

MEMORYSCAPES

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For those who lost their lives on Friday November 13, 2015, and for those whose lives will never be the same. // Pour ceux qui ont perdu la vie vendredi le 13 novembre 2015, et pour ceux dont la vie ne sera plus jamais la même.

P R E F A C E

It's impossible for the artist to write a word (or render an image or make a gesture) that doesn't remind him of something. Up to a point, the community and historicity of the artist's means are implicit in the very fact of intersubjectivity: each person is a being-in-a-world.

-Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence"

In January of 2017, I sat in the office of a professor at the American University of Paris whom I had met minutes prior. My thesis professor back in New York had met him at a conference and, knowing that he lived and worked in Paris, had introduced us over email to see if he would be interested in participating in my senior thesis project: an audio-documentary I would be making from interviews with people who, like myself, had been living in Paris during the November 13, 2015 terrorist attacks.

I met Robert outside the gate on Rue de Grenelle in Paris's seventh arrondissement, a short walk from the Champs de Mars. He escorted me along the pebbled walkway that led through a courtyard to the modernized AUP building where his office was housed. I was shocked by the willingness and generosity of this man—and of other strangers to whom I had been connected—to be interviewed by a college student they did not know. As we sat together in his office, I felt moved; it was such a privilege to be listening to a stranger reach for and reconstruct memories, memories that somehow felt collectively endured, and yet deeply individual. Memories that, although coming out of someone else's mouth, in a way also felt like mine. I felt honored and validated, a forceful knowing that this work was meaningful to me and, I hoped, somehow meaningful to him.

I interviewed Robert again this summer when I was back in Paris spending three weeks doing fieldwork for this thesis. Two and a half years had passed, and in the meantime I had discovered oral history and been through a graduate program, now owned a fancy recorder and two lavalier microphones, and was equipped with a new methodology and appreciation for this work. We met in the same office, sat in the same chairs across from one another, and had another conversation about November 13.

I recall an afternoon in my Human Rights & Oral History class last fall when Alisa del Tufo came to share her work; she spoke about the sensation she so often feels during an interview of vibration with her narrators. I hadn't been able to articulate it with those precise words, but I recognized the powerful feeling she was referring to, and recognized it as what I had experienced with Robert back in 2017 that had felt so meaningful and cathartic. She then said something that has stayed with me, profound in its simplicity: "Oral history gives you the opportunity to think about your life in a different way."

In many ways, this thesis is a story of my coming to oral history, of my genesis as an oral historian, of how I arrived here. It is the story of a tragedy that somehow offered me a gift, and of how through the act of listening to others, I was able to listen more fully and deeply to myself.

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In the days and weeks that followed November 13, 2015, I felt what I would later identify as a discomfort with the swift moving-on it appeared Paris was demanding. A steadfast defiance I could not get behind seemed like the only response the French deemed appropriate, and my impulsive decision to return to the US following a false alarm-induced trauma that Sunday night left me feeling overreactive, cowardly, and estranged. While the French were valiantly returning to dine outside on café terraces, I had crawled into a hibernation-like state and had trouble leaving my house. I felt alienated from Paris's unwavering resilience.

There was some level of forced-confrontation that felt necessary in repairing both myself and my relationship with Paris. Oral history—or whatever version of it I was doing at the time, I had yet to discover this was a real discipline—served as a productive and meaningful way to dwell on a topic and experience that I did not feel I had fully addressed, and to ask other people to do the same: a reconstruction and excavation of meaning through dialogue. Subconsciously, I think this work was my way of responding to and opposing what seemed to be the general French reaction of *c'est la vie*, we can't dwell on it and must move on; my way of reconciling with my own response that was accompanied with feelings of confusion and shame. Unsurprisingly, many of my narrators during

the course of or after our interview remarked that they had never talked about the attacks in this way before, and that in doing so three or four years later were able to come to new realizations, construct new meanings, and access memories that had been left fallow. Could oral history practice serve as a productive method of dwelling for certain people? What would it look like to push back against the defiance, and instead to sit with a tragedy through this dialogic exchange?

In my initial inclination to interview, I was interested in learning about the ways in which this event permeated my narrators' everyday lives and sense of self, how it had ruptured normalcy, how the attacks had left their marks on the collective memory and discolored the often over-idealized mirage that is Paris, how landscapes had been turned into memoryscapes. I wanted to understand what these events meant, and where they were located, in the larger contexts of their lives. Perhaps I was so invested in this because, although I was physically present during the attacks, I wasn't in the weeks that followed, and missed a collective experience of mourning and grieving that I think I desired to take part in. Oral history may have been my attempt at this in the years that followed, to patch up the distance I felt time had placed between me and Paris, a city I felt had profoundly shaped me and the way I interacted with the world around me, and that I also felt deeply estranged from. It was a way to memorialize and grieve an event I didn't feel like I had had the time, space, or permission to adequately memorialize or grieve. I was asking others to take part in the social history-making practice that is oral history, to co-create an intimate and public historical record with me.

On Form

In the preface to Luisa Passerini's *Autobiography of a Generation*, Joan Wallach Scott refers to Passerini's work as "at once an individual and a collective autobiography" (Passerini xiv). The notion of a collective autobiography has guided me throughout this iteration of my project, wondering if the collective and the autobiographic could exist within the same phrase, or if instead they were completely oxymoronic. Of Passerini's innovative work, Scott writes "The accounts overlap and intertwine; insights gained in one area nurture insights in

another. . . the life stories of others provide a context for and a commentary on her own” (Passerini xiv). Inspired by Passerini’s innovative work, I set out to create a polyphonic representation of the November 13 attacks, a recomposition of memory through dialogue. Her experimentation in using personal accounts mixed with her own diary informed my decision to entangle my experience with those of my narrators, reinforcing the belief that my own experience and understandings gleaned cannot be divorced from my narrators’ words—just as the interview cannot be divorced from the circumstances of its creation, these circumstances being integral to its understanding, interpretation, and analysis (Grele 136).

This document is an attempt at an exploration of the self and others through interview and through diary, diary serving as the echo or reverberation of listening to my narrators. As I’ve interviewed others, the diary (for lack of a better word, I will use *diary* to refer to the personal interjections and reflections I’ve made throughout the next seven chapters) has served almost as an interview with myself. I’ve done my best to track my process of engaging with various iterations of this project over the past three years by way of these interjections, them serving as reflections of and refractions to the words of my narrators as I’ve listened, transcribed, and revisited them again and again. Passerini speaks of the interview as a sort of mirror, allowing narrator and interviewer to see themselves reflected back through the other person. “I want to attempt a reading of these life stories, including my own,” she writes in *Autobiography of a Generation*, “Take up the same thread from the other end, talk about what I’ve seen in the mirrors held up by those I’ve interviewed” (Passerini, *Autobiography* 21). As I’ve developed a relationship with oral history through this project, I’ve experienced many of these mirror-like moments Passerini speaks of. I’ve seen myself reflected back through the words of my narrators, at times offering a perspective or observation that, although may feel like a personal truth, I had never explicitly observed or articulated. Not only did I want to put my own experience and understandings in conversation with my narrators’, I also wanted to use this document to prompt deeper reflection and understanding on my own part vis à vis their words.

As I've constructed these chapters, I had a Portelli quote in mind that has undergirded my oral history practice since its beginning: "Similarity is what makes the interview possible, difference is what makes it meaningful" (Portelli, "Living Voices" 4). My form evokes montage in an attempt to represent fragmentation and dissonance and, through the doing of this project, a sort of reintegration. I've used the material I've gathered from my life and from the lives of others to work through, make meaning from, and describe what this experience has meant to us. In contrast to Passerini's format, which separates diary and transcript, I wanted these materials to speak to each other within each chapter. I attempted to make my transcription feel as unintrusive as possible, flowing from one voice to another, conveying a sense of collapsed time and interconnectedness as my narrators and I speak to one another. As I assembled these chapters, I looked for places where my own life intersected with those I was listening to, where our voices could be in concert with one another, where their interpretations of their own lives told me something about my own. Listening to others' recollections and interpretations has facilitated an accessing of my own memories and experiences through this exercise of remembering together. As I read, both for pleasure and for the purposes of this project, I looked for places where I could inscribe my own thoughts and experiences onto the writers', moments where, removed from the context of this project, they may nevertheless have had the words to describe something I hadn't yet found the words to describe. These instances of intersubjectivity have crafted this thesis.

On Intersubjectivity

As a graduate student in oral history, I have spent a lot of the last year thinking about the word *intersubjectivity*. It seemed that the very bedrock of oral history was built upon this seven-syllable word I was poring over Luisa Passerini's writing in an attempt to understand. To quote Passerini, "intersubjectivity is rooted in the process of its own formation; the subject is shaped through the relationship with the other" (Passerini, *Memory & Utopia* 7). Intersubjectivity is both shaped by and shapes two individuals; the interview (or inter\view, as Portelli cleverly writes) is a moment of mutual sighting and mutual transformation as our subjectivities encounter and inherently shape one another.

What we create in the moment of the interview is the product of our respective subjectivities encountering one another. Through this work, I've come to understand intersubjectivity as what we know and have experienced together, where our knowledge and experiences overlap.

Alessandro Portelli aptly addresses the power of the intersubjective exchange, articulating how the two subjectivities shape and catalyze the interview: "What follows is not a spontaneous recitation but a response to the interviewer's questions and presence, shaped by the dialogic situation"(Shackleford 1) he writes, and "What is spoken in a typical oral history interview has usually never been told in that form before"(Portelli, "Oral History as Genre" 4). As the interviewer, my own subjectivity inherently shapes the interview. The questions I ask, and therefore the shape of the interview, are influenced by my own experiences, curiosities, biases, and presence. This is what excited me so much about this work: the idea that, even if people had spoken extensively about the attacks before, that my presence and intervention could in some way generate a new way of telling. That even in moments of silence on the part of the interviewer, the narrator's words are shaped by her presence, the dialogic extending beyond the limits of verbal expression. And because I haven't amply quoted Portelli thus far, "the interview implicitly enhances the authority and self-awareness of the narrator, and may raise questions about aspects of experience that the speaker has never spoken or even seriously thought about" (Portelli, "Oral History as Genre" 4). Not only does the oral history interview demand a level of self-reflexivity and thus discovery through narration on the part of the narrator, but it also facilitates discovery through another person's words as we listen to them.

As I delved deeper into oral history, I realized that one of the things that set this practice apart from other forms of documentation and history-making was the acknowledgement and sometimes outright obsession with subjectivity. "We are not seeking objectivity, but a highly disciplined subjectivity," Joy Parr writes in "Don't Speak For Me": Practicing Oral History amidst the Legacies of Conflict" (Parr 4). Nishani Frazier eloquently echoes these sentiments in the preface to her book, *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism* : "And unlike historians, who pretended identity somehow dissipated into the ether," she writes, "oral history theory required constant

critical awareness of my relationship to the subject even as it legitimated, perhaps even celebrated, my attachments and bonds”(Frazier xvii). Frazier notes that this scholarly detachment is an illusory practice, neglecting any effort at self-examination or reflexivity that felt so central and essential to the work I was doing. “That was the power of oral history. More than an evidential source, it was a living testimony of the voice’s power. The echo of “I” and “we” being, these interviews did not just detail what happened, but who I am, who we are, and how I/we became. It was a creation story, how a past became building blocks in a person’s life” (Frazier xvi). Oral history embraces the subjectivity of experience and, through the act itself of collecting oral history, manages to also document the intersubjectivity of experience. This “who we are” is embedded in the reading and understanding of the history we’ve made together; the process is also the product. Oral history is a social creation, a process of becoming, a living and breathing form of both history production and relationship production.

On Relationships & Bearing Witness

Oral history is built upon, entrenched in, and sustained by relationships. “Oral history is basically the process of creating relationships;” writes Portelli, “between narrators and narratees, between events in the past and dialogic narratives in the present” (Portelli, “Order” 15). The conversations we have and the knowledge we produce and share are possible because of the relationships we build, nurture, and are shaped by. Part of this thesis’s intention is to make my labor visible, and to allow others into this dialogic exchange of meaning-making and listening—to invite you into the process. But how to write about listening? How do I articulate how listening to these particular narrations has shaped me, and shaped my listening? How can I recreate the experience of being with another person for you? This thesis is an offering, an attempt, an *essai*, to use the root of the French verb for “to try,” of that. Many people have experiences of the thirteenth to share, but this was the version only I could tell, and it felt critical to make my audience aware of who was guiding them by simultaneously engaging in my own act of introspection. As a co-witness to the attacks, I found it critical that my form reflect that piece of my identity, and that through my form, I also implicate the reader as a witness (and not just voyeur) to this exchange. My relationship to the thirteenth is profoundly shaped by and

centered around this act of listening, and this story is as much about my process of documenting what happened as it is about what happened, and how people have made sense of what happened. The reader is privy to the development of these relationships, and thus privy to these “stories in the context of a developing relationship. . . and the understandings that emerge during that interaction” (Rickard 34). Since this project necessitated a centering around intersubjectivity, I aimed to replicate the intersubjective relationship between myself and my narrators through attempting to create an intersubjective relationship between my reader and this text, and by extension the voices represented through this text.

“The act of representation is dialogic,” Mary Marshall Clark writes, “the story of the life is represented by the narrator, shaped by the hearing of the interviewer, and is an artifact of both imaginations” (Clark 4). My intention is to illuminate how knowledge is produced within these relationships and how that affects you, the reader, and to visually reveal the dialogical shaping of oral history discourse through tracing these intersubjectivities. There are multiple relationships present in this work that I have tried to render visible to you: the relationship between myself and the people I’ve interviewed, the relationship between past and present—and how both myself and my narrators experience and narrate this—, our relationship to the event itself, and my own relationship to oral history. At the same moment you are witnessing a dialogic engagement between narrator and interviewer, you are simultaneously witnessing a dialogic engagement between past and present, and between our past and present selves. The form my thesis has taken in an attempt to most faithfully represent these encounters is also dialogic in nature, mediated through my own listening, transcribing, interpreting, and intervention. It is illustrative of a shifting relationship to Paris—both my own and others’—and of a linguistic relationship and the inherent subjectivity that accompanies it.

Holocaust survivor and trauma researcher Dori Laub speaks of the various levels of witnessing present in an oral testimony. The first level is remembering one’s own story while listening, the second is creating the archive together, and the third is allowing others to bear witness to this interaction (Laub 75). Through this document, I am asking you, reader, to bear witness and to activate your imagination on two different levels: I am asking you to bear witness and to

imagine my narrators' experiences, and I am asking you to bear witness and to imagine the encounter between myself and my narrators. Imagination was a theme that came up in multiple interviews I conducted; for many of my narrators, a pre-existing familiarity with the landscape allowed them to have an amplified sensory experience of that night despite not being *there*. Intimate knowledge of the spaces not only spurred a heightened sense of proximity, but also enabled a heightened sense of reality. Armed with your own subjectivity and experiences, I invite you to activate your own imagination as you observe these levels of experience through this imaginative form of listening, and to position yourself in relationship to these offerings.

On Transcription & Translation

The presence of subjectivity doesn't disappear the minute the recorder is turned off; the act of transcription is an inherently creative and interpretive act mediated through a particular subjectivity. But even when translation from one foreign language to another isn't necessary, the process of turning oral language into a written one is an act of translation in and of itself; the transcriber (and in this case, the interviewer—myself) is applying her own understanding and interpretation to render spoken words into written ones in the most faithful and vivid way possible, avoiding the (inevitable) flattening of speech that comes as a by-product of transcription. "Transcribing," Elinor Mazé writes, "is a decontextualizing (from performance) and textualizing (to print) movement that locates cultural conventions and social structures of the personal and of narrative" (Mazé 244.) To combat what I viewed as an inevitable flattening and diminishing of their words, I decided to approach my transcript as a space of creation.

Transcription is another level of encounter with our narrators' words, and beyond merely capturing what they've said, I've tried my best to capture *how* they've said it, accounting for intonation, pause, breath, hesitation, and affect. What we may lose through the exercise of transcribing these textured, spoken words onto a page, we may gain through the process of sitting longer with these words as we create a new way of holding and representing them. "The conventions of grammar, punctuation, and typographic style, unavoidable in the

rendering of spoken narrative into printed text, impose an arbitrary and alien rhythm upon that narrative,” Mazé writes (Mazé 246). Through my extensive transcription process, I’ve tried to most faithfully translate my narrators’ idiosyncrasies, speaking patterns, rhythms, and tones onto the paper. My experimentation in spacing to evoke pauses, hesitations, and silences is an attempt to further reproduce the moment of the interview on paper. My decision to have a purely written thesis may seem paradoxical to the work I’ve committed myself to over the past year; through the creation of this document, I’ve aimed to explore and embrace the idea of oral history as spontaneous literature (thank you, Nyssa Chow), experimenting with how vividly I can make these voices come across on paper. I’ve tasked myself with replicating orality through the written word, experimenting with the relationship and tensions between orality and text, the limits of recreating a sense of verbal narration on paper. I’ve made the decision to leave the transcription as un-edited as possible in an effort to give you access to the feeling of orality, to further heighten the feeling that you are witnessing our conversations.

As a non-native French speaker whose identity has been largely shaped through my acquisition of the French language, it felt important that I conduct some of these interviews in French. The pool of narrators I’ve had access to has been a source of discomfort for me since the first iteration of this project. I had set out to interview “survivors” with the hopes of finding someone whose experience of trauma would validate my own response; however, I did not have access to survivors in my direct network, and reaching out to those I knew had suffered extreme trauma presented ethical challenges. For a while, I sat with this discomfort that I had not yet interviewed a *French* person—how could I possibly understand the attacks if didn’t interview someone who was French? What did it even mean to be French, to be from Paris? What did it mean to be a victim, to have survived? What was this “authentic” testimony I was seeking, and what did it look like? Many of my narrators, despite being originally from another place, have gained French citizenship; their experiences occupy a gray space—between local and foreign, insider and outsider, present and removed. Their experience of the attacks is compounded with their respective subjectivities—linguistic, cultural—and the fact that Paris is a place they’ve chosen to relocate to. Oral history has given me permission to embrace the subjectivity of history and experience: the set of experiences I’ve gathered is specific and subjective, and is

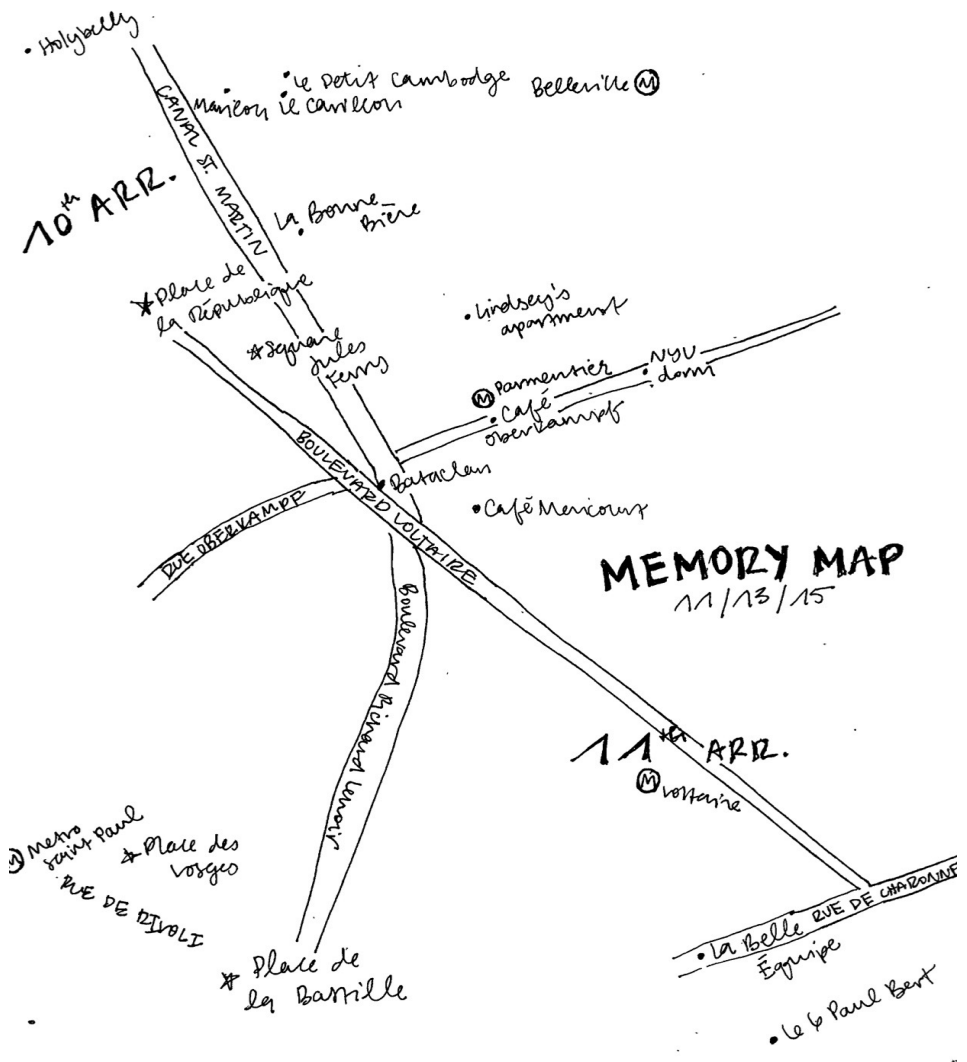
by no means a representation or generalization of how everyone in Paris responded to the attacks. The access I had to this particular pool of narrators is reflective of my own subjectivity, my experiences, my connections, and my attachments.

Despite the majority of my narrators being expats, most of them had an almost native-level mastery of French. And despite my internal pressure to conduct as many interviews in French as possible, it still felt strange to do an interview in French with someone with whom I shared the same native language. The interview is already a form of oral performance, and for two people who share a native language to do the interview in a second, non-native language seemed unnecessarily artificial and performative. When I interviewed Mathieu in French, I had a completely different listening experience. Not because it was more of a labor to listen to him narrate— despite deep performance anxiety in French, my ability to listen and understand feels nearly as effortless as it does in English—but because the mere fact of listening to him narrate using a different mode of communication, French, made me feel privy to a perspective I didn't previously have; as if experiencing the attacks as a francophone, and then processing and narrating them as a francophone offered a perspective completely removed from the one that I and most of my narrators had access to. I was also simply curious, and a bit trepidatious, to see what it would feel like to conduct an interview in French, to have much less linguistic authority than usual.

Because I knew my main audience was anglophone, I also knew that this would mean translating an interview, an exercise that felt daunting but meaningful. The first exercise was to transcribe Mathieu's French interview, an exhaustive labor that resulted in a transcript I was having a really hard time convincing myself to translate into English. My translation work thus far has been entirely literary, and because I was dealing with someone's spoken words, something about representing them in another language exaggerated a sense of being inauthentic and synthetic. As I translated, I found myself cringing at the inadequacy of meaning my translation was imposing on Mathieu's narration. So much of the meaning that came from his narration seemed derived from the fact that it was said in French. The constant negotiation that translation demands—between retaining fidelity in the source language and clarity in the target language—felt

more than ever like an impossible task. I ultimately decided not to translate it. Instead, I've left the transcript in its original form, leaving you with an interview that reflects my own linguistic subjectivity, and where that intersects with Mathieu's.

As I near the end of a sprawling three-year-long project, I ask myself why doing this was important to me. I struggled for a long time to feel any sort of resilience in relation to the thirteenth, distancing myself from what seemed to me to be the *appropriate* exhibit of resilience. But as oral history has allowed me to open myself up to and validate the experiences of others, it has also allowed me to open myself up to and to validate my own experience. To hear others articulate things I've experienced on a visceral level, but that had never transformed into language has been cathartic, transformative, and profound. Maybe resilience can mean to keep asking questions, to keep coming back, to seek answers and through that process to discover even more questions, to examine my own life through the lives of others. To bring my self in confrontation with the past. To ask questions about how other people experience the world, and through this, to better understand how I experience the world. Listening to myself does not necessarily mean answers; sometimes it means more questions, more searching, more encountering. If it wasn't for the willingness of the people I've interviewed to look inside themselves, I would never have been able to engage in this transformative act of listening and discovery: to them, and to myself.



“If I had not heard the life stories of the generation of ’68, I would not have been able to write about myself; those stories have nourished mine, giving it the strength to get to its feet and to speak. But I couldn’t have borne them, in their alteration of being too full and too empty, if I had not confronted myself and my history with the double motion of analysis and the exercise of remembering.”

Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation*

Lindsey

“We’re neighbors in memory.”

Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*

January 2019, Paris

Okay. Um. Today is, January 12, 2019. Um. I'm in the eleventh arrondissement with Lindsey Tramuta, is that how you say your, last name?

Yep. Wow good job. [*both laugh*] Never happens on the first try.

Well, here we go.

~

I, first I'm gonna ask—What do you attribute to your initial preoccupation with French, at a young age? And how old were you—you said you were pretty young—

I was about twelve. Because um, and again I don't know if this is still done, because I think edu—you know, the school systems have changed in the states, um but in middle school when I was, when I was there, I think it's sixth grade we each had to, take, you know each trimester was, you try out a language. We all had to. And my older *sister* took Spanish for most of her, academic life, and so I was like welp, I don't wanna follow her, so it was sort of an act of rebellion in a way. But then it turns out when I was in that like, that short amount of time taking French or learning about French, I thought it was so beautiful, I thought it was, fun to pronounce, I thought,

there was just something very uh
enchanting about it. As as a language, not necessarily about—I did not have *any* fantasies about the place, it was purely about the language.. And then I had a chance to come to France too, it was like learning about how they value *life* and downtime and you know and I was just like, wait. Okay so they just have everything, *right*, they're just doing it *right*. Um and so that's where I started to feel like, there's something that they're doing better, and then every time I came I was like, you know there's obviously, it's not a perfect place by any means, but

there was this this this *real* genuine appreciation for culture and art and, um, and and just,

more intellectual things, that even your like young, French person is imbued with,

like across the board and I I was like, America's missing something in the way they're teaching children about life and history and the arts and what not. Um. And, and I was like I wanna be in that place, I wanna be in a place that is full of history.

~

I'm interest—I'm interested in your, in your linguistic identity and how that came to be. And how, having that relationship so early on as a, as both a French speaker, and a person, and someone who was in France, how that informed your cultural and linguistic identity. Because you are, you do have a dual citizenship?

Yeah. Mhm mhm. I I find myself very lucky to have, started a relationship with someone in French. The people I know who met their partners and started in English have a much, different relationship with France. Um I think there's always something, always this like piece missing. And, for me if this was going to be my life, I need to—I wanted to speak French like a, like a native. And, that's not important for everybody. But given that that was what my strength was throughout school I was like, NO, I am going to succeed at this. Um, and I think there's also something, you know like there's this level of pride of being able to master something, and I, you know I couldn't master other things, um you know there were activities like dance and piano that I dropped, I never *mastered* piano because I let it go, so I think part of me wanted to be able to master something, and and, being here was the way to do that.

August 2019, Paris

1. I am jostled by the familiar and the strange. In many ways, I know this city and feel a sense of mastery of it, and in many ways, the ocean between us feels overwhelming and oppressive. I am at once a local and a stranger to its streets, the feeling reinforced every time I open my mouth and know that I do not sound French. But I am also so moved and motivated by interactions in French where the things that mark me—my accent, perhaps my appearance, my incorrect use of some verb tense—is not acknowledged. I'm not quite sure why this makes me feel so powerful, but it does; the fruits of a linguistic labor to fully inhabit a language. This, I believe, is what I love so much about language; how functional it is, how you can use it and (on a good day) immediately feel the results of your labor, sometimes discovering new aptitudes through the process. Three minutes into being outside yesterday in the neighborhood I'm staying in, a woman approached me looking for directions. I felt a jolt of excitement, she had sought *me* out after all, which meant that something about me seemed to indicate I was someone who knew this neighborhood and could direct her towards the street she was looking for, *and* could communicate with her! And although I had no idea where *rue des belles feuilles* was, she showed me her GPS and I directed her towards it; she thanked me profusely as she hurried off. It's moments and transactions like these that make me feel like I have an existence, a role, a place here.

2. I slept slightly better last night, but I cannot only just sleep when it's light outside for the next three weeks. I took the 9 to Oberkampf (this is becoming the daily commute), walked into Dreamin Man, and who do I see but Lindsey Tramuta. It really felt like seeing an old friend (even though we've only met twice—power of the oral history interview!), it was really nice. I can't express how happy it makes me to run into people in this city—at times I feel so overwhelmingly alone, but then there are moments of serendipity and familiarity and mutual sighting that make me feel like I have made a small place for myself here, that I'm somehow a neighbor. Lindsey tells me she will bring me melatonin tomorrow when we see each other again—this makes me feel very taken care of, hopefully sleep will come! (I texted Nora about this to which she said “That's love and intersubjectivity!”)

~

Um. You said earlier that you were exposed to this neighborhood when you first met your husband uh a decade—

Twelve years ago

—twelve years ago. Um. And you've lived here for—

Twelve years, yeah

Can you tell me about your neighborhood and what, you love about it, what drew you initially, why you stayed.

