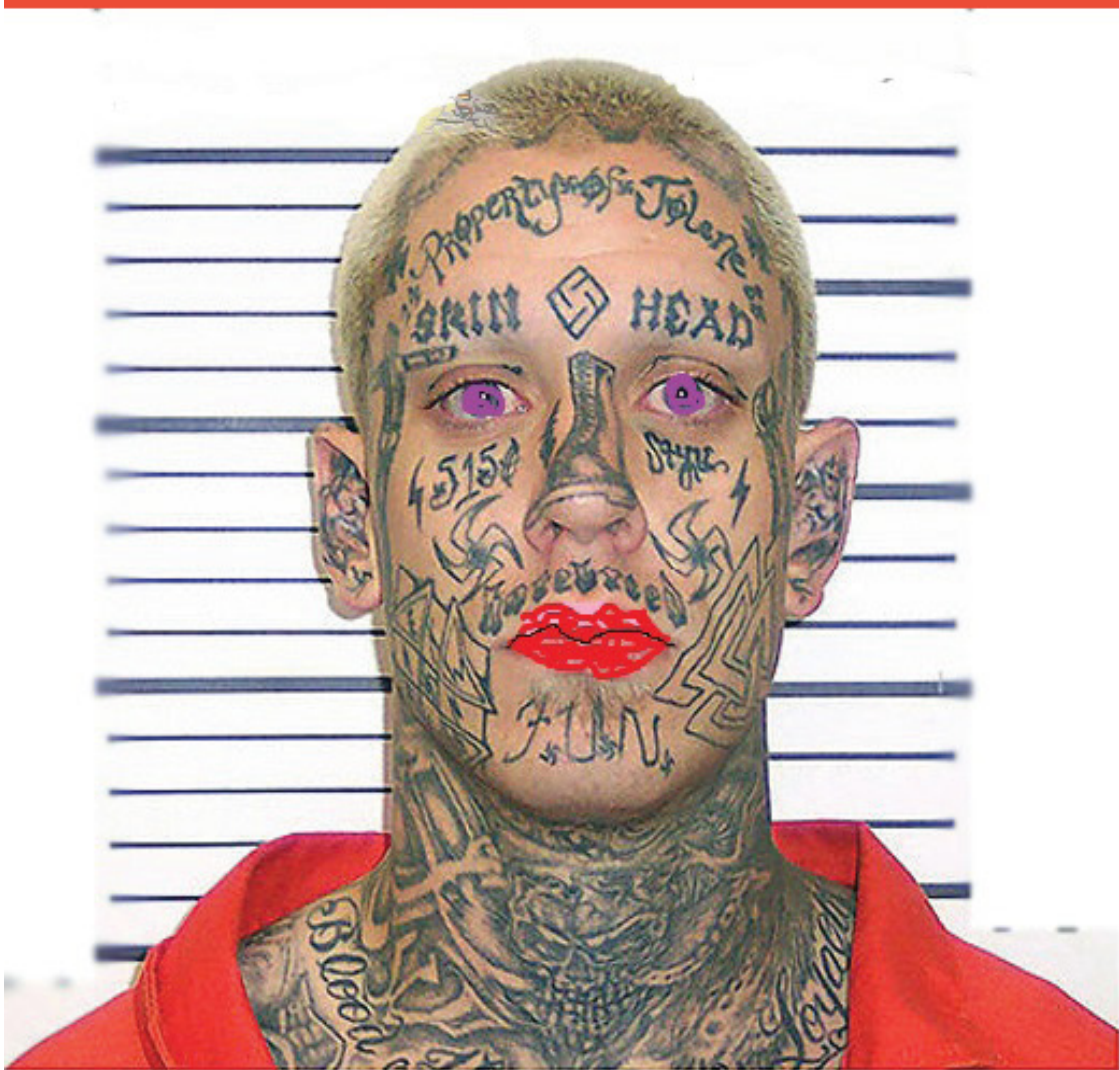


# PRISON AND OTHER IDEAS



Andrea Sloan Pink

**Prison**  
**and Other Ideas**

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

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## **Premier Kádár and His Tiger**

January, freezing cold,  
the fire hoses are turned on you.  
They walk you to gallows,  
then take you to your cell again.  
Your hair turns white.  
A single bulb burns.  
They never turn out the light.

