



Judy's testimony (aged 30), Circa 1994, Auckland, New Zealand

At the same time as I learn all the ways devised by evil- 'anorexia'- to devour my life, I paradoxically learn of my own innocence. I think of how sweet is a little girl who skips down a path singing to herself, oblivious to evil...totally unconcerned with evil...totally concerned only with whom she will love. You asked me if I knew evil was being done to me. That seems the tragedy for me now at 30. If I didn't, it is because some of the innocence never left me. And for some reason, I don't begrudge the 'sweetness' having stayed because nothing is prettier than the thought of a young child and her heart-song and skipping. But the tragedy is that to know evil, one must give that up. And one must know evil to realize one's innocence. Tragic irony!

I do not owe Anorexia loyalty as penance for my part in its domination of my life because I didn't know I could resist evil and that is neither fair nor our fated destiny in this world. We are not at the mercy of evil.

I wasn't scared, once I knew the evil of Anorexia, and I tried to berate myself when in my innocence I was tricked. When I first saw you, I only knew Anorexia as saying to me that I was bad and I deserved punishment the moment I put food in my mouth. It is at least 15 years since I've heard this song but I can still recall that line that goes something like this:

"If you wish to conquer pain, you must learn to serve me well!"

It is the haunting that the 'voice' of Anorexia is the same as my abusers. If I asked myself: "Why I had to be tortured?" What did I do to deserve it? Just 'being' is the only answer. Just being my abuser's abomination. In short there was no escape.

I told you I felt all these years like a silent Jew, forsaken by God, everyone and everything. It seemed cruel that just being, I deserved abuse; I was born to suffer. You then asked if I regarded Anorexia and Bulimia as sinister forms of power comparable to the naked cruelty that destroyed the Jewry of the Holocaust. Whereas they knew evil was being done to them and they didn't deserve it, Anorexia gets people to go to the torture chamber smiling. Grateful even. I became grateful to my abuser.

There is, I think, a reason for this when I consider the identities Anorexia attached to me. The silence in me then was such that anything that fell in, I would grasp at like a rope and it would have an enormous reverberation. Girls are vulnerable, I think, to being humiliated by their own lack of meaning. I have never known who I was and have been haunted by that since I was 12. I remember telling my mother that I, we, women were nothing. I was desperate for her to explain all this lovelessness and misery and how could it be redeemed. I screamed, refusing to believe that there was no justice. I ran away. When I returned, my heart went out to my mother there in all her wretchedness. I sensed that I too would suffer silently like her. I know that is when I lost the connection to my own heart.





From then on, I lived by Anorexia- a self-effacing existence. When I no longer expected anything such as grace- and this want of love had grown unbearable- Anorexia popped up like a good idea. There was a haven in a heartless world where people like me could go free. I think it grabbed me from the panic like one of those giants who eat little boys.

'Me', my subjectivity, was stolen from me. I lived in the shadows. No longer able to sound myself as to my own being; Anorexia supplied the vocals and turned my agony against me. It was Anorexia in power. The more maligned I was by this evil, the more I grew up looking in the mirror, not the subject of my own image. I did not know the person in the mirror. Anorexia, having taken responsibility for who I was, it was with great difficulty that I tried to take responsibility for what I looked like. I was wearing Anorexia's flesh and one of the first things she stole was something so elementary as the ability to dress myself.

Humiliated by my own lack of meaning, I became complicit with my own effacement. Being raped out of your mind and losing connection to your heart is how Anorexia works when you have no substance as a person. You are first obliged to objectify yourself in case you were to disappear, and then, in our culture, you are incited to do so. Women, be thankful, body bits recognition is better than no recognition at all.

I must admit- but not confess- then that I have conspired against love and be accountable for this. It is not wrong for a child to want love or to feel lost, frightened and alone. Anorexia comes in as a way of twisting this want of love in to a demand for its satisfaction and a judgement against your life. It is as if it sniffs out little girls or sites where there is fear or loss, places a bet and then goes in for the kill. It promises to take responsibility for all the negative aspects of one's existence, thereby entwining its life with mine. It nourished every feeling of jealousy, righteousness, bitterness and rage. It promises you can keep them and have satisfaction as well. Evil stokes up fires of jealousy and revenge, bemoans your very existence but promises you a release from despair.

It is like a snake. Having now lost my innocence, I see 'sinister' as too mild a description to give to this beast. It goes on and on trying to take me away from me. The more I learn of its 'voice', the more I see it as predicated on hate and the denial of life. I know when it is coming in to my mind now because as it confuses my wants with its demands, all of a sudden my values appear haywire and my needs frightening and limitless. A little girl nursing a broken heart and promised a company in this way is no doubt spellbound. She knows nothing of evil- the source of evil is invisible to those it effects most intensely- only love and, in a trance, the power of mind is handed over to Anorexia. But without faith...without testament. I am saddened that I had to get to 30 years old before I learned Anorexia-blame. This makes me nauseous to think about it too much.



Maybe I made this little pact with Anorexia before I became enslaved to its threats and flattery. It makes over our worst qualities along with your very form. I was only sweetness and innocence at that stage, emptier of meaning than perhaps I should have been. But domination, like sexual abuse, is a moment for where there is no saving grace. It is Anorexia writ large on the wall. It wipes you out totally in order that someone can impose on you the arrogance if its desires. This is Anorexia, isn't it? It demands total annihilation and total self-effacement. It rapes you out of your mind. Anorexia is insidious like an avalanche, is it not? Anorexia rapes you out of your mind over and over until you no longer know who you are or realize that in such a place, you will never be thin enough. There you are kept in the shadows of Anorexia's lies. It is not an answer to despair but an answer that lacks soul, as I believe I have suffered enough to testify. I should have stayed with what literary philosopher Julia Kristeva calls the 'sensuality of tears' but grief is too much loss for a little girl. If I attended to Anorexia believing it was attending to me, this is not evil. Tragic folly perhaps!

Anorexia's final taunt to me is the one that broke the spell because it made me realize how pathetic it really is. Maybe a serpent but more like a dragon hideous and stupid. It appears both obscene and foolish; it's only purpose is to guard the darkness. So Anorexia tries to tell that if I cross over to Anti-anorexia, I am fooling myself because I can never atone for my part in its creation. I deserve abuse even if only as a penance for not resisting its domination of my life. That, in other words, I am evil. Fortunately, I am bit of a logician and know 'you are mine forever' to be a ruse.

If I were evil for not resisting when I didn't know I could, then could there be any good in the world? Sure I have complied with Anorexia and called it 'Lord' and 'Master'. I did so, not because there wasn't any possibility but because I didn't know there was. Now once again able to sound myself as to my own being, I know the crack of Anorexia's whip is synonymous with its dragon's tail. Now that I am practising Anorexia-blame, Anorexia has receded in to the distance and I have come in to the foreground.

