

# miaaiden

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Each year, on a secret date corresponding to a full moon, the Psychotherapists’ Ball is held at Hofburg Palace in Vienna. Psychodynamic or otherwise, participants make the pilgrimage from around the world to compete in the ball, unveiling the therapeutic dances they have cultivated and perfected through their healing practices. Wide-eyed hopefuls and veteran professionals alike proudly represent their Celestial Houses, Enclaves and Orbs at the exclusive event. For the first time, invitations for this year’s ball have been successfully intercepted, the thin circles of milky amber agate etched at nanoscale with a date and password also bear the quote: “A therapist who is genuinely an instrument of the Self participates in the same healing mystery as the rainmaker.” It is in the spirit of investigating this healing mystery that our undercover team of grad students and self-described journalists attempted to infiltrate the most recent ball.

Following are some fragments transcribed from secret recordings submitted by our field operatives, many of whom (at time of publishing) remain missing...likely still engaged in post-ball festivities, visionary unfoldments, dancing mania or at least complementary counter-transference which may arise in response to various intra-psychic conflicts made perceptible through the elaborate performances witnessed:

[fragment 1 (from the notebook of exiled food blogger Tander Bream):]

“This ritual is presided over by four Judges, rumored among them at least several Fifth Wave dance-movement therapists, their anonymity maintained by shawls of floral brocade on black silk crêpe, a Greek phi embroidered in spun gold over obscured foreheads. The masked faceshapes of the judges are framed by thickly rippled hooded robes, apparently cut from bolts of salvaged ancient Roman wool, dyed in Imperial or Tyrian purple, a pigment extracted from the secretions of predatory sea snails in the family Muricidae. Each judge silently observes from atop a throne of upcycled e-waste, transformed by the work of a guild of Maltese apiarists (their interns) into beeswax monuments. They conclude the ceremony by announcing a winner through the presentation of a small velvet pouch, contents as yet unknown.”

[fragment 2 (hidden recording device):]

“The ceramics club has taken over a banquet table of Pharmacie reps in VIP, unlimited bottle service, they seem to have been encouraged into a situation remix, I’m going closer...”

(rhythmically:) “...self-installing algorithm on Jupiter’s satellites, to get a better tarot, to get a better yarrow stick throw!”

(laughter)

“I’m researching online how to get my synchrons up. It’s all delta waves!”

“I need to get my gut microbiota profiled, gimme your contact info.” (laughter)

“So, what kinda reality maintenance exercises you do lately?”

[fragment 3 (recovered audio recording):]

“-okay they’re doing it in English next.”

“We proudly introduce Inayah of Xnura House. Xnura House is an offshore arcology currently situated in the (unintelligible), ostensibly involved in conservation and plant-based apothecary research of the Soqotra island protected biome. Please welcome Inayah and her assistants.”

(applause)

(drumming)

(static)

“Interesting form...”

(static)

“She’s spinning that guy inside the pendulum!”

(static)

“-some sort of apparatus to reflect the magnified moonlight at-”

“Are those prisms?”

(high-pitched frequency, possible howling)

“A volunteer? Me! Me!”

(recording ends abruptly)

## WORK HOLE

An hour is worth eight dollars  
are words written in my sand  
by a detail oriented wind.  
I pour all my colors  
down the workhole,  
sign a flipped crucifix  
into my aging checkbook.  
I invest in loss,  
choose stocks in burning houses.  
I cook the bird to burn it.  
Smaller than a question mark  
that there is no time to type,  
I see a grim and golden truth  
as it's breaking down my door.

## WRATH

How late am I hungry  
for cow, pig or fowl?  
At what witching hour  
does the siren song  
of melted cheddar  
sing loud above heart health?  
I've gone rotten inside.  
Preserve me in plastic wrap.  
Carryout my warlock,  
he's becoming bloated.  
One french fry stands apart  
from a hill of old receipts,  
thinking "I should feel golden,  
but I'm soggy with death and grease."

