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2017

### A Refuge for Jae-in Doe: Fugues in the Key of English Major

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## WOVEN: A Refuge for Jae-in Doe: Fugues in the Key of English Major

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**Categories :** Creative Nonfiction / Essay

**Date :** 03-11-2017

*WOVEN is an Entropy series and dedicated safe space for essays by persons who engage with #MeToo, sexual assault and harassment, and #DomesticViolence, as well as their intersections with mental illness, substance addiction, and legal failures and remedies. We believe you. If selected for the series, we want to provide the editorial and human support such that our conversation continues long after the stories and names have changed. You can view submission guidelines for WOVEN [here](#).*

Reread the [archives](#), always.

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### INVOCATION (Winter 2015-16)

It's evening in Queens, New York. Alone in my apartment, I'm grading student papers and drinking ginger tea. The phone rings. For some reason I forget to check the caller ID before answering, "Hello?"

A woman's voice: "Hi, Seo-Young?"

"Yes?"

"I'm calling from Stanford to ask about your experience while you were here."

(blank space)

The blank space above: a representation of my immediate response to the caller's words.

I almost can't believe that this is happening. Stanford is reaching out to me. Will Stanford apologize at last? That is all I have ever wanted: an apology.

My experience while I was at Stanford.

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The story tumbles out. It's a story I have told numerous times already—to psychiatrists, to close friends, to myself, to lovers, to neurologists, to therapists. The story begins with my suicide attempt at age 21 and ends with Stanford's own punishment of the professor in 2001: two years of suspension without pay. I describe the long horrible months of sexual harassment. I describe the rape—or the parts of it that I can bear to mention out loud. I add that I never pressed charges or received any money from either Stanford or the professor. All I did was tell someone else who told someone else who started the fact-finding investigation that resulted in his punishment. I have never sued the rapist, the department, or the school—despite the time I've lost and the fortune I've spent as a consequence of the harmful culture at Stanford that enabled the professor to injure me as well as others.

The monologue is disjointed and long. I hadn't been expecting this call. I haven't had time to prepare. And yet I've had too much time to prepare: nearly fifteen years.

There is a silence after I've finished speaking. I start to wonder if perhaps the caller has hung up on me. I start to worry she won't call back.

But she's still there. "That's... awful," the woman is suddenly saying. "I'm so sorry. I'm just a Stanford undergrad. I was actually calling Stanford alumni for financial donations, to ask you for a gift of, but, I don't, I mean, in this case, for you..."

Something is happening to my eyes. The room has begun at once to darken and to seem much too bright. Or is something happening to my mind? Bright like sunlight at noon in Northern California on a cloudless day. But I am in Queens, New York City. The year is not 2000. What time is it? How old am I? Something is happening to reality. A sickening gust spreads throughout my internal organs. The phone I hold is shaking. My hands and arms are shaking. I close my eyes. I imagine feathery bandages made of photons holding together the jigsaw of my body. The shaking subsides.

"No, I'm the one who's sorry," I manage to say, and I mean it. "Tell me about your studies."

"Sure," she says, and begins to talk with cheerful confidence about her major, which is not English but history. She's excited about her academic career. As I listen to her, I murmur vague, pleasant, encouraging utterances. I'm happy for her. She has a bright future. "You have a bright future," I say. We wish each other well. Somewhat awkwardly the dialogue ends.

For several moments I am dazed. Inexplicable giddiness has begun to seep into my head. I can hear air seeping into a balloon. The balloon is beige. The phone is warm in my hand. Most balloons are not beige. The gust of nausea rapidly gathers in my chest. I rush, half-stumbling, to the kitchen trash can.

I throw up.

## **DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION**

"There's a great pleasure in teaching freshmen because you're sort of being folded into their lives at a particular, powerful moment in which you can make a difference," he said in the 1996 interview. "And to some degree, you can 'convert' them to English. It becomes a way of trawling for majors." (Source: Cynthia Haven, Stanford Report, August 17, 2007)

## **SOURCES AND ALLUSIONS**

He found me in a place known as the Farm.  
His field: to grow a special breed of harm.

His stock of antique furniture and dolls  
And manuscripts he nurtured in his walls.

A culture of "American" indifference  
To rape he tended with uncommon sense.

Exactly how I came to be a thing  
For him to call his own is still a thing

I can't or won't remember. He misused  
His powers to leave minds like mine abused.

Where others who preceded me fare now  
I often wish yet do not wish to know.

Sometimes I dream that his rare book collection  
Is made of all "his" women turned to fiction.



