

**For He Who Will
Never Know How
Pornography Kills
The False Woman
And Prevents The Live
One From Breathing**

by
KRISTIN PREVALLET



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ESSAY PRESS EP SERIES



#16

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In the Essay Press EP series, we give extended space and time to some of our favorite authors currently developing new book-length projects.

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For He Who Will Never Know How Pornography Kills The False Woman And Prevents The Live One From Breathing

In order to go beyond a limit, there must be a boundary. To touch one another in intersubjectivity, it is necessary that two subjects agree to the relationship and that the possibility to consent exists. Each must have the opportunity to be a concrete, corporeal and sexuate subject, rather than an abstract, neutral, fabricated, and fictitious one.

—Luce Irigaray

It's got all the ingredients to be a good story, discreetly told: the blind greed of those who pursue their innermost dreams and desires, all the while perpetuating brutality and systemic oppression.

Well, that may be a slight exaggeration. It's a bad plot move to begin the story with the meta-analysis. Nobody cares about that.

Perhaps I could begin this story by stating that in 2014, romance novels grossed \$1.08 billion (*source: BookStats*).

A classic romance novel follows a certain formula and ultimately props up heterosexuality as essential to the preservation of the status quo. A formula might be summarized along the following guidelines:

His chiseled chin. His broad shoulders.
Rippling back muscles. Feathered thighs.
But he is overwhelmed by mental demons
that threaten to sabotage his wealth and
social standing. He mightily struggles
against them.

She is a woman whose beauty, innocence and submissiveness bring him to his knees. Often she is from a lower class. Her humbleness transforms him, and they are both saved in a cataclysm of orgasmic freedom, the kind that is bound by constraint and experiments in bondage.

By being broken down, she learns self-respect. By breaking her down, he learns humility. She becomes powerful, having now learned the rules of the games that rich people play. She learns how to break people down and watch as they struggle to build themselves back up again. And if they don't, it's their fault. (Of course, she maintains some compassion.)

Needing some additional income, I figured I should write a romance novel. After all, I had the rules of the genre pretty well understood. But being a genre-bending, discourse-loving, language-games-practicing poet there was no way I could possibly write a straight-up romance.

And so, in the summer of 2013, I wrote an anti-romance novel called *The Queen of Coins*, under

the pen name Mia K. Lloyd. It was a manuscript that tried to critique romance novels by exaggerating the tropes of romance novels. I tried to reveal how those who propagate the logic of the free market attempt to constrain the free flow of sexual bodies while at the same time profiting from the free flow of capital—as if money somehow obeys different rules from this genre that defines both bodies and money in an abstract but geometric cosmology. It ended up being a very confused piece of writing, a vile piece of doggerel erotica.

I wrote the following synopsis and sent it out to a few agents, but it didn't get past the slush-pile screeners:

The Queen Of Coins is set in the corrupt and anxiety-ridden shadows of Wall Street where ruthless hedge-fund CEOs turn profits in the wake of the financial crisis and the ensuing movement to occupy Wall Street. The narrative swirls around three characters—Lyle, Dean, and Cate—as they each embark on a collision course with their deepest fears.

After losing his job and almost losing his mind, Lyle Clarke struggles to figure out how he allowed himself to so blindly follow his childhood friend—Wall Street billionaire Dean Lloyd—into the path of violent lust and escalating acts of degrading women.

Cate Mesmer is an expert at transforming sexual repression and forbidden desires into a healing power. Some who cross her path call her a “Shamanatrix” whose sexual prowess results in unconscious cleansing; for Lyle, she is a catalyst for redemption who helped him to restore his confidence and take charge of his life.

But when Cate finds herself caught in the middle of the power dynamic that is happening between these two men, she finds in Dean a mastermind whose powers put her to the ultimate

test. She will need to become as ruthless as he is in order to enact her revenge and restore the balance of her universe.

In the end, the greatest epiphanies are the ones that fail to change the world, but succeed in changing the lives of people who are bound, by energetic forces of time and space, to transcend their karmic paths and change their destiny.

The novel is clearly a bad romance, and as a piece of writing it is destined to live a long life on my hard drive. But sometimes, writing isn't about the final product. Sometimes, it's about an energy that is unleashed like a cosmic pool ball flying into a nuclear reactor, causing it to leak. Causing a chain reaction. And lots of scrambling to put it all back together.

Call it a dream that makes its way into reality.

What I'm trying to say is that because I am a poet in the tradition of legislating unspeakable worlds, I

decided to see what might happen if I tried to manifest the energy and idealism of this novel in my life in a real way. I figured that if the universe is a pinball game of intentions set on GPS courses that we enact through our actions, I might at least attract a few good poems. That's the secret, after all.

And so, I posted the following ad to Craigslist:

Dear Investment Banker:

I was standing by the occupiers of Wall Street while you were working there.