Mhmm. Well it's very diverse, it's um, it's not this like monolithic, white-washed kind of, Parisian neighborhood, it's not Saint Germain des Près where everyone looks like they just, they go to church on Sunday and they they, because they think they have to and, you know they're wearing their, their loafers and their Ralph Lauren outfits or whatever I mean it's, it's a neighborhood with so much more ethnic diversity and, a range in ages so there are families, there are elderly people who have lived here for forty, fifty years, there are newcomers, and I *really* instantly loved that mix, because I felt like it was already more interesting. Um so I mean I've been here and saw it evolve and I think that's what I found so interesting was to see how, people saw opportunity and potential in this neighborhood um, and to see that despite all that has come in, there's still great mixity in the population, um, and I'm really glad to see that it's retained that, and obviously in this, in this particular section of the eleventh I noticed that.

August 2019, Paris

1. I met Lindsey at Partisan Coffee yesterday afternoon. When she saw me the first thing she did was exclaim “I forgot the melatonin!” We chatted about many things—her book, an anticipated U.S. book tour next spring, my project, and the new pita sandwiches at Circus (she asked if I want to go to their new pizza night this Friday or next!) We eventually walked back towards her home in the eleventh to collect the melatonin and her copy of Lauren Collins' book *When in*

French that she kindly offered to lend to me. I followed her through the streets of the upper Marais and into the eleventh, down Rue de Bretagne, cutting up towards the Boulevards, and finally to her beautiful apartment where we had our interview last January. She produced a bottle of melatonin and gave me a handful of pills to take home with me. I spotted *A Little Life* on her bookshelf (she had not yet read; I told her she must) and we chatted about many book-related things, recording equipment, gun violence in the U.S. (she's scared to spend time there, which is super understandable), the lack of air conditioning in France and how she survived the *canicule*. I thought about Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembryzcki's book "Oral History Off the Record" while we were together—I love that this relationship has transcended the confines of the interview, that *we* have transcended the confines of the interview.

~

So the attacks obviously happened, pretty close by.

Everywhere I go. So, well like, everywhere—all the places that I have frequented, everywhere you know—And November was,

I mean,

terrifying

because it was *so* close to home. I mean that [the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015] felt, specifically targeted to the newspaper so we didn't necessarily feel that all of us were at risk. And then here obviously it felt, okay our very lifestyle is being threatened. Um, but you know Le Petit Cambodge, of course, I mean I've eaten there how many times? I've eaten at the pizza place that's directly—Maria Luisa, across the street. I had been to a party once for a birthday at Le Carillon. Uh, I mean there, the Bataclan, I mean ev— all of these places were, references. So, that it's happening *here*, it was like

there's a reason for this.

August 2019, Paris

1. “I am glad to own the memories I own and through those memories to belong someplace, to have someplace belong to me. I am remembering, and I am writing a poem in many tongues.” -Camille Dungy, *Guidebook to Relative Strangers*. I read this today; I love this, and it reminds me of Nyssa’s thoughts in class re: writing as an act of translation, and how challenging this can be. I love the idea of writing in many tongues, trying to travel many distances through translating different experiences. How do I render an experience tangible, concrete, comprehensible, outside of my body? Dungy’s quote also makes me think of my relationship to this place, the ways in which I feel embedded in its streets, how I felt that Sunday night pausing by the memorial at République, candles drowning in their own wax, feeling like this place finally belonged to me. But I was not able to, and still am not able, to adequately describe that.

~

Can you, start wherever you have like your first memory of that, day?

So that day, uh, well I knew my husband was gonna be going out to dinner with his colleagues. It’s something they do, they don’t do it regularly he works outside of the city. Um. And, I can’t remember *why* I knew where he was gonna be sitting. I guess they were a group of, I don’t know maybe five or six? But I think when he reserved the table I think she had said to him something like—the the manager had said something like okay you’re going to be near the *bar*, or something. I don’t, I don’t know why but I *knew* that. That day I had been, I was, doing a consulting job for Publicis. And we had been in a meeting all day, and I had been working with, the team at their *office* and then I was like, alright I’m gonna head home, you know blah blah blah. I took my time because I knew my husband wasn’t going to be home for dinner anyway. I get home. I guess I made myself some dinner I can’t remember what I *ate*. Um. *And* we were watching my friend’s dog. Our cat, we had put our cat down in Auuuu—July of that year, and so we were, watching my friend’s dog while she was away. So I had to take, you know I had to be there for the dog anyway. And, so I was playing with the dog whatever, I made myself some dinner, and then I remember I took a shower. So I took a shower this is like, I don’t know,

between 8:30 and 9 pm. And then I was in a bathrobe, my hair was wet I remember that, and then I'm going back on Twitter because I'm always obsessed, and I was also texting my friend Sarah, and my—and she at the time was living in the eighteenth. *Now*, however she lives on Rue Paul Bert, which is very close to la Belle Équipe. But anyway, we were texting and I don't know we were probably complaining about something work-related, because we're both writers. And she's you know—uh anyways, we were texting back and forth and, I was on Twitter, so this was now maybe, I can't remember when the first, incident exactly the time happened—

9/9:30? I don't know

Okay. So I had just, so my my hair was air-drying, I'm I'm, my phone was plugged into the wall even I remember I'm standing up at the wall, uh over the table. And I'm starting to hear *sirens*, and I'm texting with her and, I don't think anything of the sirens yet, and then on Twitter I'm seeing something, like that's when the news starts dropping and I was like

what the *fuck* is going on.

And I see, I think I must have been, mentioning near the *canal*, I don't remember what the first words were if it was canal, if it was Le Carillon, Le Petit Cambodge, but there were, you know I heard there were mentions of *shots* fired and, and then I was texting her I was like something is going on, go on Twitter, look at this. And then, I go to the window. So this is in our old apartment which is just down the street, and if I looked out my window, I had a view of the Avenue Parmentier which is right here, so I could see,

you know,

ambulances
you know racing down the streets, cop—police cars, and I was like, this is not normal. And then more reports started coming through and, you know I was like holy fuck something is, you know this is, this is real. And then I saw—she and I are texting back and forth and she was like oh my god oh my god where are you—where's Ced? Are you at home with Ced? And I was like, fuck, no. I'm

alone. So I start calling him to try to tell him something's happened. I text him I call him he's not answering. And I'm like, freaking out. Um. I think a couple of other people had *called* or texted to be like is everyone okay, you know those messages I got I didn't even know who they were from, you know that's, that's the thing, it was just everyone just started blasting, once they realized something was going on. Um. And then I guess at some point we knew that, you know, it was like there were updates all the time and so there were, you know oh the the, I don't know if it was the *same* car or it was another car but they were on their way elsewhere. And, they were on their way to la Belle Équipe, or whatever, I don't know at some point I realized they were near la Belle Équipe and I was like OH MY GOD THAT IS, TWO BLOCKS FROM WHERE HE IS, my husband. Cause he was at le 6 Paul Bert.

July 2019, Paris

1. When I left camp a few days ago, I told Winnie (a 78-year-old who was a counselor when my mom was a camper, and still is) that I was going to Paris for three weeks alone, and expressed my trepidations. “How wonderful!” she exclaimed in her ebullient Winnie way, “a three-week solo!” I’ve been thinking a lot about how camp gave me the gift of comfortably sitting with myself, of valuing moments of aloneness, silence, reflection. Of valuing “the solo.” This, of course, in contrast to my central method of fieldwork—the interview. But the moments of being in an interview will be minimal amongst the moments of silence and being with myself. I think back to how peaceful and profound it felt to sit amongst the woods along the path to Winships for three hours alone on a Sunday, amidst the constant noise and otherwise often overwhelming state of overstimulation that is camp. Easier to embrace the quiet and solitary time surrounded by the green hills of Vermont, but perhaps the lazier, leisurely days of August in Paris will help. It’s hard to access this state of serenity and introspection when you aren’t *physically* alone, when there are others around you. In all the months I’ve spent in France, I’ve never been here in August—I’m told that the majority of this city flees this month for the practically-mandatory, month-long French *vacances*, that a sense of tranquility washes over the city as summer draws to a close.

2. In *When Women Were Birds*, Terry Tempest Williams writes “I fear silence because it leads me to myself, a self I may wish to not confront. It asks that I listen. And in listening, I am taken to an unknown place.” This strikes me as relevant to a truth of oral history—this hyper-focused state of deep listening that simultaneously enables an introspection on behalf of the interviewer, prompted by the words of another. In *Faux Titre : Subjects Not-at-Home : Forms of the Uncanny in the Contemporary French Novel*, Daisy Connon writes “the act of writing creates a site in which the strangeness of the self may be welcomed and reflected upon.” I think this extends to the act of listening, to this project as a whole; the idea of writing a history, and through the process of doing so inviting this strangeness of self. “Conversation is the vehicle for change,” Terry Tempest Williams writes, “We test our ideas. We hear our own voice with another. And inside those pauses of listening, we approach new territories of thought.” When we encounter the mind of another person, we are led to more deeply and thoroughly encounter ourselves, even if this encounter-with-self does not involve any words spoken aloud on our end. When we listen to someone else, we open up a stillness within ourselves to listen more closely to what we’re yearning to say.

~

So I’m freaking out he’s still not answering his phone, at this point I don’t even remember what time it was, maybe it’s, maybe it’s ten o’clock? I don’t remember how much time has passed. A bunch of friends had had messaged me and called and I was like I still can’t get ahold of him. I was probably, I don’t know if I was crying but I was like,

like,

hyper-ventilating. So I was like fuck it I’m calling the restaurant. So I called the restaurant and I was like “uh, hi I need to speak to one of your guests, your diners or whatever, I don’t know if you’re aware what’s going on but there is a *fusillade en fuite*, I don’t know what I, I don’t know what I said, but uh, *ils sont près de chez vous, ubbb il y a des militaires dans la rue et tout*, and I

don't, I don't think that she believed what I was *saying*, uh I was like "he's sitting near the bar apparently" again, that's how I knew, because he had told me again I don't know why he—anyway. Um, I was like can you please just, give the phone to my husband. And when she handed him the phone she said "uh it's your wife she wants to know that you're alive." And I was just like oh my god you are going to regret saying that when you realize what's going on outside. So, I talked to him and I'm like, you know trying to make sense, and like, speaking super quickly, *he's* frazzled cause he's like what are you saying, what. And I was like you haven't answered, there's like a huge attack you know blah blah blah. And so I tell him what's going on out there, I was like you guys need to get home now, they're saying you can't be out in the *street*. You know by this point I had read enough, there had been some tweets I guess from the *prefecture* or whatever saying like don't be out. Every time I looked out my window you could see people running, like *quickly* trying to get out of out of the public and you're just like ohmygodisthisreallyhappening. And I was like, are you with anybody that has a car? Yes, one of his colleagues had a car. Um, I was like, you need to get home, now.

August 2019, Paris

1. I took the 2 to Colonel Fabian on my way to Radiodays this morning, a half-mile walk from the station. I passed Hôpital Saint-Louis, and felt (for probably the first time on this trip) the striking reality of where I was and what had happened there. I marveled at how close (thank goodness, how close) the hospital is located to le Petit Cambodge and Le Carillon—quite literally across the street. Robert and I spoke yesterday about imagination—he told me that he spent most of that Friday night imagining. I told him that I did too, the difference being that he had been to the Bataclan, it was a space that he could fully visualize and place himself in, he could imagine what that scene looked like, what it might feel like to be trapped inside of it. Having no idea where the Bataclan was or where it was located, I had no framework for imagining. There are gaps from that night, places my mind didn't go, images I couldn't conjure or did not want to. I asked Robert if he felt the events from four years ago still permeated his neighborhood; he said no. He said it's hard for it to still feel emotionally and physically present for him. In some ways, I agree. But I walk by Saint-Louis and am completely, overwhelmingly confronted with its presence. I

imagine. At the corner, I see a woman preparing Le Petit Cambodge to open for lunch, sweeping between long tables stacked with colorful chairs. I remember the lunch my mom and I had there almost three years ago, how I wasn't certain of my thoughts regarding the ethics of eating there, the patterned ceramic bowls of red curry and rice we ate, the only people in the restaurant. How does violence invisibly inhabit a place? Does this woman think about it always? Does the heaviness ever go away?

~

So they pay up or whatever, um, I don't know how much time had gone by but, it felt like an eternity when finally he gets in the door, and he says that they dropped him—by the time that they left the restaurant, uh there were military or armed, men in the street, telling people to get out of the roads. His colleague could drop him at Metro Parmentier, and then he had to get off the road, and so Ced ran—my husband ran. So he ran a block but he was like I was running and it was eerie because where was nobody on the street and if there were, if there was anybody on the street they were running. And you know, so he was explaining this, he comes up the stairs, I'm like, as soon as I see him I'm like, you know, a bucket of tears. I had the TV on, we don't have a TV now but we had a TV, and I was just, you know, the news is going. He—we're looking out the window and, yeah he explained that the restaurant had no idea what was going on, meanwhile they learned that, you know two blocks *away* there was a shooting at la Belle Équipe as well. And at this point we didn't *know*, I guess—I I they hadn't been caught or I don't know where they went, but this was before Bataclan happened. And I don't remember what *time* Bataclan actually, kicked off but I know he and I eventually got into bed and I was just like,

I was just
on my phone, scrolling like this because I was just like well I can't sit up anymore I just need to lie down. And that's when we—I saw the news break about Bataclan and I then I was just in bed crying and I was telling *him* what was happening because he, he was just like maybe just go to sleep and I was like I can't. And then I was basically debriefing him about everything that was

happening, live. And, I was tweeting again and someone was messaging me, some journalist from the states was like “can I get your comments?” and I was like DUDE I’m like,

NO. Um. And then a bunch of people also the next day wanted me to write, reaction pieces which just felt so strange but at the same time it was like, in the moment I couldn’t because also I wasn’t, I mean I wasn’t at Bataclan. Um. We were *just* far enough away that we couldn’t hear any of the shots, but my f—two of my very very close friends including the owner of of Méricourt, because at the time he was um, they were living on Rue de la Folie Méricourt and so they heard gunshots.

August 2019, Paris

1. I see Guy in the window of Café Oberkampf folding aprons that, once indigo, have faded into a deep purple, one tied around his waist. I decide that this is the moment to ask him for the interview. As I walk into the door, he smiles at me “ça va toi?” “ça va très bien et vous?” (he tutoies me but I’m not sure if I’m allowed to tutoie¹ him.) I love the lilting rhythm and simplicity of the sequence of “ca va?” “ca va et toi?” “ca va”; *ça va* is at once the question and the response. Though our relationship has existed in French (four years ago, after frequenting his café for weeks, I asked him in French what his native language was—he seemingly spoke flawless French, and to my utter disbelief and jealousy, I had recently heard him speaking flawless English, with an accent that could have been British but also strangely could have been Australian.) He told me English, that his father was British and mother was French, and asked me what my native language was. I probably rolled my eyes, laughing—English, *évidemment*; my French, although impressive for an American, was nowhere near the level of someone confusing my linguistic roots. He tells me he has a busy month, as he’s filling in for members of his staff who are on vacation, and that there are two

¹ In French, there are two versions of the second person: *tu* (familiar and/or singular) and *vous* (formal and/or plural). Since there is no real English equivalent of this linguistic intricacy, it can be difficult to navigate whom you should be “tutoyer-ing” and whom you should be “vousvoyer-ing.”

days next week that could work for an interview. I watch as he gracefully oscillates between French and English—French with his two young colleagues, one French, one Australian, English with the anglophone clientele that often frequent the shop. I order a crème from the woman at the counter before sitting down to write.

2. Lauren Collins calls French a secret garden, too: “French is a secret garden, but English, somehow, is everyone’s property” she says, speaking to the experience that while living in Geneva, any attempt on her part to speak French was immediately shut down by a Swiss person itching for the opportunity to demonstrate their impressive grasp on English. French, she felt, was not her property. I like to think that French is my property, but someday I feel like I have more assets than other days. The most discouraging feeling is when I feel like people don’t receive my French, as if I don’t have permission to speak it after eight years of existing within this language.

~

So we were all texting each other being like oh my god oh my god, I had texted family to be like, we’re okay but this is what’s happening. Um. And I think I was just, up until 2 in the morning watching, you know, the death count come in or or whatever it was that the announcements were, and feeling like

what the f—
like what is this? Um. So it all felt very surreal, and the next morning—cause we also had that dog. So I was like [whispers] *oh my god we have this dog*. And uh, and then about *two* I was like, alright I need to get out of the house but I was scared to go out. Not because I thought something was going to happen but just because it was a day that looked like this actually and uh

you know I was like
what is it gonna feel like. And I will never forget that feeling it was like,

you
couldn't breathe. It was, it was almost emp—I mean the streets were,

eerie.
You know like there were people out but everyone looked like, they had just seen a *ghost* and, all we did was go to, you know like the Biocoop to get you know bananas or something and walk the dog, and someone actually said, I remember at the cash register someone was like *bon week-end* as like a reflex and I was like are you, are you serious? And I was just like OK gotta go home this is too much I can't I can't. And then you know there was a scare the next day on Sunday because, of a *foule* at République and so, you know I had a friend who, was out and about and called me and she was like “can I come over right now I'm at République and something's happening and I don't know what's going on” and so she came over. You know and everyone was just, it was that, *constant* state of panic and it just kept happening and like, every time my husband left the house I was like oh my god, tell me when you get to work. Every time I took the metro I was, you know, dubious of everyone I was looking at. And it created that, that *sick* judgmental feeling, um. And then you learn about like okay how they planned it, or you know and then you learn about the people that *died*, and, you know, the only person I actually know, who was at Bataclan who died was someone I met *once*, she was an intern at my old agency. Literally I may have

said hello to her once. But I I *remember* her, and, you know I learned quickly, through former colleagues that she, she had been there. And like, what's *strange* is it was the kind of concert that like, almost everyone I know knew someone who was at that concert. Like I guess it spanned all age groups and,

demo-
graphics and,

you know and so the reports coming in were horrific, and it was just a long time before anything felt norm—I mean nothing felt normal but I mean it just, was an icky sad feeling for a very long time. And then I think it was, what was it March of 2016 when something happened in Belgium? And a guy from my grad school, uh, had been in the metro, and he remembered having to escape, I mean he got out but he escaped and like he had to pry his, metro door open um to to get out and I just remember thinking like, oh my god like,

this is,

nowhere's safe anymore. Um. So it's crazy to think that it's been four years, already. Um but you know when anything happens, *like* the thing we were just talking about this morning with the gas leak, and you know I see things happening on Twitter and people are like “what was that explosion?” You know my husband's like you need to *stop* reading so much into these things initially, and I'm like I can't help it, you know I hear—cause he wasn't *here*, and I try to remind him of that, I was like you were not in the apartment, when all of the, all of the ambulances and all of that noise started happening but it will, it's a *trigger*. Just like in early December with the *gilets jaunes* when there was a helicopter circling over in this area, like they were heading towards République. You know *that* feeling, is terrifying, it like resurfaces all of these emotions. And, you know he obviously

experienced it to a *degree* but he was not in the house when it was happening, and watching the information come out, and I think that, will stay with me.

August 2019, Paris

1. Cyprien² asked me last night if I still had my anxieties—I'm not sure how he phrased this exactly, I don't recall if this is because it was in French that I am not able to recall the exact words or if it was in broken English, but he asked me if I was better. I said yes, I think, yes. He tells me that he remembers a dinner out in Rennes we shared together—the last time we saw each other, two, three years ago? I can't be sure. He told me I didn't seem *sereine*—serene, calm. I am strangely touched that he not only recalls this occasion, but somehow knew and remembers how he perceived that I was feeling, and cared to ask if I was still feeling that way now. He asks me if I think he's changed, I say no. We sip our drinks in the evening sun, in a plant-filled outdoor bar—buckwheat, cucumbers, sunflowers—down the canal from Albane and Quentin's in Pantin that feels like an outdoor Gowanus bar in the summer without the stifling crowds. We joke about how Pantin has been dubbed “the New Brooklyn” with its new influx of hip establishments. We run into Delphine, who has a son Gaspard's age, whom I met at Dock B when I was here in January, and exchange bises. Later, we have dinner on the balcony as the tangerine-colored sun sets late over the apartment building across from them—“*Le soleil se couche sur Brooklyn*” Albane says.

~

What was your relationship with safety in this, city like before, the thirteenth and how was it compromised after, if at all?

I never felt unsafe. Ever. You know we, there, I remember reading about you know, stabbings in London and and like, things that happen there that seemed like oh London's a *much* more unsafe place. New York also. And I never felt

² When I was sixteen, I lived with a host family in Rennes, France for a year. Cyprien and Albane were my host siblings, Quentin is Albane's partner, and Gaspard is their one-year-old son.

unsafe here. And, what it *did* and unfortunately this still remains is, um, a level of,

I mean, maybe I'd call it vigilance, and more vigilance than I had *before* it's just that I pay very close attention to my surroundings. And it's not that I was, *unaware* before it's just that now I'm *hyper* aware. And, if anything seems weird I will, take myself out of that situation or I will, speak *up* or, you know, um.

I I
mean even even I remember in the year after the attacks you know I think my husband and I were on the metro at one point and there was someone really strange. I can't tell you *what* he was doing or, maybe he was just weird and that's—there are plenty of just weird people. Um and he was like do you wanna switch metro cars? and I was like yeah. I was like actually can we let the *whole* train go by and get the next, you know, and we did. I don't do that very often but it was just like, you you realize,

that this is the way you should be acting everywhere you go actually, because this is the world we live in, and that any kind of, you know

sense of pure protection you felt was probably irresponsible, in fact. Um, but you know the majority of people I think found themselves in, a state they were, *completely* unfamiliar with.

Mhmm

A state of discomfort, and and discomfort in the fact that they were also probably judging the people they were looking at, and they didn't necessarily have to be of a certain, *origin*, I'm saying *anybody*, it could have been a girl looking weird it doesn't matter. It was just, what are you doing, and you know there was already a level of, you know in Paris everyone is already suspicious, you know you, you tell someone you like their shoes and they're like "what do you want from me?" So unfortunately that's just, you know exacerbated to a degree. *Except*, that there *was* a coming together after the attacks, right. So, you know, you know the outing on Saturday was very short-lived because I couldn't handle the environment, and then, nothing was open. And then *Guy* at Café Oberkampf re-opened on Sunday, and it ended up being like all the people,

all the people that I know.

I went there Sunday.

Okay so maybe you were even there when I was there. I mean I went in there and I saw Alice, his wife, who is a very good friend of mine, and as soon as I saw her I just broke down into tears it was sort of like, it was sort of like, I I don't know, like you've just come out of *battle* and you're seeing someone? I don't know how to describe it it was the weirdest reaction because I'm not,

it was foreign to me that I would react that way actually. I saw him, I saw her, and I was just like, lost it. I mean she was more composed than I was. Um

I

that guy Andrew I told you about who's the PhD student, he was there. Cédric tried to come with me and then he didn't feel right

being there and so he went back home. He felt like it was too soon to be out, and I was like, fair enough I needed to be around people. Um. And that's when you know Andrew being that he, has ex—you know researched, French Islam and how, Muslims in France are made to feel and how they've been ostracized and all of this, like, what else is at play with what happened. And, he and I started talking a lot after, after the attacks and I was gleaning all sorts of information from him, as to his, worry about how this was going to isolate the Muslim population even further. But I also was so quickly, thrown into the fact that like, France has a role in in the way that it has, their policies and their, um, this like fake color blindness has, has has created *such* horrific divisions in society. And so I'm not saying that that's what *necessarily* led to this but you have, a set of the population that's so easy to indoctrinate because they feel like they're meant—

they're lesser than, and they're not really French and they, are meant to be kept out into these, you know suburban ghettos and,

doesn't make anything right, obviously. But it's just sort of like, okay let's *reevaluate* the way that the government has, treated its population. I don't know. It it was very strange like after the fact, and listening to all of the people who, all the terrorist experts evaluate the situation and some of them actually say the things that you didn't think they would dare to say because the French don't want to hear the truth about themselves? Um, and I guess that's like the start of when I started to, be far more critical about, um,

not that I had rose-colored glasses on any more about France but just, far more critical about their policies and the way there are *huge* swathes of the population, and not just the Muslim population but just in general that feel like the permanent other. And and what that can do. Um. But

what happened is horrific, the kosher supermarket which was also, you know after Charlie Hebdo, like all of those things they they play in your mind. Um. And obviously I remember where I was during September 11 but this was so much more visceral, I'm an adult. And, it affected me in a much more direct way.

January 2016, Paris

1. I haven't been feeling like myself, I need to be alone a lot and have been super tired and unmotivated and unexcited. I've had moments of intense relief and others of sadness that I was leaving and not "finishing" my year. Walking through the eleventh yesterday, I also realized that the Bataclan is directly off of Oberkampf; I don't understand how I'd never seen it before, I walked up and down Oberkampf every other day while I was living there. Joelle and I went up close the other day and read what was written on the plaque; it was emotional and surreal and powerful. It makes me feel connected to Paris in an awful way; I lived through history with this city. We went to PNY in the Marais last night for dinner, and I freaked myself out so I couldn't really enjoy it. I'm pretty sad to leave; I ended up getting an extra day in Paris because of a blizzard on the east coast. I went to Fondation on the last morning with Julianne and lingered outside for a while, just soaking it up and appreciating the fleeting moments and realizing how much I'll miss this place and Julianne. But of course this week was amazing because I was appreciating the little time I had left to enjoy Paris by filling it with all of the things I love. I almost didn't make it back to New York because practically all flights were cancelled to the east coast. I teared up when we took off.

~

What was, what was your experience living in this neighborhood after, and being part of this neighborhood, did you—I mean obviously immediately after it felt, quite, somber.

Mhmm

Has that feeling at all carried on in the past three years?

No

It felt revitalized pretty quickly?

And that's, that's entirely because of the way the French are. They're like, *F you we're going back to our cafés*. If they weren't like that, it would have been eerie forever. Um. You know *obviously* the Carillon and the Petit Cambodge were closed for a long time. Um. La Belle Équipe *aussi* they needed to renovate and, um,

you know luckily there are plenty of businesses *around* them. Um. And and they seemed to be filled too I think there was this sense that like no we need to *support* these businesses now. Um, and the businesses around them, and make sure that they, they can carry *on* and um, and and good *thing* too because, I mean the tourism numbers dropped, dramatically in the eighteen months following the attacks so, you know I think it was largely thanks to *local* support to compensate for the fact that a lot of the foreign, visitors had dropped off. So no I I saw there was a lot of life, *thankfully*, and I think a lot of us were like we wanted to see each other we wanted to *be* there and be like you know we lived through this thing and let's just keep being together. But you know even when I would go back to Oberkampf there were times where I'd be like yeah I'm gonna stay away from the window, there was, there was often *that* feeling too it was like okay, is there a strategic pl—you know, area where I should sit in places now to be far enough from the window, as *if* somehow that's really gonna make a difference if someone's shooting in there, you know but, you think of those things, you think of crazy things like that. Um. But no I mean I think Paris is and and France in general is far more resilient in that way. Um. And I think they're resilient—I mean, this is not relevant for for you for *this* but like you see it in the same way with the *gilets jaunes*, you know the business owners are like, you are *destroying* us, um and so you have a lot of consumers who are like we are gonna go out to support these businesses, so I think it's the same kind of mentality. Um, and I

think that's what saved that like, that spirit of the neighborhood because it could have easily become like, zombie-ville.

Mmhmm

Um. But I will say, you know, whenever there's like a mass gathering I don't want to go near it anymore. That's like, I I, it took me a long time to want to go to a concert.

How did you feel like your reaction either, aligned with or differed from the— what you sensed was the overall Parisian, reaction to the thirteenth?

Um.

Maybe, you know, the people who were not in the *neighborhood* felt slightly different. Um. So the friend Sara who was, who I was texting with that day, she was affected, obviously, and scared, um but she was up in the eighteenth and I know she went to a concert not much, I don't know how many months later or maybe it was a month later but I was just like, oh no. And then she would go to the theatre like it didn't *stop* her, and she's a native New Yorker maybe that's why, I I don't know but I was just like, nope. Um. Other people that may have been further away, felt a detachment. I know people on the Left Bank felt more, like, not everybody but some of the people I remember talking to felt detached. Scared, but detached. Um. And, my, I know my husband was was,

disturbed

for a while. He just, couldn't explain it in the same way I could. Um. But I don't, I don't know I I think if you were to *really* engage people they'd probably have a lot of similar things to say, but, you know and maybe I wouldn't have been so freaked out if he hadn't been so close, to one of the, incidents. And, if I couldn't, if I had been able to get ahold of him, or if he hadn't been there at all, you know. If he had been *home* with me and we were watching this unfold like, *maybe* my reaction would have been *slightly* different. I don't know, but I I do feel

like I took it, I took it hard. And I remember um I had to go to Amsterdam shortly thereafter like maybe a week later, less than a week later for, for work, and the two um, the two people I had to go with, one of whom lives like *down* the street from La Belle Équipe. And she was just sort of like, *bah écoute, si un truc va se passer ça va se passer* and I was like, can you not? can you just, can you *just* be a little bit more sensitive. And I was like, should we cancel? Like why are we still going on this trip? And she was like well, we're going. And, you know, I was surprised by her sort of hardness. Um. But everybody reacts differently. But I, but I think it was just I was so shocked. That I just, and I couldn't have anticipated you know, what might you do if something happened on your doorstep? I have no idea. Well now I know. For that particular one, you know. But. I don't know, I know the people who, lost someone or knew someone, you know, felt strange for a long long time. Maybe they still do, I don't know. But it's, it's eerie. I still won't go anywhere near Bataclan. I have a friend who went to a concert there, actually it's the same Sarah! She went to a concert there recently and I was just like, I can't, I don't know how you could even step foot in there I would not go in there, I understand it needs support like whatever, I just can't. But like, maybe people are more brave uhhh, you know good for them, I just. I almost feel like that's like a holy space that should be off, you know it should be like a, a memorial or something and not, I don't know. Like they renovated, *yes* they cleaned but I feel like there's like, spirits haunting that place. So. And like I don't *need* to go there. Right, but again this is how *I* react.