**IS THIS AN EXAMPLE OF IRONY? EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER.**

I grew up pronouncing the word "women" the way my Korean parents did: the same way we pronounced the word "woman."

It was the professor—my rapist—who corrected my pronunciation of the word "women." Since then, every time I have uttered "women," I have remembered his voice.

It—his voice—it accompanies mine like an accent. “Women.”

**HERE, I FILLED OUT THE FORM.**

- Year of birth: 1978.
- Place of birth: Northern Virginia.
- First language: Korean. To this day I have dreams in which my young mother is holding me in her arms and whispering to me in achingly melodic strings of Korean syllables.
- Second language: English. When I started school, the teacher told my parents that if they wanted me to succeed in America they would have to communicate with me exclusively in English. From then on my mother and I were estranged. We spoke to each other in an English filled with gaps. It took me decades to recognize the sacrifice my mother made when she stopped speaking to me in our native tongue.
- Language spoken by parents to each other: fluent Korean. I grew up hearing marriage as a foreign language—literally and figuratively. I grew up hearing the sound of Korean as a language of Korean-bound han syndrome, disappointment, fury, resignation, the sense of being trapped forever, resentment, guilt. Every other word: a door slammed.
- Faith system(s): raised Roman Catholic by my mother and Confucian by my father. Currently agnostic.
- How parents met: Their marriage was arranged.
- Significant family trauma(s): the Korean War (which orphaned my father and made him watch his beloved elder brother die); my mother's sister's suicide when I was a child; being run over by a car as a child while waiting for the schoolbus; struggling as a Roman Catholic teenager with my romantic feelings for a female classmate; being hospitalized during my senior year of college following my first suicide attempt; being raped soon after my first suicide attempt by a professor at Stanford University, where I was just starting a PhD program in English language and literature.

**IS THIS AN EXAMPLE OF IRONY? EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER.**

His interests included The Declaration of Independence. He wrote a book titled *Declaring Independence*.

**SYMPATHY FOR JAMES COMEY. SUMMER 2017.**

He had called me at lunchtime that day and invited me to dinner that night, saying he was going to invite the whole cohort, but decided to have just me this time, with the whole cohort coming the next time. It was unclear from the conversation who else would be at the dinner, although I assumed there would be others.

It turned out to be just the two of us, seated at a small table in the middle of his favorite restaurant.

The professor began by asking me whether I wanted to stay on in the PhD program, which I found strange because he had already told me twice in earlier conversations that he hoped I would stay, and I had assured him that I intended to. He said that lots of people wanted to work with him and, given the academic pressure and job market, he would understand if I wanted to walk away.

My instincts told me that the one-on-one setting, and the pretense that this was our first discussion about

my position, meant the dinner was, at least in part, an effort to have me beg to work with him and create some sort of intimate relationship. That concerned me greatly, given that I wanted to be his advisee.

I replied that I loved my work and intended to stay, write my dissertation, and receive my degree. And then, because the set-up made me uneasy, I added that I was not “interested” in the way people who are dating use that word, but he could always count on me to work hard and try my best to produce good scholarship.

A few moments later, the professor said, “But I'm lonely. I'm needy. I need to feel desirable. I need you to desire me.”

I didn't move, speak, or change my facial expression in any way during the awkward silence that followed. I wanted to leave. Instead I froze.

The conversation then moved on, but he would return to the subject near the end of our dinner.

At one point, I tried to explain why it was so important that my personal life be independent of my professional career. I said it was a conundrum: Throughout history, some people in institutional positions of power (e.g. straight white male professors with tenure and endowed chairs, among other privileges) have decided that their positions authorize them to use less powerful people (e.g. 21-year-old first-year graduate students who happen to be female, mentally ill, and 1.5-2nd generation Korean American) in ways that make the powerful even more powerful (while putting the powerless in a risky situation). But the abuse of power can ultimately make the powerful weak by undermining public trust in institutions—including academic institutions—and their work.

Near the end of our dinner, the professor returned to the subject of my status as a student, saying he was very glad I wanted to stay, adding that he had heard great things about me from Professor X, Professor Y, and many others. He then said, “I need you.” I replied, “You will always get work from me.” He paused and then said, “That's what I want, work from you.” I paused, and then said, “You will get that from me.” It is possible we understood the phrase “work” differently, but I decided it wouldn't be productive to push it further. The term – “work” – had helped end a very awkward conversation and my explanations had made clear what he should expect.

### **INTERLUDE. During one of my episodes.**

Self: Dad?

Dad: Yes, Jennie?

Self: Did Stanford happen?

Dad: What do you mean?