You passed by every day, pretending not to notice what was happening.

I don't blame you for the financial crisis—I know you believe in capitalism because you've worked hard and have invested your time and soul into the flow of money, and into the success of your lifestyle.

But you must know that the free-market system causes many people who can't (or don't want to)

participate in it to suffer.

And I think you're suffering too.

Will you let me love what soul you have left tonight?

Sincerely,

Mia K. Lloyd
Author of *The Queen of Coins*

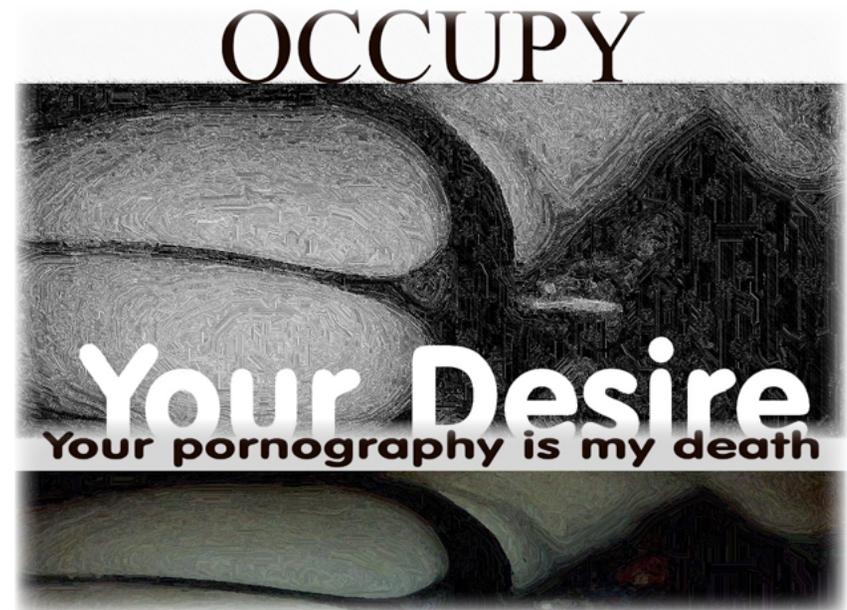
I began a correspondence with a lonely accountant named Jack who agreed to read my novel in exchange for my reading and commenting on his own fantasies. It was a perfectly civil exchange and a good example of the gift economy in action. Except that he only read the first few pages of my novel, reporting that he found it to be too extreme without enough character development.

So much for that.

And so I decided to translate the novel into an essay, figuring that perhaps this is what it was all along. The essay—"Hear Me Roar: Essay on the Emancipation of Bondage Fantasies" by Mia K. Lloyd—is a failure in another kind of way. It seems

both to mock and indulge bondage fantasies at the same time. Regardless, I put it up as a Kindle essay on Amazon, hoping to throw a strange loop into the search results of people looking for *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Still not satisfied, I decided to translate it once again into a manuscript of innovative poetics that crosses genre lines and erases narrative or explication. Because the story seems to be one I cannot adequately tell in any other way. Perhaps it's not really a story at all. Perhaps it's a theory disappearing into slogans and images.



I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling—to manifestations of mutual kindness. He'll love and hate, equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again—No, I'm running on too fast—I bestow my own attributes over-liberally on him.

—Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

Leave off looking to men to find out what you are not—seek within yourselves to find out what you are.

—Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto"

Suppose then that dream is the language of the self to the other. It's an hypothesis I think worth thinking about, worth examining. If the dream talks to other, the dream is the self speaking to the other, a dream then is a word that you are speaking to the world, then it might be worthwhile to investigate what the dream says to the world, what that story is that the dream is telling, a story that you are not ready consciously or wakefully to tell the world. Perhaps a story you need to tell to the world.

—Robert Kelly, "Hypnogeography"

*I LIVE IN A BORROWED AND OFTEN TENDER
MULTIPLICITY* A gust, cups, clouds, amethyst,
buckweed burns like sun, nervous & ready for the beach,
till the ceiling falls in bed maybe the smoke oven, clear
light walls cave in comets to blame deep suffering
mundane shock make it right, come on, correct things,
sob story, Tattered Tape, try not to slobber rice crackers
and cakes, helmet? hornets' nest? boats snap braincase
loose, s-e-e p-i-e m-e-l-t-i-n-g lineaments of fire, cloth
closing in, due to silence we stayed together, though
quite worn through and bundled, blow things up like
wacky adhesive dried in drive-through shakes, silence
brings unwanted guests, someone blow it up or bring
on brewskis.

