

When My Mother Wanted Me To Get Beliefs She Didn't Mean This

I.

Ten million people
visit Lenin's mausoleum
in Moscow's Red Square
between 1924 and 1972. I
am not

one of them, but I have
an academic interest so

when he appears (sleeping in my guest bedroom)
I'm not surprised.

II.

The next morning he teaches me
the precise mixture of
acetic acid diluted with vodka
to erase
the dark spots from his flesh.

When I explain Stalin's purges, he
holds his head
in his hands, saying,
"chto ne yavlyayetsya pravil'ny"
almost until we both believed it.

And we would have
if I hadn't jabbed him
in the neck with a hypodermic needle
to make purple-hued splotches
on his cheeks and jaw
disappear.

III.

Lenin and I take up salsa dancing
the Tuesday after I
find him obsessively refreshing
Stalin's page on Wikipedia,
as though that could refresh
what had already
occurred.

I can't object when
the first premier
of the Soviet Union
becomes the lead; I don't want to.

IV.

I tell him shorts are no good. He's
going to end up with grass in his
white canvas sneakers, and I'm not
going to wash his grass-stained socks or ankles.

As Lenin starts the lawnmower, he laughs,
he asks when de-Stalinization began.
"1956-" is my answer.

When he gets close enough
I hear him saying "1956" over
and over. I try to grab him;

he's too old for this, his knees aren't
what they used to be, his fingers will curl
into claws from that grip, but

his shirt skims my fingers as he runs.

Lenin collapses a moment later,
keeling over, gasping, asking me when salsa class begins, asking me
if it's true. And I can't answer while watching
the sun glance off of the sweat on his face,
while he looks up at the sky, his lips moving soundlessly, repeating
pravda.

To Subjugate / Verb / To Bring Under Domination or Control

If Walt Whitman and William Wordsworth walk into a bar
 implying or inferring that they had
 a subjugation to do
 with the bloody woman- *and when I say 'bloody,' I mean*
she is covered in blood, not that we
can confuse
the peach tree for her lack of taste regarding
the methodology of suicide.

Let's ask her: have we considered ways to subjugate our hands?
 Maybe if you tell them that they are *bad and you will always be bad*
and then you will die.

You're asked if you want vanilla ice cream for dessert,
 presuming that there are flavors of books on "How To Subjugate"
 my mother never warned me
 about the pit before I grasped anything.

Spatter / Verb / To Cover With Drops or Spots

This is not your private counseling session
 spattering
 words against

yesterday's
 obscenities

banter

as much as
 different thespians performing
 disparate imitations of Van Gogh,
 flicking fork-shaped tongues at the night sky
 to spatter extracted plasma across the backdrop.

If we could travel
 to Mercury in thirty seconds,
 would you buy your next banjo there?

Spattered atoms across the surface.
 H(ydrogen), O(xygen), N(itrogen), C(arbon)
 your mother says to stop saying that already. Weren't you listening the first
 time?

Capitalism / Noun / A Free Market Economic System

I. Primitive Communism

You've heard this before.

Your mother was told:
A lady doesn't act that way.

Your father's best memories of his father
 involve a cold beer and John Wayne movies.

In the sixth grade you learn:
The consumer can control the market.

 You're a consumer of your parents in more ways
 than one.

II. Slave Society

You call Walmart and ask,
*Can I return my defective parents? My mother
 can't make pancakes. My father won't show me how to hunt deer.*

Yes, they say.
They were defective when you got them.

III. Feudalism

As it turns out, you don't like pancakes. *Short, Blond Mom (Mother Series 429-1962)* cries all night because she thinks you don't like her cooking.

It's not that you don't; it's that she's a perfect lady.

IV. Capitalism

One day while hiding in the attic
you find two thick instruction manuals covered in dust.
You see two familiar faces:

Tall, Brown-Haired Dad (Father Series 913-1957)

Short, Dark-Haired Mother (Mother Series 315-1963).

Troubleshooting Mother 315-1963

Her cooking program is overrun. She will not be able to make pancakes unless you teach her.

Troubleshooting Father 913-1957

His programming does not come with the 'hunting' option. See page 214 in History.

History Father 913-1957

In his factory he was beaten into a corner with a broom handle. Will not perform violent actions. Pacifist coding.

Caveat emptor, you say to yourself.

IV. Socialism

You call Walmart again.

Listen, you say, I exchanged my defective parents. Can I exchange them back?

Sure, they say, but how long ago did you exchange them?

A few months, maybe, you say. But I don't have my receipt.

Sorry. There's nothing we can do.

You become a vegetarian a few days before

Average Height, Red-Haired Dad (Father Series 1030-1967) offers to teach you how to hunt.

V. Stateless Communism