We siphoned gas from cars along the street  
and spat it into glass.  
We took grenades from dead Russian's belts,  
and distributed the powder to make ten.  
We lit their tanks on fire  
then shot them when they rose from the hatch.

They chop your bodies into bits  
and dump them in the Danube.  
They keep a vat of acid  
to obliterate the rest.

Premier Kádár,  
they took your fingernails  
to show they were your friends.  
A tiger cannot be tamed by bait,  
you said.  
It can be tamed only by beating  
it to death.

**Charter 77**  
**6 January 1977**

Department of the National Security Corps,  
The City of Prague and the District of Central Bohemia  
Prague,  
Ref. no.: OS 0011/02-77.

Under section 160, sub-section 2,  
of the criminal code,  
I am commencing proceedings  
concerning the crime of subversion  
under section 98, subsection 1, of the penal code,  
which was committed by an as yet not entirely identified  
group  
of persons out of hostility  
towards the socialist social and state  
system of the republic  
by preparing and disseminating  
a document called "The Charter 77 Declaration"  
in a place that has not been exactly determined  
and at a time that has not been exactly determined,  
the content of which is a crude attack  
on the socialist social and state system of the republic.

**After the March**  
**January 23, 2017**

There were the most downed trees  
I'd ever seen:  
huge eucalyptus, their root systems  
still filled with dirt upended  
at the side of the road.  
Where pines had been, now just raw trunks.  
The chain saws had come and gone.

At the March, the ladies in their pussy hats,  
men with pierced tongues,  
and those in between in dresses and rags,  
cheetah print and lace.

The fallen trees, their roots surprised,  
shoved naked toward the air.  
In the street two men sweep  
pines needles endlessly from gutter to bag.

Rain soaked the earth,  
sent snow-stars hurling to my coat.  
At the side of the road, a woman vomits  
in a snowbank while her friend holds her  
gently by the arm.

The marchers' cardboard signs grow wet  
and sag. Snow turns to slush,  
brown sludge beneath our feet.  
In Washington, the deaf remain so.  
Tree roots bear witness to our grief.

## **Knitting Protest**

It is better to knit  
than to water-board,  
to force feed prisoners  
through their anus.

Don't drop a stitch-O,  
ring it on your finger.

I will knit  
my worry into caps  
for babies, knit  
the drone strikes,  
the pregnant women tortured,  
knit until my fingers bleed  
yarn,  
twisted fibers do no harm.

Knit, and knit,  
until every uncovered baby head  
is covered.  
Knit until they disarm.  
The knitting needles flash  
and click,  
sound the alarm.

The knotted yarn seethes.  
I pull it tight  
and try to breath.  
There are not enough babies'  
heads in all this world  
for all this knitting.  
Knitting will not relieve

the harm,  
no matter how much  
twisted yarn.



## The Problems of Narration

The problems of narration begin  
when the the father,  
in a moment of 'irrational thinking'  
kills the mother, before killing himself.

In that moment, the narration twists  
and torques, and the girl receiving the news,  
the narrative now changed,  
leaves college to care for her little brother.

The narration becomes one of orphans,  
and killers, and families, and news vans.  
The narration becomes an irretrievable story  
of loss.

The narration before this moment, a story  
of a girl with roommates in a small town  
with a big university, where the girl is studying,  
a good girl, doing the good girl things,  
while the parents she has left behind have separated.

The narration before this moment, a story  
of a mother and father held together by the girl's glue.  
The girl's leaving, the separation, the glue dissolving in  
water.

The narration moves to television, to the newspapers,  
to the neighbors who are interviewed. The news van  
with its humming, its radial satellite, its electrical cords.  
The girl's roommates. The girl. The little brother.  
They are incidental to the narrative, now a narrative of  
murder, domestic murder.

This narrative moment, the twist, the torque,  
forever this girl has this narrative moment in her story.  
Her story cannot be told to a future boyfriend,  
to future children, to her university, without  
including this moment. Her narrative  
has become this moment, a fusion.

