

My Postliminary Confessions of Redigested loves

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This text was written as a response to the experience of 'being single/being with yourself' that took place in the Love Space by Jasper Griepink. The narrator is a fictional character that witnessed and participated in the event, drawing from some true and false testimonies that might or may not have happened.

bekentenissen die wel of niet op waarheid zijn gebaseerd.

"The only thing that can save us is another summer of love" is what I heard from a friend who heard it from Hugh Lemmy, it felt somewhat desperate and hopeful at once - something I'd no doubt like to do with my summer.

I went to the 'Bos' after a long discussion with an affair I'd been having for a few months, it led to the inevitable moment where some sort of verbal contract was suggested. We were negotiating the commitments and freedoms of our bond, which could be made up of looser or tighter strings, or with some form of elasticity that would enable both to occur simultaneously. It wasn't an attempt to maintain the ability to act out of selfish impulses, but to acknowledge that the relationship wasn't erasing our individualities - that the shared intimacy and love wasn't a tie but a bond, as elastic as it was resistant.

gedeelde intimiteit en liefde geen strop was maar een band, zowel elastisch als beperkend

"instead of having another stable and predictable affair until it fades out, eclipsed by other life commitments, I'd like to test the limits of our emotional capacities"

I arrived in the circle at around midday. A group of fifteen, mostly strangers, gathering to share a variety of experiences about being single — particularly on how we can engage in a deep connection with others while not being committed to a relationship. It seemed like a very appropriate space to share undigested intimacy and love, not in order to process, but to release in a sincere and visceral vomit. Relationship narratives were generated generously in a safe and confessional space, interrupted only by the sound of a small percussive instrument.

While listening to some of the confessions I kept thinking about the contract I had drawn out a few hours prior, which was some sort of attempt to recognize that we deserved the experiences we might want, and to take a pragmatic and active understanding that wouldn't foment losing one's self within the merging of several entities. There is a dichotomy that is created from the loss of freedom when one enters relationship/exchange - but at the same time this becomes a sharing of affection, growth and protection,

and I didn't want to cross the fine line between safety and complacency.

As I finally gathered the courage to hit the wooden instrument to share with the rest of the circle, I kept doing this thing - perhaps an attempt to protect my vulnerability. I would say 'you' before every sentence to identify my personal narratives. Jasper was quite quick at correcting me to speak in the first person.

So I proceeded, I, to talk about the past few years, in which I have always and almost pathologically been in some sort of romantic relationship, calling it off or introducing a certain distance whenever the imminent pressure or the realization that it was turning into a contract. This allowed me to experience sexual bonding and friendship as two layers of the same thing, enabling the friendship to exist beyond the intimacy of a bed. I understood that tight strings would eventually snap into something irreparable, and was perhaps trying to avoid falling on hard ground, but mostly in an attempt to prolong the bond beyond passion and sexual attraction.

I shared this while an ex partner and current friend paid close attention to my words. They took on the instrument after to me and narrated our relationship from an angle that reflected the insecurity that was created by not being able to tighten the strings of our liquid love affair. I kept my eyes down throughout their narration.

I'd probably have to admit that insecurity fed my competitive drive for improvement and my openness to develop more relationships, although I am not sure of the quality and quantity ratio that was at play. I was searching for how to maintain one's (my) freedoms while sharing and caring, without neglecting one's (my) desires, nor demanding selfishly from a relationship.

It pained me to have combined every aspect of our lives by growing and falling through multiple quotidianities, just to lose all connection to the other due to some pre-foreseen break up and life divergence that came precisely because of the growth and change that occurs when multiple lives merge. It seemed to me that this vicious circle of "one - two/many - one" was a recurring pattern of similarity and complicity that would allow for empathy to turn into love and care, which would foment the growth and change of the members involved, and inevitably lead to differentiation, breakup and subsequent pain. This I tried to avoid at all cost through a form of detachment, freelancing relationships and not drawing any permanent contracts that would compromise my personal space and individuality.



image by Vika Ushkanova

Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.

- Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays*

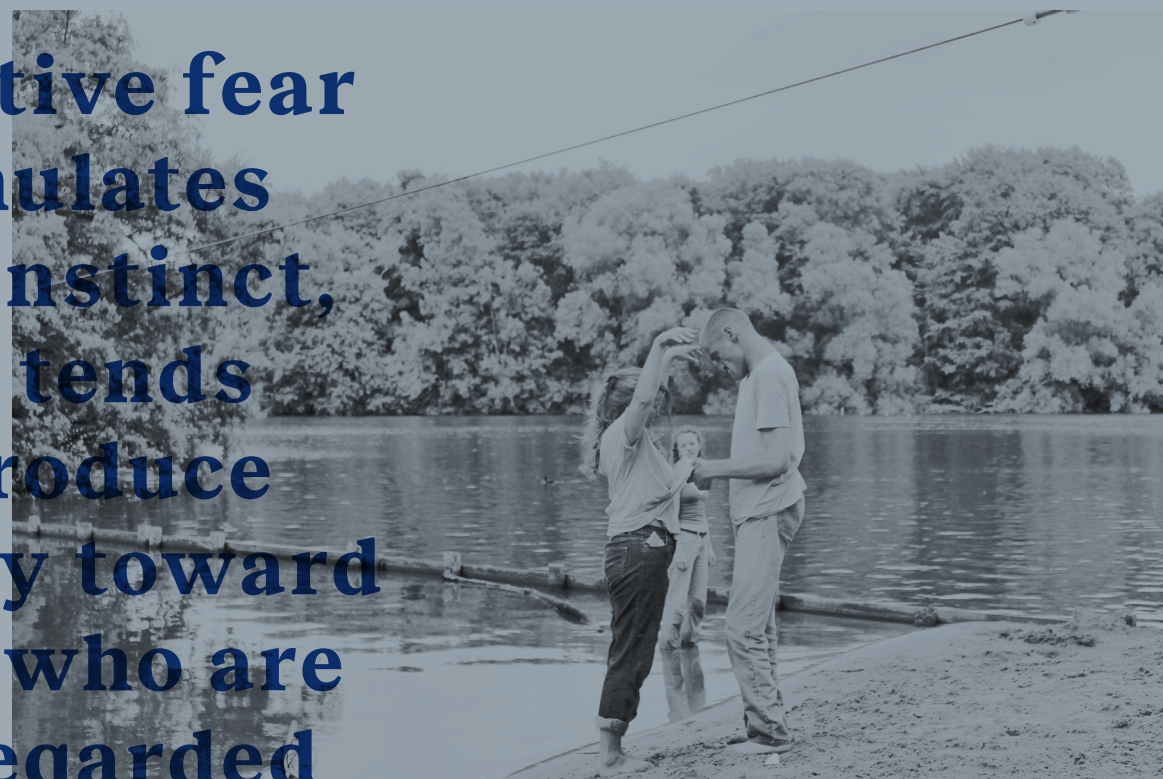


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Images of Cathelijne Smulders' Baden