhere I have thought or written *alone*, what I mean is *lack*? I remember years ago I lost it, and skinbare, tried to return to the earth in the wet garden as if that is where I came from... not consciously so but, honey-drenched, sticky, centre-of-something, perversely erotic.

What I haven't said is how happy I am here in the lime-emerald (green) and lemon-gold (yellow), making a grass-angel, lying and unable to lie for a moment. I don't want to lie to you anymore, says *grown up* me to myself, with an eye¹⁸ infection - *das ich infektion*, translating as the *I* infection.

¹⁴ Old English growan (of plants) 'to flourish, increase, develop, get bigger' (class VII strong verb; past tense greow, past participle growen), from Proto-Germanic *gro- (source also of Old Norse groa 'to grow' (of vegetation), Old Frisian groia, Dutch groeien, Old High German gruoen), from PIE root *ghre- 'to grow, become *green*' (also see *grass*)

¹⁵ c. 1300 contraction of all ane, from Old English all ana; *all* and *one*

¹⁶ The Germanic root seems to have had only the sense 'remain, continue' (which was in Old English as well but has since become obsolete), which also is in Greek lipares 'persevering, importunate.' But this usually is regarded as a development from the primary PIE sense of 'adhere, be *sticky*'

¹⁷ Meaning 'person regarded as a sex object' is first recorded 1785 (compare piece of ass under ass (n.2); human beings colloquially have been piece of flesh from 1590s.

¹⁸ c. 1200, from Old English ege (Mercian), eage (West Saxon) 'eye; region around the eye; aperture, hole,' from Proto-Germanic *augon (source also of Old Saxon aga, Old Frisian *age*, Old Norse auga, Swedish öga, Danish øie, Middle Dutch oghe, Dutch oog, Old High German ouga, German Auge, Gothic augo 'eye'). Apparently the Germanic form evolved irregularly from PIE root *okw- 'to see.'

*

What I have is a Sty. A St. Eye. Saint Eye. I am a martyr with no cause, the ego of a saint without any religion to back it up. Infected by beliefs rejected generations back. A mistranslated problem. And like the church accepting gold to absolve sin, my eye accepts gold to absolve my infection.

Other writings

Waiting

The cup in his hand held potential. A cup, a glass, a bottle was not only to contain liquid, it offered something. Like the change of a body from before and after you know the pleasure it can bring. This cup, like the glass this morning, like the small bottle the night before, now offered, even asked. It was a private relationship, he knew, as did the cup, glass or bottle what they could do together, what it felt like in his hand, shaking a little, how he could act and what it would feel like if he did. Feeling the muscle memory in his left arm (the one with the drink), he transferred it over to his right; he knew he had no legitimate reason to act, *the act*. That action of such senseless violence would be beyond absurd, believing this the reason, he placed the cup, in the centre of the table, far away from the edge.

Her hand shook, almost unnoticed by the eye but prevalent in the flesh; she wanted it again. She had no reason to, not like she had done the other day. The glass she held, just like the cup she had held at breakfast, had mutated; from object to opportunity. There was a before and an after potency, as there is with sex. You cannot undo sex, she could not undo what had happened between her and the cup. The glass and her were tied in an agreement, one that started with the cup; her body remembered. She took a sip, the glass met her teeth; it was even more fragile than the cup. She washed, dried and returned the glass to the cupboard all-the-while replaying, in every hidden corner of her body, the cup smashing, via her force, on the floor. She assumes to herself, she restrained, this time, out of social conduct.

We've agreed, she, just as he, simply prolonged the wait, lengthened the gap between desire and action.

For him, the cup was waiting on the table; the glass waiting in the cupboard for her.

Fantasy

She fantasised about him, because he symbolised her freedom to be all the things she wanted to be but was not. From her mother's perspective these were negative traits. She hadn't considered that maybe if she wished to be these things she should just be them. Something about being that person without being loved seemed tragic, as if only with the chaotic beautiful terrifying sweet glare of love could the scene she desired to be in be correctly lit.

She fantasised about him, because she had spent many years reprimanding herself when fantasising about men. Reprimanding herself for continuing what at the time felt a cliché, something false, reprimanding herself for not being whole enough. But, without some kind of acknowledgement of a lack, some kind of room, some small empty cupboard or gaping unfurnished hall we will not, and do not, fall in love. The desire to complete such a wholeness creates aggravated trauma or shallow lies. So she lounged in her own lack, swam in the empty pool and shivered ecstatically in the large cold hall.