I don't know.

Do you have anything else you want to say on the topic, before we end?

Mmm. I will say this, um, it hasn't upset me, like, it hasn't *broken* me down in a long time until I saw, um, in September, so of 2018 I saw "The Jungle", have you heard about "The Jungle"? It's a production—

I don't think so

—um, a *very* unique production that's actually now playing in Brooklyn that deals with, uh the refugee camp in Calais. And it's sort of like this interactive experience, um. You're part of the *stage* and the actors are run—you know all around you and, you're sort of supposed to be within the refugee camp. And there are these screens on the side and, there's there's a moment during the *play* where, they're depicting the way the refugees reacted to, the attacks. And on the TVs they ran footage of, the cop cars and the, and all the chaos and the crying from that night, and I was with my best friend and I broke down into tears. And that was immediate, that was the first time I had actually felt like broken down, um, with such emotion, *since* 2015. Um. So it's just interesting to to, to remark how it's still there, I guess that's like grief too it will get you when you're not expecting it, but. You know I obviously didn't know that was going to be part of of this this *production* but, you know I think it was because, you know, *reading* about it is different than the sights and the sounds and like the news footage from that day and I know there's a Netflix uhhh show, I can't—I just I won't watch it. Um, I'm not there yet. And maybe I won't ever be, I don't know that I necessarily need to go down that road again, um. But the the Jungle, this— I mean it was an *amazing* production but I, there was a *part* where I was just like aaaand,

lost it. So it does come out.

Yeah. Thank you.

Whhhhshhooooo.

Marie-Louise

January 2019, Paris

Hello. Okay today is Friday, January 11. Um, this is Caroline Cunfer. And I'm in Paris in the tenth arrondissement interviewing—

Uh, Marie-Louise, that's in French, or Marie, if, since we're speaking English today. Hi guys [*I laugh*]

~

So you've had a, you've had a strong, connection to France from, a very young age?

Oh from the get-go—

Besides the fact that your father is French—

Yeah so I mean there was always this kind of sort of streak of it growing up? And then it sort of solidified into a very large part of my identity upon coming here and over the years it was a very large, process of accumulation actually. Um because despite—my both my parents they spoke, my dad was a multi—he was a polyglot he spoke like four or five languages which was opposed to my mother who only spoke Tagalog and English so they, they raised us speaking English in the household so I didn't get that, you know how most kids were completely fluent by the time they were like four or five I would just have like snippets of it I would only be like, at best like three-fourths bilingual and, so my French was kind of *fractured* uh up until up until moving here it was only after like, it's been what eight years now? Since I've moved and just being completely immersed and just kind of doing away—or distancing myself rather from, like my American side. Yeah.

~

When you were growing up did you always have the goal of ending up in France or when did that come?

I wouldn't say it was as finite as having like a goal of being like okay I'm gonna move here, I just always knew, that it was gonna happen. Uh I I knew it and even between me and my sister there's like an eight year age gap, she, in contrast completely assimilated into American culture once they moved there she was like twelve years old when they got there when I was—no, she was like ten, if I was two, she was completely immersed in it and she had zero interest in her French citizenship, she never declared it, she was all about that suburban life she bought a house, has a car, and uh she lives right next to my parents like less than fi—like ten minutes by car as opposed to I was just like had this weird anger of being like why do we have such an international, like multi-lingual lineage that like spans several countries and you guys fucking chose to raise me in, in like the American suburbs I don't under~~stand~~. Um, so naturally, my dad never forced the French language upon me, it's like something that I naturally gravitated towards like in high school instead of taking the one semester of Spanish which I mean like in retrospect would have been a little more useful, um, I took French. I then eventually, I mean, uhh, majored in it in college and then I moved here. It was just a very, um, natural progression, yeah.

August 2019, Paris

1. I'm sitting at the Holybelly counter alone again waiting to order. Over the glass partition, I can see the chefs in the same black Holybelly shirts that I own, flipping bacon, calling out orders in a mélange of English and French (“Il y a encore deux hashbrowns;” “Cinq savory;” “You have five hash in the fire;”) I realize I have never been this close to the operations before. I picture Marie-Louise, in her Holybelly shirt and cross-backed blue apron, running around with Sarah, cracking eggs, flipping perfectly-poured pancakes, scraping bacon grease off the stove with a metal spatula.

~

So you started cooking the—right when I first ate at Holybelly, which is also funny, so thank you for the food [*laughs*]—

Oh yeah yeah, absolutely

—in the fall, I think it was September, I think it was September—like mid/late September 2015, when it reopened, cause the first few weeks I was there, it wasn't there. Um, tell tell me about the fall of 2015.

Uh, fall of 2015 I actually, like I had been having panic attacks all summer over the construction cause I was just like, when is it gonna open when is it gonna open, I had so much pressure like uh shit this is it, you've wanted to cook so long now you're going to do it. So there was that, that was like the prologue of fall and then fall I finally did it so it was like September October—it was rough, it was rough, man. Because I literally had zero

zero experience and, you know, it's—I am just gonna take a moment to just really *applaud* Sarah and just say how much I admire her like, gargantuan *strength*? To be able to just produce *such* consistent high-quality dishes *at such an enormously fast rate*. And, unfortunately when I started cooking, I was not at all accustomed to that and it was a, it was a very, you know that rocked my shit. I mean physically, emotionally, just going through that and having her, you know and having her and then Martin, one of her cooks, look over at me and be like you're not, going fast enough, you're not going fast enough, these need to be a certain way you need to find that, that special, kind of balance between *going* fast without losing quality. And it was so hard, you know, and that time was really, really,

I wanted to do this so badly and I had promised them that I would deliver, you know, so I really had to force myself on a physical level to like move—to, to work up to standard. Um, that was September/October, well obviously November, obviously the attacks happened in November. Ummmm. Yeah, since I was so, deep in the kitchen, I mean I was just working insane hours and I was there, I I was working six days a week, basically.

August 2019, Paris

1. At Holybelly this morning with Lisa (Lisa!), I told her I was here for my thesis. She asked me if I was doing the same project I was doing in college, I said yes. She texted me after we had parted ways post-breakfast and told me it seemed like I was truly thriving. Something about her being able to observe and articulate that after our hour spent together eating magical scrambled eggs felt profound. I always detect some level of discomfort/self-consciousness/hesitation when I talk about the fact that I'm *still* doing this project. Why am I drawn back? What do I still want to discover? Why am I here, in Paris, alone, for three weeks? What am I looking to find?

2. I took the ligne 2 the past two days. I like it because it comes aboveground, launching into the daylight at Barbès Rochechouart and curving above the trees through the eighteenth and tenth arrondissements until Colonel Fabian when it plunges back into the Parisian metro tunnel system. I observe that I have been feeling sensations of peace—joy!—from being on the Parisian metro. The other times I've been here over the past four years, I've tried to avoid it as best as I can, despite the fact that I have always derived great pleasure from taking public transportation in foreign cities. There is a sense of anonymity and ambiguity that public transportation affords you as you blend into the collective, headphones on, face in a book. I kick myself for leaving my French copy of *A Little Life* in my bedroom in New York—I could have really convinced commuters that I was a local for the duration of my ride on the 2.

~

So yeah what had happened, it was pretty surreal, I mean are we gonna talk about that now—

Yeah yeah yeah, [*laughs*] whatever you want to talk about.

Yeah no because, I mean, it didn't, yeah. That was, that was a weird period, cause I was already emotionally wrecked—emotionally, physically, whatever, I was

already in such a state that like when it happened, luckily I was inside. Well I mean,

Yoann and I, my ex and I, we, I don't know where we were going. Maybe we went to go pick up food but we were riding home and we rode up uh Boulevard de Sébastopol and I remember we were passing near like, Centre Pompidou near Rivoli and stuff and already like, there was like a bunch of cops telling people to get off the street which you're like yeah okay whatever. Um, we sit down and we have dinner and, our apartment is facing—it it had these like huge, double-glazed windows facing Stalingrad, like the metro and the corner of Faubourg Saint-Martin and the huge boulevards. So, it's fucking *loud*, it's loud all the time. And uh, when we sat down to dinner there was like, sirens, which we were totally accustomed to already and then sirens, and then more sirens, and then finally, after we had finished like *half* our meal we were like, okay. That's a *lot* of sirens, even for our street. [*Coughs*] And uh, so you know we open the windows and we're like, okay, and then finally, then you start getting, then you start getting the texts of like, hi, oh my god, where are you, are you okay? And then I'm like hmm, okay, that's weird. And, you know, you check on the internet and you're like, *oh okay*, people are getting shot that's weird, and then you're like *where*, and you're like, oh. You know again it was a very, uh, residual thing cause first you hear reports—it was several locations uh simultaneously, you know. And then, you're like *oh that's weird*. And of course being American I'm like ah yeah like random acts of violence, it's no big deal, whatever you know. And then it finally hit a *nerve* when we turned on like video-streaming live streaming of the cops having completely shut down um Boulevard Voltaire uh in front of the Bataclan. And just seeing that neighborhood and, you know, my kind of cyclist view of the streets and like everything that really hit a nerve because I was like wait that's like right next to my house and then wait, oh okay, like this is not a *joke* anymore this is like a significant thing that's happening andddd then, the rest of it became

really

surreal in the sense of like, you know, uh, in your kind of cultural, collective memory you can always kind of brush things off and I'm like, oh this is something that, you're not even going to be able to brush off I'm like, this is not this is not.

~

So when the night—that night—rolled around and the news stuff and everything was still going off, I, you know I actually text Nico and Sara and I was like, guys, do we, are we *opening tomorrow*? And then, they were like “I don't know.” And then, especially cause like Le Petit Cambodge and Le Petit Carillon is just, like, a few blocks, it's just the other side of the canal for us so that was literally our hood, that was like the neighborhood. Um, same with Fontaine au Roi where they hit another one of the cafés there that was like right on the like, the little canal space too. So it was basically, it was, right in our faces that's why I was like guys I don't know are we gonna open? And then Nico and Sarah were like this is kinda nuts I don't, I don't know. So, we were on standby and I remember yeah obviously it was like really difficult to kinda go to sleep. Um and I woke up really early in the morning because you know usually we would start at 7ish, yeah 7. So, you know I had gotten up at six, well before six am and kinda texted Sarah and was like hey you know, and I just remember,

just like the *light* and how it was just like the weather, and like how it was just super cold and, it was just like all this blue light flooding into like the living room and just her being like yeah no I don't know, yeah I don't think it's a good idea, yeah I think we're going to stay closed, today.

And yeah the, the neighborhood shut down we weren't the only ones that, didn't open that day it was majority of the businesses did not open that day, I remember. Um,

I forget at this point if at one point I just rode my bike over to the Petit Cambodge just to *see*, what had

happened and I just remember seeing yeah all these just like bullet holes and everything's just all like shattered glass just like everything and it was just like, surreal, I guess that's the word to single-handedly define this experience cause you're just like whaa [*stutters, unable to find the right word*] For me it was just like an extra irony cause I was just like okay you moved away from California, you moved away to a place where gun violence is totally not a thing and you potentially could have died,

in, you know, [*laughs*]

in a terrorist attack, that's pretty, pretty ironic. Um, so yeah that was the events in itself I mean it was, and the days that followed it was a *wound*, I think, I mean it was a wound for most people like when we finally did reopen it was a bit shaky. And even, you know Holybelly, like their vibe and everything we're bubbly, we're happy. We had the music going, we had coffees going people still came out we you know,

it wasn't a record-breaking day but people did come out and people, you know, just kind of wanted to move on but the *vibe* for about a week almost a week and a half two weeks was like,

so,

so,

palpably,

heavy. And, I remember that first service yeah, so um, everybody was a bit shaken you could just kind of see crossing kind of, you know glances with other people around you they were visibly shaken you know and that was one of the rare times when you know Parisians *generally* are like pretty fucking closed off you don't talk to one another and that was when it was just kind of an armistice-style day where you could start talking to one another and be like "are *you* okay?" "I'm okay are you okay?" and kind of just talk about what happened.

August 2019, Paris

1. "I am charting a journey into memory" (*The Hare with Amber Eyes*, Edmund de Waal). What if we conceived of the interview as such? I wonder what it would look like to visualize the interview, to make it tangible, to attempt to illustrate it with paper and ink. What would it look like to draw the interview, to chart its twists and turns and divergences and contours, its silences? So many of my narrators have spoken in such place-based ways; they are drawing a map for me with their words. I am able to follow their spoken paths, but you, perhaps unfamiliar with these particular parts of Paris, may not be. So many experiences

seem to speak to this disruption of place, an intrusion of the uncanny into places that once felt safe and familiar. And many speak to the need to confront these spaces, a need to reexperience them through this new perspective.

~

There was the false attacks too or like the false the the,

when everybody started running at République a few days later so we were still open, we were still shaky I think that happened a few days after and I remember we were closing down. Um, we had just put down the metal, the metal rolling door like halfway down as we always do like when we were closing. And then, we had this like backdoor cause it's like attached to like an apartment building, you know and it had like this back door. And then, we saw people like run, frantically past in front of like the metal roll door we saw we were like oh, that's not normal. And then two minutes later, you know, a bunch of people start running, coming into the kitchen from the backdoor and they're like "oh my god, they're star—they're shooting, like *can we stay here?* and we were just like *what are you saying* like, are you serious? And like, they were super [*indecipherable*] yeah you can stay. We roll down the metal doors. And then,

we're all like in in a panic, we don't know whether, um, to like *stay* or *leave* and then there was all these false reports like oh, it was just noise, and then there was other people were like no it's an actual thing, something's happening. So we were kind of stuck in the, in the restaurant for like, I think a good hour or so before we were like, okay are we leaving or are we not? Eventually I was like alright, fuck it, like, if I get shot, whatever. And I remember just like taking my bike and just being like, just ride home like you normally do, if anything happens too bad. I remember kind of having to make that peace with myself. And then finally it was like, okay it was nothing, luckily. But that's just how *deeply* it got into uhhh the psyche of, of everyone, like the

collective psyche during that time. It was, it was pretty intense, I had never experienced anything like that.

So,

I mean,

I wouldn't—but I wouldn't go as far as to say that it was a *trauma* or like a like a traumatic—I mean it was a traumatic experience but it was one of those that didn't leave—mm—like a mark or a scar on me. I think mostly because, fortunately, I didn't know anyone personally who had died. But, it was very second degree, because I did have a lot of friends who did lose people, and I had a lot of acquaintances yeah that did lose people but I did not have anybody from my direct circle, affected by it, you know? And I think that's the only reason why I was able to just be like, okay this is weird, this is scary but, whatever. Unfortunately not everybody had that same experience, you know? Mm.

~

November 15, 2015, Paris

1. Woke up late; surprisingly, I slept exceptionally well. I decided that I needed to go outside and see how it felt, so Grace and I walked to Café Oberkampf and got carrot coconut soup that Rhys put an olive oil smiley face on. Grace went home and I walked over to Holybelly at 4 to do some homework. It was strangely the most beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky. After Holybelly I walked home and stopped at République memorial. It was beautiful and moving, and for the first time I felt an overwhelming surge of love for Paris and finally felt so connected to it, connected to the city and to every single person I saw on the street. On my way home, I stopped at Monoprix for eggs and soup, and was three blocks away from home when three cars came by honking and yelling for everyone to run to the left. In a moment of panic I jumped into a restaurant and hit the floor, things were flying and I was convinced that terrorists would enter. It was absolutely terrifying. Eventually I left because people were saying there was nothing actually going on, but people were talking about a *fusillade*, I don't

even know what happened but I tried to seek refuge in a shop that was closing; I talked to a military guy on the street who said I shouldn't go in the direction of my apartment, so I ended up in a bar and called my mom sobbing and said I wanted to come home. I was too terrified to walk 500 feet home so I waited probably almost an hour in the bar, all of the old men at the bar were so kind and one walked me half-way home. I was so unbelievably relieved to get inside and just collapsed into Grace's arms sobbing. I don't really remember the rest of the night, it was a blur. I bought a plane ticket back to New York, and didn't sleep at all.

~

In what ways do you feel like it most affected your, experience of being in Paris and particularly of both living and working in that neighborhood?

UM, how it affected it? Yeah, how, I would say,

I, well obviously I was already going through a lot of mental and emotional stuff going through the motions of like, you know, *cooking* and stuff and just like dealing with that stress but it also instilled the sort of like very primordial fear of death and made me ask—I like posed a lot of existential questions at that point I was like if you go *out*, are you happy with what you've done so far, are you hap—like are you, um, fulfilling your life's work like your universal like *purpose* and I was like *no*. And that is why I was, I was so terrorized by this I was like damn, I'm not ready to go yet and I have no idea what I'm doing but this is not, this is now how I want to *finish*. Um, so that's definitely uh how it affected me the most is that it kind of *intensified* all these internal questions that I was already having. Also, for the first time, I was very acutely aware of like, how—cause there was news reports saying that they had purposefully *targeted* this part of Paris, the right bank, which I'm like, mm, you know. And and this is the first time that it really put the right bank—cause okay, I mean like obviously people who don't live in Paris or like Americans in general they don't know this like, subtle difference between the left and the right

bank and, just basically how Paris is like broken down by its neighborhoods, the same way that New York is like broken down by its boroughs and by its neighborhoods and each, respective borough has its kind of cultures and stuff like that. So, what had happened was like the, the—what is that, lash, not flashback? No sorry the *backlash* there we go, the backlash—my English is like a little broken there—um, a lot of the the, the two major effects of backlash was that, first of all, like, I was pretty shocked to learn about uh, the fact that, this neighborhood in general, the right bank, was specifically targeted. I was—that was the first time I was very acutely aware of like, okay, this is where for me this is like the living breathing part of Paris, you know I was acutely aware of how, of like this is kind of like where you know, *privileged* kind of like, uh, anglophones hang out and live. Second of all, I just, I had a really huge laugh about the whole no-go zone nonsense that came out on Fox News, I had a good fucking laugh. Cause I would go to like, you know, Belleville, Belleville Coffee, was it Cream was still around on Rue de Belleville? And I would like go and have my coffee there and be like, yeah, I'm way deep in the no-go zone right now. [*I laugh*] I actually live in the no-go zone, I actually *work* in the fucking no-go zone. And I, you know, I'm just like, what, what what are these people envisioning? Like it's, you know, of course, people were *scared*, people were scared right after it happened but eventually I mean life goes on and and like daily life slowly picked up pace again, you know, and so when all this stuff came out and it's like, no it's not, it's like not that intense, it's not, *scary*. Um, I thought that was pretty funny. So yeah, that's, that's how I, those were the effects, for me, which, yeah, I mean. Not as traumatizing as it could be, fortunately.

~

How do you feel, you said you didn't feel like you had like a personal scar that's left on you, how did you, or did not witness ways in that Paris and that neighborhood in particular have a scar, and either still do or only had it for a bit afterwards?

Um, wait can you like repeat—

Yeah like, in terms of that neighborhood or Paris in general or the landscape and the way that people, lived and like even visually, in what ways did you see or not see like a scar that was kind of left, visibly, there?

For *me*, the most, like, palpable like tangible feeling of like, wow this is heavy this is like significant was actually I, I took a yoga class, um, just right off the bat I was looking for a new studio to practice and, I signed up for this one, and it was like in the eleventh and, I didn't really look until like the last minute where it *was*, like what street it was exactly and, it just so happened that, it was in, right adjacent like literally on the corner like that little alley passageway of like, you know that video clip where you see all those people like climbing out of the window and running for their lives and stuff, it was in that alley like you actually had to cross that alley to like get there to that studio and I just, I mean, I believe in cosmic like the cosmic order of the universe I believe in in in energy and that, felt, really bad to walk through that. I—yeah, that was, the height of all of that heaviness that I felt there. I don't—I don't know if it would affect me if I would go back there today but since it had happened so recently you really, you really felt it there. But also, I mean, eventually, just people, in general like the general public just like kind of got over it in the month that followed, in the six months that followed. I mean also it plays into, like the French mentality about like *obhh c'est bah, c'est la vie quoi, on continue na na* you know they're very like, whatever, it happened, let's move on. Um, not in the same enthusiastic way that American people are you know what I mean, they just kind of shrug their shoulders in just a more, like, accepting way and they're like, whatever, it's fine, I still have like my cigarettes and my newspaper and my coffee like my burnt espresso, I'm fine. And things are going to be fine. Um, so there was this sort of funny, sort of paradoxical like pessimistic resilience that I really felt during this time [*said laughing*] and that's kind of what I witnessed, for me it just kind of, because I was so deep in the kitchen it was just sort of like somebody's gotta poach these eggs [*I laugh*] you know and like, [*laughs*] I was part of that crowd that was like *ça continue, tu vois* like let's just keep going, and I literally that's what I did, I kept going, I was literally so deep in work that I just like, alright, whatever, you know, it's part of the every day. *However*, that too marked, um, sort of this, how do you say it, like being desensitized to violence, uh, that's pretty hallmark of of American culture. I felt like from that moment on, since there were so many attacks in other parts of France that followed, this similar desensitization to

other random acts of violence here which, uh, I find very disquieting, very disconcerting but it's, it's true, like, I, I'm no longer shocked by it, I mean I'm not, sad, nothing hit me the way that that November, the November attacks did. That was like the one, full-on punch that I felt and then everything that followed I was like, yeah of course. That was like my general reaction to like what happened in Nice too like there's like a stabbing or they killed that priest in that church, all these *random* things that you hear and you're like, uhh, apparently this is what it's coming to, it's just very *glib* resignation to, the reality of, of of what's going on out there.

August 2019, Paris

1. Installée à la Fontaine de Belleville aux terrasses in the tenth. I woke up this morning to hear the news of two shootings that happened in the U.S. while I was sleeping—at a mall in El Paso, and at a bar in Dayton, Ohio. My feelings of safety in the U.S. compared to my feelings of (un?)safety in France feel unfounded. I tried to explain in French to Catherine the other day what the state of gun violence was like in the United States, and I couldn't capture the desperation, the absurdity, the horror. She asked me if I originally came to France to seek some sort of safety—I said no, but that I did feel safer in Rennes, and did feel safer in Paris before the attacks happened. Now I'm not even sure what safety looks or feels like. I read on Twitter this morning that as of today, there have been more mass shootings in the United States this year than days in the year. Two hundred and fifty. I tried to let that number sink in. There have been zero in France. Yet here I am in France working on a project that stemmed from my response to one instance of gun violence in France, meanwhile in my country, the country I ran back to seek refuge in because of a perceived higher sense of “safety”, there have been 250 mass gun-related tragedies this year. Carried out by white men. I texted Holly this morning and told her that we gravely needed her project now, she said she's been working on her play. How have we learned to tolerate this?

Maggie

THÉÂTRE DE L'ODÉON

I could not rise from the dark and go out into the cool,
night air of that beautiful city,

could not get on with my conniving, young life.
What had been smooth and good became impossible,
slowly,

Mechanically, placing one foot in front of the next, so
that legs,
as if burned in snow, might inch along the river

and the alleys with the clochards and the cats,
and I might seem bright young thing again.

And all this before the shock of loss, the dying,
who linger,
with their weak bodies and blank faces,

and my own stupid share of human harm
inflicted upon the innocent,

and long before Time, that asp,
started laughing, *laughing* at me.

Emily Fragos, *Poems of Paris*

November 2018, New York

Okay what, made you, go, to Paris?

To Paris?? To gay old Patee? [both laugh] Oh god I mean what makes—

I remember finding out you were going and being like *yesssssss* [both laugh]

Uh, my neighbor growing up his mom was like the ‘French for Fun’ teacher and I stumbled into that, so I always loved the language, I always loved like French poetry and French film and, French art and, I mean, we were like twenty, the idea of living in Paris for a semester is like the most intoxicating thing in the world. And the fact that it just came with my education, like I could just decide to do it it was wild. I could just decide to go to Paris. My dad, I remember sitting down with him and him being like, okay like we need to talk about your decision to go to Paris because it’s not final yet and I—he’s also like never urged me to do anything in my life he’s so *laissez-faire* about everything, but he was like, I think you should strongly consider not going to Paris because I’m not sure you’re going to like it. And I was like “what do you mean??” what’s not to like there’s art there’s music I was like realizing I was queer so I was like ah to be a blossoming gay in Paris how exciting and he was like, I really really, really urge you to consider going to Prague or Berlin and, avoiding Paris. And I was like fuck you dad [said laughing] you don’t know what you’re talking about. And my grandma said the same shit, I told her I was going to Paris and she took like a deep sigh she was like [imitates sigh] I, have no love for the French [laughs] and I realized so much—at the time I thought this was tied to them being Jewish and resenting Vichy regime [laughs] for like fucking-up our people’s history which is *totally* fair. And I was resentful of that cause I was like these old Jewish farts don’t want me to go to this place just because there’s some rough history there, they want me to go to Berlin instead? I was like that’s crazy. Later on I realized it wasn’t crazy, obviously, cause I think, this is a whole other conversation but I think Berlin is a much more hospitable place for Jewish people. But, yeah but I was like screw you, thanks for the advice, but no thanks, I’m going to Paris, I’m gonna have a great time. [laughs]

What foreshadowing

[*laughs*] Yeah right?

~

Yeah I guess, I guess I'll pose like a general question then: like, talk about anything like about getting to Paris, like your first few—anything that like needs to be said to, to communicate your relationship to—with being there.

Yeah, um. God, what a crazy time, what a crazy time. Definitely the craziest time of my entire life. Like, attacks aside, just the weirdest, weirdest time. Getting there, I remember Olivia and I always talking about this, we were like, just in awe of how beautiful it was for first month. Really it was like four weeks of just, feeling twenty-four/seven intoxicated by how pretty it was. And I still really respect how beautiful that city is, like, my relationship with it is not good but I, I think very fondly about the walk to *school* and like, just I don't know, the Marais especially was really—just like so exciting to explore that for the first time. I remember Olivia and I exploring that together and being like, this is the most beautiful thing we've ever seen. Um. And like, the people were great too, you were there, I mean everyone there was so great, it was really when I started realizing a month or so in that like, I didn't like the nightlife? And I did—I wasn't getting anything from it and I, my French as good as it was just like wasn't respected. That was when I started to feel disillusioned, and when I started to like, drift away from, that initial intoxication and more into like this darkness of like, I am never gonna feel welcomed by this city. It's when that initial like “wow! I like loving being a tourist here” wore off and when I started to realize I was *living* there and not respected by the people there and by the city itself, that's when I was like, oh no, I'm gonna have some reckoning to do.

Do you think that was mostly a language thing?

So much of it is—

I feel, yeah—

—so much of it has to be but it's also just like,

for the first time I was like, *totally* inarticulate about why I was sad, which was so weird, I had only ever been, there were there were reasons like *this person broke up with me* or like, you know being sad when you're eighteen is so, you have a reason to be sad. But like for the first time I felt guilty about it cause I was like I have the, I have the privilege of being in the most historically beautiful city in, in human history and I'm *so* sad. And I don't really have a good reason for it. It was the most insane feeling I've never felt that crazy. But like, a lot of it was the language because I was like so excited to use my French and I was really *fucking* good at it like I was really good at French, and I'd always been good at French, and like the fact that I like couldn't order a meal without being somehow ridiculed or ignored or like they would switch to English and be snarky like, that destroyed me. Again going back to like what I was saying about growing up in Nashville coming to New York for the first time people wouldn't smile back it was like that times a million. Because at least in New York like I've always felt like the door is open for me to engage with strangers in a really like nice way because people don't want to engage with you unless they really do. And like you know it's real, you know it's genuine. But in Paris I just like, I don't, I can't remember a single

inter-
action with a Parisian where they really wanted to interact in like an earnest way. And like they didn't want anything from me, and like that was so jarring. Cause like, my whole, I knew that like from that point on my happiness was just gonna have to depend entirely on our friends and and the program. Cause I wasn't gonna get any from from the city and from the people. Like I wasn't gonna make friends. Uh, which was crazy, cause I love making friends, I love meeting new people and exploring new cities but it's just like, it was such a crazy moment I was like oh I'm just gonna have to sort of like, withdraw and just really like be in my apartment and have people over which is like nice, it's still nice. But yeah.

I feel like you just articulated like every thought [*Maggie laughs*] in my brain from that fall.

There's a guilt, right? Like there's a guilt there too because you're like, I'm this fucking privileged ass person in this elite institution and I have nothing to complain about but like that kind of *void* that Paris opened up for me and Olivia too is just like, I've never, I hope I will never feel that again. It's such a crazy feeling.

It's crazy talking to Olivia too like feeling as if all of my thoughts were being validated.