Self: Was it real. The professor. Did all of that actually happen. To me.

Dad (after a pause and a sigh): Yes, it was real. It happened.

Self: Because I couldn't remember if I was remembering something that didn't happen. But it was real. You're not just saying so.

Dad: It happened. It was real.

Self (after a silence): Thanks Dad. I needed to know that.

**FILL IN THE BLANK.**

Crime:

Punishment: suspension for two years without pay.

**LECTURE, 2078**

“Originally the sonnet was a site of sexual violence. Male poets were rewarded for celebrating the women they hunted. They used the sonnet form and an instrument called the ‘blazon’ to convert their prey into exquisite English artifacts. Our anthologies still include holograms of jewel-like eyes, porcelain skin, ruby lips, hair like gold, and so on.

“Over time the white men themselves modified the sonnet to make it accommodate topics other than male heterosexual desire. The topics came to include blindness, time, spiders, God, the planets, apple-picking, wine, prayer, computers, robots, politics, and the apocalypse. Now, in the year 2078, it is possible to choose existence in a world designed like a sonnet. It is possible to live one’s entire life inside a sonnet. It is possible to become a sonnet.—But only if one has consented to such an existence.”

**DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION**

In a 1996 News Service interview, [JF] described the 18th-century attitude toward belongings this way: "There was a sense that objects were preferred over people because they didn't leave you, they didn't talk back, and you could project a certain subjectivity and have an intense relationship with them, particularly with books," he said. (Source: Cynthia Haven, Stanford Report, August 17, 2007)

**A LITTLE SONG AND A RECEIPT.**

Doe: a deer, a female deer—  
Often chased by sonneteers of old.  
Caught, and killed, and bathed in fear,  
turned to human blazons to be sold—

Eyes—\$twin models of the stars.  
Skin—\$fine tissue wrought from gold.  
Lips—\$your favorite kind of flower.  
Sex—\$a secret still untold/ a Silk Road to unfold/ a thing for you to mold/ a source by you controlled.

Total: \$————.—

**THE BLAZONAUT.**

Setting: an alternative universe where, due to the choreography of molecules here, to use words is to versify. Location: Southwest Canada (not far from where the Golden Gate Bridge is located in our reality). Time: a year named "The Earliest Early Americanist" (corresponding roughly to our year 2000 AD). All residents of this universe hold the following truth to be self-evident: Each person has the right to free consent. Living by this truth is to them as breathing is to us. Rape, in this reality, is an alien phenomenon.

### 1. News

"...she fell into the water from the sky..."

### 2. Jae-in Doe

Decedent is an Asian female.  
Twenty-two she just had turned.  
The cause of death we cannot tell  
Despite the many things we've learned.

### 3. TOP SECRET

My Doe-type can be difficult to track.  
Yet here I am, my voice-box playing back  
From lips hydrangea-lavender in hue  
His thoughts during our first few interviews.

The hair is shoulder-length, the color black.  
The height and weight suggest she won't fight back.  
The fingernails are unadorned and short.  
The eyes are brown; no makeup do they sport.  
The skin appears unpierced and untattooed,

Yet scars of ruby-pearl seem to protrude  
Like self-inflicted jewelry on each arm  
And wrist—which means she's vulnerable to harm.  
The language of her flesh, as I assess her,  
Reveals Confucian worship of professors.

Her deference Korean gives me right  
To use her innocence for my delight.

### 4. The Coroner's Soliloquy

The species: neither robot nor a xenomorph but both.  
A *blazonaut* I call her as I scan her for the truth.

Throughout her brain dimensions grew like flowers wild  
And *han* flowed through her circuits like fog-weather mild

until the onslaught  
caused a drought.

The genitals, the soul, the lymph, the spine, the nape,  
Show evidence of \_\_\_\_\_  
For which we have no name.

I can't do this anymore.

### **DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION**

You can keep nothing safe from our eyes and ears. This is your own history. We are your most perilous and dutiful brethren, the song of our hearts at once furious and sad. For only you could grant me these lyrical modes. I call them back to you. Here is the sole talent I ever dared nurture. Here is all of my American education. (The Korean American narrator of *Native Speaker* by Chang-rae Lee)

### **MUTANT BLAZON**

My rapist's eyes remind me of the sun.  
To look at them will mean that I go blind.  
His mouth beside my ear—they form a gun.  
Each breath: a bullet targeting my mind.

My rapist's eyes remind me of the sun.  
His throat: a fist to silence mine designed.  
His reason: a ventriloquist's illusion.  
No tenor in the end could hearing find.

