

— A WANT AROUND ROB HALPERN'S
[-----] *PLACEHOLDER* —



ANNA VITALE

“ . . . it had not as yet become apparent that the very problem so insistently trying to draw attention to itself was something to do with achieving a relation to the inevitable ‘otherness’ of what is outside one, to the reality of the solid earth”^a

“ . . . suicide was imaginary. Suicide is probably never anything else, and that is why it is forbidden”^b

(being the same)
 [-----] *Placeholder* assembles a problem (being an object) that suicidal fantasy engages. This problem is precisely the one of not knowing who one is talking about and feeling about when one is doing so much talking and feeling (writing: a specialized form of talking and feeling that keeps shaping activity into something intended to be consumed by others). Rob’s book: the cover and the spine invite conflation between the long bracketed dash, the name of the author, and the word “placeholder.” Is Rob Halpern a placeholder? Is the book holding a place for Rob? Thinking about killing oneself is thinking about intervening in the present, stopping time, as a way of solving the problem of the life of an endless object.

[-----] *Placeholder* is a promise. The book shares our desire: “the world we radically long for” and “the world whose beauty we know in dreams and whose plenty we can taste already” and “the world whose realization will make these poems irrelevant.”^d The realization of suicidal fantasy—the transformation of fantasy into action without language^e—would make these poems too relevant.

As an object, I do not know my name and this is both desirable and undesirable. I cannot be pinned down; I feel pinned down. I feel enormous, immaculate, and dangerous things about other people

dear _____, I bought this card w/ you in mind. it’s you, dear friend. I am wanting to say I am on the so very much about building— corner of 5th the lives we lead, build, & 36th. I’ve that build & lead us, and just seen the how we can’t stop time Peter Hujar and how writing & art exhibit. It’s do things to time that expensive, we cannot do to ourselves & if there is but the world anyone in the world it reflects is so close to I can share that with me—I feel alive in its capture. Till soon, Anna^c

^a Marion Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint*, 24.

^b Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 52.

^c postcard to Andy

^d “Acknowledgments,” [-----] *Placeholder*, n.p.

^e I am thinking with Audre Lorde’s “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action.”

as things and as a thing myself.^f I am regularly subject to the psychic phenomena of living with relations in my body and head that do not reflect or emerge from a single person, that do not belong to me to which I don't belong & this makes my qualities as an object all the more palpable. All of my experiences—especially ones that I am not aware of—push me around, and I say things and do things and want things.

I want experiences that I do not understand.

No one succeeds in being owned &
yet we—I do not know who we are but somewhere
there is more than one of us—

I start to keep track of “my” I want “my”
to mean something & I cannot figure out
what the fuck it means.

bemoan not belonging.

Two pieces of paper pop out. A torn, baby blue post-it reads:
I get/off/ know-/ ing/ [off]/ [of]/ [knowing].

*for my mom & dad
my operatives*

It refers to the start of a sentence that she has underlined.
It looks like this:

*my writing
my brain
my body*

army contracts

*my car
my book
my usable parts*

*my use of disjunction
my organ
my pleasure
my operative and verse
my soldier's wound*

*my social relations
my form*

*my body
my financialized double*

She returns to “Envoi”^g the most: “a short stanza concluding a ballade”; “an author's concluding words.”^h You send an envelope, glass waves of every wave enthroned.ⁱ A shirt mistaken for a fold,

^f I am thinking with Barbara Johnson's *Persons and Things*.

^g [-----] Placeholder, 59.

^h “envoi,” *New Oxford American Dictionary*.

ⁱ Some echo of Hart Crane

a cumbersome patch matching his legs, hairy, filth and love spread thin over the calf because it comes from animals and that's the reason

my waking life
my last anonymous fuck

we can't keep ourselves together.

We are too human for our own good.

my dad's diminishing bank account

“Until we accept that the satisfaction of loss is our driving motive, we will remain hostages of an economy of enrichment.”^j

my head
my hope
my bed

my so-called friendships

my rhyme
my poems
my product
my house
my poem
my body
my soldier
army guys
my poem
my double
my writing^k

The morning I decide to finish reading Rob's book is the same morning I wake up dreaming I am running from murderers (people are chasing me why else do people chase if not to murder) & my father is there along w/ two friends. I suggest we buy a car. We need to get away. We are at a used car lot already running & the car costs \$427. I'll pay the \$227 & the three of you can split

^j Tracy Morgan's interview with Todd McGowan, author of *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (2016), on the New Books in Psychoanalysis Network podcast

^k brief list of “my _____” from [-----] Placeholder.

the rest. The car only has 1,000 miles
on it. It should last a few days
The front end is banged in
The car is blue & gold
It used to be a cab & has a meter &
a radio. I radio to base.
I want to know if we can sell it,
if it's worth \$\$. There's also a ton
of CDs that the old cabby left &
a lot of junk. The car is so cheap—
smashed front end & all the junk—
but it helps us escape. I drive.
It's not a stick. It drives weird.
The steering wheel sticks.
I'm so close. The emergency break [sic]
flies up but
doesn't work.