Totally

Do you feel like you, I know you two felt the same and talked about it but do you feel like your response and how you felt was way different than your classmates? Or do you feel like most of the people you were spending time with had paralleled experiences?

It was so interesting, it felt like an abusive relationship with the city. Cause even I would have moments of total joy. Like with people out or like, so, I hung out mainly with like Holly and Chloe and Anna and Tiye especially because we lived together, and there was, we had so many conversations about feeling disillusioned with the city and everyone was on the same page about that, but I did feel like my specific disillusionment was, more intense. I really did feel that way. I, and I felt again guilty about it cause I feel like, they were still able to lean into that detachment and be like I'm not a part of the city and that's okay, like I'm an interloper and that's okay. But I could not reconcile with that feeling. Because I was also just establishing my identity as a queer person and like, like I wanted to be engaged with the world and like I felt detached. So I couldn't really, lean into that, that feeling of like "I'm only here for a brief time, like it's pretty" like I could not do that. Everything was so intense. Every feeling was so intense. That was the crazy thing that like when I get depressed I don't feel numb I like feel *everything* which is lucky, I think, cause I've had the kind of depression where you're numb and like that is not for me, like it is not compatible with my like spirit. So, I'm still grateful for the depth of feeling that

Paris gave me even if it was despair, like I did access some crazy profound stuff through that.

August 2019, Paris

1. I hate Paris, I love Paris, I hate Paris again. No other place in the world has inspired such fickleness in me. One moment the narrow, splotchy trees that line the streets of the seventh make me feel overcome with the gentle beauty of this place, and the next moment I'm struck by something that makes Paris feel sinister, unwelcoming, uninhabitable. I envy those who have made a life here, yet at the same time could not imagine attempting to make my own here again. There is a part of me that wants to have to call the bank in French, to experience the other daily linguistic struggles that come from living in a foreign place, and another that revels in the creature comforts of living in the United States. There is a small place somewhere inside of me that desires becoming a stranger to the United States (last night finishing Lauren Collins' *When in French* I couldn't help but detect a small feeling of envy when she talks about going home to North Carolina and being turned off by the ability to overnight a coppertone umbrella.) There is something profound about becoming a stranger to what previously felt like comfort, and although I crave comfort, I crave that too.

~

Um. So you went to Berlin

Yeahhhh [*laughs*]

What was your [*laughs*] what was your reaction like having like, cause that was over two months in like what was your reaction to a new city and I think you said earlier like yeah in retrospect I, probably should have, or maybe Olivia said that? I might be getting you— [*laughs*]

Should've studied somewhere else

Yeah like should've gone to Berlin

No yeah Olivia and I both should have studied abroad in Berlin.

And that, that trip jumpstarted the whole—

The whole dang thing, yeah. Berlin is still my favorite place in the world.

Yeah.

It's amazing.

Okay—

I actually brought, I brought my little diary from that time. And I found it this morning—

Oh my gosh, do you want to do a dramatic reading?

Sure, well, okay yeah, I do. It's. I have not read this, since, I wrote it.

Wow. That was three years ago.

And I wrote all the time in Paris because I was just feeling so much all the *time* so I was just writing so much down. So there was the before the attacks, the during, and the after, and then all my experience in Berlin I like low-key sort of fell in love in Berlin so that's all in there like me totally leaning into my queerness it's like all in here it's crazy [*laughs*] your eyes are crazy right now. You're like oh a *primary source!* [*both laugh*]

The oral historian's like TEXT!

It's crazy, we can get into that.

Yeah, I don't know what you—I I, do you wanna, do you wanna talk about, the attacks, do you wanna talk about your journal, we can do it in whatever order you want?

I mean the attacks are so, we should just get into it because it was such a major thing for all of us.

Yeah, let's do it.

I I don't even know where to start. I should read for a minute. Should I read for a minute?

[Both *laugh*] Sure? I'm so excited.

Cause I really don't know how to talk about it cause it's—for a few reasons, one, it was *so* fucked up and two, I don't remember a lot of it? I really don't remember a lot of it and I feel embarrassed about it because I reacted so intensely to that and I know you did too and and it was such a pivotal moment in all of our lives and I really am having trouble piecing together a quilt of a memory of it. And really I am *so* thankful I wrote stuff down because without this, I don't know what I would say to you today. Like it would just be me fumbling over my words and not knowing what came when and like who said what. So like, yeah, let's do it [*laughs*] Um, I have an entry from the sev—okay this is from the seventeenth, and then I have one from the nineteenth and they're both just like a page or two, this is the one from the seventeenth. This is so weird to do wow, okay. Okay. Uh :

This weekend was the worst of my life. I'm not sure how to write about this, it will take a few entries to get it all out. So, I was in Rome with Tiye and she was too tired to do anything but we saw the sights and ate the best gnocchi I'd ever had. Olivia was scheduled to meet us the next morning. So that night we got to the Airbnb and a weird fellow named Alberto checked us in, it was like thirty minutes out of the center and kind of weird, but we got into bed and Tiye fell asleep. Then my cousin Izzy messaged me about a shooting in Paris. I told her it's fine, I'm in Italy. Then Olivia's mom messaged me and said something I didn't get like "tell me you guys aren't at that stadium and you're all good" and I was like "yeah. . ." and then the messages came pouring in. I started having a panic attack, but woke up Tiye and told her there's been a

terrorist attack and could I use her computer? She was really calm. I had just gotten off Facebook with Olivia at 10:08. At 10:12 I messaged her if she was still there, at the dorm. She was already en route to my apartment across the city because it was easier to get to the airport from there in the morning. That's when I told Maren, her mom, that'd she'd left. And that's when I found out that there had been two shootings at restaurants I'd seen in the tenth and there was an enormous hostage crisis at Bataclan which was blocks from the dorm. So I panicked. A couple hours went by and we hadn't heard from Olivia. That was the single worst night of my life. It got, it got worse every hour. Tiye was really level-headed for me. Laura comforted me. Jake helped the most. Maren and I, Maren and I talked every few minutes. I'm not ready to read those messages again yet. Some of it's really funny actually. Then it got dark. My friends in Paris were so brave. We all focused all our energy on finding Olivia. I didn't sleep except for a fitful half hour here and there. I think the worst moment was realizing it was light out and thinking, okay, my best friend is dead. Dad said he'd come pick me up. Alberto felt so bad for us [*said laughing*] he bought us breakfast. He was amazed that we ordered sandwiches, that's just not done at breakfast. He was even more amazed Tiye didn't want coffee, that's really not done. I'd never felt the way I felt in that Airbnb bed, total panic and horror, unimaginable. It got worse still. Maren was looking at flights. Jake called the state department. I face-timed a therapist at NYU Paris cause I had no service. Then at 1:50 pm, I get a text from Olivia in all caps I'M ALIVE AND IN ROME WHERE ARE YOU? And I cried and Tiye did too a little and called her and just yelled at her, I called her so many words, so many names. That's all I want to write right now. There's much more, it will come in waves.

So that was the seventeenth [*laughs*].

Wow

Yeah

I don't even know how I got all that out, like. It's so nutty. Actually I should just go into the next one cause it's only a page. Is that okay?

Yeah yeah yeah!

Okay cool. So this is the *nineteenth*. Uh, to pick up [*laughs*] :

We had a full day in Rome to process the terrorism and see the most beautiful of all cities [*laughs*]. I was a human puddle. One second I would think about the Bataclan and start weeping, the next I'd see a stunning church and start weeping. Beauty and evil both made me cry, all day. Big fat exhausted tears. I'm blurring timelines here but I'm thinking back uh on what I'll never forget. Saint Louise de Francesce and its dark ceiling and Caravaggio that required coins to be illuminated. I lit a candle for peace there the same evening before the attacks. Il Tempietto where I sat for a long time with Olivia, marveling in the beauty of the place with a name built for a god we didn't believe in. A bunch of kids in medieval costumes were doing a weird flag ceremony outside. We followed them up the huge hill with the gorgeous view of the whole city. The best dinner was was near Piazza Nevoni. A bunch of Italian men bringing us pizza and wine and Limoncello. Going back to Paris was devastating. I was in a daze and panicking until I saw the footage from the Bataclan and Andrea reminded me we were just there a couple weeks back. I didn't even realize. So that night I had my breakdown, on the phone with dad. He did too. Sobbing, the both of us, furious, desperate, he told me a lot of things. He told me I'd always been a certain way and had felt a certain despair but never at this level and now there's no going back. And there's no undoing the evil and there's no living for the dead. They were the only ones who could live for themselves. And that all you can do is be kind and not expect it back. He expects the worst from people and that's why he's the happiest guy in the world. Because goodness is always a surprise, but it's everywhere. He says the world is inherently beautiful but that people do bad things to each other but when you're kind you are the most real you can be and in these moments in you in these moments exist in harmony with the world. Every act adds a note to the music. This has really been affecting me. Tonight a lot of us got

Indian food and gelato as a last hurrah for Anabel and Andrea who are heading back early. We were all so kind to each other.

[*Pauses and sighs*] So yeah

That was beautiful.

It's crazy

Um.

Okay I don't even know—[*Maggie laughs*]—where to start um.
Can you, talk about

I don't, I don't know— the mom—I mean you obviously read that but can you talk about like your feeling—the moment you like realized—cause I think a lot of people had the kind of, “oh there's a shooting response” because we've, in this country we've become so horrendously accustomed to it.

Exactly

Like the moment that you realized it was something

larger than that? And, the
moment you realized your friend

may have been

harmd in it.

Yeah. I mean all I was thinking about the whole time was Olivia. I think that's why it was so *anful* is because like, *regardless* I would have been a *total* wreck like, just knowing that many people *our* age, like, our *kind* of people were

being like
slaughtered? Like blocks from where we all hung out was like, that was always gonna be a pivotal like traumatizing moment. But I was only ever thinking about Olivia like walking to the train. Just like I had the image of her, like her little walk she has like a slumping way of walking just like her little schlump to the train. And just like that was playing on repeat like, like *willing* her to get to the train safely. I, yeah, that's all I could think about, that's all I could think about. The craziest—what's not in, what's not in this journal, did she talk about what she was doing during the attacks?

Oh yeah

It's the craziest shit I've ever heard.

Tell, talk [*laughs*]

I mean [*laughs*] she was in the fucking bathtub. Like, watching *Wet Hot American Summer* on her laptop. Did *not* log into my wifi. Which, I'm still mad about. It's the craziest shit like, I, when I think back to that day I think about it in like a split screen cause I'm a doofus who can like only contextualize things that happen to me in film language but like, just imagine her on like the right side of the screen in the tub [*laughs*] and on the left side of the screen me and Tye in ROOOME [*said laughing*] like weeping and like pull-ing our hair out, me calling our friends, people going like Grant going to my *apartment* and like knocking on the window and like trying to wake her up, see if she was there it's like the crazy, craziest stuff, the craziest stuff.

Did he go there in the middle of the night?

He went there early morning.

Yeah.

Yeah.

What like— *knowing* that she didn't have a phone

I feel is a very important part of it, what was the, like in your head the kind of play between oh she doesn't have a phone it's it's, I can rationalize that she is not able to contact me? And like, this has been so long that I—

I didn't know that she didn't have a phone though.

Oh you didn't know?

Nooo. Cause she had just, she didn't tell me that. I mean, like, I thought, I I knew she didn't *have* a phone but I thought I didn't— like why would she not log into my wifi like it didn't make any—I wasn't even thinking—I literally was so stressed that I didn't even remember—like I didn't even remember that she didn't have an actual phone. So there was just no excuse, there was never a moment where I was like “oh she's fine it's off.” I was only ever panicked about it. And it's so, what was so, I guess the craziest thing was like, it was immediately traumatizing because we all had access to everything that was happening in full detail, in a way that probably like, we never have to a tragedy it was just like so much information so quickly and, like we weren't like huddled over the radio wait—it was all like immediately available, CNN live updates, right away. And that like, compared to Olivia's like radio silence was like, it just didn't compute. So obviously I was like she's dead, like she has to be cause there's no reason [*laughs*] in like this modern world for her not to be talking to me, like all the time.

Right

And it was also like I said, I didn't realize until I'd read this right now out loud that she had, we had been talking at 10:08 and it was at 10:12 that all the news, it was craz—she must have *just* left, she must have just been on the train, which is just like so nutty. Yeah.

What was it like talking to her mom all night?

So crazy. We were, we weren't close at the time but we were after that, like, yeah we didn't talk on the phone at all it was all over Facebook message which is weird, she was such, she and Olivia are very, they're cut from the same cloth just like very practical. So from the start it wasn't, there wasn't a lot of lamenting it was like, it was even more horrible cause it was like her planning her *flight* and like, us agreeing to call different people, ya know? Cause I was the liaison between NYU and Olivia, I was al—from the start I was the one who was supposed to keep tabs on her and like, like update the university when she was found. Yeah it was all very like, *technical* it was all, it was a lot of me comforting her too which was actually like nice cause I was such like a *fucking mess* it was nice to, have a responsibility and not just be, *untethered* and floating around in my own misery it was like, *I have to* keep her okay too. Um. And I didn't lie but I did like stretch the truth a little bit, I was like “we have a search party.” I like I wanted her to be okay so bad that I was like, telling her things that weren't *entirely* true. Like, we didn't have a search party [*laughs*] but, she needed to know that.

Besides the fact that you like couldn't be there physically to search for Olivia, what was the experience of being removed, in a place that like you should have—not that you *should* have been in Paris but like that you very, very likely could have been there?

Right

Like what was that experience?

I—it's so—I just, I never really, I still haven't really articulated how horrible that felt? I almost wanted to be there just to to be with all our friends, like to be able to process that together cause we were in the like weirdest Airbnb, like two little, oh man, two little twin beds like outside of the city too, so there was just nothing

out the window, like it was essentially just like a housing project and it was like old Italian people it was just, it was just *so* surreal just thinking about. Just being able to visualize like those cafés and those streets so, like calling the image right to my head and it not being some, like not being someplace on the outskirts of *town* or like, or like the stadium is like far enough removed that it didn't like hit me, really, but like those cafés and the Bataclan like, I know, I intimately know what those streets look like and I had just been to the Bataclan, so it was just so, my brain was just so ready to imagine what being there was like. Like, which I had never, I'd never experienced that before, yeah.

Mhmm. What was your experience of going to the Bataclan?

Um. It was so, it was one of the best nights of my Paris, experience, like I love that place. That's part of the reason why I was so fucked up cause like, it felt like a congregation of like my kinds of people and I had not had that in Paris, yet. Like I had not seen that many cool young people who were wearing all kind of the same thing [*laughs*] all gathered to listen to music, so. We saw Tallest Man on Earth [*laughs*] which was awesome. And, it was packed so, the whole time the news was coming in I was just accessing memories of the show and just imagining that, like that, like everyone being slaughtered at that show, like that's—how could I not? You know? Yeah.

That's like an insane other level of a surv—

It's so crazy, yeah. I had never, my brain had never like, had that, had that access to that kind of image. So def—definitely a first.

August 2019, Paris

1. Bataclan. A word that has only ever held one meaning for me—carnage, terror, danger, darkness. It is not a word that means concert hall, it is a word that means massacre and the depressing potential for cruelty in humankind. It did not undergo a process of being imbued—tarnished, rather—with new

meaning; it was handed to me this way with this particular knowledge pre-attached. I wonder what its first life was like, before it became a heavy word, unable to be detached from its history.

~

What was it like coming back then, coming back to Paris?

Ugh awful. Oh my god it was terrible. That was terrible, none of us wanted to go back, we were just like we should just stay here [*laughs*]. Olivia and I were late to whatever event they had, the fucking like [*sighs with annoyance*] ugh I'll never forget walking in and being handed like a sheet of paper with like, I think it was "Imagine" [*laughs in response to what seems like me nodding as I recall*] yeah, YEAH! It was fucking—

I wasn't there but I got an email telling me that we were going to sing "Imagine."

Yeah and Olivia and I are just like, literally we hadn't slept, we were probably about to faint from dehydration and not eating cause we were just like, so stressed. And just like walking into that. I did not sing that song. No way that I sang that song [*laughs*] but hearing other people sing that song, this pianist like clunking the notes it's just like, that was probably the worst possible, thing [*laughs*] for us at that time and just, having to watch my best friend get like *assaulted* by people just like, "*I'm so glad*"—she, she prides herself on fading into the background and like being an observer and that's her whole thing and so this was like the opposite of that it was just like so horrible to watch her, so horrible to watch her go through that. Cause like I didn't care that much I I wasn't that affected by like being adjacent to the center of attention but I could tell that she, it was like tearing her apart. Yeah.

Um. So you, you didn't live anywhere near the NYU dorm—

Yeah, no. Yeah no Olivia and I didn't live together.

—in that neighborhood but I imagine you spent a lot of time there.

All our time cause that's the thing, it's the only pocket of Paris where I actually felt close, to being at home? Or or close to being accepted cause people were, in their twenties generally and from all over the world. I could speak French and not always be lampooned for it and uh, what small queer scene there was was around there. Yeah, we all ate around there, we all partied around there that was the only, that was the only place you go out like, the Oberkampf area, um. So that was another thing of like, oh my god like the only place in Paris that was a refuge to me and my friends was like massacred like that is, that was so awful. There's no, I mean, I should have gone home too like there's no staying after that, there's like no reconciling, after that so, yeah. It was only bad after that there was like no, good, stuff [*laughs*].

Do you have a memory of like physically going there for the first time—

Yeah

—after?

I can't remember who I was with, but I went. I went to see like the all the memorials which was *so* overwhelming and there was like a news truck and stuff. And uh, everyone was singing—I can't remember what they were singing—it was some French song everyone was like singing together. But I remember yeah, seeing all, seeing all the memorials was like really awful, for sure. Very moving though. I needed that because I was suspicious of Paris after that in terms of um, people not, seeming that affected by it? Like Parisians not, reacting the way that I knew that New Yorkers would to something like that? Where when something terrible happens in New York like, like, after the election, you know? Taking the subway into the city was like, devastating. Cause everyone's so, sad. And visibly sad and they're not hiding it. Whereas in Paris I don't, no one was crying on the street, like, no one was talking about it in the cafés it was like *really weird*. And I felt like as Americans we were all, we are all cultured to *talk about* trauma and like, pain like, constantly when it happens and, I was in the program II or whatever so I had only French teachers and like none of them really wanted to talk about it? They all said the same thing like “we must move on” which was the *craziest* thing to me! And it didn't feel like they were repressing anything like they were really

mourning. So that was *really, really* alarming and disarming. Like not, not feeling the city respond to that the way that I expected it to. Yeah.

January 2017, Paris

1. I've been neglecting “journaling” or documenting through words my time spent in Paris thus far, and I'm hoping that I haven't missed out or forgotten any important sensations or observations in my last four days in this city. The first battle to overcome is jet lag—the first two nights I was here, I slept between 12 and 15 hours and found myself battling to get out of bed in the early afternoon. I felt like I lacked some sort of motivation to go out and re-experience Paris, and I'm not completely sure what to attribute that to—obviously, there are some intense sensations, experiences, and memories associated with this city for me, but there may have also been a sense of estrangement from the city. I don't really know how describe it, it's more the sorts of sensations I experience, but perhaps this feeling is a result of never truly having felt at “home” here combined with the intensity of the feeling that being in Paris during the attacks left me with in terms of this strange new connection I feel to the city. So much of my identity, I think, has been tinged by the attacks, influencing the way I perceive the world around me, justify my actions and feelings, and perceive safety.

~

Did you feel like you had any um, did you feel like, besides, besides not want—like feeling like I don't need to enjoy Paris, like was there anything in terms of like bodily responses or like fears or apprehensions that like changed?

[*Blows out air*] Ooh yeah. Huge. I didn't want to—

Tell me [*laughs*]

—be in public. I didn't want to get shot. Literally.

I mean, same.

And I still fucking feel that. Before, before Paris, I literally had no anxiety about being in a public space. And *afterwards*, I still, when I see a movie or a play, my instinct is to sit on the end, and towards the back, and I don't think that's ever going to go away. Like I still, and whenever I go to a concert I like, mark the exits. Like I know, I know where I would escape, from anyplace. Which is *crazy* [*said laughing*] like our generation shouldn't have to have that instinct but I *really* feel that way. And, *yeah*. I just remember talking to Chloe specifically about this and like, we—cause she was devastated in the same way and like whenever we would hear a loud noise we would assume it was gunshots. For the rest of our time there. Which our nerves were frayed in a way that I didn't think people not living in *war* could feel, like. That's how I know, I know that people living through war feel that way but you know we're in a modern, like *peaceful* [*said laughing*] society walking down the street totally normal and still terrified, yeah.

Do you feel like you took that, the same feelings back to New York?

Yeah, definitely. Totally. What I took most though—cause New York makes me fearless, I feel fearless. I still have these reactions in concerts and movies and stuff but for the most part I don't get scared on the streets of New York cause like, it's a very courageous place and the energy here like really lifts me up, but, um, what did change *most* is before that semester I really expected goodness from, the world? In a big way, and I had just, *subconsciously* really felt and believed in people being mostly good. And after that I didn't. And it's not that I think people are bad now, or that I expect the worst like my dad does but I definitely don't expect anything from anyone or any experience anymore, I really don't [*laughs*] and all my writing changed after that completely, after I got back to New York, all I could write about was stuff with that theme, of people being disillusioned, of people not expecting goodness from people anymore. I remember that was like the *main*, there was a very fruitful conversation I had with Tiye after the attacks, months after we finally got drinks in New York and that's what we talked about was how she, wasn't *nearly* as shattered by the events because she had only ever expected the worst, from the world. So she wasn't *surprised*. We had the same conversation after Trump was elected where I was in tears and she wasn't, cause she just expected that to happen. So nothing can touch her [*laughs*] but I really really wanna

believe that good things will prevail and after that like, no. And still, I feel that way. Yeah.

I think you said you wrote a play?

I did, yeah.

Inspired—

Yeah, I wish I had—I mean I had to get it out.

Yeah

But I never wanna read that again.

Really?

Yeah. There was one good scene in it, I don't know. It, yeah. Yeah. It just, it's about feeling betrayed by, the world. But it was very grounded in this—it didn't know what it was, it still doesn't. But but I needed to write something that wasn't just my journal I needed to hear this out loud so that I didn't feel crazy anymore. Yeah.

Did you share it with anyone?

Yeah, it it was my thesis [*laughs*] which was great. The whole—a cliché of dramatic writing which is, so real is that, no one's proud of their thesis. Like the stuff you're proud of is stuff you write either after or before but like no one gives a shit about their thesis and I was no exception like, I really don't like that play. But that was my thesis I wrote about, the attacks, um, and just this this sort of like horrible version of me, way way worse person than I am reacting to it. But Olivia, I adapted her into it too in like a really unfair way, totally, yeah *totally* unfair. [*Pause before she laughs*].

August 2019, Paris

1. I finished *Important Artifacts* in the Square du Temple park last night, and am completely consumed with thinking about the interplay and gray area between fact and fiction. In oral history we distinguish the truth from the capital T Truth (we are seeking the former), history from capital H History (we are writing/capturing the former.) Taking in peoples' stories inevitably leads me to want—to need—to imagine. What are the ethics surrounding this? Do I have the permission to blur the lines between the two? Because our memories—particularly memories relating to trauma—are never crystal clear nor perfectly recalled, are we always straddling the lines of fact and fiction when it relates to reconstructing memory? How *real* is it to write imagined dialogue? I never question it when it's not my own. To re-write this remembered history inevitably involves me using invention and imagination, does it not? I cannot recall precisely what it felt and looked like, what it sounded like to dive into that café that Sunday night, so if I want to attempt to transmit those sensations to you, I must employ some level of invention, *n'est-ce pas* ?

~

Do you, do you—what's your relationship with the word trauma, like in this particular um cause?

Yeah. Um. *Definitely* was traumatized. What's weird is like, I've been, I've, lived a sort of like, I hate the word blessed cause like I'm agnostic I don't, whatever, but I like, have lived a pretty trauma-free life, again my parents are great, I've had a lot of like family members *die* but in drawn-out ways where I was *prepared* for the death. I—there was one, there was one family friend who, had a heart attack like, really suddenly the night I was supposed to see him and that definitely, like *that* was a major traumatic event for me? But like other than that I've like *dodged* trauma in a big way. Um, so this was like the first, thing that had happened to me that I could say with confidence like traumatized me. Yeah.

Yeah.

But it's tough because, I came out of it alright? I guess a lot a lot of my worldview has been affected but not, not in a *negative* way anymore it's definitely evolved into something *healthy*? Um. But yeah I mean it's an interesting question cause part of me also feels guilty for saying that I've, I've experienced trauma and not actually—I mean no one—nobody *died*, Olivia lived [*laughs*] but that was, that night did destroy me, I mean it totally did, yeah. It took me like a year to like *fully* get over it, whatever that means like get over it. Being in New York being back in New York immediately didn't like *cure* me but it did like help me, so much. Just, coming back to my life and acting normal, yeah. If I had stayed in *Paris* I don't even know what would have happened to me. Like for another semester like I can't imagine, yeah.

I remember you dad posted something, on Facebook [*laughs*]

[*Laughs*] Yeah he's such a, he's a corndog.

About about Olivia paying for your therapy—

Therapy yeah. Mhmm. I actually found a *great* therapist, the one way they flew out from New York? Like they flew this woman out from the counseling center here and like she had to meet with a bunch of people.

What a job.

~

Um. Is there anything else you want to talk about or reeaaddd or?

I don't think so. I will say that going to Berlin like *totally* turned me around. I'm glad I—cause I also almost went home and I think if I hadn't gone to Berlin like, it would—the time after the attacks would have been irredeemably bad but Berlin did sort of, give me a window, to the rest of the world.

What do you think the—in that—what about that made you not, wanna go back? What made you want—I mean I know what happened but what was the,

what was the, I don't know what was the thing that you felt like you couldn't face and like had to go back, and then how did that, how did Berlin um, change that?

I guess, like I—my instinct to go back wasn't even to go back to New York or like home it was just I want to—like I wanna go to bed for a very long time [*laughs*] so the going to Berlin was the opposite of that where like, I didn't sleep, I was only ever out, I was being very social and, it just made me remember that, I—like that was still me, I was still capable of these things, better for *me* specifically at that time than going home and going to bed. Just, you know, everyone needs different things after, *trauma*, and I think I needed to be like, pushed back into the world. And Berlin is such an *intense* place in so many ways and its, its intensity really like, meshed with my own at the time in like a healthy way. Cause like I said Paris was dead. Like I felt like the city had died and my experience had died and that, the Parisians and the culture around me were not responding to this in the same *way* and I felt crazy, so going to Berlin where everything's intense all the time [*said laughing*] was so necessary, for me. Yeah.

Cool

Cool!

Thaaaaankss

Thank *you*.

Olivia

October 2018, New York

Why did you pick Paris?

Ummm I had been before. I had been twooo times before? Once when I was like ten, and once when I was uh, how old was I? Like seventeen. And I was like, *uh, this, this is a beautiful city* [laughs] *the most beautiful city in the world*, and it like is but uhh, and I was just like. It was between, I think I was gonna go to like Paris or Berlin. Um. Shoulda gone to Berlin, but [both laugh] but, uhh, I was like, Paris, I was like ugh I'll go with Maggie, we'll have a grand old time, we will like drink wine and eat bread and it will be, great. I also spoke a little French I took French in high school for god knows what reason [laughs], um, but I took French in high school so I knew how to be like *Bonjour je m'appelle Olivia, comment ça va?* Um, and like, yeah. It was just, it just fell into place.

Why do you say you wish you had done Berlin? [laughs softly]

Well, besides the obvious reasons [both laugh], besides the reason I'm sitting in this chair right now [both laugh], um I I went to Berlin while we were, for like fall break or something and—

~

Did you spend a lot of time in that neighborhood?

Ummm, yeah. Yeah, yeah I did. Like, I remember so vividly the stretch from like Parmentier to the Monoprix to République and then it was like, if you turned *left* it was bars, and it was like if you went up it was Belleville, and then if you go down you're in the Marais. Um. But I spent a lot of time there. I spent a lot of time just like walking. I did a lot of walking in Paris cause I was, bored, and like in retrospect, depressed. Um, but I would just walk around and like, explore. Cause it also always felt really safe to me so I was like I'll just walk around and see all these spots and walk along the river [laughs] and like very dramatically. But yeah, I think I spent a lot of time there. Maggie lived over by, *fuck*, Trocadero, is that right?

Mhmm mhhmm.

Like, the very fancy area, and I did not like going over there, I was like mmm, I don't need to, this is too many old people. I liked our area cause it was like oh, everyone here is like, under thirty, ish.

Did you—what was your impression upon—cause you'd been before like you said but like when you actually got there, I feel like I experienced this too like it's so different to get there and be like “okay well I'm here for umm

a bit.”

[*Olivia laughs*] like did you [*stutters*]—did Paris have a different impression on you when you like, got there—

Oh for sure

—and were like “this is my life for—”?

Yeah

—a while? [*laughs*]

Cause it was like, I mean there's also like, so the way I see it is there's like the first day and you're jet-lagged and that sucks.