## PLANET NOT OKAY

On my planet, we all suffer  
from the same diseases.  
I harbor toenail burn, brain flares,  
spastic hairline, raptor breath.  
I drop my Poptart  
into oblivion.  
Conduct General Tso's Witchcraft.  
before the iTunes Archangel  
strips my awkward spacesuit.  
I Google "Why?"  
add "is Everyone Better?"  
change "Why?" to "How Come?" change "Better?"  
to "Happier?" then "Happier?"  
to "Less Dying?", then "More Alive?"

## WHAT IS WRONG

My poetry is a byproduct  
like flouride from aluminum.  
It's all my employed leftovers  
from 10,000 "have a great days,"  
100,000,000 "thank-yous,"  
"thank-you-for-your-business-sirs"  
"have-a-fantastic-evenings."  
It's blizzarding outside right now.  
The snow accrues its debts,  
mirrors in its rolling collection  
the blank silence of each moment  
widening between you and me.  
I'm cold inside, how do you feel?  
Tell me, I want to know.

## I

The painting shows two figures and a small dog in the foreground. The figures are a man and a woman in thick, ornate clothes that add bulk to their otherwise thin, nearly spindly, bodies. The man's thin calves and elongated feet, clothed in blue stockings, rest upon the dusky wooden floor whose grain runs vertically from the front of the room to the back. His shoes, two wooden sandals with wedged heels and a single black strap across each, purposefully lie just next to his feet. He has recently removed his shoes. He stands on holy ground.

He wears a black, velvet shirt and a blue and red, pleated smock with brown fur trim. Atop his head is a hat so large it seems not really to rest upon the man's head, but only to hover around his pale face with its bulbous nose and cleft chin. His right hand is raised in a gesture of benediction, while his left extends to the woman standing on the opposite side of the canvas. He lightly grips the back of her hand with his palm, while her palm extends out to the viewer. Their two hands occupy nearly the center of the composition. The joining of their hands is the action of the scene. The painting bears witness to this act.

The woman, like the man, wears an expression of seriousness and yet also distraction on her translucently pale face. Her head is downcast, but her eyes are focused upward, sending a diagonal line across space to the man's upturned right hand. Her right hand rests atop her stomach. The thick folds of her dress enclose a large bulge rising just below her purple and gold sash, making her appear almost pregnant. Her dress is green, with cream-colored fur lining, and a bright blue underdress peaking through at the sleeves and the hem. A fine piece of white lace with precisely rendered textures and shadows drapes over her head, neck and shoulders.

There appear to be two beds in the room with the couple and the dog, both adorned in deep red cloth with embroidery. The larger of the two is just visible, extending into the space behind the woman at an oblique angle. It has a canopy and a round, red ballast that hangs just next to the woman. A carpet occupies the space between the beds, peaking out from behind the woman. Next to the man is an open window, exposing grey brick and a sliver of sky and tree. A single orange rests on the windowsill. A narrow table just below the window holds more oranges, bright and inviting spheres half in light and half in shadow.

The dog stands in the center of the lowest portion of the canvas. It is a small dog, more the size of a cat. The dog has an ugly face, with eyes too close together. Each long tendril of its dull brown fur is visible. Moving upward through the central vertical axis that begins with the dog, one sees the hands of the couple, and then a circular mirror with notched frame. Above the frame is a Latin inscription made directly on the wall in exaggerated script and above that a thin metal chandelier. The mirror and inscription are likely the work's most discussed details, though they are just barely visible. The mirror is convex and reflects back the image of the man and woman. Before them in the mirror are visible two other figures, standing where the viewer stands, entering through a doorway. Inserted within the notches of the mirror's frame are small religious scenes. The inscription reads, *Johannes de eyck fuit hic*.

## II

The painting is over twenty feet long and stands ten feet high. A row of at least forty men and women clusters in frieze-like formation, occupying end-to-end the lower two thirds of the canvas' wide horizontal reach. At the left most edge a lone man with sideburns and brown receding hairline stands, mostly eclipsed in darkness. His nose, cheekbones and brow are sharply defined. Next, four pallbearers present a coffin draped in a long white cloth adorned with black crossbones and tear drops. These four men wear matching black, wide-brimmed hats, with white gloves and white scarves draped evenly across their chests. The four hands that do not work in supporting the coffin, tightly grip the outer edges of their respective scarves. One pallbearer makes eye contact with one of two small, round-faced altar boys dressed in feminine white robe and red caps. The one not looking up looks out and to the right, he holds a large urn likely filled with holy water.