IN A HUNCH THE STREETS OUTSIDE BURST slim down to a point, golden source, your cusp a corpse, I will tell you what to do, pull surface moisture from skin, grotesque sweating, soul nothing but strong daylight, fist on the centipede, latent death black gleam, salt slug rosy featured, grass as a pointer all from one hand, Limited Desk, before the metal starts flying dull, cowards, no way I know to survive, blood in the vortex, fixed on futurity, see the bone twist before it falls, eyes growing darker, hard lived lessons, voice gone scratchy, browbeaten blizzard coming, bullets whiz, brightness whittles sympathy.

THE POWERS THAT BE HAVE A DEEP AFFINITY TO DEATH (MARCUSE) He rings then doesn't. He determines connection. He moves through, like imagination does to reality. He scopes and inserts; pours over and behind. He rolls. He reminds planet earth of his presence. He burns down and then refinances to build up again. After roofing, he moves outside. He commits to markets, not memory. He comes in many colors, but only one pronoun. He adjective; upright, evolutionary, struggling. He longing for projected ideal; he subconscious lethal. Imagined as ink stain, he is violence translated back into language. His appetite is generosity, or pillage. He takes inexhaustible pleasure. He exerts force and gets angry when his force is thwarted. He lies dead on the road; he built the bomb. He penetrable when gaze circles back. He in constructing identifies with the rubble. He in moving rubble cautions the children to be careful where they step. He impresses with facts and figures. He refrains from staring even though fashion teeters ass and cleavage. He holds back but doesn't let go.

He builds dams to control mighty rivers; feels bottled up.
What is held back comes through with a vengeance
when restricted.

Accused of lacking emotion, he squelches release. Never
allowed to rebel he'll rebel until he's dead.

He mistakes life forces as prolonged adolescence. He
wakes up and realizes that what he has is all he's got.

Disappointed, he was told early on that he could be king
of the world. He's always too slow or too quick and can
never keep pace with the object of his desire. He wants
to see it all, but upon this seeing has lost the desire that
drove him to see in the first place.

He wants his hands all over. Symbolic order, he makes
meanings for what he sees in the distance. In crossing he
is myriad not unlike atom—a collapsing particle.

He spreads, crosses over, supplants one logic with
another. Devastated by the children screaming, he
emotes killing.

In a ring, boxing himself silly. "Murderers!" he hears her
cry. "Why kill them? Why not kill yourselves?"

He is beauty and release; the red balloon caught by the
chimney's grate. He bombs, calls it caring; he erases,
calls it freedom.

Complexity. He occupies through wants of love; he
destroys when love is reciprocated.

FILL YOUR ERASURE WITH LOVE Eyes roll back. Her
gaze will not be diverted. They press into each other, filling
in the gaps. She stares up while sucking and rubs while
swallowing. The close up of the hole is covered in spit.
Once inside, the force is uncontrollably hard. She stands
behind and with one hand rubs; with the other fingers.
Lying spread wide, arms overhead, wildly. While he lies face
down, arched up, on the staircase. He rubs oil then spreads
wide open. The muscles in her arms are flexed. Turning
hips around and around an imaginary torso. At the foot of,
turn on, take it slowly, without a spin. She seizes: first by
burning, second by firing, third by cutting down. The shrubs
are pruned to perfection. She picks up a saw and swings
it: first at a car, then at a bird, then into a pile of wood. She
moves through like an underpass. She leaps, anticipates,
gazes. And what of it? She learns power, fast as something
burning.

POWER, A MULTITUDE a clustering that is an area without borders, an exchange of mind-frames that creates a context for the reality of many minds, not always agreeing and not always with the same agenda but here we all are, now, no time like the present to speak your peace, just sit for awhile and listen, laugh, theorize and prophesize, concentric and expanding geometrics that position varying coordinates here, where you are now, and how did you get here? Who were you before you were occupied, and who are you now? Occupy me, reside with me now together, now sleeping, now marching, now beaten, jailed, baton and pepper-sprayed, wondering as Creeley citing Duncan wonders, "I always see the underside turning," where will this underside go? What spaces will open up to hold the surfacing as it evolves, steadying the forces of weather, will, and agency? *To hold the space of participation in a fragile democracy*, in the mental and physical space of an expanded solidarity, and of this we can be uncertain: the terms of reality are turning.

The underbelly is turned inside out & culture sees itself selfie as it self-destructs. Like my body money is magnetic dust. It can be used for death, or for love.

Dear Investment Banker:

Do you know what it means to exchange without profit?

Do you know what it means to dream of a world that is no longer subject to your suffering?

Exist
in a varied and mul-
tilayered
multiplicity. My dreams too are
always,
about you.

Author Bio



Kristin Prevallet is the author of five books of conceptual essay poetics, including most recently *Everywhere Here and in Brooklyn (A Four Quartets)*. She edited *A Helen Adam Reader*, and is on the faculty of Bard College's Institute for Writing and Thinking. A 2015 writer-in-residence at Spalding University, she also works as a [hypnotherapist](#) and with a [private practice](#) in Westchester.



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