Yeah [*laughs*]

Um, and then, the jet-lag goes away and then it's like, *wow*, I live in *Paris*, and that's amazing, and like I can get a galette whenever I want and I look, I look out my window and there's the Eiffel Tower whatever. And that's, amazing, for like,

two weeks? And then it's like, suddenly you start, the façade gets a little grimmer and you're like, I don't know [*laughs*] if, if like these *people are weird?* Or like if, I'm trying to figure out what I really didn't like about Paris, and I think it was just, there's like

one time I asked my French professor I was like what is the French word for rude? And he was like “we don't have one” and I was like oh, so that explains everything about everything [*laughs*] like there's just this way of existing there that clashes like *so hard* with like how I feel like you should exist in the world, like no one really has a sense of any urgency and they're all just like, truly like “*C'est la vie*” and I'm like no no no *no no, ce n'est pas la vie*, [*laughs*] like, you can't just mosey about your life as if you have no impact on other people at anytime. Um, I don't know.

August 2019, Paris

1. I decided that today was the day to voyage over to Maggie's old apartment, which is only about a mile from where I'm staying in the sixteenth. From the Marais, I walked ten minutes south to Rue de Rivoli to get on the 72 bus westward towards Trocadero. I got off at the stop after Pont d'Alma, and made my way through a lovely hilled park above Trocadero towards Rue Benjamin Franklin. I don't actually think I had ever been to Trocadero; I'm not used to seeing the Eiffel Tower so close up, but today—although it is a holiday within the already month-long holiday that is August in France—hordes of people crowded Trocadero, gazing south towards the Eiffel Tower.

I wound my way up through a beautiful park surrounding some sort of museum—little ponds and bridges and stone steps leading up a hill to the street Maggie lived on. Through the trees, an unbelievably postcard-esque view of the tower herself. I think of how different my life may have felt living over here in this quiet, tucked-away, nearly suburban oasis of green and Haussmann, how my perception and experience of Paris might have differed. Maybe I would have felt detached. Detached from the youth and vitality of eastern Paris where most of my classmates were living. Maggie told me she and Tiye had lived at number 30,

but there didn't appear to be even numbers in the 30s— the park and museum take up most of the even-numbered side of the block. I stop in front of a cluster of pristine Haussmanian masterpieces—27, 29, 31—and decide that 31 is most likely the building she lived in. I don't remember why, but something in my memory tells me she lived on the ground floor. The shutters are closed, but nonetheless I pause to look into the windows shrouded by thin curtains, imagining its elegant interior, who inhabits it now, what the bathtub Olivia might have spent that night soaking in looks like.

~

Okay Friday November 13

K

Let's talk.

Friday we didn't have classes, but there was some makeup day on that Friday and, I was in this art history class, that I *hated*, um, taught by this woman who was like, the wor—like *absolutely* the worst. I don't even remember her name but, she was—we all hated her [*laughs*] like we all like *despised* this woman, but she was like “If you don't come to the makeup class like, it'll like mess your whole thing up” and I was like well I guess I'll, I'll go to the—I'll switch my flight and I'll fly into Rome on Saturday and I'll just like meet you guys there. And they were like “okay, fine.” Um, and so, I—I was gonna fly out Saturday morning from like, not Charles de Gaulle, and not the other one—

The *really* far one.

—but the third one? Yeah the one you have to take a bus to, that starts with a T?

Yes. Bercy? No. I don't know.

Yeah it's like the tertiary Paris airport, and, the the bus stop [*laughs*] the bus stop where you go to get to the airport was closest to Maggie and Tiye's apartment so they were like, you can just stay at our apartment, um, for the night and then like wake up early and get on the bus and I was like "great." So, that Friday night, literally as the attacks were happening I am like moseying out of my dorm. And I go to Parmentier, and, the metro is closed and I'm like hm that's weird, and so I walk to République where there is like, um, a *crowd* has formed and everyone is like, there's like cops and I'm like, what's going on? And then I hear someone in English be like "uhh it's just a bomb scare" and so that is what I got in my head I was like oh, okay that's weird. République is still open, I catch *what must be the last* train that goes, uh take it to Trocadero, get into their apartment, um, like, open my computer but realize I had forgotten their wifi password umm and I was like well, I guess I'm like just like, off the grid for the evening. I take a bath, I'm like eating like chips in the tub or something I was having like really the most luxurious night of my life, and then I go to sleep, wake up, I'm waiting, I go out, it's *dead* silent, like it's 5 in the morning and nothing is, it's still. Um. I'm like, waiting at the bus stop to catch a bus to go to the bus station, and there's no buses coming and I'm like *oh man I gotta figure something out*. And so I get in a taxi, and I'm like uh can you take me to this place and he's like "sure", and on the radio through like broken French I could hear that something had happened at the stadium [*mic falls off*].

ooh I better get this back on.

K. I could hear that something had happened at the stadium and I was like, oh, that's, that sounds bad. Um but it hadn't like fully clicked and it was really early in the morning, and I was like, and I couldn't—I didn't know that it was several different things it was like, one thing happened, here.

July 2019, Paris

1. Today I'm on the 9, and as I make my way east towards the eleventh, I realize that I'm on the reverse journey Olivia took on the thirteenth from Oberkampf to Trocadéro to get to Maggie's apartment. Multi-colored striped felt seats and warm lighting, the situation escalating with each blinking light that moves along the chartreuse-colored line towards Pont de Sèvres, moving farther and farther from Eastern Paris and, unbeknownst to her at the time, towards safety. Today I am moving east towards Oberkampf, where Olivia tried to get on the metro but it had been closed off, leading her to walk to the next station at Place de la République. This neighborhood is viscerally familiar to me—in a way that makes standing in its streets not quite feel like being in a foreign country, whereas standing in the streets that occupy other Parisian neighborhoods does. Yet I stand on Boulevard Voltaire and try not to look towards the Bataclan because it feels like a specter, it feels like a place that's void of anything real, a place that I shouldn't purposefully look towards and observe. I almost feel as though I don't have the right to look directly at it, as if making the choice to look towards it is disrespectful. I remember Marie-Louise telling me about the yoga class she almost went to in the alleyway beside the Bataclan—when she arrived and realized where it was, visions and memories of people jumping out of windows and into the narrow street prevented her from going in.

~

Tell me, I know you said you met Maggie in um, in I'm I'm assuming like very early on in your program—

Yeah.

—cause it's a pretty small program

Yeah it's small.

And you guys live together.

We live together now. We uh, oh god—

That sounded like you're in a relationship [*laughs*]

NO no it's literally like we have known each other for like, I was thinking about it the other day I was like oh my god I've known Maggie for five years. I met Maggie on that first night at Le Poisson Rouge. Like on my birthday, and I had seen her cause like we also had, I don't know if you had this but we had a small Facebook group that was like, *Dramatic Writing* Freshman 2013 or whatever and I had seen that, you know how in a college Facebook group there's like a couple people who post and you're like, am I not posting enough, like should I—is this cool? Like what is going on—and Maggie had posted something in our group about winning some comedy writing contest, and so like that is all I knew of her [*laughs*]. And and I met her at Le Poisson Rouge and she was like “Hi I'm Maggie” and I was like “Hi I'm Olivia” and in that moment I was like “This girl is either going to be my nemesis or my best friend.” And, it turned out to be the latter [*both laugh*] but, I was like this is going one of—there is a fork in the road right now, but that was only because I hated her Facebook presence [*both laugh*].

~

Um, so I get out of the cab, I hop on the bus to go to the airport, I go to the airport, there's no like, TVs or anything, it's literally basically like, a big warehouse where you wait to get on the plane. And then I, uh, got on a plane and flew to Rome [*laughs*] and then I like, get off, and you have to take another bus to get into city center or whatever. And so, behind me on the bus are like all these Americans, who are clearly college students and they're like, *yeah man it's crazy what happened in Paris* and I was like what? [*laughs*] And they're like *yeah man, like there's no planes going in or out* and I was like “that's not true because I just came here” [*both laugh*] like, whatever could they be talking about? Annnnddd [*said laughing*] soooo, I try to get on the bus wifi on the bus and it's like bus wifi so it's like not happening, uhhh and at this point it's been like twelve hours? Umm [*laughs*] and so I, like, I get off the bus and Maggie and Tiye are supposed to be there waiting for me, and I like get off and I was like huh, they're not here yet, cool.

~

1. This is what I remember: Issy asking me if I wanted to go out for Vietnamese food, telling her I had plans to go to Louis and Mélissa's for dinner with Julianne. The man in front of me at the Dia near Blancs Manteaux buying a box of Magnum ice cream bars and a six pack of beer, bringing a bottle of that four euro wine with the orange label—*Les Petites Récoltés*—I bought at Nicholas, Mélissa posting a picture of it to Instagram minutes before we heard the news, friends commenting on the picture wishing her safety. Mushroom risotto, my gray dress that was developing a massive hole in not one but two of the armpits. I remember the first shooting, Louis reemerging from the kitchen with his phone, a group text between his brothers and mom, *there's been a shooting at Le Petit Cambodge, stay inside*. Mélissa says "We ate there two nights ago, it's a mile down the canal." Eerie coincidences against a disconcerting lack of disquiet, the norm, the usual—we had also been talking about a lack of gun violence in this country and how safe we felt mere minutes prior. Their friends—whose names I've forgotten—were at a bar down the street, Louis and Mélissa telling them to come over. Finding them annoying, disrespectful of the situation, somehow, disrupting what we had created together. The four of us had settled into a strangely tranquil state as we privately yet collectively read the news from the screens of our phones beneath their lofted bed, and their presence seemed to undermine this time of grief and disbelief and processing and history we were allowing ourselves to sit in. Hearing about the Bataclan, what's the Bataclan?, the hostages at the Bataclan, imagining the hostages at the Bataclan, hearing about the Bataclan for what felt like six hours, *where is the police*, the four of us squished into bed, thick tights and a dress, overheated, numb, shocked, searching for sleep, sunlight, voices from below, the light of day, morning, Saturday.

~

Umm. And then, I was like, I wait like *twenty* minutes, I was like they're not here yet, I start like *chain*-smoking because by that point I was like something happened in Paris and like, I don't know what it is and I have no way of finding out what it is and I'm phone-less in Rome [*laughing*] and don't know what to do aannnd [*said laughing*] so like, so I'm *furiously* chain smoking against this wall, and a man, I can't remember if there was a bench or if he sat down on the ground and in my head

he like sat down on the ground but this man has a newspaper and he—it was like a scene out of a movie, he OPENS the newspaper, and in Italian it says *PARIGI ATTACCHI* like *this many morti*, like *this many injured*, and it was enough that I was like “holy fucking shit” and in that moment I was like “everyone thinks I’m dead!” [laughs] and I had to, I was across the street from, the Best Western Rome and so I run in and I’m like listen I need to book a room right now for one night and they were like, “sure” and so I put down a credit card, go to—I’m like do you guys have a business center and they’re like “yeah we have a computer right there.” I check, I go, I log on for the first time for what at that point was like sixteen hours um, and was like email after email after email after text after text after whatever like anyone who I have ever met in my life had contacted me trying to be like “are you okay?” It was so many Facebook messages, so many emails from like *everyone* at NYU literally being like “are you alive?” Like so many frantic emails from my mom and my dad and all of my family members and I was just like sitting there like oh boy oh boy oh boy I *fucked* the *fuck up*. And so I, I like really quickly email NYU, I really quickly, I run up to my room and I, I think I like skyped my mom from my computer, I I called Maggie, I told her where I was. And right after I sent that email to NYU that’s when they could send out the like “everyone’s fine” [laughs] email. And the worst part is like I literally was so fine the whole time I was like bopping around like unaware of what had happened, and like meanwhile the juxtaposition is that everyone I’ve ever—my mom was, like my friend, my friends in America—one of my friends called the State Department, my mom was like, two steps away from making a huge ask to like, Hillary Clinton [laughs] she was about to pull the trigger on *that* and I was like doooooon’t, boy. And also my mom said that like, *ten* minutes after I called her there was a chyron on CNN that was like *American college student identified as victim*, and she was like if you had called me fifteen minutes later I would have already have been on a plane to Paris like, it was, so fucking bad. And so then. So *then*, Maggie and Tiye come to the hotel that I have booked for the night, and Maggie is *so* mad at me, she was like *so* fucking mad at me. Ummm, and then we just had to like,

do touristy Rome things

for a day. And like, which was fine but I was also like so like, emotionally exhausted and they were staying at an Airbnb kinda far out and eventually I stayed there too and I met the guy and he was like “you’re the per—you’re the one they thought was dead,” um, aaand [laughs] and I was like, “yeah.”

~

1. It is dusk on Friday the thirteenth. I am twenty years old, I am living in Paris's fourth arrondissement in a beautiful apartment with my best friend from summer camp, Grace. Grace and I met in the snack line two weeks before our twelfth birthdays (we're a day apart), and have been best friends ever since. Our apartment has herringbone floors and pale gray-blue wainscoting and a chandelier filled with miniature birds.

Neither Grace nor I love Paris. It's difficult for us both to articulate what exactly we don't like about Paris, but we've identified a mutual disenchantment, a kind of discomfort that feels unproductive. I am familiar with productive discomfort—living with a host family, overcoming language barriers. Rendering the uncomfortable into a feeling of comfort, making it all the more special and comfortable. But not this discomfort, not the way we feel inhabiting this city. Any admission of these feelings is met with utmost bewilderment, as if our lackluster feelings for Paris are somehow a personal affront. *How could you possibly not be having the absolute time of your life, you're in Paris for god's sake.*

But even before the thirteenth, there is a sense of dissatisfaction brewing amongst the idyllic Haussmannian buildings and (sometimes) warm baguettes picked up from the boulangerie in the evening and walks to and from school straight pas Notre Dame. The attacks will feel like a breaking point, a forward-moving wave of discontentment building momentum, unfurling in a crashing crescendo. As if it had been creeping, approaching, anticipating this the entire time.

~

Yeah. Yeah it seems—I I feel like we had a similar experience of like, I feel like everything just felt like it had this undercurrent of, inexplicable, sadness?

Yeah.

Or—I don't know, was I, am I—

I just also think that that city is so old. And like, so like, there's that um, there's that Joni Mitchell song "California" and the opening lines are like "Sitting in a park in Paris, France, reading the news and it sure looks bad" and she says something about Paris being like, too old and cold and set in its ways, and I would like, think about that song and be like "yeah", [*laughs*] like that's true, like there is a way you do things in Paris and that's because it's been around for thousands of years and like—thousands, hundreds, I don't know, I did not pay attention in my French History classes [*laughs*] um, but like [*laughs*] it was—there's so much like—they, they have figured themselves out, and if you aren't there, like, you are an intrusion and like, the whole like *laïcité* of it all is like, like um, yeah. And, I don't know. I also felt like, this is really, like, Freshman year poetry class, but sometimes I would like, look at the Seine and the water would be like going really really fast, and I'd be like "I feel like the water is going at a normal speed and Paris is just like, so slowed down that like [*said laughing*] the water looks insanely fast, and then I'd be like, whoah buddy, I gotta—

Do you feel like your— do you feel like your friends had similar, experiences?
Or that yours was—

Yeah

—yours was unique?

No, I think there was like, a small contingent of people where it was like, saying a password or something and it's like if one person was like "Is Paris not that great?" and another person would be like "YES" [*laughs*] and then it would be like opening up a door where you could be like "Okay great like I also am like not having a great time" and like, cause there was, it felt like a group of people who were *having the time of their lives* and it was like, that's great for you but like, I I can't do this. Um, I remember uh, Annabelle and Andrea were lthe first people to be like "I think I don't like Paris" and I was like, *really??* [*both laugh*] They called it "the Paris demise" [*both laugh*] and they were like, you start up here and then slowly you just realize that, it sucks—

I think your mic fell off.

—and then slowly you realize that it sucks. Um. And I always think about the Paris demise as like, that is really what it was. Um. I think Annabelle left if I'm correct. She, after the attacks and stuff and she was part of the people who were like “I'm fucking out of here” and I was like, props to you. I think Andrea might have also left?

There's nothing you felt like connected—was there like any moments of, like feeling like at home? or like, I don't know. Was there anything where you where you felt, like when you left when you, when you were like oh—

Oh my god

—there was actually something that I—

Literally no. [*Both laugh*] Like when I left I was like “let's get the fuck out of here.” Ummm. But there were definitely moments, especially like, when I was like, going on one of my uh patented extremely long walks where I would be like, I would be walking and just like, be on, whichever, the Right Bank? Um. Whichever one the Eiffel Tower isn't on, um and I would look and see it light up and be like wow this is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my whole life, um, and it was like, that's great and that's amazing but. And just, I don't know, the old buildings the Mansard roofs all beautiful and stunning. Um, but none of it like really connected with like, like no—there was like never an energy in Paris that like, connected to me where I was like “ah this feels like putting like, a key in a lock and it just like fits” um, it was always like, I'd try to turn the key and it'd be like “no no no no no” [*both laugh*] this is the wrong one, try again. Try again in Berlin, and I was like oh I'm opening doors left and right here [*both laugh*].

August 2019, Paris

1. Taking another stab at Passerini (*Autobiography of a Generation*) and I actually think it may be quite relevant to the task I'm trying to accomplish. I'm interested in her calling it an "autobiography"—in the preface, Joan Wallach refers to it as a "collective autobiography." I've called what I've set out to do a "collective autobiography" although those two words would appear to contradict each other. I think part of what oral history accomplishes is centering individual histories, yet generating a collective history from them. And in the case of Passerini's (and mine), through creating this collective history or biography, she is also writing her own; the process of doing becomes part of the product.

2. Passerini uses the term "liberal elaboration of a diary" in the author's note—I like this. It gives me permission to render my thoughts more eloquent without it feeling inauthentic or fabricated.

~

Uh and then coming back to Paris was such a nightmare because I was like, one, I had to like immediately go to Orange or whatever and get a phone, um, or else I would have never heard the end of it. Um, so I get my phone, and then I go up—I make my way to NYU Paris and like, it's just the, that was the worst fucking part was just like showing up on that eighth floor and seeing everyone being, like, and everyone wanted to either tell me they were like "I knew you had been fine" or people were like "I was so worried" and everyone wanted to tell me like how—what they had thought of me, and I was like wait what, I don't know how to respond to your statements, like what am I supposed to do when they're like "I thought you had died" and I was like, I didn't, I don't know. Um. And then they fucking made us sing "Imagine" around the piano and I'm like, this is the most fucked-up shit of all time like people actually died and you're like, passing out lyrics sheets in like French *and* English like why do we even have a piano up here? Like it was so insanely stupid I was like I have to leave right now and I left early and went back to my horrible République room and just like, cried on the phone to my [*laughs*] mom for like thirty minutes and then I think I like took a very long nap and was just like, ugh this sucks. And, then, then I was uhhh, someone—I I

think it might have been Julianne [laughs] who like, that week said something she was like, ah, the girl who lived or something [laughs] and I was like, ohhh thaa—that makes me feel weird [laughs] just like, the fact that—cause everyone wanted to talk about it in the like resulting weeks as you do when you have trauma, but like, every time people wanted to talk about it what it would eventually turn into was how they had tried to like find me, or like how I had, cause I became a part of everyone’s narrative, um, and I *hated* that cause I was like, I, felt *so* bad that I had made anyone feel any kind of way, especially unintentionally, I was like “ugh this fucking blows,” um, and so, so that last month in Paris was really just like, I need to, get the fuck out of here, like this, this city blows [laughs]. I went to Lyon for a weekend and I was like “this is much better.”

I was supposed to go on that trip.

Oh I didn’t go—I went on—I did not go on an NYU trip, my friend was studying there, and he was like “come to Lyon” and I was like, sure. And, everyone speaks very understandable French there, everyone speaks much slower.

Hmm.

Umm, but yeah. So that was, that was my November 13, that weekend. Um. Really, probably like the worst, worst day of my life [laughs] almost 100%.

Robert

“History is concerned solely with the facts; emotions are outside of its realm of interest. In fact, it’s considered improper to admit feelings into history. But I look at the world as a writer and not a historian. I am fascinated by people.”

Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*

August 2019, Paris

Today is Tuesday, August 6, 2019. I am in Paris with Robert Payne. Thanks for being here.

Sure.

Uh, and yeah, you're actually the *only* person I've—the first person I re-interviewed which will be cool for both of us I think after—

[*laughs*] Yeah!

—after two and a half years to see how, yeah to reflect upon this, if we remember, yeah.

Absolutely.

Um, I'd love if you started by talking to me about your childhood, your upbringing—

Hmm.

—wherever you feel is fitting to start.

Wow. That's a huge [*laughs*] a huge opening point, I guess. Um, so I was born and raised in Sydney, in Australia. Um. Born in 1973. And, I grew up in the suburbs of Sydney, the Northern suburbs, which are, very leafy, lots of trees, very quiet, very, um, very conservative, politically, and socially. And um, grew up in a big house with my parents and my brother and went to local state schools for the entirety of my, of my primary school education and then into high school as well. Um, what else do I, want to tell you about my childhood? My childhood was

it's funny, I have, so I, I've decided I've got a bad memory? One of the things that I've been thinking in ref—in reflecting in anticipation of this interview is that I think I have a bad memory. And so things that aren't yesterday, some things that aren't yesterday I have difficulty retaining? Um, and so childhood is sometimes one of, those things. But I I think generally speaking, my childhood was pretty harmonious and pretty, um,

even and happy and, contented. We didn't move, my parents didn't, you know, go through upheavals. Everything was very, very stable. It was a very, very stable childhood. And, I guess I didn't feel, um, I realize now much more clearly that I didn't feel super comfortable, um, in a lot of ways as a child or as a as a teenager in particular. Part of that was about, sort of sexuality stuff. Part of it was about feeling, um, a bit more kind of intellectually-oriented than a lot of people around me, especially my family. Not that they were, um, not *intelligent*, but they didn't, they don't and didn't have the same kind of, interest in intellectual pursuits that I do. And so I think that led, from a pretty early point towards a sense of feeling a little bit isolated from them. Um, which was compounded when I, realized I am gay and that that was somehow, like a, a consolidation in some ways of those feelings of, of slight isolation.

August 2019, Paris

1. I'm about to go meet Robert Payne, whom I interviewed coming up on three years ago, at his office at the American University of Paris in the seventh. This is the first time I've re-interviewed someone—I think it will be quite fruitful and meaningful for multiple reasons. Namely that I have an interviewing methodology now, and I won't just be sitting down and hitting record on my iPhone, that I've spent so much time thinking about this moment, the interview. Speaking with Robert in 2017 was one of the moments that solidified my love for this thing I was doing (something on the brink of oral history? I was veering

towards a discipline I didn't have a name for; I love looking back on this moment of having a nameless, yet-to-be-discovered passion); I remember the palpable excitement I felt meeting and speaking with him.

2. "On the way back to Cape Cod, and for days afterward, Madeleine felt a rush of happiness every time she remembered Meg Jones calling them all "Victorianists." The word made her fuzzy aspirations suddenly real. She'd never had a word for the thing she wanted to be."

-Jeffrey Eugenides, *The Marriage Plot*

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What do you attribute to, you kind of mentioned that the amb— like Paris as an ambition, had existed for awhile—

Yeah.

—that it wasn't just like a spur of the moment—

Yeah.

—maybe Amsterdam was. But what, what do you attribute to having that as a place that you were drawn to?

First it was because, um, I had studied French since, first year of high school, since since year seven as we call it in Australia. Seventh grade. I studied French all the way from seventh grade through till the end of high school, 12th, year 12. And then for three, the first three years of my BA. So I did nine years of, French studies, which, um,

gave me enough French to want to be able to try to speak at places where French was spoken, apart from in class cause there was nowhere else really. And the other thing was that I didn't, well that's a whole other, whole other conversation about the fact that I didn't let myself speak outside of class

anyway, French, even though I might've been able to. But um, but I remember, I can't remember what exactly it was in, maybe it was a textbook or something? We had really old textbooks when I was at high school for French and my brother had done French for a couple of years before me. And I remember watching, looking at his textbooks while he was studying before I began. But in one of these textbooks, I think I've got this sort of very vague blurry image of a, of an old photograph of the Arc de Triomphe. Um,

and even now when I walk past the Arc de Triomphe, or if I see it from a distance more than any other monument or view in Paris, it reminds me of, the mythical Paris that I had aspired towards all those years ago as a, as a kid in Australia. Um, and I think it's something about this image from a textbook, or some other kind of like, yeah, I think it was probably a textbook. Or maybe it was one of my parents' travel brochures or maps from when I came in the early seventies. Anyway, it was something like that from a really long time before, um, the present then in the 80s. Um, so I guess the simple answer to your question is myth. The myth of Paris had been a big part of the ambition, um, to somehow want to kind of get into the myth or, or, or be in, be in the myth, be in the mythical place of Paris that I had sort of seen from afar. Um, partly, excuse me, partly because of the language, but partly because it was so far away. And so, um, so kind of exotic, and foreign that, um,

so far removed from the suburbs of Australia. And it felt, I don't know, I, I'm not sure what else was the attraction in specific terms. I mean, I can, I can guess, but I don't know if that would be right, how I felt. Um, but I loved the language from the first moment that I started speaking, uh, learning it. I, for some reason had what felt like a natural affinity for it.

I have two questions for you. One is how did the myth play out when you arrived to live, indefinitely, I guess. Uh, and two, how did your relationship with French, how *has* your relationship with French been over the last 11 years? Um, how has it changed? What was it like at the beginning?

Yeah, interesting. Um, the myths did not play out as I expected [*both laugh*]. Which is probably what everyone says about, encountering a myth that they have held onto, or that has been held in front of them for so long. Um, I mean, I like to say and in fact I tell students all the time that the myth is less interesting than the reality of Paris. I think I believe that? [*laughs*] Um, yeah, the myth is still interesting, or at least my version of the myth is still super interesting and super compelling as I've just kind of said but, real life in Paris for me was, um, more *difficult* initially than I think I anticipated? Socially, culturally.

August 2019, Paris

1. Robert and I spoked about how relationships often exist within one language, and how to speak a second language with someone you share a native language with seems artificial in some way. I like that choice of adjective to describe it—it echoes the notion I experience of it feeling performative, somehow. That being said, I also feel like the minute I step into CDG—no, the moment I step off the ramp and into the plane in New York, I have somehow entered an imagined linguistic space within which, given that I can speak French, it is therefore a required labor on my behalf to speak French. I think so much of the discomfort I experience when a French person speaks English to me is in the labor I'm witnessing—I want to be laboring, I *should* be laboring, I am a guest in this place and therefore we should not be speaking my language. Every moment I give into speaking English here is a moment where I am not imprinting French further into my mind's muscle memory.

~

So we were just talking about, that you're moving. Um, have you lived in the same neighborhood for the eleven years that you've been here?

No, I've lived in, in the eleventh for, five and a half years, almost six. Before that I lived in the ninth for, two years or three years? Three, I think three. And before that I lived in the Marais for two years. Uh, so the eleventh now. Yeah. Right now I guess it's, I'm at the point where it's become, half, a little more than

half of my time in Paris. So it's, yeah I now think of the eleventh very much as my home in Paris. But it's definitely where I feel I'm, one of the places I feel like I belong in Paris. Yeah. And I, and I walk around the neighborhood and feel like it's mine. Not in a possessive way, but in a, belonging way [*laughs*].

What do you think—I think, I can't tell if it's mine or yours, do you mind try—um, that's okay—re clipping it? I think it might've tipped in towards your shirt³.

How's that?

I think that's good. Uh, what, what do you, why do you say that you feel like you belong, in that neighborhood? What makes you feel that way?

Um, I feel physically and emotionally comfortable in the eleventh. Um, I like that there is, I feel comfortable and I feel like I belong among the mix of people that I see the mix of—It's not a dramatically multicultural part of Paris, probably decreasingly I would, maybe not, but I would speculate decreasingly but, but it is nonetheless multicultural in a bunch of different ways.

Um, it's probably decreasingly diverse in terms of class actually I would, I would say. But nonetheless this, this, there's interesting levels and layers there. Um, the visible layers in the eleventh are fascinating. The layers of the old industrial past, you know, all these old sort of warehouses and workshops and, most of which of course are no longer there, but still the architecture of them is still there and the other sorts of traces and some of the cultural history is still present, and how that has been kind of laid over with, partly laid over with other, other sorts of things. And I find that really fascinating. I, um, I see people who, who look like me and my friends, a lot of my friends live in the eleventh, uh, my closest friends who live in the eleventh. Um, it is, it feels like just like a social and cultural fit for me.

³ I hear rustling and think that Robert's microphone may have moved and is rubbing up against his shirt, causing a distracting noise.

So you were living there at the time of the attacks in your current apartment?

Yes, I was. I was, um, I guess, when did they happen? So I guess I was relatively new in the eleventh?

Four years ago.

Um, we're talking about the—I said this is what I said about my memory being bad, so we're talking about— when you say four years ago, we're talking about the November attacks, right? The Bataclan and the—

Yes. But the Charlie Hebdo attacks were also—

Right.

Four—January of 2015, right?

The January of the same year, yeah.

Yeah.

Really four years ago? That's, that's—

Yeah, I know.

