

## FUCK THE DAY: A NOVEL

Lewis Freedman

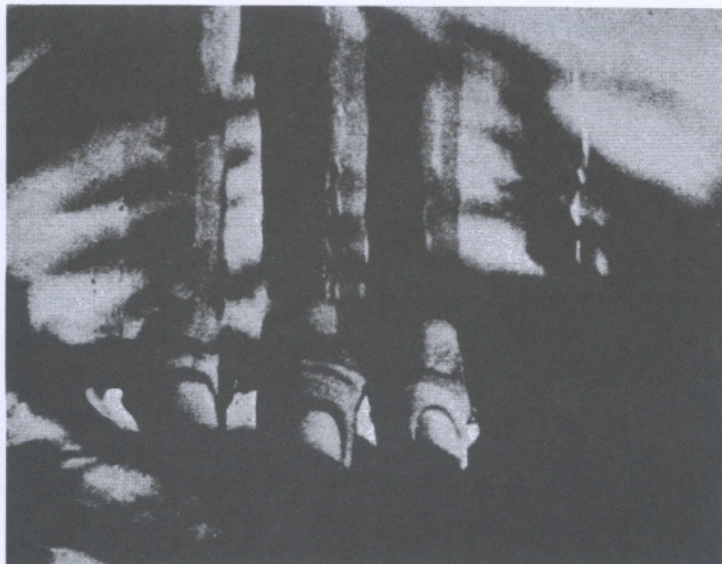
*Dear Octopi,*

I wrote, beginning finally a novel, and then later, having grown self-conscious of all marks that might puncture the fiction, erased it.

The margins through which our bodies float know no proper boundaries. But what I'd meant to tell you was not that. Why is it when we sit down to write, the thing we'd sat down for is already gone, and then some other unrelated sentiment replaces it in the briefest possible way, leaving in its wake some stupid absence? I'd wanted to tell you about the period of my life in which I ran my so-called, for so I called them, experiments against the day. The sun goes up and the sun goes down I would say. Fuck the day I would say. We must resist the hegemony of the day. In those days I'd say shit like that all the time. And basically to anybody.

Like to Phil or JuDean, wellwitted professional persons with their empathy about them, who would approach, no, not approach, simply pass me along one of the several possible paths one had to take to either enter or exit the building in which we all worked, and they would say to me, hey Lewis, and I'd say hey, how's it going, and they'd be like can't complain, have a great day and then I'd be like oh, I'm not in a day, I reject the day but they'd be basically gone by then, not out of earshot but basically gone, with a hahah or an over the shoulder smile or a take it easy.

It was like when I was younger, a teenager, and I'd pretend to mishear the question how are you and answer it with my name. Or it's like when I was in my mid-thirties and I worked and



worked at slowly tweaking the prescribed language of greeting, turning it slowly towards a greater particularity, striving towards a more particular recognition of the particularized content of any given other person's ensuing condition. Like I'd be at the supermarket having my groceries scanned for their value, I mean like I was checking out at the coop, and I'd be like thank you, and they'd be like have a good day, and then I'd be like I hope your day is good, moving away from the imperative into my particular wish for them. Over the following months I'd work this into greater particularity, I hope your day today is good I'd say, or I hope today is a good day for you I'd say, or I hope today and tomorrow are good for you and I hope yesterday was a good day for you as well when considered at least from the vantage point of today.

This does recall to me a fear which gripped me for several years of my childhood. My mother would come into my room to say goodnight, and we'd godbless all the various members of our immediate family including cats and then also certain select members of the extended family and then my mother would say goodnight, sleep tight, see you in the morning. If she didn't for some reason say this last phrase, say see you in the morning, I'd be gripped by the certain fear that I or my mother would die in our sleep, that one of us would not see the morning. But then it began to be that even when she did say this, even when she said see you in the morning, I began to feel that the morning wasn't sufficiently particularized and to fear that if left unspecified it might be a morning not tomorrow morning but rather

