

OCTOBER 25, 2012

On the radio today, while washing my face in the bathroom, I heard an African poacher describe his occupation. His specialty, he claimed, was elephants. The interviewer asked him what he thought about the fact that scientists who study elephants have found that they conduct elaborate funeral rituals for their dead. The poacher snickered, oh yes he knew all about the funerals. The event, to him, was a boon because it meant if he killed one elephant soon others would arrive to mourn, providing the opportunity to kill them as well. "Kill one and the others will soon come to mourn, the fools," he said. He seemed gleeful about the funeral situation. I could not believe my ears. So badly it made me hate humanity, even more than I already do, which is saying a lot. Desperately I wanted to capture this poacher and torture him in the ghastliest ways I could imagine. I stopped washing my face in the sink and let the water drip from my beard onto the countertop, and I imagined how I would first begin by burning his skin and then removing the burned skin with pliers and then how I would douse the open wounds with lemon and salt and tobacco, and that would be day one. My imaginary torture would drag on for a very long time. I felt great satisfaction and pleasure in imagining the ways I would torture this man. I resolved to do research on torture methods, to find better, more effective ways to hurt him. Eventually, I supposed, I might kill him; but not for many years. For many years I would keep him chained in a mud pit inside a shed in my back yard, where I would take great pleasure inflicting as much pain and agony as possible on this person.

A pit, so that he could shit and piss and live in his own filth. Killing him, I decided, was out of the question. I would feel bad about killing him, not because I took his life, which he rightly deserved to have taken, but because it would mean that he no longer received my punishment. In other words, I would regret that he got to escape the pain.

Alternate universe in which Jimi Hendrix did not die, in which Hendrix recorded with Miles Davis, as they had planned to do before Hendrix died, a European tour...a story...

At the end of his life, Miles Davis began painting. Art Deco meets Basquiat.

Miles Davis, 1959-1972. Best years of his musical output, in my opinion.

Jean-Luc Godard, 1961-1967. Best years of his cinematic output, in my opinion.

Today in 1932, Sylvia Plath was born in Boston. Goddamn, I love her poetry.

You know her husband, Ted Hughes? I hate him. He wakes in me a fury, I'm not exactly sure why, but I am conscious of the fact that I resent his censorship of Plath's work after her death, that he supposedly destroyed some of her material. Often, I imagine the moment of her death. But even more often, I fantasize about her pubic hair.

Do we know if Miles Davis was circumcised? For better or worse, I imagine his schlong as sheathed. And also curved to the right when erect. Godard, on the other hand, I imagine

with a small but fat penis, circumcised and perhaps with genital warts. In this fantasy, he did not have genital warts until after he stopped having sex with Anna Karina. I do not wish to imagine Anna Karina with a sexually transmitted disease. I do, however, wish to imagine her pubic hair.

I can picture the pubic hair of Anna Karina and Sylvia Plath in two ways: wild and unkempt or shaven completely bald. For some reason I have a hard time imagining a middle ground, where either of them trimmed, styled, or otherwise groomed their pubic hair.

I can, however, easily imagine Miles Davis carving shapes into his pubic hair. Godard, I'm not sure. I have a hard time picturing his pubic hair.

I picture Ted Hughes as a Ken doll with no genitalia.

Perhaps you are familiar with the photography of Lee Miller? She was an acclaimed war correspondent for *Vogue Magazine* in the 1930s and 40s. Of particular interest to me is the fact that she was one of the first journalists at the scene of the liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp in April of 1945. My paternal grandfather was one of the soldiers in the lead battalion responsible for liberating that camp. I have this fantasy that my grandfather had an affair with Lee Miller. Probably he didn't, though.

My allergies are killing me. Hurricane Sandy is killing people up in New York City right now.

President Obama got reelected.

The Lakers fired Mike Brown as head coach.

My brother sent me a Gchat with a link to the following logic problem:

Question: There is an island upon which a tribe resides. The tribe consists of 1000 people, 100 of which are blue-eyed and 900 of which are brown-eyed. Yet, their religion forbids them to know their own eye color, or even to discuss the topic; thus, one resident can see the eye colors of all other residents but has no way of discovering his own (there are no reflective surfaces). If a tribesperson does discover his or her own eye color, then their religion compels them to commit ritual suicide at noon the following day in the village square for all to witness. All the tribes people are highly logical, highly devout, and they all know that each other is also highly logical and highly devout. One day, a blue-eyed foreigner visits to the island and wins the complete trust of the tribe. One evening, he addresses the entire tribe to thank them for their hospitality. However, not knowing the customs, the foreigner makes the mistake of mentioning eye color in his address, mentioning in his address “how unusual it is to see another blue-eyed person like myself in this region of the world.” What effect, if anything, does this faux pas have on the tribe?

What makes this question interesting is that there is one convincing argument that the traveler’s comments have no effect, and another convincing argument that the traveler’s comment will have a dramatic effect. Which argument is true – and what is the logical flaw in the other argument?

Argument I: The foreigner has no effect; because his

comments do not tell the tribe anything that they do not already know (everyone in the tribe can already see that there are several blue-eyed people in their tribe).

Argument II: 100 days after the address, all the blue eyed people commit suicide.

Somehow, I've lost the rest of this email exchange, so I'm not quite sure how those are the two options. But my brother says to me, "Knowing what other people know affects what you know about things outside of them." Which got me thinking. Sometimes I am stunned by how smart and interesting my brother has become.

I read an article online about how passwords are passé. "The age of the password has come to an end." It tells me not to repeat passwords, which isn't easy because I have no memory whatsoever. I may as well self-diagnose myself as an amnesiac or a victim of Korsakoff's psychosis. I killed so many brain cells in my teens and twenties, there aren't many remaining. I use like three or four different passwords for everything. If I didn't, I would never remember my own password. You won't ever guess my passwords, though. And I doubt an automated hacking program would get them either. There's little chance of my accounts being hacked, yet I am vaguely concerned. Vaguely.

Taught Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* for the past two weeks in my introduction to Modernism class. Before that, my students read Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. After Thanksgiving, they will read and I will lecture on Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*.