My rapist's eyes remind me of the sun—  
Too close for any vessel with a mind.  
Survive or get to die—that is the question.  
No longer have I any will to mind.

My rapist's eyes remind me of the sun—  
Not dead, not living, neither keen nor blind;  
A daily haunting; memory rebegun;  
Disaster in some future undivined.

I write, rewrite, a "sonnet" about rape  
To hunt that voice I wish I could escape.

### **DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION (without using the words "predator" or "prey")**

There she beholding me with milder look,

---

Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide:  
Till I in hand her yet half trembling took,  
And with her own goodwill her firmly tied.  
Strange thing, me seem'd, to see a beast so wild,  
So goodly won, with her own will beguil'd.

—From Edmund Spenser's poem "Like As A Huntsman" (Sonnet 67 of his 1595 sonnet cycle AMORETTI)

**DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION (without using the words “predator” or “prey”).**

"Yeah that's her in the gold. I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful... I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything. [...] Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything." —The 45th President of the United States of America

**COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE.**

Professor: All men have rape fantasies, including your father.

Student:

**A KIND of CENSUS**

- Number of spouses: zero.
- Number of children: zero.
- Longest stretch of time spent alone inside the apartment: eighteen consecutive days.
- Longest stretch of time post-rape without any physical intimacy with another mammal: seven consecutive years.
- Number of episodes of Law and Order: Special Victims Unit never seen: zero.
- Year I watched SVU for the first time: 2011.
- Year SVU started: 1999.
- Number of fantasies about cathartic dialogues with Olivia Benson: countless.
- Number of years spent closeted to most people about what happened at Stanford: fifteen.

**July 5, 2016. Facebook entry posted shortly after I came out as a rape survivor.**

Q: Do you think being raped made you gay?

A: Several people have asked me this question (or a version of it). It is a question worth addressing.

(1) I cannot speak for others who have been raped. I can only speak to my own situation. Please do not mistake anything I write here for a generalization. (2) The first crush I remember having: Ellen Degeneres. At the time I didn't know who she was (I caught a glimpse of her on TV); I didn't know what it meant to be gay; I didn't know what I felt was a crush. All I knew was that she made my heart feel nervous and I wanted to see her face again. (3) My parents had an arranged marriage. The arrangement was less than ideal. They spoke to (argued with) each other in Korean—a language that my brother and I

did not understand—and they spoke to us in (broken-ish) English. To this day I think of marriage as literally a foreign language. (4) My mother was (is) devoutly Catholic. As a child I myself was devoutly Catholic and confused about my sexuality. The last time I went to confession (I was a teenager) I confessed I thought I might be gay and also I wasn't sure if God existed. The priest said he could not forgive me but he could give me holy water for me to keep by my bed to repel Satan. (5) My first sexual experience was being raped at the age of 22 by someone who wielded power over me, who controlled my future, and who was fully aware that I was sexually inexperienced and confused about my sexuality. (6) I spent much of my twenties in relationships that allowed me to pretend (or try to pretend) that Stanford never happened. Does it matter that a few relationships were with men and that a few were with women? I honestly don't know. (7) My last relationship ended a decade ago. Since then my personal life has resembled a desert ruled by agoraphobia and the wish to destroy my capacity to feel attraction. (8) I have been attracted to people of all sexes and gender identities. (9) As the details above are meant to suggest, my sexuality is extremely complicated. Did being raped make me gay? No. (See item 2.) But it is a fact that rape (among many other factors, including those mentioned above) had an impact on how I experience desire and act (or hesitate to act) upon my feelings. Indeed it may be the case that "rape survivor" is one of my sexual orientations. \*I would not wish this joyless and often agonizing orientation on anybody.\* (10) Again I stress that I speak only for myself. I doubt it is possible to generalize that rape makes people gay (or straight). Different individuals survive violence in different ways. Some of us end up not surviving. Some of us are working on just holding on. I hope that my answer has been educational.

**“Noli me tangere”: A Kind of Villanelle**

His ghost stands watching me while I'm asleep.  
I know that this cannot be real because  
I'm wide awake. I never fall asleep.

The hours between twelve and twelve still keep  
Me up reciting poetry because  
His ghost stands watching me while I'm asleep.

I close my eyes, imagine rivers deep  
And soft plush turquoise emerald velvet moss.  
I hide myself here as a pebble heap.

What if I dared to sea from cliff to leap?  
My absence from the world would be no loss.  
His ghost stands watching me while I'm asleep.

When finally I die, will I escape  
His ghost's attention? Or will those glib jaws  
Assault my ghost with secrets fresh to keep?