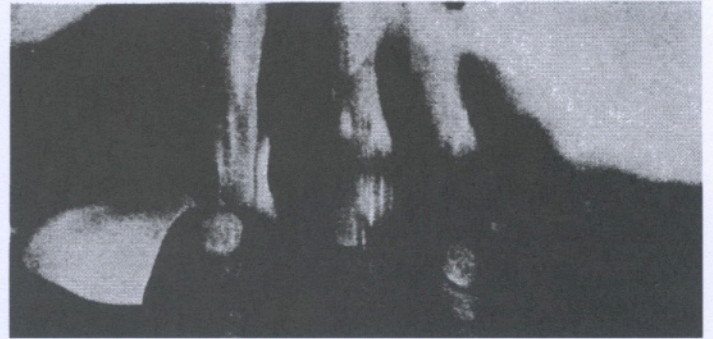


some morning in a further future that we might see each other in and that we might sleep for days or weeks or longer. To counteract this I began to respond to correct my mother's see you in the morning with a see you tomorrow morning, and it was my unhidden desire that she should say this too, either in response to my corrective, or better yet at the outset so that there need be no corrective at all.

What I'm getting at here tho, what I'm trying to tell you, is about the period of time, a period of time most accurately demarcated as the Spring and Summer of 2018 in which I launched a most vociferous and resolute resistance to the unit of the day as the unit which overly circumscribes our experience of the passage of our lives. The problem as I felt it was that the day, which like all forms exists through its repetition, seemed to start off with so much promise and hope, or at least it felt that way to me then. I would get up in the morning with a song handy to my throat, deposited there by the refreshing unconsciousness of sleep and dream life, a life to which to this day I feel a sense of being deeply and unknowably influenced by and yet towards which I feel no responsibility at all. Sometimes I would wake with a long lost friend in my throat full of refreshed song and would immediately email them writing Dear Carson, I know we haven't been in touch in ages, but I dreamt about you last night and you were filming neighborhood children teach free classes in front of their homes to other children and adults about how to live. Anyway, a bounce in my step those mornings, and this is not to say I was happy, far from it actually, my life as a lived unit was a useless thing in many ways, but I had just emerged from a long convalescence resolved by surgical intervention that winter and I was, despite my general lifelong tendencies towards hopelessness which anyway might be said to be habits around the safeguarding of hope, hopeful. But save for the worst times it had always been this way and this is precisely my point, I had always seemed to wake in the morning with a feeling of what could and might be done, or what had to be done, or of what need not be done which sometimes left a calm and calm-wavy nothing there to do nothing into, and with a sense of comfort, or anticipatory anxiety, or hopeful dread that the entire day had lain itself out ahead of me to do it. And in this morning's sense of time, space, and well-being, the thing to be done or not and the capacity to do or undo it, I would luxuriate, talking excitedly to my life-partner, cheering her up, singing her my annoying songs, loving the smell of the fucking coffee brewing and anticipating its stimulus as though I were already drinking it.

This is my problem with the day that I'm writing to you to tell you about, my octopi friends, with the day as the primary marked unit of our experience, as the thing we are so to speak within, my

first problem, and for the first many years of my life this wasn't a problem I realized as problem at all, and even once I'd begun to realize it as problem it wasn't at first a problem until later in the day, but now here, looking back, I can tell you that my problem with the day is that, excepting of course the very worst of times which anyone, and from this no one is necessarily excused, can be suddenly in for the rest of their lives, my problem with the day is that at its start it feels so expansive. ■



□ LEWIS FREEDMAN is in bed again in Milwaukee, having retreated there to write this bio. Were he but real or not, he thinks, this whole enterprise might feel less vexed. There would be a thing he usually writes for his bio and he'd slightly adjust it (and now this move is that thing?). He considers the jet-lag, the irreconcilable palimpsest of places he's moved through, all of them rotten with murderous power in the production and protection of wealth, the irreconcilable palimpsest of people he finds himself with, all of them beautiful in complexes of loving and being loved. What is there to do?

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