

CENTER for EXPERIMENTAL LECTURES

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<http://experimentallecures.org>

I Wanna Be Inside You Part Two

by Sophia Cleary



Video at: <http://vimeo.com/81903925>

[Music intro and entrance, see video]

Hi! OK... (I use this—hello--ahh I'm so tall...oh fucking OK, sorry was that a child? Too much...ummm...wow, OK) Thank you for having me, Center for Experimental Lectures and Shandaken... God bless! What an amazing experience this has been, thank you. OK, so...(Can you start that video?) Oh my god my voice is shaking...ummm. OK, so, while that's starting—I love that, just a nature scene...

The title of this piece is called “I Wanna Be Inside You Part Two,” which was supposed to be more of a reincarnation of a piece that I did in 2011 called “I Wanna Be Inside You,” so that’s the part 1. I was gonna recreate it more like I did exactly, but tonight I’m just sort of gonna talk about it and give you the balloons which it sort of centers around. So, in that piece I had an audience of about fifteen people and I sat in the middle and I had a clock in the corner so I was timing it, it was kind of like—Time Oppressive! as a visual and I sat there and I was blowing up, I don’t know, like 20 balloons, one for each person (super exhausting, horror.) Very intense... And so I passed out each balloon to the people in the audience and I told them not to tie it—don’t tie your balloon! OK, um and everybody tied their balloon—uh, ok, so that’s awful, already this is a wreck—um no just kidding but if you can imagine, here I have one—so I’ll do the demo. So—oh my god it’s gone! Oh my god—no—I have a few more! OK! No—I’m OK! There’s also another one if you really wanna partake. OK, so I’m gonna do that later, but OK, so everybody has a balloon that they haven’t yet tied up and then I’m like: “Yeah so

OK everybody like inhale my breath!” and I have to, you know, coax people because they’re like: “Eww weird,” whatever. Um, but at the time I was really interested in the idea of breath as a part of the body, and this notion that this part of my body is in me and also inside other people at all times. So I was using this experiment as a way to sort of solidify that act or solidify that expression so that people could really feel it, and it was also kind of like a creepy way for me to be like: “I wanna be inside you” and then like watch that happen and like sort of—I had this kind of cum power that I was harnessing and I was like in multiple people at the same time and it was like—it was basically like a really polite exercise for doing something that was semi-pornographic. OK so, if you will, so if you haven’t tied it you can blow up your balloon, and then you can either do it to yourself so it’s masturbatory or you can give it to someone else or you can switch—whatever you’re into. But so the vulnerability here is that ostensibly you have to find like sort of a delicate balance, K? You have to find a delicate balance in which you don’t quite put your mouth on the tip but you’re kind of inhaling it gently, because also if you inhale it if your mouth is on the balloon and you suck it in too intensely it can explode your lungs. So be careful. So, death is real. And at the time I had this really awesome lipstick on which...was like on the balloon so you were sort of like oh my god yeah. Umm...is everybody feeling this? Does anybody want mine? You want mine? Somebody want it? I want to be inside you, OK thank you. Oh yeah. OK, so the idea with this exercise...is finding a special balance in inhalation...thinking about pressure...penetration, breath...the urge to dominate...and also of course collaboration. Yeah, so the collaborative and participatory effort to imbibe, take in or envelop another’s essence.

So on top of that, so yeah like Center for Experimental Lectures, I’m just gonna steal that, I was just gonna re-do that, because I was freaking about what I was gonna do, so I was like I’ll just do that piece again...but I have since done more work, so that’s great. So on top of that I’ve been reading this book, well I finished it, by bell hooks called “All About Love” and this book was especially interesting to me because it’s about loving and being loved and engaging in a practice of love which of course, who wouldn’t be interested in that? But in her book she uses a really specific definition of love as the basis for her argument that charts love’s presence or lack thereof in our childhood, with ourselves, with our parents, with our partner, with our higher power, etc. And she says “love is the will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.” And she goes on to explain how there’s basically no bargain, pretense, or expectation involved in loving—a practice of love is to just freely love, and she links this closely to spirituality as well which I find really interesting. It’s not about emotional health or happiness, it’s not about extending oneself to foster happiness with someone, or physical health with someone. So I guess that’s something I don’t think about very often, so I like that. She also says that love absolutely cannot exist in situations where there is any kind of abusive behavior, physical or emotional. And it especially cannot exist in situations where there is not complete and absolute honesty. And she also says one must relinquish their urge to dominate over others in order to really love. And that was kinda like “what?” Um...I love dominating, or being dominated, or whatever. So I’m just interested in how she’s thinking about power in relation to love and how those can be reconciled. I get what she’s talking about in terms of abuse and honesty, and I also understand that maybe she’s talking about dominating within a strictly patriarchal sense which assumes that some people just should have power over others or whatever, which is horrifying. But I kind of enjoy the harshness with which she makes these claims; I mean it’s scary because if you’re from a kind of dysfunctional family or if you’ve had dysfunctional relationships where abuse or this urge to dominate is present, then you’re like “Oh my god I’ve never fully felt love,” when you read her book. So it’s scary to hear that but then it’s kind of exciting because you’re like: OK let’s move towards this love that she’s talking about, that maybe I haven’t experienced and maybe I will experience in my life.