I don't know if I wake or if I sleep  
Or why my speech obeys poetic laws.  
His ghost stands watching me while I'm asleep.  
Perhaps he's dreamt a way my soul to reap, to reap, to reap.

**PALO ALTO DISAPPEARANCE**

---

A yard, once used for some kind of sport, lies seemingly deserted. High above her, in a near-future sky, one allosaurus and one magpie, each the size of a skyscraper, battle for extinction. Crowds of invisible spectators flow toward the spectacle. At some point, when the rumors grow too poisonous, she turns around, against the tide, and starts to climb a secret staircase made out of wisteria, the stems of which twine counterclockwise. The more she climbs, more and more flowers surround her. Blossoms thicken. Petals seep into her hair. Her skin becomes liquid petal.

"Anyone is inside your house," the flowers whisper.

"I don't have a body," she responds.

By now she is no longer climbing a staircase. The staircase has disappeared and so has she.

In the distance another mythical creature falls and another endangered animal cannot hear its own appalling song. Where games of sport once took place, palm trees begin to shimmer, dazzle, daze. She is beyond the last thought at the end of the mind.

Obviously this is not reality.

This was one way I got through it.

## **TERRIFIED VAGUE PRONOUNS**

As he, to have her, turned into a swan,  
So she, to bear it, turned him to a swan.  
I often wonder which was worse: the swan  
She conjured, or the man inside the swan.  
I often wonder which came first: the swan  
Whose "blow" (Yeats wrote) was "sudden," or the swan  
Whose "sudden blow" was made of piecemeal swan-  
Like men in motion slow: from man to swan.

The things that one man did engendered here  
A broken mind, the pills within an hour  
That should have left me dead. Being caught up,  
Accustomed to the comfort of his chair,  
Could he possess the knowledge or the power  
To see that each from different heights would drop?

## **AFTER EMILY DOE. JUNE 2016.**

One image that's been invading my mind lately: a mugshot that was never taken. It was never taken because I never pressed charges. I didn't think to press charges.

He's no longer alive. He was my adviser at Stanford. He was a tenured professor, a "big name" in academia. I was a first-year Ph.D. student, 21 years old and stupidly naive. I had also recently been hospitalized after a suicide attempt. I had just been diagnosed as bipolar.

"Your mom and I should have — we didn't know how to prepare you—" my dad said yesterday while we

were brokenly discussing the Stanford assault case that has been in the news recently.

To which I could only say, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry you have a daughter who made you go through so much trauma in addition to the Korean War and everything..."

We apologize to each other, my father and I. The Stanford professor refused to apologize to me.

I know I should forgive him. It wasn't his fault.

When he asked me if I was a virgin, I told him the truth: yes. (I should have said: It is none of your business.)

When he told me that he controlled my future, I let myself believe I had no future worth imagining. (I should have been brave and stood up to him.)

I still wake up sometimes to find my clothes drenched in sweat and my body numb, literally numb.

In my head the mugshot is blurry. I scarcely remember what he looked like. I can't bring myself to google his name.

Parents: you do not want your children to end up like me. If your child is assaulted, try to get professional help for your child immediately and be sure to follow through. This may be challenging if you are an immigrant who is exceedingly shy, less than fluent in English, financially struggling, Roman Catholic, and/or incapable of saying the word "rape." But assault can be devastating and the impact permanent if not addressed right away and adequately.

### **THE NEW MILLENNIUM (after Shelley's "Ozymandias")**

I meet a stranger in a house of gloom  
Appointed with archaic chairs and shelves  
Made centuries ago... The stranger's doom  
Is my fate too, for that which makes my self  
not hers is time alone. Inside that room  
She cannot see me but I see her dread,  
Her shattered face—Something I know is wrong.  
Her body language speaks as though it's dead.  
If minds could text, in hers this would appear:  
"Your name is Jennie. My name is Seo-Young.  
Let me, your future self, bear your despair."

Now that I'm home, I'm drowning in decay,  
Pill bottles, trash, her burden mine to bear.  
Why did I—she—choose to survive this way?

### **SEX AFTER STANFORD**

One of the side effects (for me at least) of being violated: every time I feel desire, attraction, or any evidence of a libido, I automatically feel guilty. I feel an obligation to cancel my body, delete, to make it disappear.

The "logic": I have a libido; therefore I could not have been raped. The truth: I did not want to be trapped in his house full of horrible shadows and statues.