We hope that if she had to give up the fantasy she would. That she would rub out, or rip apart, those neuropathways, built on fictions stolen from places she would never be able to reference, which relied wholly on the unfulfillment of the situation (not that in love we are ever continuously fulfilled. Enough is not enough¹⁹.) That she would, better yet, take her lack and her fantasy and serve it on a platter or wear it as her dress at their first dinner. We would hope that she would not be ashamed, and that she would not mistake the man sitting opposite her as real flesh with its own fantasies, lacks, thoughts, past. We would hope that that would become her new fantasy. To listen, to receive, to collide and attempt to achieve the unachievable; to, despite the unequivocal truth of our own solitude, know something about another person.

¹⁹ "I feel frustrated; for me, enough means not enough" Barthes, Roland. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. , 1978.

The mirror

I watch you in the mirror watching me. This is the moment, both in the moment it happens and in my sense of the history of things; I love you. I turn around and tell you that you must face and feel all your losses in life in order to be prepared for when you die. Not that the two things are necessarily contradictory, but I both believe this line I speak and it is also my seduction of you.

I never tell anyone about this night, and when they ask about the gold ring I wear, which you gave me then, I tell them it's a piece I picked up in an antique store in a small village in south-west England.

Because you died the next day, and I am still so young, and I have no idea where to place any of it without you. And the thing we lose when we fall in love and loss of you actually dying, become tied up together for me.

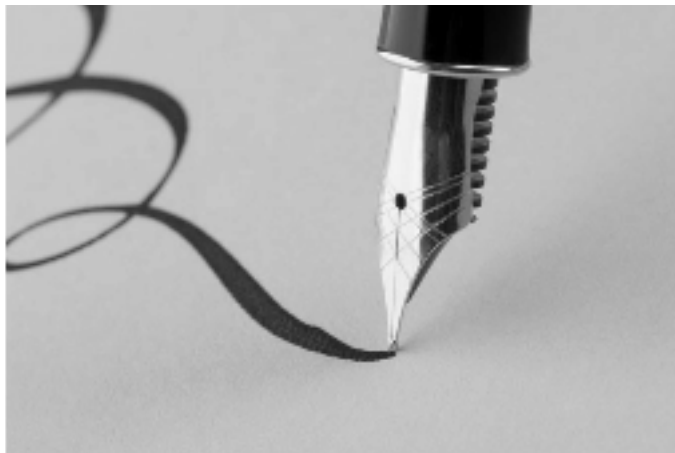
Though I howl at times in the following days and months, tears barely pass through my eyes, I want to keep them clear because all the while I am only ever back in that room, watching you watching me in the mirror.

The pen is envious

You throw your pen on the floor in anger, we are in public and you've just received the news that it is a *no*; a *rejection*, a *you are not what we are looking for*, a *you are not enough*, a *it is someone and something else we want*. I offer you the pen back, and you reject it. I go "here you are, take back your pen"(is) and you refuse to hide what I see to be a confrontation with your own castration. It only takes me a moment to realise, but I need you to hide your castration more than you need to hide it. And I feel embarrassed, but in a panic to hide all this lack that has entered the space. Please, I say with my *eyes*, take back your pen, otherwise your castration will show my castration and I cannot have that happen. Baby take back your pen(is), be whole for me right now! Take it back and write me our fantasy out with sticky permanent ink. Use it to defy nature and prove the impossible. Please no, do not just let it lie here limp in my hand as if it's nothing. Bring it back to life for me!

I leave the reception for a moment with a lame excuse, and walk up the high street in search of a stationary shop. In the stationary shop I find a new pen, a heavy solid fountain pen with refills that I'll never let run. It's gold rimmed and in a leather box that for *safe keeping*, the shop staff tell me of it's wonderful advantages and of the prestige of the make *masquerade*. I buy the *pen(is)* and return to the reception, you open the brown paper bag grinning and kiss me. I feel awful because you don't seem to see what I am really doing.

Three weeks later I find the fountain pen in a drawer, you haven't used it as the ink is full when I unscrew the base; I am glad. I throw it in the bin.



Masquerade: the feminine response to castration.