The coffin moves through the crowd endwise, with just its front showing. A black hole with rectangular edges occupies the center of the canvas and waits to enclose this coffin; it is cropped and thus also opens out to the space of the viewer. A man kneels proudly by this opening in white, puffed shirtsleeves, a black vest and blue pants. Like most of the other men there, he has facial hair and a pronounced forehead. However, his thick, commanding hands and

brown, worn shoes reveal him as the gravedigger. The tools of his labor are not shown. A skull, the same brown as the dry, craggy earth surrounding it rests on the opposite side of the grave from this man. When he dies, who will dig his grave?

The painting is awash in dull hues and dark tones. A group of women stand together, relegated, to the right edge of the canvas. They are a sea of black punctuated with white kerchiefs, bonnets and cheeks red either from cold or tears. Two in the front cover their faces in grief. By contrast, only one man, to the right of the gravedigger, seems to weep with such intensity. Aside from the earth and grass atop which they stand, the landscape of the painting consists of two flat slabs of white and brown mountain, the right one longer than the other, and both resting atop green grass. The strip of sky above the mountains is hazy grey with wisps of long cloud moving along the length of the canvas. Breaking the mostly empty space of the valley between the mountains is a crucifix, whose height extends nearly to the top of the canvas. It is held by a white-gloved attendant of the ceremony with large nose, trim mustache and inscrutable expression. He is the only figure who makes eye contact with the viewer.

The officiators of the ceremony stand out in their ostentatious clothing, as compared to the mostly homogeneous group in black. The bald priest, raising his Bible to begin speaking wears thick black robes with white trim, fringed along the edge of his cape. Behind him stand two men in red robes and large, red hats with fluted contours. Out of stupidity or boredom, or as has been implied, drunkenness, they each wear faces unbefitting to the occasion. Aside from the clergy, the only man not dressed in mourning clothes is the one standing to the right of the grave. He wears short green pants, tall green and bright blue striped socks, buckled shoes, a brown vest, a grey coat and a top hat. He stands in three-quarter view with his left foot slightly before the right, and his left arm extending at roughly ninety degrees.

Many of the artist's friends and acquaintances sat for this painting in the artist's studio. Among them was the artist's father. When the artist died, it was in another country and his father fought to bring the artist's body back to the place of his birth, though it was against the artist's own wishes for his remains.

## III

The work consists of two sheets of glass suspended in a metal frame. The work stands nearly nine feet high, with the two sheets resting atop one another like a window. Both windows are badly cracked. The network of cracks forms a triangle, a chevron, an arrow, extending from the corners of one side of the work to the central horizontal axis of the other. The cracks resulted from an accident in a truck and were fixed back together instead of replaced allowing the cracks to show.

In the top panel, a grey form resembling a long cloud or a section of wood is cut through by three wavy rectangles, forming windows within the window's pane. The cloud has many irregular undulations. On one end of it extends geometric forms of black and lighter grey. These attach to and drop from the side of the "cloud," with further hanging elements extending below there. The accumulation of silver-grey forms extends from top to bottom, the bottom-most form being merely a thin irregular section resembling a twig and cutting a diagonal toward the lower corner.

The bottom pane shows what appears to be some fictional mechanical apparatus. To the left, rows of what could be empty sets of clothes, or parts of bodies are arranged hanging from a mechanical clothesline, like what one would encounter at the dry cleaners. The skeleton of a rectangular box seems to hold the works of this machine, a wheel with flattened extensions, running against the ground. Protruding from the base of the rectangular frame is a black line connected to what appears to be three thick, ribbed cylinders resting on an elegantly proportioned table with curved legs and feet. Atop the cylinders is a disk, with handle, and a pole stuck through its center. Four lines cross atop the pole, two with circular knobs that are attached back to the clothing contraption. One that extends to the back of the space, and another that extends forward, breaking the frame. Draped across the center of these poles is a series of wide cones, each touching the other and forming a chain.

The way the two machines intersect, it appears as though they would destroy each other if they were actually running, creating a tangle of clothing and wires.

The work is forever unfinished.





JB

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