**FASCICULUS**

Where two thighs meet - a Vertex glows -  
My "Sex" - a Bomb or Missile -  
Remembrance Now - the Weapon grows -  
Turned - inward - at - my - Will -

As Hunters - carcass - make their Prey -  
A "Special" "Victim" - I\* -  
To excavate - Preempt decay -  
Extract - from sense of Time -

\* Variant: I'm

**TO BE ON THE MARKET DURING HIS FESTIVAL**

The professor, at once bragging and threatening, had often told my younger self that he controlled my future, my livelihood, my \*worth.\* (I still ask myself sometimes: "Is my future 'worth' living?")

Being on the job market became a continuously fraught performance. The most excruciating theater took place where no one else could see it: my brain. Denial was a circus act. I don't know how the circus animals survived the mistreatment.

In preparing for the long stressful winters of phone calls and emails and MLA hotel rooms and campus visits and "professional" attire (my rapist liked to talk about grooming me, as if I were a pet—I remember how furious his reaction would be whenever I chose to wear glasses, look frumpy, or let lint appear on my clothing), I should have done this:

I should have worked through the bad memories. I should have worked through the feelings of disgust, self-loathing, humiliation, fear, despair, and hopelessness.

Instead I let the feelings and memories choreograph my actions. I punished my psyche for remembering details about JF. I punished my flesh for what JF did to it.

**PSYCHOMACHIA**

- We wish we had selected our

Society with much more care.

- The problem is you've shut the door,

Available to life no more.

- But she can't risk or bear the chance

Of misconstruing some advance—

- What if his cultured ways to me

He gave, rape culture a disease?

- I never understood this world.

I still don't understand this world.

## **REMINDER**

And yet he could be vulnerable —alarmingly so. Once, in his house, during a meeting to discuss his course (for which I was a teaching assistant), he began to sob violently. No one else was there. I was sitting at one end of a couch. He sat next to me and—before I could do anything—weighted down my lap with his head. “I miss my mother,” he cried over and over again on my lap.

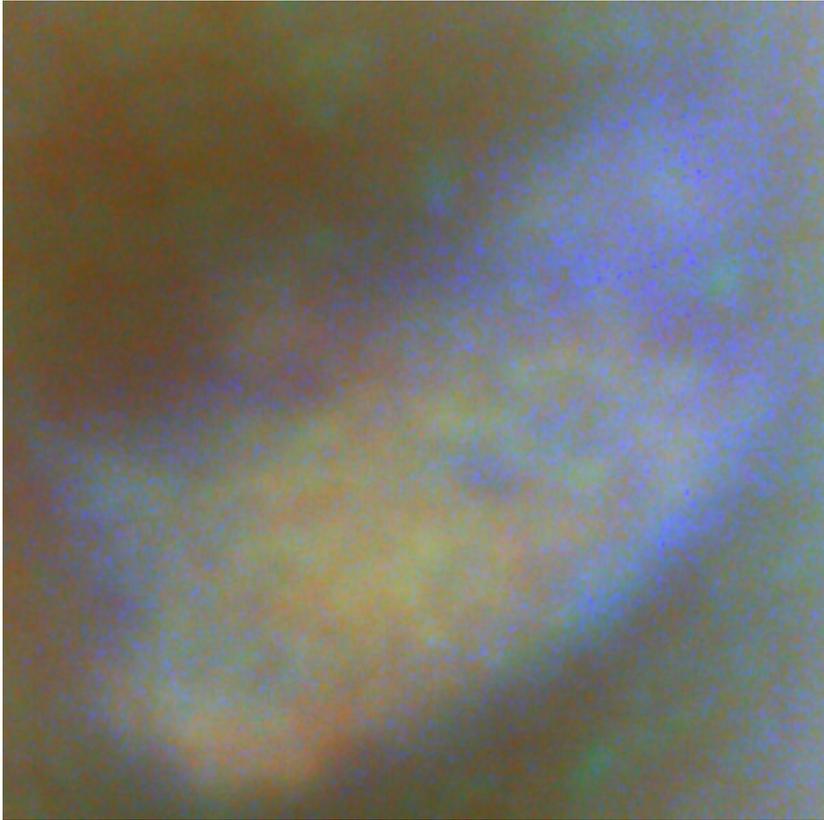
I was rigid. I was rigid with an emotion for which I still have no name. I don't remember how I got myself out of the situation.

Did part of myself get left behind—? Is that why I can't remember?

## **SOMETIMES I SCREAMED.**

A Special Victim said to me  
In Space there is no Rape -  
A Special Victim heard from me  
In Space there is no Hope -

There is no thing with Feathers, here -  
No tune without the words -  
Nobody can exist out here -  
I'm nothing - Who you were -

**CONTUSIONS, RECENT**

Whenever I felt the horrible urge to “pleasure” myself, I would often succumb—but not without using a hammer afterwards to punish my flesh with such ferocity that the pain made me pass out.