“Are we acting out a trauma of beginning or are we having fun.”¹ It’s not a question. It is a statement of possibility where the line between these possibilities is as small as “or,” which becomes a way to swing and hinge. “Or” does not keep these possibilities far apart; it brings them as close together as possible without saying they are the same thing. This is the fear that either/ or instills in us, the threat that we must find a way to decide what an experience is or was, rather than discover its potential, its power.

Rob’s book might tell us we are having fun acting out our trauma. Rob’s book also might tell us that having fun acting out trauma is one of the more traumatic things we can do with our lives, and at least we are doing it and it is not being done to us. At least this is a good song. I mean it’s more than a good song. No. This is not it at all.

The last thing I want to do is imitate Rob’s language. The ambiguity of this statement is clear. This has everything to do with the “or,” the distance, the deciphering, the search for silence, a frame, interference in the endless threat/ hole. Don’t plug it up.

The only time I ever tried using a Diva cup—a cup that holds your menstrual blood inside you until you pull it out—I pulled it out and flung blood all over the bathroom stall, not realizing the force of my pull and how much blood was in the cup. “Should we have abundance, we will still experience ourselves as lacking subjects in an abundant world because no amount of abundance will provide the missing lost object.”^m

How could we live if Rob’s poetry became irrelevant? Longing for “the world whose realization will make these poems irrelevant.”ⁿ I am so miserable, she says. Fuck you and you and you and you, pointing her finger at the whole room, as if all of us were responsible for her misery as well as her company.

¹ [-----] *Placeholder*, 33.

^m Tracy Morgan’s interview with Todd McGowan on the New Books in Psychoanalysis Network

ⁿ “Acknowledgments,” [-----] *Placeholder*, n.p.

As if

my pleasure is not real enough &
my hate is more real

my hate so easy
to come by

the only thing that feels
like my own, personalized

“He wrote [me] ‘I will have spent my life trying to understand the function of remembering, which is not the opposite of forgetting, but rather its inner lining. We do not remember. We rewrite memory much as history is rewritten. How can one remember thirst?’”^o

“I get off knowing” and I “get off of knowing.” I am turned on and I get away from it, remove myself from that obsession, and I try, go somewhere else, but I am in the repetition compulsion and it snags me and I guess I let it. I get off experiencing desire and that desire transforms into being pushed off into nothing, into fear, into more desire, into blanks—erased, obscured, a placeholder—where everything is being filled and wired into what? How? This is difficult. Let’s forget it. The music of the recitation of the reminder pulls us into. Let’s be real. I am talking about being murderer, being ourselves.

“While there is no recipe for this change, I suggest that the idea of surrendering rather than submitting is a way of evoking and sanctioning this process of letting go of our determination to make our reality operative. To do this [. . .] is to find a different way to regulate ourselves, one in which we accept loss, failure, mistakes, our own vulnerability.”^p

the murder feels like it is happening now^q

—his dead in me.^r

Survival is reciprocal^s

*There are so many things I want
to tell you . . .^t*

longing to be fucked^u

[how to sustain intimacy? In what contexts
? violated taken advantage of,
exploited—it is not possible to be exposed
without injury, so how is it possible

[-----] pumps the soap
hits the wall
behind me
ricochets off

^o Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil*.

^p Jessica Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done To: Recognition Theory, Intersubjectivity, and the Third*, 41.

^q Ibid., 61.

^r [-----] *Placeholder*, 71.

^s Jessica Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done To*, 63.

^t [-----] *Placeholder*, 9.

^u [-----] *Placeholder*, 67.

to want besides (instead of)
(next to) injury? in proximity?

If we think we know what injuries are
made of, what constitutes
wounds, we've got another
thing coming. *Show your wound*^v
Mimesis

A badly dubbed audio^w

my hand
onto the tile
looks at the cum
my ejaculate after
the appointment's
over I love
him what is
that? another
way to fire
off my flesh-
y substance red-
dening end-
game:

the demand of his tur-
d lil magic shit
in a porcelain device
wanting to get open-
ed by mouthing air into
the welded stench of
waste. I am perf-
ereted laminate-
d perf ID gets right
out, the machine
warps my digital smell
of an image: You behold
me, elegant lady,
scripts blow up
telephonic x-rays
the fall dials down
dumps until lace-up
music cuts & spits
its blue nudge
throughout my system.
Give me yr ID, bastard,
ass. Otherness
a metaphor for
people. “[-----] Placeholder [sic]
another” [after we]
Desire

^v Josef Beuys, “zeige deine Wunde” <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beuys-show-your-wound-ar00093>

^w [-----] Placeholder, 72.