That's, yeah. Right, okay. Um, yeah, I was, I had moved in November '13, I guess, into the neighborhood. Yeah and where I live currently and, you know, where I was living then is very close to both of those, um, main, locations. Charlie Hebdo is—or was—I guess they moved. Um, but the attack location, uh, was,

I don't know, a few streets away, I guess? Like it's, it's sort of, down the hill and across, from where I live. Um, and the Bataclan is the closest of the November locations to where I live and that's also very, it's like also a 10 minutes walk from where I live so. Yeah I, I did feel very much like this was happening in my neighborhood. Um, not just in Paris or not just in somewhere

in Paris, but in my neighborhood. And that was a, um, that was, uh, an *odd* feeling, you know, because even though I was safe and even though I was not, um

um.

Even though I didn't see anything of the attacks, geographically speaking it was extremely close. And so there's a kind of a sense of proximity, but also not like in one, in in one sense, especially for Charlie Hebdo, in one sense it could have been anywhere in Paris. The fact that I was, I don't know, five hundred meters away or whatever it is, um,

is more of a—I'm not explaining myself very clearly. Um, if I think about that fact, it, it, it gives me a different sense of my relationship to the attacks than the fact that I wasn't,

Five hundred meters, let's say, if that is the number, *feels* like an unsafe proximity. The fact is I was not unsafe. And so there's a kind of a, there's a slight

mis-match between how I *did* feel and how, my physical proximity may *allow* me to feel or may have allowed me to feel. Um, the, the, the November attacks they were a little bit different because I was, very close. I was not at home that evening and I was very close and I was out, in the eleventh at a friend's place who lives, pretty much in the middle of the triangle where the main attack locations were. And so, we were, we were right there in the, in the center of the action as it were, not outside, but in his apartment. Um, excuse me, and for that reason, we were very, very, um, conscious of something happening out in the street, which was all around us. Um, again, I wasn't unsafe, partly because of the, decision not to go outside, but also just, yeah, a sense of being much more in the center of it, which I would never expect it in the eleventh. Maybe, maybe no one ever expects it. Maybe that's not a smart thing to say, but um, uh, yeah, this was suddenly in our neighborhood.

August 2019, Paris

1. I just met Catherine⁴ and am now forcing myself to write field notes while it's fresh. Meeting her was almost like a cartoon becoming animated, her drawings and thoughts and words that I knew belonged to a real person were suddenly being spoken aloud by the real person herself who had them and translated them onto paper. She tells me we should sit on the end of the *terasses* in case something happens so we can leave, as she gestures and smiles in a kind way that implies that I, too, understand. She doesn't know me, but I do understand. We ended up talking about our experiences of the thirteenth's aftermath, but not in a very direct way. She profusely validated my French and told me how

⁴ Catherine is a woman I had connected with over email after discovering her graphic novel, *Les Chroniques d'Une Survivante*. She self-published the book after surviving the Bataclan attack, turning to illustration as a form of healing. We had been communicating over email for two years, and finally met this summer when I was in Paris.

wonderful it is to hear an American speaking French like I do. I told her I had written a paper for Zoë's class comparing graphic novels and oral history as forms of trauma narration, and pulled it up on my laptop to let her see. I told her how I often felt like I didn't have the permission to do this work. She told me that I do, that I, too, lived through the *treizze*, that that's what links us together, that's what connects us. She said this all in French in a very poetic way that I am unable to fully re-create for you, but the thing that sticks out to me is her saying *ça nous lie*. That connects us. That's why I found myself this afternoon, the second of August 2019, almost four years later, at a Breton bar in the eight arrondissement of Paris with a French woman I don't know. There are things I can't understand about her, there are things that she can't understand about me, but there's a space—that magical, elusive intersubjective space that Passerini speaks of—where our worlds and understandings and experiences intersect and overlap and weave together into the larger one. I think that's what I've set out to do, to find and then to illustrate the juncture where our stories are interwoven and joined together. To capture intersubjectivity. She tells me that we can learn things from each other, that she can learn from me as much as I can learn from her. I wish I could remember all of the other beautiful words she spoke. I think of that Portelli quote about similarity and difference, how what we share makes the interview possible and what differentiates us from each other makes it meaningful. I think about Passerini and the mirror, what a profound experience it is to see our reflection in another person, and to reflect it back towards them. We talked about how there are beautiful things to be found amongst hardship; I tell her I found oral history, and she tells me she found illustration. At moments during our time together, I did wish that we were doing a formal interview, that I had my recorder and was capturing this beautiful encounter. But our conversation made me realize that my research doesn't only exist within the confines of these interviews, when I put my headphones on and plug them into my recorder, that these organic moments of human connection can facilitate the same kinds of empathy and connection and mutual understanding that a formal oral history interview is capable of. Research and research, just like Truth and truth, History and history. During our last workshop this spring, the question we were asked to answer when introducing ourselves to our final guest speaker was "What do you love about oral history?" My answer was that I love that you can go into a room with a complete stranger, and emerge two hours later feeling so

connected to them. I felt that today. An acknowledgement that we see each other. *On se comprends.*

~

I wonder, you say your memory is so bad, but in my memory I feel like you recalled [*laughs*] uh, the events of, or your experience of the thirteenth so, *vividly* at least three years ago.

Yeah

But this will be interesting for us to see how, being prompted to recall them again, changes?

Mmm

Um, I wonder if you could just start wherever you feel your earliest memory was? Um, and talk about that evening and into the days that followed.

Yeah, well part of the funny thing about doing this is that, and this is not just, you know, this particular memory, but maybe it's any memory, which is a whole other conversation but, there's something about, I I feel a little bit like I have some version of a script and maybe it's what I told you last time, which I haven't recalled exactly, but I do know what we talked about.

Yeah.

I do remember that. And I know that I've talked about it with other people in other, in other contexts, so I'm, I'm conscious [*laughs*] of the fact, more meta-consciousness, conscious of the fact that, um

I'm reaching for these memories right now also with something a little bit, pre-formatted, potentially.

Mhmm.

Anyway, that's, that's your concern, not mine [*both laugh*]. Um. So what are my, what's the, what's the first thing I remember? Um, first thing of that evening I remember is, my partner and I were at my best friend's place down the street, having dinner. And, I think the first thing that happened for us to become aware of what was going on was one of the, one of us, I think my partner, received—my partner received a text message from somebody? Maybe his friend who's a cop? Um, to alert him of something going on. I don't remember what the message said, I don't know whether it was because we live in the eleventh the person was saying to be especially careful, or whether it was someone just saying, shit, have you seen the news or what it was. But anyway, we, he in particular for some reason, maybe he's, whatever, he started getting more, um, text messages and then I guess the others, the other two of us started getting bits and pieces of stuff coming in. But there was, it felt like there was incoming information on our phones. Um, that's what I first remember as being the atmosphere of the evening. And then the second thing is that there was just this, uh, this increase in the presence of sirens around

basically for the rest of the night. Um, I guess it was about nine or something that we started getting information. And, there were sirens for the rest of the night, if I am remembering correctly. And um

Mm. What else do I remember? I remember being a little bit, well, a couple of things. One, uh, is the sense of

shock that the three of us felt. A sense of shock, which kind of either produced lots of *silence* or produced lots of, kind of, not babbling, but a lot of, kind of a lot of chatter, a lot of just, you know, anxious talking basically. Um, and maybe another thing which comes to mind now is that, maybe a little bit like what I was trying to explain before, a sense of being, kind of in two places at once that evening. So we were in this apartment on the fifth floor of a building, completely safe from potential harm. And yet, meters away from where all the, cop cars and and sirens and whatever else were, were were going, um, in kind of the middle of the triangle of attacks. Um, if we had gone into the street, it's possible we may have seen

without knowing it, um, some of the attackers in their cars. Right we could easily have been in the line of, of, of in in danger I guess is what I'm saying. Um, so, so I had that sense of being very, very close and that it was right there, and that therefore we were kind of there, but at the same time being up on the fifth floor, removed from it and being, um, yeah, in both, in both of those places at once in a, in a strange kind of a way. And so because we were so close my partner and I decided not to go out, so not to leave, we stayed the night at our friend's place. We had, in fact the three of us had planned to go out, that's right, we had planned to go after dinner to walk down to the Marais and go and have some drinks afterwards. Um, which would have had us walking, um, pretty much down the Rue Oberkampf, I guess. Um, and so we stayed in, and didn't do that, but also, um, I guess it became clear late in the evening that the situation had not settled and that it wasn't probably safe to go out into the street. And so, Vincent and I would've had to, my partner and I would've had to walk home pretty much past the Bataclan, not exactly in front of it, but one or two streets away from it. Um, so we just decided not to walk home, we figured it would have been the wrong thing to do. Um, which is also a very strange feeling, right, of not being able to actually go home, or feeling not being able to go home. And so we stayed, we slept at our friend's place and, and got up at, seven or eight or something in the morning, um, where it was very, very quiet. And walked home, in a strange, *strangely* beautiful morning. I say strangely beautiful because, I guess it was November, right? So, it could have

been freezing cold. It was probably crisp, but it just, it was, I think in my memory anyway, maybe I'm making this up, but it was a kind of a, one of those beautiful, crisp, sunny kind of mornings, Paris mornings. Um, but it was quiet. It was quiet enough to feel, completely normal like a Sunday morning. I don't know what morning it was. I don't remember what day of the week that was, but it felt like a Sunday morning.

Mmm. That's what I remember.

Mm, yeah

I
guess I'm trying to remember as well. I mean, I'm getting, slight flashes of the, of the feeling of the evening as well just in terms of, um, that sense of disbelief and shock. Um.

January 2017, Paris

1. I'm sitting here in some new coffee shop on my last morning in Paris, and I can see Le Petit Cambodge and Le Carillon from the window. I made a point to eat at Le Petit Cambodge yesterday, and I'm not sure why—I did it in daylight because, well, that's what I can handle at the moment, and I think I wanted to do it in a way to "pay homage" to what happened last year, and also as a sort of exercise to observe myself and how being there made me feel. And, because I've heard it's a really good restaurant. Robert Payne had told me that he felt like that was a place he needed to go at some point, as a "thing to do," maybe in an expression of paying homage to the events. I did feel like I was sort of on hyper-awareness mode for part of the time, hyper conscious of my surroundings and the people around me, imagining scenarios that could play out. I had been circling around this neighborhood in the tenth arrondissement that, last year at this time, was very evidently marked by memorial, and consequently quite moving for me to walk through and witness. However now I find little to no traces of memorial— a few of the homemade flags that had previously been strung through the streets in what had felt to me like a beautiful act of unity and neighborhood and a call for peace, were all gone but for a few hanging from one apartment's window. I eventually found a plaque near those two restaurants similar to the style of the one in front of the Bataclan indicating that thirteen people had died there. I think I was saddened by the disappearance of the "DIY" memorials that so deeply made me *feel* something last year when I often found it hard to *feel* anything. . . which made me question the life cycle of these fleeting memorials, how and when someone decides that it's time for it to come down, and what that suggests in terms of remembering an event. Does it have to be physical for memory to be left somewhere? And as for the more perennial memorials, like the one across the street from the Bataclan, is there a time when people will stop writing notes and placing flowers there too?

~

I mean the, the, the, Pl—so the Bataclan I had been to several times, *have* been to several times and the, the restaurant, the Petit Cambodge I had been to several times and felt so, not so much the Bataclan even though it was close but the Petit Cambodge felt like one of my places. Um, and so once it became clear

that those were two of the, um, *targets*, that felt very, very strange I remember feeling strange about that, especially the Petit Cambodge. But the Bataclan felt strange more on, not necessarily because it's a place that I know and have *been* many times, but more because of the, the actual reality of what took place there. That just as, as that information started to creep in, slowly over the evening, particularly I guess the, um, the death toll as it was *climbing* progressively up, uh, over the evening. Um,

I think that felt increasingly like a, I don't know how to, how to describe that feeling now. I don't even know what I *was* feeling, but it was, it was awful. It was an awful feeling anyway. And, starting to try to actually come to terms with the fact of people being, trapped in that space. Maybe also cause I'd been there and I know what it's like to be in that space and it's, you know I think, even before the Bataclan I had, often felt some *vague* sense of discomfort being in enclosed old theaters and cinemas in Paris. Maybe not only in Paris, but particularly here where the, where the exits are not always clear where or you know, or in those restaurants and nightclubs which are down in the *cave*, down in the basement and you think, how the hell does someone get out of here if there's a fire? Like if there's a fire near people will die. So, something of that feeling, but coupled with the absolute, unconscionable recognition of human cruelty right at the same time that it wasn't just a fire, it wasn't just, shit those people, um, can't get out of this space but, those people can't get out because there are people who have designed a situation that means they can't get out. And just that, just as that started to become clear that evening, um, yeah, it was just a horrible, horrible, horrible set of kind of, emotions to try to face. But, you know, it wasn't yet entirely clear, but I guess it, I think by the end of the evening we knew, I think we knew that that's what had happened. And it wasn't until a couple of days after, I guess, that we started hearing stories and seeing video of people, climbing out of windows and so forth, all that, all that horrible stuff. But that, yeah, so the, the first evening was really more about imagination

than anything. Um, and for that reason, partly maybe, um, you know, the horror of the imagination as well, or the horror that the imagination can, can, can generate.

August 2019, Paris

1. I try to imagine Catherine in the Bataclan and my brain won't let me go there. I can't imagine her inside of it, I can't imagine her walking out of it, I can't imagine. There are so many things I can't imagine, so many things I can't bring myself to imagine, so many things I probably never need to imagine. As we part ways by the Gare Saint Lazare, I hear a loud sound and instinct forces me to turn back around to make sure she's okay—I see her jump and my heart breaks. I understand, but I could never fully truly understand. I can't imagine what she's going through. I can't imagine what she imagines, what she sees, what she recalls, what images she does not want to see but that invade her mind anyway. There are things she doesn't know, because she was inside. There are things that I (thankfully, so thankfully) don't know, too, because I was in safety. I remember watching the Netflix documentary last fall with Lily, and thinking how strange it was that I was present while all of that was occurring, I was just unable to imagine it. My mind couldn't go there.

2. I try to explain to Catherine what I love about French. I tell her that although it's not as though I become a completely different person when I speak French, that I feel as though there is a piece of me that I can only access and activate when I'm in France and speaking French, and that I love moments where I gain that access. *It's like your little secret garden*, she says. I smile and agree. She tells me she would have left, too, if she were me. She tells me that she was lucky to not have to move after the attacks; she has a house in a quiet area in the Parisian banlieue, there are birds outside, a garden. She tells me of course I left, I didn't feel safe, how strange it must feel to have felt safer in France and to all of a sudden have that feeling turned inside out.

~

But the, the moment that comes back to my memory, and I know that I told you about this last time, um, about the d—the days after, was when I was out with the same friend whose place I was at that evening. He and I were out for drink in our neighborhood. Um, I don't remember how many days *after* the attacks. It may have been a week. It may have been, it may have been up to a month I couldn't tell you any longer how, how far after it was. But we were in this really small bar. Actually we were out on the, on the, on the terrace. The bar inside is very, very small, like the size of this office. Um, and, someone must have gotten a phone call or a text message to say that there was something happening at République. Um,

it's, I don't know whether it's, whether I'm getting this right in remembering that, around this time there were public, rallies again at République? Maybe that's what—and that therefore there were a lot of people, at République? Maybe there was just this one evening, a rally or a bunch of people at République who had kind of, assembled. But either way, there were, I believe if I'm getting this right, there were people assembled at République, and someone at our bar received a message that something had happened. The message that I think we received was that there was gunfire. Um, and the,

that something, some kind of danger was coming this way, towards us from, from République. And so this weird kind of, um, movement of like, people started talking about it on this little terrace. There's like, 10 people sitting on a terrace, not all of whom know each other, but suddenly everyone's talking about this thing that we have heard, rumor, essentially. Someone, I guess tells the owner of the bar. And so the owner of the bar says, okay, everyone gets inside. And so we all went into this, we were all crammed into this tiny [*laughing*] tiny little bar, and she shut the shutter door, locked the door and shut, brought down the, the rolling shutter over the front of the bar so that we were, invisible and,

presumably safe inside this tiny bar. And I remember feeling, both a strange sense of excitement that we were having like an old school lock-in [*laughs*] you know like after, after two o'clock in the morning, once the bar's supposed to be shut and actually they just keep it running, but they shut the doors and it felt a little bit like that even though it was sort of 7 pm or something [*laughing*]. So honestly a slight sense of that excitement, that we were having a private little, elicited party. But the other thing of course was, wow, is this our life now? Is this, is, is this kind of potential danger, uh a new reality for us, in Paris or in this neighborhood, I'm not sure which of those two things I felt, but it did I thought, wow, this is, it's, it felt, yeah, it felt quite scary. And I also felt very, pleased and happy that this woman had made the decision to, just think of our safety first. Even though we didn't really know what was going on. It turned out that there was nothing going on there had been, I don't know what happened. Someone had had a, like a flare or a firecracker or something at République, it seems that there had maybe been some kind of a like a minor panic and people started running in a particular— I'm not sure what happened, but it wasn't what we had feared, people shooting or some kind of an attack. But that didn't matter because the idea that it might've been that was enough to kind of re-trigger something of the, of that exceptional fear from the night of the first attacks. And that this was now, yeah, maybe this was now part of our life.

And I remember,

calling or texting my partner as well just to tell him what had happened. I said you know we're locked, we're locked down in a, in a bar. Um, we've heard that there's something happening, blahblahblah. I'll let you know what happens. And feeling, just a very strong need to connect with him in that moment, which was also reassuring, that I had felt that way.

Mmhmm.

Yeah.

[Rain is heard in the background, and there's a squeaking sound as Robert closes the window. I laugh softly.]

It sounds nice.

Yeah? *[both laugh]*

August 2019, Paris

1. I met with Robert Payne yesterday, who is such a lovely person. We met in the same office as we did in January 2017—which at the time was his but no longer is, so it was interesting to physically be in the same place three years later. Within five minutes of us chatting pre-recording, he mentioned Lindsey Tramuta, and I said that I had seen her two days ago and had interviewed her this winter! What a small, small world. I love that a web of connections has emerged from my narrators, some known and some discovered. He told me about the David Bowie biography he's reading, how it's constructed from interviews in a polyphonic manner with no interjections from the writer. How the writer manages to piece together Bowie's life through the words of others, displaying the ruptures and contradictions that emerged through his research. He told me it seems like I may be doing a similar thing. At some point in the interview when I asked him to recall his memories of the thirteenth, and how I was interested in how his recollection and memory will have changed from the last time we spoke, he told me that he feels like he has a scripted way of narrating that evening. Afterwards I asked him if he felt he was able to liberate himself from the script, and he said yes. Halfway through the interview it started to downpour, which was quite audible through the small open window above his desk. It was really lovely; I'm trying to embrace the aural landscape of an interview more, to capture the circumstances of our surroundings. What does it mean that it started to downpour halfway through? For one thing, it broke the heat that had been

feeling oppressive. I was sans umbrella when I departed AUP and went back out into the streets of the seventh, but the rain felt glorious and liberating and soothing nonetheless. I think it's what Paris needed.

~

I—you just said something about imagination that made me think back to you talking about imagination the night of, which I think is interesting. Because, I feel like in a lot of ways, my capacity to imagine is, is linked to anxiety that I did not *recognize* as being problematic until, this happened, um, and that, yeah that, that the ability to *worry* is linked to the ability to imagine.

Yeah.

Um

Yeah.

And so yeah the interplay between that night you, you said like that night was all about imagining. I did a lot of imagining and then how that, creeps into your, life, your, your life in the aftermath. Um. I wonder if you have anything else to say about that, but it does seem that you were able to kind of, shush that, capacity for imagination.

Hmm. Yeah. Maybe that's true. Maybe that's true, Maybe that's, yeah. Um.

I
mean in my mind it's as simple and as, and I mean simplistic by simple as out of mind, out of sight. I mean things that are out of mind can be imagined, of course they can. Or things, I'm sorry, things that are out of sight, I'm sorry things that are out of sight can be, can be imagined and therefore in-mind. Um. Maybe the, on the night of, and in the, in that, you know, that that sort of little panic moment, two nights after, maybe there was enough that was in sight to

produce, imagination that could take on larger proportions, whereas since then there hasn't been enough in sight to do so? Maybe that's what I mean to say?
Um,

Yeah, there's, for me at least, there's been no, that I can remember, no real sort of seeds of, um, of that kind of negative imagination in the, in the time since, not really at all. You know, just when you were talking and asking your question, I was reminded about, um, parents worrying about their kids and my mother, for example, when I was, you know, 16 and going out and she would say, I can't, I can't sleep until you get home. Whereas of course, if I wasn't there, um, it was just, it was, it was her, yeah, it was her imagination, which was producing particular kinds of anxiety, but precisely because I was proximate. Whereas if you're not there, and if I live on the other side of the world as I now *do*, then the same imagination is not going to be possible. Um. Whereas if she would come to visit now, I don't think she would probably still have the same fears about her son. But it's possible she would because I'm in closer proximity. And what is closer in proximity, I think visually, at least, um, maybe sort of generates that ability to imagine a bit more fully. I don't know maybe that's not always true, but that's, that's how I see it for the moment. Maybe a total absence of information can also generate a lot of imagination in a way that produces anxiety. I'm sure, yeah, probably for some people that absolutely does, but not for me, I guess, I guess what I'm realizing is that that's not been my case. Um.

Mmm.

No, I can't think of any other moments in the last four years that really have, made me stop and think about safety in the same way or or that I've experienced as, a threat or concern in the same way.

~

Okay I have one more question before I ask you if you, have any lingering thoughts. Um, every time I've been back, which has been, actually quite a few times in the past four years I've, I've walked through your neighborhood and, *noticed* memorials and, and how there was obviously a lot more present when I came a year after, when I interviewed you three years ago than there, than there is now. Um, and I, and I wonder what your experience of that is and if you, if you feel a sense of like, permeation in your neighborhood of, of what happened, to this day? Like if that's, if that feels like a physical, if it still feels like a physical presence, to you.

You know, I wonder, I wonder if that's actually one of the reasons why I don't feel much of the, of the *emotional* presence of the attacks any longer, for me personally, because I think the physical presence has dispersed. Um, you know, for example, right after Charlie Hebdo, you might remember just down the street like right around the corner, a place that I walk all the time, um, there was a, where in fact I think the cop was shot there was a kind of an initially—well it was, it was always like a spontaneous, um, placement of of flowers and wreaths, which initially was *huge*. Like it grew over the following days into this *massive* pile of of flowers and plastic wrapping and stuff. And it, it was, like a really, major thing and people would come and see it and I went and saw it. It was like a tourist site in some ways. And then it gradually diminished. And then occasionally over the last few years, I've seen maybe one bunch of flowers every now and again, in that spot. But, the trace has otherwise just gone from that particular spot. And, sometimes I see tourists at the Bataclan, outside. I don't often walk past the Bataclan, but I sometimes do and when I do, I sometimes see tourists. I was walking past just a couple of weeks ago and I, um, with someone, I think maybe my partner and there was, people who looked like a family, um, from, I think probably Latin America somewhere? Um, taking pictures I think one of the kids had his picture taken in front of the Bataclan? And it felt like a really important thing for them to be doing. Like they, they felt, they were presenting as if this was an important, um, tourist site for them. I don't know what their attitude was I didn't, you know, that's a different question, but it was, as if they were also at the Arc de Triomphe or the Eiffel Tower or

somewhere else. So what I see sometimes is tourism, just as much as commemoration, and maybe those are related. Maybe, maybe they were also commemorating, I don't know. Um, I see plaques, you know, there's a, there's a plaque across the street from the Petit Cambodge, which sometimes has flowers attached to it or beneath it. But I feel like the traces, the physical traces have really dispersed. Um.

And for me at least, that means that the mental and emotional traces also dispersed along with them, to a large degree. Um. The Bataclan the very, the word itself is now, I think, irrevocably, um, touched by, that night, by that tragedy. So that's, that's a, that's an interesting kind of a trace, right? That a place—I wonder actually whether a certain, like, I wonder whether the meaning of the word, will have a before and after? And whether that meaning will depend upon whether you had a relationship before or after. I think that's an interesting kind of a trace. Um, I can't *think* about the word or the place without thinking of the, the attacks. So I guess the place itself is, and the name itself is, is a kind of a physical trace, um, which is still quite powerful. Less so for the other ones for me, and Charlie Hebdo I don't read it, I don't look at it. I see it. Um, I guess its ongoing presence is a trace as well, but for me it's not the same. Yeah.

Do you have any lingering thoughts?

I don't, I don't that I can think of, except this was fun.

I'm glad.

It's really interesting to, reflect on, this stuff again.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Guy

August 2019, Paris

Alright. Today is Wednesday, August 14, 2019. I'm in Paris with Guy Griffin.

Hello.

Hi.

Hi. [*both laugh*]

Thanks for being here. Um, can you start by telling me about your upbringing, starting wherever you feel like is, important to start?

Um, born in the South of England, in Sussex. Um, lovely childhood. Um, quite normal. And then moved to France quite violently in 2014 violently in the sense that, um, my parents split up and I didn't really know and, uh, came to France with my mother who actually initially told me that I was coming on a holiday and never went back to England. Uh, so, um, a bit of a very, well *very* weird experience for the first few years, so not super happy to be in France and maybe a bit ungrateful, the bad years as well, like early teens. So, um, very ungrateful and very, very *barsb*. And, yes, I arrived in the South of France, um, spent my studies, did a part of my studies, moved to Paris. Uh was working in bars and night clubs at that time and then decided to go back to my studies. So I studied, I studied architecture and urban planning. And, um, when I finished that, I worked for several years in a big agency. And then after a while just decided that it wasn't, I wasn't extremely happy. And um, started opened the, I first opened a restaurant with one of my old bosses who kept on every year saying, hi, open this with me, open this. And then after a while I was like yeah okay, we're on board, I'm going to do that with her. And so I was doing the restaurant in the evening and the agency during the day. And then after awhile I was fed up with doing the evenings. I'd met Alice, who is now my wife and so as for like, uh, just for a personal comfort and be able to have a personal life, working in a restaurant in the evenings is not ideal. And so that's why I opened Café Oberkampf. And I'm still a part owner in, in Marilou. And it's quite interesting because this actually does join the subjects um, Marilou is Rue Marie et Louise,

and that is just off, uh, Le Petit Cambodge where the start of the attacks actually happened. So my first restaurant, um, oh I got shivers, my first restaurant is like 50 meters away from Le Petit Cambodge, where the first shootings happened.

Wow.

Yeah, you didn't know that.

Yeah, no no no.

I was keeping that for today [*both laugh*].

August 2018, Paris

1. We're staying on Île Saint Louis in a beautiful apartment overlooking the Seine. I spent a lot of time walking the old paths, not really doing anything all that new. On Saturday I went up to the nineteenth to Le Pavillon des Canaux, and something about that truly felt like coming home—the air was crisp and it felt like fall, I ordered a noisette and went upstairs to sit by the open windows overlooking the canal. Something about being on that canal felt special, directly across the street from Louis and Mélissa's old apartment where I had found myself the night of the thirteenth. Then I tried to find a v lib to ride to Caf  Oberkampf to read and have coffee, but I ended up walking all the way there through Belleville without finding a v lib station. My friend Guy sadly was not there, but I sat at the counter by the front windows and the barista was very chatty and spoke to me in French and didn't even say "where are you from?" which felt so nice. I don't feel ready to leave, which is an interesting feeling. There are pieces of this city I love, and a lot of it will always feel like mine.

~

What drew you to, this neighborhood? To open, uh Caf  Oberkampf?

So I've known this area forever and I've always loved this area. This is like a real pocket. So I've always loved this area and when I was towards the end of the

Marilou, when I was like, okay, I want to move on, try something else, went to my hairdresser, he's cut my hair for the past ten years. And, I just said, oh, maybe thinking of opening up a little café around here. Um, and he said to me, well, Dominique, just next door is letting go of her shop, so why don't you go see her. Went to see her, and she was like, sure, I'll keep the shop for you. And then just, yeah, four months later, moved in. And, and it's, it's, yeah, full circle. I came back to where I, I was working before in the same street. And so I knew I knew most of the neighborhood and that helped as well. I felt really comfortable in this, in this neighborhood, and I knew who I was going to work with. And also I, I lived down the road as well. And so, yeah, I've been able to, uh, and still today I live just next to, I live in, this street. I can literally, if you look through the window, you can see my, my apartment. Um, and so yeah, I've been able to create my life around that. And so I'm very, I'm very attached to this, to this neighborhood. And, yeah, I mean this may come up later, but we are literally a hundred meters away from the Bataclan, right here right now. And so I used to live, we're at number 22 right now, I now live in number 22 in this passageway, but I used to live at number 24. And so that's just, just next door. So, um, yeah, we're very, we're very close to to the events And um,

uh, do you want us, do we go straight

onto—

Sure!

Okay. No, cause it's um, yeah, so it was actually, we actually *heard*, we heard everything. So the um, the number 24 where I used to live in a like little courtyard, and so it's like a U shape and all the windows you can, like you do in Paris, if you put your head out, you can see your neighbors over there. And we were watching, we were watching a film? Okay, it was an Amy Schumer film, a comedy. Okay. And, um, and my phone just started bleeping, ringing, just nonstop. And, I was ignoring it. It was my friends, mostly, and I was just like, so I turned my phone over and I'm like I'm watching a film, Friday night, please just leave me alone, I'm not going out tonight. Um, and then we started to hear explosions and gunshots and things like that. And I was like, *okay*. So I then

started to look at my phone. I was like, okay, this is *weird*. And I was like, I saw ‘are you okay? Is everything all right?’ Blah, blah, blah. Uh, are you at Marilou? And straight away BFM TV, which is the news channel. And we just saw these things happening. So what happened was, is that there was the attacks, um, *at* Marilou because the circuit, they drove past, it was the first destination, wasn't it? The first spot?