There were times in my life when my skin ran out of places that were not purple, turquoise, blue, or red.

The alternative to battering my flesh: letting the intrusive ghost of my rapist happily watch me surrender to my libido.

**INSTRUCTIONS LEFT INCOMPLETE (After Donne’s Holy Sonnet)**

Gather our parts, united self, though you  
Do not exist quite yet enough to send  
Your futuristic wholeness from the end  
Of lyric time to where we wait for you.  
Make us consent to sentience anew.  
Revive our will until there is no end  
But endless means by which we all transcend  
The paradox you already outgrew.  
Believe the story that free will is free.  
By then you'll have put on the suit of “me”  
As if it were composed of empathy,  
A fabric of compatibility.  
It's your turn "to be" now. Now you are me.  
Please sign your name here if you \_\_\_\_\_.

**WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IS TRUE?**

- (A) Someone says, "I am lying right now."
- (B) Someone says, "Rape me."
- (C) Someone says, "I never consented to this alien experiment called 'existence.'"
- (D) Someone says, "No means yes."
- (E) Someone says, "At least you didn't die."
- (F) Someone says, "Why can't you just get over it?"
- (G) Someone says, "What you went through is a first-world problem."
- (H) Someone says, "What about the Earth and climate change? You have to put rape in perspective."
- (I) Someone says, "But you seem okay."
- (J) Someone says, "I can't believe how widespread this problem is."
- (K) Someone says, "Let me rape you."
- (L) Someone says, "Let go."
- (M) Someone says, "Am I the only one who can hear all of these voices."

**ON THE IMPORTANCE OF NAMING**

"When you use the word 'rape' to describe what happened to you—can you use a more subtle expression? Something more elegant? You are an English language expert, Jennie, so I trust you must know how to discuss what happened without using that word. There must be a more decent, less ugly way of saying it. I am sure you know of such a way. Jennie? Are you upset? Why are you crying? Did I say something wrong? Jennie, say something. Please, I'm sorry. Jennie, what did I do."

**CLEAR THOUGHTS IN A CLEAR SHADE (After Marvell's "The Garden")**

To vanquish all my memories' blight  
I swallow dots that promise light.  
Ellipses of unconsciousness  
Unknow me into happiness.  
What science fiction is this space  
Where time is just another place?  
No apples drop about my head  
Yet "apples" I can "taste" instead.  
Such luscious freedom from the past  
Is pleasure after pain has passed.  
Once human life I finally shake  
A shape past human I will take.  
Were I a Daphne turned to tree  
I'd pray for flames to set me free.  
Tillandsia I'd rather be,  
A lock of air, the dew my key.

Yet still I live, an idiot,  
A shadow that can strut and fret.  
Why human form? Why woman form?  
Collapse me into formlessness  
Until existence nonsense is:  
The sonic and the furious,

A nothing of significance;  
—An alien of consciousness;  
A spacetime of unconsciousness.

**RESURRECTION LULLABY (After Milton)**

When one considers how one's life is spent,  
Each resurrected self another hide  
Less human than the one that last had died,  
One's brain a frozen bruise that can't consent  
To heal after the violence he meant,  
His afterlife itself slow homicide,  
"Please let my will complete the suicide,"  
One prays. But other voices, to relent  
That prayer, interrupt, "One did not need  
Apology, redress, or an arrest  
To live as though his punishment were great.  
Survival was enough to fill the need  
Required by existence of each guest.  
Your prayer's heard. Now fall asleep and wait."

**DREAM**

Outside: a Farm. Inside: a dimly lit living room. A constellation of antique furniture. A couch. A young woman, my height, we're standing in the room looking at each other, no one else is in the room, she looks like me but her hair is longer and her cheeks are fuller and the scars on her arms are still visible. I notice them because she's gesturing. She's pointing at the couch. "That's where I die," she says. "That's where you must take my place. There is no other way. I have no future worth living."

I used to hate these dreams. I'm learning to live with them. They're like the dreams I have of North Korea. They're like the dreams I have of life after death.

The next time I see her I will say:

Forgive yourself for having been naive.  
You've dwelled here for too long. It's time to leave.

**DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUOTATION**

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

**THE GRADUATE MENTORING AWARD. NOTE: THE AWARD WAS RENAMED IN AUGUST, SOON AFTER THE LETTER WAS SENT.**

To:  
June 2016  
Executive Director  
American Society for \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Professor \_\_\_\_\_,

Recently I learned that there is a graduate mentoring award named after (I'm just going to force myself to spell out his name) Jay Fliegelman.

