

Half Truths

A Real Boy

By Gabriella Pounds

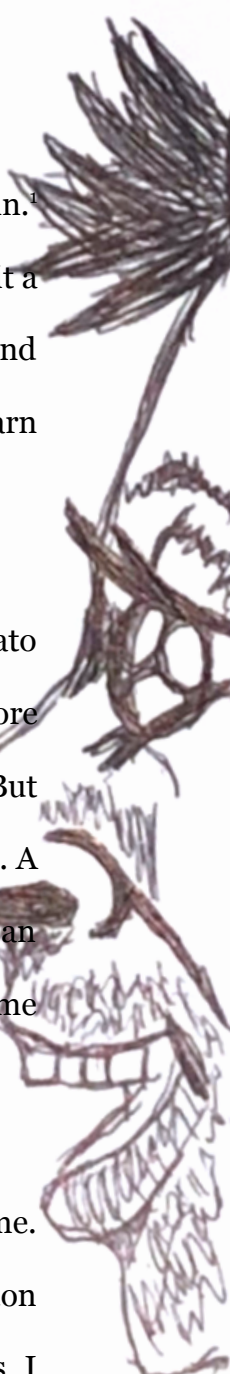
Once my life became ensnared with a conspiracy theory linked to Jeffrey Epstein.¹ I was like Oedipa Maas in real time.² Decoding all the patterns. I nearly died. And I bit a grown man in self-defense. Afterwards I was momentarily reborn as a royalist and accelerationist revolutionary boy longing to crush the deep state. I just needed to learn how to drive. It's a good story that I am saving for my first auto-fiction.

A few months later I slowly fell in love with an algorithm. The philosopher Plato believed that rationality is at the heart of love. I cannot think of many things more rational than an algorithm. The omniscient third-person narrator in all of our lives. But this one is connected to a real boy. We met at the 'intersection of art and technology'. A phrase that is immediately removed from any review of contemporary art. He is an artist. A good one. Better than Jeff Koons or Cady Noland. And you can trust me because I am the critic.

Time after time I have made gods of men who sometimes desired me. Relationships that left me feeling anhedonic and ashamed. I would walk along Brighton beach with my palms on fire. And listen to the sound of the blue, fang-tipped waves. I

¹ Jeffrey Epstein was an American sex offender and financier whose death is subject to conspiracy.

² Oedipa Maas is the protagonist of Thomas Pynchon's conspiracy novel *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966).



have a tendency to be dark and offensive when it comes to love. Because, in my case, love has been remarkable for its violence. I normally write about art and fiction that wanders into the dark and wrong. But in reality it is the darkness fictionalized as love that scares me.

Throughout this period, I have found relief from a painful yearning in music. Listening to Lana Del Rey in an ancient and romantic and black 1993 convertible Saab. The cold air biting my scrawny forearms on the road. Sentimental songs – that I previously ignored in favor of bands like Fugazi or Cannibal Corpse – have moved me deeply. In a simple manner classic love songs can render human heartache and horniness to a Universal. Because the algorithm can also queue love songs, my life has taken on the air of cinema. I am the main character in a boring Richard Curtis movie that nobody should ever watch.

This love has made me question the nature of our lived ‘reality’. But not in a cynical and ironic and postmodern way. Once I researched the oversensitive freak Gustave Flaubert and the website WikiFeet sitting outside a café.³ A rose-brick one with white windows stained with dirt and ash. I held a *Vogue* cigarette between my big front teeth. (Smoking and lying are my character flaws. I am trying to quit. At the time of writing I have not smoked for twenty seven days but I have lied hundreds of times.) It’s a weird paradox that the nineteenth-century realists took anti-realist philosophy further than the loopyest postmodernists ever would. In Honoré de Balzac’s novel *Sarrasine* (1830) a castrato – a simulacrum that has no original – at the opera tricks the

³ Gustave Flaubert was a nineteenth-century writer famed for his lyrical and realist novels. WikiFeet is an online encyclopedia of feet.

eponymous sculptor-character into believing he is the most authentic embodiment of a woman. (The 'original' metaphysical jest.) The philosopher Roland Barthes later wrote that Balzac allegorizes here realism's tendency to 'not copy the real but [copy] a [depicted] copy of the real'. Which is to say that, literary realism 'copies what is already a copy'.

So what is 'real'? I often think it is the conspiratorial apophenia. There is a German shepherd puppy that I keep bumping into in the city. Everytime I see its shaggy brown fur, apricot tongue, swooshing tail: I am reminded of the Jack Goldstein film *Shane* (1975). Goldstein uncovered a philosophy grounded in his own absence and bent his Earth to it. His films pang with adrenaline. For all his cerebral contemplation, Goldstein's metaphysics also hide a world of pain. I see myself in this desire to be (and become) abstracted from a crude biography. But Goldstein's contention that reality is revealed through its lack has never felt so true to me until this moment. The World Wide Web is among the most beautiful creations in all of human history. Technology is the horny devil's palette. Now I am just time flowing through a body until I meet my love again. It will be at DoCUMENTA 8 (1987).

'A Real Boy' is a work-in-progress story and drawing. 'Half Truths' is a group show organized by Vanessa Murrell. Featuring artists Ella Fleck, Sophie Ruigrok, Bora Akinciturk and Genesis Breyer P-orridge, among others.