So I was looking through my tweets from a few weeks ago and in one of them I wrote, quote: “Transitioning from a power bottom to a regular bottom.” Un-quote. And um, I don’t really take my tweets very seriously (um yeah I do.) But I thought that was really genius and I thought what’s a regular bottom? Oh my god, so what is this spectrum of bottoming, as they say? Um...I felt sad thinking about a regular bottom, like thinking about it as, like, the unquestioning heterosexual straight woman who’s just like “Yeah I just get fucked and like that’s fine” or whatever, and she’s not considering her position of power within a heterosexual relationship, and she just is—it’s like “yeah patriarchy obviously” and it’s - she’s not even using that word. So, um...and I guess this is a point of anxiety for me because I’m like “I’m a fucking regular bottom,” or whatever, or I’m worried that I am and I’m confused about my heterosexuality or about my body and getting fucked and enjoying it and especially being in a heterosexual relationship where I fear that my position, like—“oh my god missionary”—that I’m like playing out some kind of normativity or enjoying it, which is like, ugh, god I hate myself. But I shouldn’t hate myself, that’s the point.

OK, so... Somehow I find myself reading Leo Bersani, and, specifically “Is the Rectum a Grave,” and—yeah, just casual, just like in a hammock... And in this he posits in defense of this kind of passive bottoming or what I like to call reg. bot-

tom, he says “What if we said, for example, not that it is wrong to think of so called passive sex as ‘demeaning,’ but rather that the value of sexuality itself is to demean the seriousness of efforts to redeem it?” What? OK let me say that again. So it’s a question, right, OK: “What if we said, for example, not that it is wrong to think of so called passive sex as ‘demeaning,’ but rather that the value of sexuality itself is to demean the seriousness of efforts to redeem it?” OK. So, I don’t know if I’m interpreting this correctly but I found this to be kind of like a relief when I read it because I was like, OK, the radical nature of sex is that it’s fucked! That sex is fucked already, and that our efforts to salvage it or to contain it in a way that’s more digestible so we can make it more about love or whatever is to ultimately undermine its radical potential. Sex is fucking nasty and it’s riddled with the urge to dominate, in a good way, or not—in one way or another, and he goes on to explain later—he uses this term “to self-shatter,” so it involves this experience as well but, um...in relation to the bottom. So, my urge to be a regular bottom, or to get fucked without feigning any type of power over the situation or to even be aware of it, is maybe already always power bottoming, right, because I’m talking about it? But Bersani keeps coming back to me, like this idea that I’m in it to self-destruct, or this self-shatter and that to me seems like this kind of masochism that I perform and enjoy, that kind of rubs up with this idea, rubs against this idea—ha rubs—um rubs up against this idea of self love that bell hooks is talking about. I’m like “OK how do these work together?”... So as hooks writes, as I mentioned before, “Love involves the will to extend oneself,” so maybe this extending is the act of shattering that Bersani is talking about. Becoming something that’s everywhere all at once, or an act in which you dissolve from a unitary being into multiple beings, or a moment in which you arrive in various places while being in one place. And maybe this is the spiritual growth that hooks is talking about too. But that self-shattering, that extending of oneself, seems to apply only to the experience of the bottom, or the person who chooses to imbibe my breath from the balloon. It’s an act of vulnerability and risk, but in choosing to allow this thing inside you, which you want, you’re of course running certain risks, so you have to come to terms with that, and the imagination obviously doesn’t have to work very hard to come up with a sweeping and horrific range in which—all the physical emotional and spiritual ways in which penetration can violate our being. So the most extreme case that I’m thinking of, uh for me, especially after reading Bersani, is like the fucking horror that comes with someone ejaculating inside of you when they don’t have your permission. There’s literally nothing you can do to prevent that, it’s like OK I want you inside me, but then you can’t perform a resistance against that moment, unless you know it’s coming. So how can you communicate and perform resistance with or when someone is inside you, is a question I have, and that state of vulnerability leaves me nervous and kind of sick because I don’t yet have an answer for the way in which I can protect myself from that or to think about how you communicate that. Um, I mean obviously you can say it but I’m thinking, you know, about a different moment. So, within the context of the AIDS crisis Bersani questions the position of the bottom as this infected locus riddled with the potential for death, and instead posits it in all of its risk as a place for radical transformation in sex. He writes “But if the rectum is the grave in which the masculine ideal (an ideal shared—differently—for men and women) of proud subjectivity is buried, then it should be celebrated for its very potential for death.” So, imagine for a moment that through fucking we excavate subjectivities from their so-called graves. And in doing so we highlight the unique position of he or she who fucks, who performs this excavation, and perhaps the tender vulnerability (maybe?) (Maybe I have in parenthesis with a question mark.) In doing so. Like thinking about, maybe this is a horrifying metaphor, but like the care or ferocity with which the anthropologist like digs and tears away searching for some secret or some mystery, but this is a process which of course could ostensibly exhaust and terminate both parties and both places. So the potential for death in sex is real, for some more than others, whether it’s literal or captured by the mind but as Foucault generously reminds us “Sex is not a fatality; it’s a possibility for creative life.”

Um...I thought I was gonna talk a lot more about urns in this piece, like I think in the description it’s like “urns!” Um, so shit I gotta talk about urns, um, but I want to talk about urns. Specifically the urn as a metaphor for independence, and how in death—like thinking about the urn functioning as a room of one’s own, and um, like I have this joke with my girlfriend Kate that’s like “god that girl will never have her own urn because she’s just so latched on ‘is he texting?’” Or whatever. Um...that’s like a horrifying joke, but I’m thinking about the tragedy of losing one’s self to another person’s existence, or the fear that I guess I have on dependence on someone else, and the idea that you might have to like share your grave, share your urn, or let someone inside your urn, let someone into your death state. This all resonates for me—with Bersani’s idea that the subject’s vulnerability is inscribed by a death and that it is inside the body. So the empty cold form of the urn then begins to resemble maybe not a morbid or horrifying vessel into which the body’s remains are cast, but a form or a space that like the womb or like the rectum or the vagina we return to again and again as we interrogate our own subjectivities by inside and through another’s participation. OK, so just one second.

[Music and dance sequence, return to video]