I think so other than the Stade de France.

It started off at Stade de France, okay. And then, so they drove past here and they, they started shooting at, um, the two cafés that are on the corner. And as I was saying before, it's only 50 meters away from, uh, from the restaurants. Everyone started calling me saying, are you okay, are you at the restaurant? And, uh, so I *wasn't* but um, my business partner was there and they all barricaded themselves into the restaurant that we were, we have a back door, so we were able to evacuate everyone through the back door. And, um, and then, so by the time I was getting the messages and, uh, I don't know, 15 minutes had gone by or 20 minutes had gone by, I can't remember.

August 2019, Dinard

1. Nothing like being back in Brittany with my host family to bring true, deep sleep! It really is so strange that I slept significantly better here in Dinard after ten days of nearly no sleep in Paris. I *feel* okay in Paris, I don't detect any real stress or anxiety, but maybe it's underlying anxieties that are inhibiting me from sleeping? I roll my *Rennaise* sweatshirt over my head and creak down the narrow white staircase to find Michel making coffee in the small canary-yellow kitchen; he tells me that everyone is outside in the garden. I go out barefoot to find everyone around a breakfast table à la Call Me By Your Name. Michel offers me some tea—bowl or mug? (I take the bowl) and Antonia hands me a croissant straight out of the bakery bag. There's some trouble with the coffee maker—*la cafetière*, I love this word—apparently it has leaked all over the kitchen counter which is why only two cups have been poured from what should have been a full pot. French breakfasts feel foreign in the best way—bowls of hot tea and coffee, baguettes ripped in half placed haphazardly on the table, glass pots of honey

and various confitures (strawberry, some unidentifiable khaki-green substance, a fruit whose name I always forget), a small ceramic container made especially for butter (with its own apt name, *le beurrière*). I marvel at the tiny beige and pale pink sweater Yoann and Blanche's baby, Carmen, is wearing. Yoann is a Coutard—the family that hosted my friend Phillip; I tell him we had celebrated Thanksgiving at their home in Cleunay eight years ago, how it was my favorite Thanksgiving I've ever spent. I bring up photos on my phone of Phillip dancing ridiculously with my host parents.

2. Drinking tea in the garden after lunch, Blanche asks me about my project. I tell her I'm going to work this afternoon instead of going to the beach with the others, that I have a lot of transcribing to do. Albane clarifies—but you're writing, right? Translating? No, I'm transcribing I say—*Oui elle a le bon mot*, says Blanche from across the table, *c'est tout à fait ce qu'elle fait*⁵.

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Uh, and then they were starting, there was the attacks at the Bataclan. And, and then, so I think, I just think that we, even though the chances of it coming this way and people going into our courtyard and blah blah, blah, of course, we all looked out the window. All the neighbors were like, shut your windows, shut your uhh, *les volées*, just shut yourself in. So yeah, that's what we did. And you're just like refreshing BFM all the time and like, just trying to, to, to follow what was happening. And so we, we kept on hearing gunshots and then, we heard the detonations of the guys blowing themselves up. And so you don't know straight *away*, but you hear a bomb and you're like, okay, either it's the police that have come in, thrown a bomb and they are attacking or uh, or you don't really know. And then, yeah, Twitter was like, the guy just blew himself up. And so we literally heard that. And um, and *yeah* and so I think that night, I can't remember, we went to sleep. I mean, we didn't, we weren't up all night panicking. I think we went to sleep. Because at one moment it was like, it's over. So you're just like, well, you talk about it. And you fall asleep and the next morning you wake up and you, you, you look at everything that was going on. And so they were saying

⁵ Translation: “Yes she’s using the right word, that’s exactly what she’s doing.”

well it's finished, they were killed. Uh, can't remember was there one on the loose? I can't remember what happened.

I think so.

Yeah. And so, anyway, you're like, well he hasn't, he's not stuck around if he's on the loose, he's not, he's not here. So, business as usual, *sort of*. And so I just posted something on Instagram, like everyone we're staying closed today, really sorry. Um, no one really cared. I reckon no one was actually expecting to come into the eleventh at that moment. And, also didn't want to put my staff in that situation. And uh, because as a, as a business owner or as a coffee shop owner, I do feel it's our duty as well to be open all the time. And um, as I say, be a living room for people to come in. But that day it was like, I—even myself, I can't, I don't know what to do. And we actually, with my wife, we actually just looked at each other and were like well, you just need to erase—not erase but think of something else. And uh, and we actually started the—I don't know if you hear the sirens? [*sound of sirens becomes increasingly loud in the background*] Uh, but even now, today when you hear sirens, you're like, oh, in this area you hear sirens you're like, oh my god, what's happened? Anyway, that was just, um—and so we actually took the Amy Schumer film that we hadn't finished the night before and started watching it. And, we felt really guilty cause we actually lol'd at one moment. Do you know, we actually laughed because we were, we'd sort of been able to block that out and um, watch the film. And at one moment we looked at each other and said oh shit we just laughed, is it okay? Is it okay to laugh? Do you know in this situation is it okay? And I think we stayed at home until, six o'clock or something like that. And we're like, well we can't just stay at home, all day, I mean. And we went out and started walking around the neighborhood. And we went to, um, la Buvette, which is like a, a wine bar. And we, even though it was Saturday night, we never go out on Saturday night. And um, we just did something that we never really do. And it wasn't a, it wasn't like we weren't saying, oh we have to—because that was a thing at the moment. At that moment it was like, we're not scared, we're—no sure we were thinking about it, but it was just, it just felt natural to go out and, have a drink. And um, it's a bit like walking around and meditating about the situation. Cause you start talking about it and, you could see that the bars weren't full, there were people in the bars, no one was sitting at the windows. But, there were people and people were just like. And

it felt weird cause you're like, shouldn't we be in, mourning? But then it was like, well I don't know. Life does, life does go on. And I think maybe I'm a quite cynical person. And so it was like, okay, it happened, life goes on. And so the next day, um, uh, the next day we opened the café and it was, it was *eerie*. It was amazing because, there was a lot of people in the streets and like journalists *everywhere*. And um, some of them were a bit pushy to get comments and so at one moment I did start talking and then things aren't clear, do you know? It's been 48 hours in your mind, you don't know what you think, and so you, so you start saying things and then you're like, oh did I really mean that? And so I just stopped and we sort of like, kept kept ourselves in that bubble that was Café Oberkampf and um, the light was amazing. There was this like, it was really quite magical because you had all these people coming in that we knew, but not like—you, you came in, but we didn't know each other on a first name basis. And um, Lindsey came in and all these people that had been hanging out, expats that were hanging out on their— who would come in on their own, do you know? And would feel comfortable. And people would come in, hug, talk. Um, but it wasn't, it wasn't like sitting in a corner and crying and mourning about it. It was just really emotional and um, and so yeah, it made it, it made it quite magical cause it was still a bit of a chaos outside with all the, uh, all the people wanting to come and see what happened. You know there are those people who live on the other side of Paris and want to come and see the Bataclan.

August 2019, Dinard

1. Tonight was one of those evenings that was so laughably and beautifully random, where I question the events that led to my being there—a thirteenth-wheel to a soirée of high school friends in their early thirties, none of whom question my presence. I'm not sure whether to be flattered or insulted by this. Tonight I've somehow found myself in the presence of a dozen of Albane and Quentin's friends, sans Albane and Quentin who have taken Gaspard to the doctor to make sure the tick they found behind his ear has been fully removed. French introductions are strange—a sparse exchange of bisous and first names, perhaps with an *enchanté* thrown in for good measure. No questions asked, no

explanations given. I wander between the living room, kitchen, and backyard for a while where most of the friends have gathered around the table, looking for Albane and Quentin until I discover that they have left. *Bon*. In a moment of panic about what to do with my body, I decide to walk over to the table where Yoann and two other men I don't know are preparing mussels by ripping out the tendrils from the sides of the shells—I later look up the verb for this which evidently is *debearding*. I mentally note how ridiculous this scene is—me, elbow deep in a plastic bag of probably 300 mussels, flinging clean ones into a pot that Yoann tells me he is going to cook with coconut milk, coriander, and ginger, *à la thaïlandaise*. After the mussels are prepared, I carry the pot into the kitchen and return outdoors to find that someone has brought out *le palet* which I'm told is the Breton version of *pétanque*, a game that consists of flinging metal disks onto a wooden board instead of hurling large metal balls onto the sand (safer? I'm not sure). I'm also told that *les palets bretons* not only refer to these metal disks, but also to a popularized shortbread-like cookie resembling these disks. Someone asks me if I want to play (François? Yoann? Antoine? Ludo?) and in the spirit of finding oneself at a party full of French people I don't know and who don't know me, say sure, why not. It turns out I am quite good at *le palet*, to the astonishment of the five French men I have found myself playing with, a game whose rules I do not know. I don't even know that I'm on a team with François for fifteen minutes, because no one has told me this is a team sport. Ten minutes later Corantin asks me where I'm from—because my presence at this party is still quite unclear and no one has felt the need to inquire—*Anglaise?* Non. *Irlandaise?* Non. *Écossaise?* Non. . . *Americaine?* Oui.

By this time it is after 9:30, although there's still daylight and it strangely feels like it should be six pm. An unknown neighbor begins aggressively playing the bagpipe from behind the hedge, followed by a stint on the accordion. I laugh with the woman beside me, Coline, about how strangely French it is to be serenaded by an accordion and bagpipe at 10 pm in the backyard. It's also 10 pm and we have not yet eaten. After what seemed like a four-hour-long game of *palet*, I wander into the kitchen to find that the mussels are done. I give myself the job of carrying the steaming blue ceramic pot out into the garden. Camille stands up and begins plopping large spoonfuls of mussels into shallow ceramic bowls that I pass around the table. For thirty minutes, we sit around the table, illuminated only by the colored lights dangling in the garden, shoving and

slurping mussels swimming in coconut milk broth into our mouths without forks, punctuated by a chorus of “c’est tellement bon Yoann,” “c’est délicieux,” “La recette est trop bonne je vais la refaire,” amongst all the slurping. Yoann brings out another giant pot and places it in the center of a table, followed by Quentin with the highly anticipated bowl of *frites* which, placed in front of me, I begin serving to the crowd, happy to be of service in some way. This lasts for at least one hour; then, Yoann takes away the giant pot of moules, which he promptly drops onto the ground and onto Mathilde’s foot, spurring an outburst of unbridled laughter, followed by the entrance of the chocolate cake Coline has made and iced for Anne-Sophie’s birthday, and a chorus of *joyeux anniversaire*.

2. My existence these last few days has struck me as resembling that of oral history—I listen, I observe, I overly exaggerate my understanding, I nod, I smile, I laugh, I ask questions when I feel it’s necessary.

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And so, um, and so yeah. And then after that, I don’t know, it didn’t, it didn’t die down quickly, but life, um, life, uh, went back to normal quickly and never normal because, um, even after that there were events and as you said, there was a thing at République, there was a thing um, an exhaust pipe backfired at the canal and people were jumping into the river they were so *scared*. Um, so that—it was brought up regularly and of course you did feel, uh, you did feel nervous, but I think maybe there was, um, a thing in the tenth that where lightning doesn’t strike twice at the same time. It’s like, well, we’ve had our, uh, we’ve had our moment, it’s like, it’s, and you sort of reflect about, you start reflecting about society and um, and you’re getting all these messages of support. Like, people that were in Paris were like saying, guys, if you want to come and stay at *home* and people abroad thinking it was still a war zone and, and whereas things felt quite normal, normal in a sense that, um, there weren’t military everywhere, it wasn’t barricaded, you could walk everywhere you wanted to. And, um, uh, I felt pretty safe.

But I think still now you and I, I don’t know how long afterwards, but I remember walking by the Bataclan one day and like saying, oh shit, that’s the Bataclan. Like I was, I’d gone back to normal, like I passed in

front of the Bataclan without thinking about it, until I'd gone past it. And I was like, oh. Because you, you, you're always reminded of it, um, in the eleventh, because of the flowers and there are always signs and there's little mini memorials over everywhere. Like, um, but even for Charlie Hebdo, like we— there are still memorials for the, the policeman that got shot for Charlie Hebdo which was what, how how long before that I think just a year maybe.

A little, under a year.

Yeah. And so maybe that's why, maybe that's why, uh, people resume, their liv— because we'd already gone through that experience once, not at the same scale, but the the eleventh had already gone through that experience of, um, terrorism. Um, and so we knew that life would go back to normal at one moment. So maybe that's, indirectly do you know, subconsciously it was like, okay, well, okay. Yeah. And you felt,

um, I mean it's maybe still a bit blurry. I don't remember all the feelings you have there, but I know there was a, there's a lady just over the road from Café Oberkampf who was in the Bataclan at that moment. And so all the time you were meeting people that um, uh, that *knew* someone or was there, or, um. Like for example, we all sort of all in the industry, we sort of know each other and, and the Belle Équipe there are waiters, that got, that died as well and people that died, and so I remember like Baptiste who owns, who's one of the owners of the Cinq Kilos which is a bar just up the road and, uh, each time we were *talking* he would start crying because it was one of his best friends. And he was like my best friend died a few weeks ago. And so it was a bit, um, you're permanently reminded of that. And I just think it's, then it's like something, it becomes something very personal. It's like, um, my wife's friends that are expats for a very, very long time couldn't sit on the terrasses anymore, anywhere in any part of Paris. They just couldn't sit in terrasses they would have to sit inside. Um, and then other people that just like, go back to, go back to life. And are maybe, maybe just think like what are the chances of this happening, again?

Which when you, if you're very, um, very cynical, what are the—they're like, the chances of that happening again is like, it's not, but it has happened again and it is happening again. And um.

Yeah and like, so recently with *gilets jaunes* you sort of think about it as well because you'd have, um, we're, we're very close to the actual path of the manifestations at République, it got a bit crazy sometimes. And so we'd have helicopters above the the, and République's like only a kilometer away it's like really close.

August 2019, Dinard

1. In the last twenty hours, Quentin, Albane, and Michel have all read *Mon Bataclan*, essentially in one sitting each. Peering up from my own book, I've watched from across the living room as they've sat transfixed on the slim black and white graphic novel. I forgot that I had either accidentally left it in Rennes last summer or lent it to Antonia (who has also read it), but she brought it to Dinard to return to me. Something about watching each of them completely absorbed in Fred's book for over an hour made me feel a sense of pride, like we had shared something special and intimate. I wonder what different meaning we've each extracted from it. Something about them reading it makes me feel like they may understand me a bit better, too. At lunch earlier this afternoon Michel said that he loves how positive Fred seems, the way he writes of helping and being with others, his way of injecting such lightness and humanity into an otherwise unforgivably dark subject. I think of the panel of him and Elisa grasping hands on the floor of the Bataclan, the "boule d'humanité" he writes about, his ability to extract such a beautiful and poetic thought from such horror.

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Yeah. No, so today, I don't know, I don't know how many times I think about it. Um. I suppose quite regularly because um— I do go in front of the Bataclan every day, and you do have a, maybe a bit less and less, but you do have tourists that come and see the site, come and visit. And um, and the Marilou as well, like the, the the Petit Cambodge was closed for a very long time and uh, there too, they lost, uh, they lost some staff that we knew personally. And um, and so that was a, yeah you're—if you *live* in this area, I think you're reminded of it quite quickly. But again, one day I rode past le Petit Cambodge and I was like, oh, I didn't actually think of it straight away. And you, you feel, it's mixed feelings of uh, oh good. But also, feeling guilty like damn, have I already forgotten? Um, like,

yeah so the memory of these people have been forgotten by a certain, a certain category of people and um, the memory of these people have been kept um, by, by other people, by friends and family and so. But you do still have that guilt. Maybe not thinking about it as much. I don't know if that's the same feeling as you've had from other interviews of people that have moved on, or,

but I, I suppose I I've moved on also because of the events that are all over the world, like in America at the moment, the shootings and you're like. So, we're in a society today where one thing's passed, and another thing has replaced it.

~

It's interesting. Kind of randomly, most of the people I've interviewed live in this neighborhood—not, not because I've sought that out as a, as a criteria, but, um. And even myself wasn't all that far away. And, most of the people I've interviewed, even though they, you know, they live in the eleventh, they live nearby, there was some, there's some degree of removal from it, even if they physically, physically were very close that they, you know, they didn't see anything, they didn't hear anything. They felt, they felt safe and, and removed. Um, and I, I wonder how your experience of, of *hearing* it, of knowing that you were close but also

I think it's—a lot of people imagine, a lot of people spent that evening imagining what was happening. And to physically have some sensory knowledge of what is occurring—

So yeah, it's, it's because, so, I think we're so used to violence through films and things like that, that you are able to have a, a real, um, visual sense of what's going on. So we were having the sound and two seconds later we would have *our* visuals because we would associate, um, what we know of violence with those sounds. So, um, and also I know the space. I know the Bataclan, I've been there so, and I know that the the terrasses in front and I, I know the actual route that they took by car. I mean I can visually take that same, that same route, uh, with them, so. And also they just—they described the car so I can actually visually see what car they were driving. And so I I *have* that film in my head of what happened because—and also I I I have the, the sound. So, it's weird. Even though I wasn't there, I can visually see, um, police shooting and I could see, because we've been, we've been injected all these, um, visuals of violence and war through TV and films already. So I can, I don't know, it's almost as if I have a face on the terrorists. I can see their face because I'm just associating, uh, a film where there's been another terrorist. You know, what that looks like. So you can definitely, and maybe that's part of, uh, the scariness, but it's also maybe a part of being detached because for you it's almost like a film. So it's almost

fiction. It's so, it's so, um, I don't know, it seems so exaggerated that it's almost fiction. It's almost as if it didn't happen, and the next day you have proof of it happening, but it's not like, you don't have smoke coming out of the building or you don't have, uh, it's been cleaned up quite quickly and boarded up quickly. And, um, it may be different for some of my staff members that were at the Marilou who couldn't come back for work to work for a very long time because they actually, for some reason were attracted to the crime, the crime scene, the actual scene and um, saw the bodies. And so I think maybe that's another traumatic experience because I don't think many of us have actually seen a dead body. And that must be something. Uh, I don't, I have no idea of how that can actually feel because we've seen dead bodies in films, but we know it's not a dead body.

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Yeah. You said something to me last week about, about how, so I guess Oberkampf had opened that summer that—or early fall.

We've been, it'd been a few months. What was it? Was it, November?

Yeah, November.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So we'd been open since, uh July.

Okay. Um, and how it was, it felt, important or special that, you had this new business that coincided with these events that for a lot of people it like offered—your space offered a sense of, of community and comfort and like this idea of a living room that you, that you spoke about. Um, and Lindsey has said the same things to me, that for her it was, it felt like a place that she could go to and, and feel some sense of normalcy.

Hmm

Um, did it feel like that space for a lot of people? Like, did you overwhelmingly, in the weeks that followed, feel that you had, you talked about like a cocoon or something?

Yeah, totally. I thought it was going to be a dead zone. I honestly thought that the, I'm sorry, dead zone's not really a good word to choose. But, I thought, I literally thought that the, the neighborhood would be empty for for for *weeks*. And no, it was not the case. It's like, I *think*, it'd be interesting for me to actually look at the numbers one day. But for me, it was almost, yeah, it was almost

yeah
it was almost business as usual from what I remember. I mean it was, it was, we didn't have as many tourists of course, and um, but we had the regulars and the expats that were on the, and of course.

Cause we're slightly, off path, is it off the, yeah. Um, so it's not, we're not on the, any of the main roads to the Bataclan so we didn't get, um, we didn't get the nosy people or the journalists and things like that.

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I mean,

but it was, it was quite a, it was very internal. It's like the eleventh is, helping out the eleventh. Like, people from other neighborhoods wouldn't come, especially, I don't think so anyway.

I mean, in the eleventh, if you're not coming out to eat you don't have much reason to come here anyway, we don't

have any museums or we don't, well, we do we have *one* now that, um, there's not much shopping, there's not much. Uh, it's not *particularly* pretty. [I laugh] No, it's true, like a lot of graffitis and, uh, the buildings aren't, uh, yeah, it's not, we're not in the seventeenth or the eighth or, um, not Left Bank.

Yeah.

But it has that real, uh, it has, it's it's very charming. It has that real um, I don't know. I think it's a, it's a vibe. People, I, I often call it a village. This, this portion between, so it's between the Bataclan and, just above Oberkampf. It's like a really small, pocket where, um, where everyone knows each other, all the restaurant owners know each other. There's no competition between us and. And so we all, I mean I hardly leave the eleventh, very rarely. Because I like to eat at people that live in the neighborhood, cause you sort of want to, um, it's not *helping* people out it's more like, supporting them. So that, I think that was, that was really, um, emphasized after the, after the attack. Like that sense of community.

Yeah.

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So I think it's an interest—like, the way that people mourn or grieve and like you even said this, you had gone to la Buvette and, questioned whether it was appropriate for you to be doing that, that you felt like you should be, in mourning and what mourning and grieving look like? And if, if those things can look like, spending time in the neighborhood, walking, supporting businesses, things like that. And maybe that was a lot of the ways that people here felt that they could do that.

I think so. I mean, um, when we did start—when we were walking around that evening, the streets weren't empty, the restaurants weren't *empty*, they were quieter, but it wasn't, uh, it wasn't empty. Um, yes, I think a lot of people were like that. And I, when I say that I don't leave the eleventh much, I think there are a lot of people in the eleventh, that don't, because all our favorite places are here. And, um, so I think everyone did the same, everyone did the same thing. And it would be interesting to see if the other restaurants had that, or other

cafés had that same, the same phenomenon where, um, they did find their, their regulars to come back all the time.

August 2019, Paris

1. I'm sitting at the Holybelly counter alone once again. I just came from interviewing Guy from Café Oberkampf—another friendly face I feel lucky to still be in touch with. I met him inside the café this morning and followed him up the very narrow spiral staircase to his office. The office has beautiful white wooden floors creaky with age and French windows opening out onto Rue de la Folie Mericourt; stacks of receipts secured with rubber bands are piled up on the desk. Guy asks me if I'd like coffee, and returns back upstairs with two blue ceramic mugs. I ask him if he would rather do the interview in French after he said that he now feels as though his primary language is French—he said no, that he does therapy in English (ha ! *petit clin d'oeil* à Wendy Rickard “Oral History: More Dangerous than Therapy?”) He has such a lovely speaking voice in English—in French too—but I've never had a full conversation with him in English. Towards the beginning of the interview, he said something (which now I am forgetting so I'll have to listen back) but he said something and then looked at his arm and said “I just got chills.” I don't know why that moment struck me as so moving, but it did. He also told me that he got emotional, that in the past four years this had rarely happened, apart perhaps from him accidentally stumbling into a memorial service on one of the anniversaries. I was touched—touched that he shared that with me, and touched that this encounter could allow him to access an emotional state and space that he does not gain regular access to. Perhaps it seems weird to value a moment where a narrator gets emotional, but there's something about allowing them to access this intimate space within themselves—generated by the circumstances of this interview—that feels really special. It's at once an internal and external conversation, a confrontation with the self through engagement with another. It sounds contradictory, but I think it's part of the magic of oral history. To be asked, to be led, to more deeply engage with ourselves and our shared history through the act of encountering another person,

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But you—we—and this conversation is really interesting because, um, you don't, we don't talk about it much anymore. People don't talk about it. And the fact of talking about it made me feel, more emotional than I thought I would. Um, I do feel very detached, but I, sort of not just the Bataclan, I feel quite detached about, um, events in general. I feel— you know? Um, yeah, as I said from the beginning, I'm quite uh cynical about, about life and so I wasn't, I wasn't expecting to, I was afraid I was going to be too cynical about—in this conversation and, but yeah, I did feel way more, do feel way more emotional actually about it than I thought I would. Yeah. And that's only happened a few times, it happened once when I walked by and I'd forgotten that it was the memorial service and that had really that really affected me and I didn't think it would. And yeah and right now in, I didn't expect to,

it's still a bit blurry. It's funny. but it's still, saying that

Totally.

Yeah.

Do you have any lasting thoughts, before we end?

No [*both laugh*]. No, but, um, I think I still feel a bit guilty about having, uh, fond memories of that time in the sense that, um, that sense of community was actually quite, it's quite heartwarming. Do you know? That these people, people do, uh, during rough times they do stick together and yeah, bad things happen, but then you put things in perspective and you think, well, there are some countries in the world and towns in the world that live this every day and they

keep on living and they keep on partying and they keep on having fun. So it wasn't to that extreme here, like people were very respectful about that event, but if it was happening every day, maybe that, that's how we would, we would have to, we'd have to deal with that.

Thank you.

My pleasure.

Mathieu

August 2019, Paris

On est le, sept août? 2019, c'est ça? Le huit?

Le huit [*barely audible*]

Le huit août [*laughs*]

Ouais

Um. Je suis à Paris avec Mathieu Barthel. Merci d'être là.

Merci.

C'est la première fois que je fais une interview en français donc ça va être, intéressant. On va voir.

Exciting [*said sarcastically and over-dramatically in English with a strong French accent*]

August 2019, Paris

1. I just completed my first oral history interview in French. I've been wanting to do this for a while, and have felt self-conscious about the fact that up until today, I had not. Self-conscious that I have yet to interview a "real" French person (whatever that means), that I am not a French person, and yet am so invested in this project and am the one doing it. Discomfort in whatever amount of "authority" it is implied that I have on the subject matter. Lindsey connected me with a friend of a friend, Mathieu, who kindly agreed to come talk to me in the apartment I'm staying in, an apartment that is neither of ours. I was nervous that I would be tongue-tied and uncomfortable, but the minute I met him outside Thelma's apartment, I felt strangely empowered and quite at ease. He apologized for being sweaty from his long bike ride across northern Paris; I led him upstairs and commented on his bag that read "Amerika" (he told me that

someone started the brand in France in response to the American election.) We sat down at Thelma's table, and I offered him coffee or tea—I had bought new espresso, sugar, and spéculoos cookies for the occasion because it felt strange to not be able to offer someone sugar for their coffee or a snack (while standing in front of the cookie selection at the neighborhood Franprix, I had asked myself if “j'aime bien faire nourrir mes narrateurs” would be an appropriate thing to say in French when I would propose the cookies to him.) He was so easy to talk to and the feeling that he wasn't speaking a foreign language washed over me a few times.

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Je suis arrivé à Paris je connaissais pas Paris alors j'ai—mais c'est bizarre parce que du coup vu que je connaissais *personne* uhhh je j'ai pris un studio qui était aussi grand que ça. Euhh à côté de là ou je faisais mes études. Donc c'était pas à Paris c'était juste à côté de le Valois pendant deux ans. Après j'ai vécu trois ans dans le seizième, parce que j'avais envie de vivre à Paris c'était super, j'ai bien aimé bizarrement le seizième j'étais de l'autre côté vers la maison de la radio. Après j'ai rencontré mon copain on a vécu ensemble dans le premier arrondissement à côté des Halles. Euhhm quand je me suis séparé je suis allé dans l'onzième pendant six mois. Après dans le troisième, je sais pas si tu connais—

Oui, très bien.

—Carreau du Temple, là-bas. J'ai rencontré un nouveau quelqu'un et en 2012 on s'est installés ensemble on est allé dans le douzième. Mais l'appartement était super, on est restés ensemble et on s'est séparés. Et en 2014 on a commencé à se séparer mais j'étais toujours dans le douzième et en 2015, c'était officiellement pendant l'été que voilà on s'est séparés du coup j'ai acheté un appartement c'était la première fois, parce qu'ici ça vaut tellement cher que voilà, t'es obligé d'acheter avec même tes parents qui t'aident. Euhm. Et j'ai acheté dans l'onzième cette-fois ci. Et c'était mon septième appartement donc j'y suis depuis 2015 j'ai déménagé en septembre en 2015.

Ah bon. C'est au moment que

je suis arrivée à Paris. Septembre 2015.

D'accord.

Oui. Uhm. Qu'est-ce qui te plait dans l'onzième? Pourquoi s'installer là-bas?

Euhm. Mes amis. Beaucoup de mes amis étaient là-bas euh j'aime bien le quartier euhm je j'avais beaucoup de mal à quitter le troisième parce que je trouvais que c'était très très chouette comme ambiance et ça me correspondait je vis beaucoup dans le centre de Paris. Et puis parce qu'il avait une ambiance un peu plus, un peu plus cool, un peu plus sympa. Donc voilà et puis parce que c'est surtout que j'ai pu payer un apartment là-bas donc voilà.

~

Oui. Et donc bah c'est évident que les attentats se sont passés—

Ouais, ouais

—dans ton quartier. Ehm. Est-ce que tu étais dans le quartier en ce moment?

Ouais. C'est particulier.

Oui.

