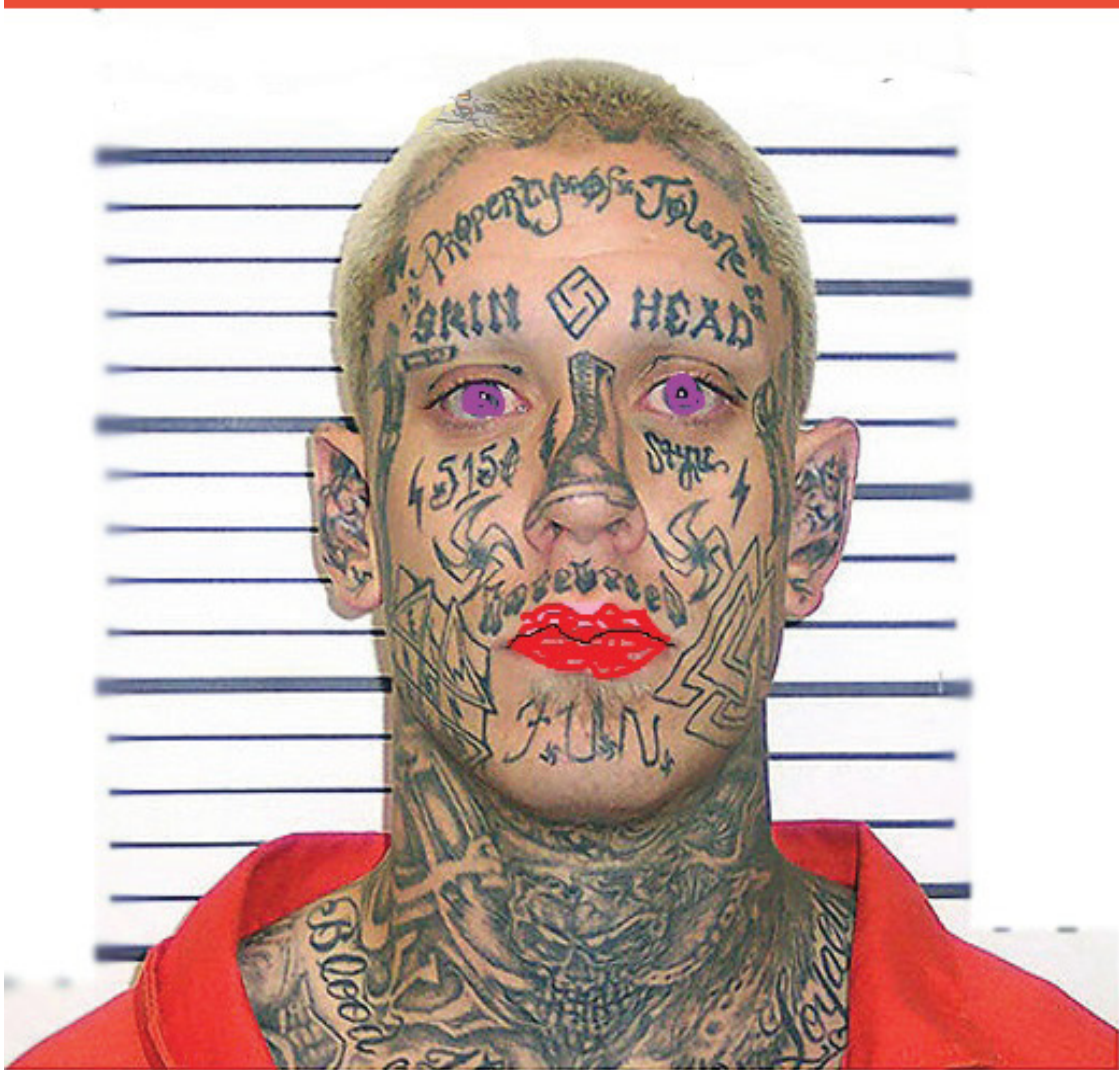


PRISON AND OTHER IDEAS



Andrea Sloan Pink

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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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