The narrative will be told in probate court by a stranger.  
The narrative will be recited in hushed tones  
by neighbors and friends.  
At the gravesite, the narrative will be spoken to a mound  
of fresh earth under a blue plastic tarp. She doesn't want  
the narrative. We do not want the narrative. I do not  
want the narrative.

## **Prison Break**

In thirty years  
not one man got out.

It is riven with cliché,  
the old story,  
told again and again.

The sheets were braided in the night  
like plaits of a girl's hair.

The razor wire on the roof was set aside.

The prosecutor in his lavender and white shirt  
has eyes as big and brown as pennies.

He will not show a picture of their tools,  
the implements of the state's humiliation.

He says: There are too many bad guys.  
We can't give them each their own room.

## Escape

When the only escape  
is a cut  
hatch-marked into the arm,  
a tally of days and nights,  
a tally of pain.

When the only escape  
is a tunnel dug  
with blood and sharp implements,  
a tunnel of days and nights,  
a tunnel of pain.

When the only escape is a twisted sheet  
slung over razor wire,  
a shredded shroud belying to ground,  
a rope of days and nights,  
a rope of pain.

When the only escape  
is no escape,  
when the escape is a rope scar sheet pain tunnel  
dug into the arm.

## **Views From A Cell**

Things you can't look at.  
Things you won't talk about.  
Things you can't say  
to your own mother.

## **Treatment**

Do you want to vomit the yellow bile?  
Does your skin fall off after the shower?  
Do they peel off your clothes  
with a rod?  
Does night look like a sodium lamp?  
Is a weed in a crack your friend?  
Are the pills the wrong pills  
and the right pills at the wrong time?  
Does honey spread?  
Is a twirling spider an amusement?  
Did you really think they would help you  
get better?

## **The Brick**

When food is discipline  
you ratchet it like this:  
make the brick.

Take the beans, bread crumbs,  
spinach, ground bits of cows,  
the parts of chicken carcasses  
removed by high power streams  
of water, take the beans, take the beans,  
mash it up and bake it,  
do not flake it,  
smash it down, go to town,  
brick it, bake it, fake it,  
'til it's not food,  
no, choke it down.

No matter what you call it,  
seg loaf, confinement bread,  
special management meal,  
you mean for us to grind it  
in our teeth, grind it without relief,  
grind it until we see your way.  
You will starve me  
but you cannot take my soul away.

## **Roxy**

It begins like a joke:  
A strange man comes out of a bar  
and finds you in your stroller  
near the curb. It's 1 a.m.

He waits with you until the police arrive.  
No one in the bar knows your name.

Your father lives across the street.  
That's why she parked you there,  
he says. So he would take the fall,  
again.

No, he cannot take you.  
He has to work.  
No, she cannot take you.  
No one can find her.

You raise your arms above your head  
to be picked up. You have no words.  
We feed you from a bottle  
and give you up to the crib,  
its unfamiliar bars a prison  
separating you from strangers.

We call your name again and again:  
Roxy. You turn to hear us and smile  
while in an office somewhere  
under fluorescent light someone  
inscribes your fate  
in a file beneath your name:  
Roxy.



## Correction

Correction means to fix a mistake.  
But how can I fix  
being born?

All the broken things I've done  
pile up like dead butterflies.

When you call my name  
I don't answer to save you the pain.

When they try to correct my writing  
they hold my hand roughly  
and tell me I grip my pencil wrong.

I brush my teeth wrong. I eat wrong.  
I answer the phone wrong. At the bus stop  
I stand wrong.

When they pull me over, they want to see  
my license. They put their hand over their gun.  
Their face is red and raging. They  
are already angry at me. What  
have I done?

They want to correct me. They  
want to erase me. They want me to be better,  
to change. They want me to smile,  
to be happy. Smile more, they say to me.  
Smile when we do this to you.

I am corrected. I stand corrected. I am better now.  
Just watch me. I can be better. I will be better.  
I promise. I will be. [Better.]

## **About the Author**

Andrea Sloan Pink is a native of Los Angeles. She earned an M.F.A. in Screenwriting from UCLA School of Film and Television and a J.D. from UCLA School of Law. Her plays have been produced across the nation. Her plays *Warner Bros.* and *Fractaland* have been published in *The Best American Short Plays* by Applause Theatre & Cinema Books.

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