

Fiction with Teratoma Preserves

by Josh Maday

1. The Inextricable Penis of Death

In Nebraska, we found a dead man lying between the furrows of a field. He'd been there awhile in the heat and the sun, the only shade provided by a cloud of flies. The dead man lay on the ground, decaying, disappearing into the dirt: slowly shoving himself into the earth.

We decided to get the dead man's wallet, but no one wanted to touch him. His eyes were open: smoky glass beads beginning to shrivel. Giant ropes of breath stretched across the sky. The sky mimicked the fields, dead man and all.

I knelt down beside him and the distinct odor of love snagged in the back of my throat. I blinked. I breathed. I turned my head and looked away. I said, "I don't know," repeatedly: a running total of six thousand one hundred and twenty-four times. I put my ear to his chest. Nothing. I said so aloud. I rooted around and found a passport. "Georges Bataille," I said. "Says he died in 1962."

The throat cleared and a voice emerged. "I'm more alive now than I've ever been." I replaced the passport. "I don't need that anymore," he said. "I am beyond nominal constraint."

Then he started with the riddles. *How does one drown in the desert? Returned to the ground, reduced to nothing, we come back up in new forms. I am a filthy parody of the torrid and blinding sun. I will brandish a hamster and watch you weep without rhythm or rancor. Love smells like death. Take off your clothes.*

I said, "These are no longer riddles."

It turned out he actually was Bataille and he really was dead and returning to dust. Someone who was partially me cut a thousand

smallish pieces from him, shoved them into his mouth, and said,
"This, is your body."

Scream, if you so choose.

All of this to the ecstatic accompaniment of drums.

[Refrain]

Somewhere, Nebraska: sometimes these clouds roll across the sky like smoke from a dead man's mouth. He lay on the ground with plants popping out of his guts and slowly penetrated the sticky black soil.

We stood in solemn posture and offered a few words:

The messiah with the wandering eye.

Smiling is an act of aggression.

Tiny little tumors with defeated purposes.

I don't listen to the music, I just like the words.

Sometimes the bottom feeder rises to the surface.

Pain is an interpretation of my face hitting the pavement.

That swirl in the water is the telltale dimple of a sucker going after the worm.

There is no past and no future: the tragedy is that the worm never dies.

Before we finished, Bataille shouted, "Amen. Goodbye." He continued lying there.

I pulled my sleeves over my hands for makeshift gloves and tried helping him from the ground. His roots ripped and shredded. He shrugged me off with his voice. "Leave me alone. Can't you see I'm happy here?"

"But you're dead."

"Go away."

The rest is silence.

2. Tissue and Appendages Cut Away and then Reattached

In some artists' renderings, human chromosomes remarkably resemble earthworms either during coitus or in death throes.

One time I wrangled an earthworm with a twist-tie I'd stolen from the produce department.

The worm's neck is located at exactly the twenty-third segment of its body.

I waited for it to crawl so I knew which end was which. I collared the worm and watched it move across the wet pavement. Wearing its yoke of paper and wire, the worm slid toward soil, which was once a living thing. I never could conquer that worm.

Moisture is essential.

loving rottenness like leaves love the light

From the age of seventeen to twenty-one years, my spirit lay exposed to the outside air, raw, causing all kinds of damage before eventually it withered into a leathery patch of skin.

Words like: *half-life, spontaneous fission, superdeformation, critical insertion time, internal conversion, decay (radiant d., radioactive d., exponential d., d. constant) cetera et, cetera et.*

The time it takes for a substance to lose half of its

The tissues of a teratoma may be quite different from surrounding tissues, and may be highly inappropriate, even grotesque (monstrous). Teratomas have been reported to contain hair, teeth, bone and very rarely more complex organs such as eyeball, torso, and hand. Usually, however, a teratoma will contain no organs but rather one or more tissues normally found in organs such as the brain, thyroid, liver, and lung.

This may also be genetic.

We fashioned a provisional umbilical cord out of rubber hose, horse hair, and lower intestines.

So much desire. So much.

I am time. For a moment, I fully understood what that means. It doesn't mean anything.

I have never wanted a monkey for a pet, but rather a companion. So I read *The Cambridge Companion to Simian Accompaniment*. I keep it in a glass cage in the family room.

The primacy of the sentence. Fragments juxta-posed in intimate discord.

One day, I read Bataille's writings until the next morning. I did not read anything to the end. Every story ends the same anyway, so I just moved on to the next one before I finished. I don't care about dying.

This is how I plan to live forever.

from "The Solar Anus": *With the aid of a copula each sentence ties one thing to another.*

. . . shit . . . fuck . . . Barbie . . . Hummer . . . Hamlet . . . Monday is garbage day . . . 1,962 bags at the curb . . . candy wrappers . . . old condoms, some used; some used fully . . . porno magazines untouched since the advent of internet . . . also our rosaries and video game controllers . . . we kept the cords for binding and asphyxiating purposes . . . pragmatics . . .

Bataille was a philosopher, meaning, simply, that he worked in a strange and powerful genre of fiction.

Worms fornicating in a closed circle.

I am lost in the layers. Zeroed out.

Still, sometimes, I try.

My television screen is perforated by millions of tiny wormholes, each one containing a vacuum. Yet my mind is still dirty.

I don't know how we got here. I don't know where this is going.

a tiny particle of life springs from an accumulation of refuse

The pharmacological half-life of *sugar cookies* is comparable to that of *I love you* and *Everything is going to be okay*. This will all be over soon.

"I'm sorry."

"This is my fault."

No, I don't believe that.

Everything came out wrong.