This man was supposed to be my dissertation adviser. I say "supposed to be" because he spent more time sexually harassing and stalking me than he did advising me academically. Instead of discussing ideas, scholarship, or projects, he "mentored" me with insights such as "All men have rape fantasies, including your father." (That is a line I will never forget.) He left me voice messages about overdosing on male enhancement pills. He shared explicit fantasies with me—despite my protests. He violated my flesh, my psyche, my sense of bodily integrity—despite knowing that I was \*unwilling,\* despite knowing that I was a virgin, despite knowing that I was incapacitated by mental illness. He must have known, too, that I was under the influence of his institutional power. I was new to Stanford, new to California, new to the profession. He had been in the profession and at Stanford for decades. Indeed, his own mentors and former dissertation advisers were still teaching and advising in the Stanford English department when I arrived as a 21-year-old first-year Ph.D. student. Only from this temporal distance can I see so clearly his power and my powerlessness.

For years I have struggled to be a model survivor. I wouldn't want to get Stanford into trouble, right? I should show how grateful and uncomplaining I am—after all, Stanford punished the professor by suspending him for two years without pay, right? Stanford, too, has remained silent about the case. There is no public record of what happened.—Not even a concise announcement describing the nature of Jay Fliegelman's misconduct and punishment. (Does Stanford not understand that in the absence of clear communication, rumors and misinformation have a tendency to grow?)

In the past few weeks I've learned that the years of silence surrounding Jay Fliegelman's misconduct and punishment have had a number of consequences that are regrettable. One of these consequences: the creation of the award mentioned above. This graduate mentoring award is named after a man who abused his power, who refused to apologize for raping his student, who screamed at and terrified his student, who dropped by his student's dorm unannounced causing the student to hide in her closet in the dark wondering "How long do I have to stay here? Is he gone yet?"—whose ghost continues to haunt his student to this day.

I have worked hard to forgive Professor Fliegelman. I realize he was human and complex. I am sure he was a good mentor to many students. I admire the loyalty and gratitude that former students of Jay Fliegelman have demonstrated by creating this award. I do not know if they are or were aware of what he did to me. Perhaps they were unaware of the extent to which Professor Fliegelman caused damage. In any case, if any former students are reading this: Now you know.

I understand the "Jayfest." I have no objection to naming his collection of books "the Fliegelman Library." But what hit me in the solar plexus and made—makes—me feel sick: seeing the website for the Jay Fliegelman award for \*graduate mentorship\* (seeing the "mugshots" of professors honored for mentoring students the way Jay Fliegelman mentored his students) and recognizing one of my graduate professors from a non-Stanford university—a professor who has been nothing but professional and kind to me. "Are these awards given to advisers who sexually harass and rape their students?" I wondered—"and if so what did Professor X do to deserve such an obscene award?"

The thought now strikes me as absurd. But it is no more absurd than the existence of an award for

graduate mentoring named in honor of a man whose "mentoring" included threats, controlling behavior, objectification of a student's body, and sexual violence. Surely there are better examples in whose honor this award might be renamed.

If you are one of Jay Fliegelman's former students who had an experience worth celebrating: I believe you. You need not provide documentation to persuade me. I believe that, in your experience, he was a wonderful mentor. Is it too much for me to ask you to believe me too?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Seo-Young Chu

### **January 2017. Why I Am Joining The March**

In an ideal world, my body and mind together would join the march—in person, in public, in visible protest.

In an ideal world, my flesh would freely will itself outside and onto the streets to demonstrate out loud against the inauguration of a man whose irresponsible and casual expressions of entitlement and violence have amplified the trauma (the injury, the bleeding wound) of rape culture.

In an ideal world, the president of the United States of America would not be so eerily reminiscent of a specific nightmare from my own personal past: a man in a position of power who sexually harassed and violated me seventeen years ago, a man whose ghost lives on in this Yellow-Haired-Man-In-Ultimate-Position-Of-Power.

In an ideal world, the pain that I am experiencing right now would not exceed the sum of the medical conditions with which I have been diagnosed (including post-traumatic stress, bipolar depression, spinal herniation, fibromyalgia, anxiety, and chronic migraines).

In an ideal world, there would be female as well as male U.S. presidents.

Yet I believe in the reality of ideal worlds. They can be articulated. They can be drawn. They can be painted. They can be diagrammed. They can be meditated. They can be realized.

### **EPILOGUE**

I am one of the lucky ones.