En fait quand Sophie m'a dit ça y est et que j'ai dit ok oui pourquoi pas, euh il y a une histoire un peu particulier par rapport aux attentats parce que évidemment ça a frappé tout le monde euh différemment et d'une manière un peu plus

origi-
nale. Je venais d'arriver moi dans le quartier. C'est un quartier que j'aime beaucoup euhh dans lequel je me sentais bien. En plus ça correspondait à une nouvelle étape de ma vie parce que je me suis séparé. Euhh c'était difficile, l'année avait été compliqué, du coup le nouvel appartement était une sorte de

nouvelle vie, donc quelque chose d'assez fort, d'assez bien. À l'époque je sortais beaucoup, euhhh je sors encore pas mal mais voilà je voyais beaucoup de monde, je *dateais* beaucoup beaucoup aussi fin c'était plutôt pas mal. Et vu que je bossais énormément, le vendredi soir je me souviens je je je terminais vers sept heures le travail et je suis rentré chez moi et je devais rencontrer en fait quelqu'un en fait j'avais un date avec quelqu'un et euhh, et je suis d'abord repassé chez moi en fait et parce que j'étais fatigué de ma semaine et une fois chez moi, euh je me suis assis en disant bon, je bois juste un verre, tranquille, et puis je le rejoins, on avait un rendez-vous à je crois huit heures et demi ou un truc comme ça, huit heures et demi neuf heures. Et je suis endormi sur le canapé [*both laugh*] et je me suis réveillé et il était huit heures et demi et j'ai fait *merde* je suis à la bourre et tout c'est pas possible. Et donc ce qui s'est passé ça s'est passé assez rapidement parce que, j'ai envoyé un message en disant, excusez moi, je suis à là—je te rejoins. On avait un rendez-vous à Saint-Paul. Tu vois où c'est Saint-Paul ?

Oui ! Oui.

C'est euhh, donc moi j'habite à Voltaire, fin à côté de Voltaire.

Oui

Donc t'as Bastille, et puis après t'as la rue de Rivoli donc c'était Saint-Paul c'était juste avant. Donc j'ai dit écoute, je fais au plus vite, je suis vraiment à la bourre je suis désolé, uhh du coup je reprends mes esprits je descends, il faisait déjà nuit, je voulais prendre un vélib un vélo j'ai oublié ma carte et du coup j'ai pris un taxi. J'ai fait bon allez on va faire vite, on va prendre un taxi. Il devait être

huit heures et demi neuf heures, un truc comme ça. Donc je me suis mis dans le taxi. Ce que je te raconte en fait je me suis rendu compte après parce que sur le moment en fait je me suis pas aperçu. Donc le taxi a commencé à partir, il est passé par la place Voltaire, c'est un quartier que je connais par cœur parce que tout le monde vit là-bas, et il a bifurqué par le Boulevard Voltaire il a pris à droite la rue de Charonne. Et on s'est retrouvé à un moment un peu coincé rue de Charonne, euhm, il savait pas ce qui se passait, et il continuait et euhhm, et j'ai

entendu une sorte de, de fête d'anniversaire de feu d'artifice comme ça avec des trucs et on est passé. Et je me souviens, euh mais ça je te le dis parce que je me suis souvenu après, *dire* à mon chauffeur de taxi j'ai dit putain il balance des feux d'artifice dans le coin euhh et on est passé sans rendre compte de quoi que ce soit, donc le taxi a continué. Je suis arrivé donc à Saint Paul, cinq, dix minutes après, j'étais très très dégêné, donc voilà on a commencé à déjeuner, dîner. C'est un restaurant plutôt chouette, c'est assez calme et tout ça. J'avais mon portable dans la poche, et le diner s'est très très bien passé.

August 2019, Paris

1. I can't completely describe the feeling of listening to someone speak French—particularly in this instance where it was very much my job to listen, and not to intervene—but there's something about it that feels like a superpower. To take in a language you've spent years gaining more pieces of the puzzle to, for it feel effortless entering through your ears, to take in a melody different from that of your own language. It feels like I've spent years gaining new hues, nuances, contours—some years more dedicated to it than others—that the painting becomes fuller and fuller which each conversation I initiate and each interaction at the boulangerie I have and each book I read and attention I pay to my surroundings, with each new word I hear and through context its meaning begins to take shape. With time they wither and fade, and then I must return to work, regaining skill, regaining control, regaining confidence. To hear sounds that once meant nothing to you, and to have them mean something. To nod or to laugh or to silently agree felt like a degree of communication that transcended what I was used to doing in these interviews. I was truly telling him that I understood, and I did.

2. In Zoë's class last fall, Jill Stauffer talked about how we will never dwell in a new language the way we dwell in our own (native) language, we will never dwell in the same way within each new language we are introduced to. I really love her verb choice here, *dwell*, and how it seems representative of a highly embodied act of listening. A world inside of me I infrequently gain access to. It also speaks to the added layer of subjectivities and therefore intersubjectivity present in an interview between two people who don't share the same native language—as a

listener, how does the way that I dwell within the French language, as opposed to the way I dwell in English, affect what I hear and interpret and make sense of?

~

Et, euhm, vers, chez pas, neuf heures et demi, peut-être, j'ai commencé à avoir mon portable qui vibrait, comme ça, donc t'es à table, t'es plutôt poli, tu continues et cetera, et je sentais, alors c'est très bizarre, mais je sentais qu'autour de moi il y avait un truc *très* particulier de gens qui commençait à réagir, je voyais des gens qui, se levaient, euhh de manière un peu, inattendu, euh et partaient. Et mon portable continuait de vibrer, vibrer, et puis à côté de moi à un moment il y avait une femme qui a commencé à à prendre son téléphone et à se sentir très inquiétée. Et mon portable continuait de vibrer vibrer. Et vu que toi t'étais avec un mec j'étais [*unclear*] et puis à un moment j'ai dit écoute je suis vraiment désolé, je prends mon téléphone et c'était Sophie, donc ma copine qui n'était pas à Paris, qui est allée voir ses parents. Et elle m'a dit Mathieu t'es où t'es où réponds, elle avait essayé de m'appeler et il y avait genre dix messages. Et à ce moment là je me suis dit, il y a, il y a un truc *bizarre* parce que je comprends pas euhhhhhh, et je vois sa dernière message elle me dit uh, il y a des gens qui tirent dans la rue, cache-toi. Et euh moi j'étais au restaurant avec ce, avec ce garçon, et je dis, c'est bizarre, il y a un truc qui, qui va pas et à ce moment là je comprenais en fait pourquoi les gens réagissaient bizarrement. Euhh c'est très bizarre tu sais, moi qui travaille beaucoup dans le théâtre dans l'écriture et cetera, le *danger* c'est quand tu vois pas quelque chose. Euhh tu sais la *suspense*, uh dans les films, tant que tu vois pas ce qui se passe il y a toujours ce côté genre la musique et tout tu as peur mais de ce que tu ne vois pas au final. Et c'est exactement ce qui s'est passé, c'est-à-dire qu'à ce moment-là, moi j'ai commencé à me sentir assez bizarre, et je voyais une copine me disait il y a des gens qui *tirent* dans la rue, il y avait un attentat au Stade de France, tu es *où* réponds-moi, cache-toi fais quelque chose et cetera, et donc j'ai appelé, en fait *Sophie*, elle m'a dit Mathieu écoute, il faut que tu te caches euh c'est n'importe quoi, on sait pas ce qui se passe, il y a des gens qui se baladent dans la rue. Alors, c'était ce qu'on connaissait, il y a des gens qui se baladent dans la rue et qui *tirent*. Alors je me dis *merde* et à ce moment-là, il y a eu un mouvement de panique au restaurant, et les gens sont partis sans payer, et il y a eu *vraiment* ça. Et donc, le, le patron en fait du

restaurant a dit, écoutez, on va devoir fermer. Euh à priori il y a quelque chose? qui ne va pas et euh, il faut que vous partiez donc que vous restez là et cetera. Et bizarrement le copain avec qui j'étais étais plutôt assez euh,

cool,

distant. Il m'a dit, bon bah, c'est bizarre ouais alors moi je le regardais j'ai dit ouais c'est bizarre aussi. Mais, vu que ça prenait une tournure très bizarre et que j'ai *jamais* vécu ça, en plus dans ta *ville*, tu sais où tu te sens à *l'aise* en sécurité, je—le fait de voir que quelque chose qui se passe autour de toi t'as l'impression de voir un mauvais film, tu sais, quelque chose d'un peu bizarre. Et, à un moment je dis écoute tu sais quoi, euh on va y aller. Et il m'a dit euh ouais mais on va pas rentrer chez nous parce que, ça va être dangereux, donc moi je connais des copains ils habitent juste à côté et euh, on va aller chez lui. Alors je connais ce mec depuis deux heures [*I laugh*] et du coup, bon. Et à ce moment-là on s'est levé et, Sophie me rappelle, et elle me dit euh, putain Mathieu, c'est terrible, ils ont, ils ont tiré sur les gens à la Belle Équipe. La Belle Équipe c'est à côté d'un ami à nous, en fait, c'est là où je vivais pendant six mois en fait, après ma, première séparation. Et où, mon copain, avec qui je venais de me séparer, vivait aussi euhhh, il avait l'appartement que j'avais eu et et cetera, on n'était pas en très bonne termes à cette époque-là, il m'en voulait un peu, bon. Et du coup j'ai, j'ai eu un un élan et puis je je l'appelle, en fait. Et j'ai appelé pendant qu'on payait, il se ne réponds pas, et donc j'ai appelé encore et à un moment il décroche, et je dis, il s'appelle Yannick, et je dis Yannick, j'entendais, comme de [*uncertain of this word*] c'est quelqu'un qui [*makes gasping sounds*]

Oui

Et je dis : « ça va ? » et j'entendais qu'il pleurait énormément.

Alors je dis : « Yannick, ça va ? Mais qu'est-ce qui se passe ? »

Et là j'entends, comme si je ne connaissais pas Yannick, et il me dit :

« Mathieu c'est horrible ils nous ont tirés dessus. »

Et je dis : « Quoi ? » Et, je dis : « Mais t'es où ? »

Il me dit : « Mais je suis euh en sécurité, je suis dans l'immeuble. Mais ils nous ont tirés dessus, Mathieu. »

Et là en fait, c'est marrant [*unclear*] de me parler, euhh, je dis : « Mais attends de quoi tu parles ? »

Il dit : « Mais en fait c'est horrible on était en train d'aller boire un verre, et on les a vu s'arrêter, et on les a vu sortir la mitrailleuse et ils nous ont tirés dessus. »

Et là je je regardais, le copain que je connaissais pas et je lui dis euhh

s'en aille, ça ne va pas du tout. il faut qu'on

Je dis « Yannick, t'es en sécurité ? »

Il me fait : « Oui, oui oui je suis chez moi, mais cache-toi. »

Et j'ai raccroché, et j'ai regardé et lui dit : « Il faut qu'on s'en aille. »

Et c'est à ce moment-là que j'ai eu peur, vraiment. Vraiment, j'étais

alors qu'il
se passait rien, mais j'ai eu *hyper* peur, je me suis dit c'est arrivé fin, mon ex était euhh venait de de s'être tiré dessus à côté. Et j'ai dit euh à ce copain, j'ai dit il faut qu'on parte, il faut qu'on parte.

August 2019, Paris

1. I walk south along the canal, to where it turns into Boulevard Jules Ferry and further down, Richard Lenoir. At its intersection with Rue du Faubourg du Temple, where the murky green canal water ends and is replaced with the lush green of Square Jules Ferry, I notice a plaque on the corner. It strikes me that I must be near La Bonne Bière, which I see is to my left. I want to pause to take a photo, or at least to take a moment to read their names, but I don't, because something about doing that I worry will paint me as a terror-thirsty tourist on the dark tourism tour of eastern Paris. I'm going to go back so I can write down their names for you. I wonder what the point of a memorial is if we don't stop to observe it, to memorialize. Why does it feel icky, disrespectful, in bad taste to stand in front of it? I watch as passersby walk past, not noticing the plaque and its powerful words, and this makes me sad, uncomfortable, in a strange way. Perhaps there is little room for balance between the thirteenth pervading every corner of this neighborhood and it disappearing completely from public memory.

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Et on fait, on est *sorti* dans la rue, et c'est la première fois que je regardais autour de moi comme si j'avais peur qu'une voiture arrivait euhh, comme s'il y avait quelque chose qui allait se passer et cetera. Et du coup il nous a dit bon bah, viens, accompagnez-moi. Et c'est *très* bizarre de sentir ça dans cette ville, toutes ces sensations de gens qui commençaient à marcher vite, à *courir*, il y en a qui *hurlaient* en voyant les infos à la télé. C'est très particulier, et on est arrivé chez ses copains, j'étais un peu rassuré, et évidemment, ce qui s'est passé c'est que mon téléphone avait peu de batterie. Dans ces cas là c'est toujours chiant [*I giggle*]. Donc on est arrivé chez des gens que je ne *connaissais pas*, qui étaient très cool c'était deux personnes, euh une fille et un garçon qui étaient très jeunes et, je leur ai dit bah je suis désolé je suis là ils m'ont dit non non mais t'inquietes pas, il n'y a pas de problème, c'est bizarre, surtout qu'à la télé ils disent maintenant qu'il faut *pas* sortir de chez vous, quoi. Et du coup, j'ai eu ce sentiment très bizarre donc la première chose que j'ai fait c'est que j'ai appelé

mes parents. Et je leur ai dit alors écoutez, euhh, vous allez peut-être entendre des *choses*, uhhh, mais, alors, déjà j'avais eu les coups de fil en absence, donc ils s'inquiétaient donc je leur ai dit, *je* vais bien, je suis chez quelqu'un mais ne m'appellez pas parce que je n'ai *plus* de batterie, et du coup s'il se passe quelque chose euhh je vais pas rester chez eux toute la nuit je veux je veux rentrer et cetera. Donc ils disent d'accord, ok, je leur ait dit d'accord. Donc évidemment il n'y a pas de cabs nulle part, fin bon donc j'avais [*unclear*] je savais juste que Yannick était pas bien mais qu'il était en sécurité et j'ai on a commencé à regarder la télé en fait. Et là, je voyais le quartier

où je vivais. C'était très bizarre, comment est-ce que je peux le dire ça ? Euh j'ai toujours été là. Rue de Charonne euhh j'ai vécu que six mois dans cet appartement, et La Belle Équipe était en face, on y allait. Le Bataclan c'est une salle où j'allais régulièrement. Il y avait des soirées, pas mal de soirées, il y avait des concerts mais il y avait des soirées aussi. Euh, et j'ai appris effectivement au Parianoeil [*unsure of the name of this restaurant*] euh, pas le Parianoeil, uh le restaurant asiatique dans le dixième, pareil on y est allé tout le temps, en fait—

Le Petit Cambodge ?

Le Petit Cambodge oui parce qu'il y avait un autre restaurant que s'appelle le Parianoeil. Euhm. Et à force de voir *ça*, *plus* ça avançait, *plus* je me—tu sais c'est un truc tellement irréal de se dire il y a des choses qui sont en train de se passer dans ta ville et toi t'es là dans cet appartement qui fait vingt mètre-carré. Tu peux pas bouger on te dit *surtout* ne sortez pas, je n'avais *jamais* vécu ça dans ma vie, jamais. J'ai commencé à avoir peur, et je me suis dit, c'est la fin, fin, il y a une sorte de révolution euhh *extremiste* qui est en train de se *passer*, et euh, ils sont en train de, ils ont monté un coup, ils ont préparé quelque chose. Et ils sont en train de prendre Paris en hôtege. C'était ça à quoi j'étais en train de parler. Et du coup je voyais que ils ont attaqué au Bataclan et, et j'étais *totalemnt* euhh, scandalisé fin je savais plus quoi faire quoi. On est resté, *deux* heures, avec les info, *rivés* sur les infos. Ce qui est drôle est que, c'était totalement irréal parce que je ne connaissais *vraiment* pas des gens avec qui j'étais. Et ça, en plus ça a rajouté quelque chose de—c'est pas comme quand t'es avec des *gens* avec qui t'as

confiance et cetera, ils étaient très chouettes mais, je me suis dis mais c'est *dingue*, d'un coup de te *retrouver* dans *une* soirée, *totalelement* dans un autre monde, tu vois, avec des gens avec qui t'es obligé de—et ils étaient *là* ils étaient plus jeunes et alors parfois je les rassurais parce qu'ils étaient un peu paniqués mais oui ils étaient chez eux. Bon. Donc on attendait on attendait, et il y avait toujours cette cette prise de tâche qui se passait je me suis dit *bon*, c'est horrible et, bon. Et deux heures plus tard, le copain avec qui j'étais a commencé à, à se sentir pas très bien et il m'a avoué qu'il était diabétique. Et il m'a dit, faut que je rentre, en fait, parce qu'il faut que je prenne mon traitement. Et je lui ai dit mais euhh

bon

bah on va pas sortir [*both laugh*] j'ai commencé à me dire *merde* parce qu'on se connaît pas je vais pas l'abandonner c'est horrible et cetera et vu qu'il habitait pas très loin, il me dit écoute il va falloir que je rentre de toute façon parce que si je reste là je vais faire un malaise et il faut que je prenne mon insuline et il faut que je rentre donc, voilà. Il était, je sais pas, vingt-trois heures/minuit je sais plus quelle heure il était. Et à un moment je dis bon de toute façon bah on va rentrer moi aussi je vais pas rester là c'est totalement débile on sait pas ce qui se passe, voilà. Et à ce moment là, je me souviens je me suis dit faut que je previenne *personne* parce que sinon tout le monde va m'engueuler, voilà. Et on est *sortie* de cette immeuble qui est dans le quatrième, *vraiment* à la frontière rue de Rivoli Bastille. Et on a rejoint la rue de Rivoli, il n'y avait

pas un chat, plus *personne* dans les rues, je n'ai *jamais* vu ça, mais *jamais* vu ça. En fait, quand tu as vu deux heures avant une ville, et après, et c'étaient *totalelement* vidé, et en fait j'ai senti une sorte de, de de temps suspendu comme ça qui était complètement, *irréel* et on était deux, et en *fait*, très bizarrement, on se, on se, on marchait mais collés contre les murs, et on regardait partout autour de nous s'il n'y avait pas quelque

chose. Moi dans ma tête je me disais, il va y avoir une voiture qui va surgir et qui va nous tirer dessus. En fait c'est la première fois que je me disais ça je me disais mas tu te rends *compte*, que t'es en *train*, d'*imaginer* qu'on va te *tirer* dessus ça m'étais jamais arrivé dans me vie. Et on arrive à la rue de Rivoli, et on voit passer devant nous, des *chars* militaires. Et alors là [*laughs*]

mais tu sais ? Parfois tu vois des films euhm qui sont principalement américains, les films catastrophes, où la ville est sous euh, sous couvre-*feu* euh chez pas, Bruce Willis ou chez pas n'importe quoi un truc. Où d'un coup c'est euh la fin du *monde* et on protège le chef de l'ét—et il y a des militaires. Tu vois ? Ça devient—non mais là j'ai vu des *chars* militaires défilés mais *devant* moi à toute allure. Et alors là tu te dis, mais ça va pas du tout fin, tu sais c'est c'est comme si on t'avait pris et qu'on t'avait retourné le truc. Donc j'ai vécu ça, on a on est *rentré* et plus on avançait dans le Marais, on est passé par le Marais, plus il commençait à y avoir de nouveau un peu de monde, mais qui marchait très vite vers chez eux. En fait, peu de gens était dehors, certaines voitures certains taxis ramenaient des gens. Donc ça a commencé à nous rassurer et en fait j'ai commencé à ramener donc mon copain chez lui, fin celui avec qui j'étais. Et il m'a dit mais *reste* avec moi et j'ai dit non tu sais quoi ? Maintenant je suis content que tu sois chez toi, en fait j'ai *besoin* d'être chez moi parce que sinon je vais pas y arriver, j'ai besoin de, voilà. Et une fois qu'il était chez lui j'ai dit écoute on se reverra peut-être, je sais pas, en tout cas je suis rassuré tiens-moi—donne-moi tes nouvelles, je sais pas euh. Et, une fois que j'étais seule, j'avais la rue, et donc j'ai commencé à *traver*, tracer tracer. Et c'est comme si je redécouvrais les rues, que j'avais connu toujours. Il y avait des flics, *partout*. Euh, et à la fois c'était vide, et à la fois j'avais l'impression que les gens couraient, fin, j'avais jamais vécu ça. Et au dernier moment, j'approchais de chez moi, l'avenue Voltaire, j'ai dû la traverser, et je voyais au loin, bah l'espace du Bataclan puisqu'il y avait, c'est comme s'il y avait mille camions de flics, de pompiers qui étaient tous là-bas. Et moi j'étais à ce niveau-là et je traversais, et je me suis dit *bon*, je suis chez moi, dans cinq minutes tout va bien, je passe chez pas si tu vois la mairie du onzième, place Voltaire.

Oui

J'arrive et je me suis dit ça y est je vais être chez moi ça va se passer et au moment de tourner, là, j'ai eu une choque sur la place Voltaire, il y avait un, on appelle ça un hôpital du fortune, chez pas si tu vois le mot, un hôpital du fortune ça veut dire c'est un hôpital qu'on a créé—

D'accord, oui.

—pour l'occasion. En fait il y avait des tentes, blanches, partout. Avec le SAMU. Et en fait t'as pas l'habitude de ça parce que la place est vide normalement. Et moi je suis arrivé passer par là et d'un coup PAFF et je suis tombé là, et j'ai vu toutes ces tentes,

et je me suis dit mais c'est pas possible, c'est la guerre, c'est la guerre, c'est la guerre, j'arrêtais pas de dire ça, et je me suis pas rendu compte que j'avais absolument pas de salive, j'étais complètement, vide, de *tout*, j'avais qu'un truc c'était [*missed word*] pour revenir chez moi. J'ai réussi à remonter la rue, à regarder cet hôpital, je voyais beaucoup de gens, beaucoup de médecins qui s'efferaient. [*missed word*] Je suis arrivé chez moi. J'ai ouvert ma porte j'étais comme ça, j'ai fermé la porte. Et en fait je me suis *collé* [laughs] contre la porte comme ça, et je savais absolument pas où j'étais, et en fait à ce moment-là j'ai vu l'*apartment* que j'ai acheté, un lieu qui est à toi, qui est *chez* toi qui—et je me suis dit mais c'est,

horrible, c'est comme si c'était une nouvelle vie ou un nouveau Paris que je ne connais pas. Et à ce moment-là, j'ai craqué. Vraiment je me suis éfondré, j'ai j'ai commencé à *pleurer*, j'ai j'ai appelé mes parents, je leur ai dit que tout allait bien et, j'ai quasiment pas dormi en fait, j'ai vu que le Bataclan était fini et tout ça et le lendemain matin, mais j'étais totalement sonné [*missed word*] c'est un peu comme ça que ça c'est passé, c'est-à-dire que à la fois j'ai rien vécu de de virulent, mais j'ai tout vécu par euh, personne interposée.

Euh.

C'est le lendemain matin en fait que j'ai, que j'ai rappelé mon ex en fait, Yannick. Euhm. Et du coup il m'a raconté comment, comment ça s'est passé. Euh, c'était affreux parce qu'il était avec un ami à lui en fait ils sont descendus de son immeuble ils ont traversé un passage piéton et il y avait un scooter qui est arrivé *devant* eux. Le mec avait une carabine. Il a *tiré* sur les gens, et *lui* il était juste *derrière* le scooter. Et à ce moment-là son copain l'a *pris* comme ça et lui a dit mais cache-toi et cetera. Et le mec s'est retourné avec la mitraille et il l'a tiré partout. Et ils ont couru couru couru pour revenir dans l'immeuble et se cacher. Tu te dis mais, *quoi*, c'est pas possible, c'était affreux. Et en fait euhm, pendant tout le week-end, il y a eu une sorte de temps suspendu

parce que c'est les lieux que tu fréquentes, parce que c'est des gens et puis parce qu'il y avait énormément blessés, énormément de morts, et qu'on savait *pas* qui était mort. Donc on avait peur. Et euh

et voilà. C'est

c'est très bizarre de vivre ça parce qu'à la fois je suis, absolument pas concerné par ce qui s'est passé. Euhh je n'ai absolument pas été dans un des lieux mais à la fois c'est comme si euh on avait complètement, on m'avait pris et qu'on m'avait genre complètement balancé par terre et qu'on avait totalement euh, modifié ma perception de Paris quoi. Ça a été un avant et un après, mais *vraiment*. J'ai mis beaucoup beaucoup de temps à m'en remettre, mais vraiment.

Oui

Ouais.

Est-ce que tu pourrais me parler un peu plus sur cette idée de

prendre du temps à de devoir

te remettre? C'est ça, le verbe?

Ouais, du temps à se remettre. Euhm.

Déjà c'est comme t'avais peur de ressortir de chez toi.

Oui.

Je sais que le samedi, personne n'est sorti. De mes amis. J'avais des amis qui habitaient à côté de chez moi, et on s'est rappelé et il y en a deux qui sont venus à la maison en fait, le soir, et on a dîné ensemble. À la fois on riait, on était totalement euh soulagé et à la fois on était totalement terrorisé, mais *terrorisés* il y a une copine qui m'a demandé de la ramener, elle habite à cinquante mètres [*I laugh softly*], elle m'a demandé de la ramener en bas de chez elle. C'était affreux. Et puis le dimanche,

il faisait beau, bizarrement, je m'en souviens. Et j'ai rejoint un copain, en terrasses. Et on s'est volontairement *forcé* à prendre un déjeuner en terrasses et à se dire *bon*. Mais on arrêtaient pas de, de regarder autour de nous. Je sais que ce jour-là il y avait des mouvements de panique. Euh, dans le Marais, parce que, il y avait des bruits, voilà, Place de la République au, au Petit Cambodge il y avait des mouvements de panique aussi. Et, et on les a vu et donc

du coup on est re-rentre chez soi et on s'est cache. Et il y a eu vraiment quelque chose de, bon, voilà, de ça. Et la semaine qui a suivi, c'était un traumatisme pour tout le monde. Tu sais déjà euhm, il faut revenir à janvier parce qu'en janvier il y avait eu les attentats contre le magazine Charlie Hebdo. Et quand il y a eu ça, mais on était, *choqué*, c'est-à-dire qu'en fait, encore une fois c'est un quartier que moi je connais très très bien c'est comme si ça s'est passé euh dans une rue à côté de laquelle t'habites à New York, en fait c'est *ton* quartier quoi, et de *voir* qu'on avait assassiné des gens euh, dans le bureau, dans la rue, qu'après ça s'est terminé en prise d'otage dans une zone industrielle fin, c'était cauchemardesque. On avait *jamaïs* vécu ça, c'était affreux. Donc, on était déjà traumatisé par ça, et *là* ça s'est reproduit donc t'avais vraiment l'impression que, c'était le début, de quelque chose de bien pire et que ça n'allait pas s'arrêter.

August 2019, Paris

1. Intersubjectivity. I think a lot about how language plays into this, which is part of why I so badly wanted the experience of interviewing someone in French. How does my identity as a non-native French speaker and listener change this encounter? How does the fact that he speaks French change the way that he narrates and experiences? Something felt very different about listening to him narrate—I'm not sure if this was solely due to the obvious fact that he was speaking French, or if it felt like his linguistic world view allowed him a perspective that I hadn't experienced before. I felt as though listening to him speak was truly to see through a new lens; I was gaining access to something new. It was as if he said things in French that couldn't be articulated in English, or that through their articulation allow for a much different perspective and experience.

2. There are still things I wish I could express as gracefully and as effortlessly as I can in English. When those moments of facility come, when there's seemingly no thinking involved, it feels like magic. As if I am accessing a special something that is often locked away. I felt like I had accessed my little secret garden, was tending to it, cultivating it. Mathieu told me that he hadn't spoken of the attacks in this way before. It makes me feel such a deep sense of contentment and accomplishment when I hear this. I feel like I've done my job.

3. Today reminded me of the importance of embracing discomfort—I feared that the circumstances of this interview would bring too much discomfort—a French-speaking stranger coming over to my makeshift home. But as I was trying to explain to Mathieu regarding why I appreciate life in France so much, living amongst discomforts my life back home is lacking, it's so meaningful to fling myself into situations of discomfort, particularly linguistic discomfort, to improve and also to realize that I am more competent than I allow myself to believe.

~

Mais c'est la première fois de ma *vie* que j'ai eu *peur* d'être euh, à Paris et de *sentir* le danger, je n'ai jamais senti comme ça. Et ça a *vraiment* modifié quelque chose. Ça a modifié quelque chose dans mon comportement bah après petit à petit bon on est retourné à des concerns moi je suis retourné chez pas deux mois après pas avant avec beaucoup de sécurité avec chaque fois le—et puis ça a changé beaucoup de choses euh, dans les transports en commun, beaucoup de suspicion, tu regardes les autres ou t'es hyper euh, dans quelque chose de tendue. Euh, ça a changé le comportement de gens qui sont plus en plus agressifs. Moi je trouve qu'il y a un avant et un après, et je l'ai beaucoup dit et, [*missed word*] c'est que dans mon quartier il y a quelque chose qui est devenue beaucoup plus *tendue*. Euh entre les gens, entre quelque chose de de difficile, et puis encore une fois de passer devant, devant les lieux, où tu as vécu, où tu as bu des verres, et où tu vois qu'il y a des gens qui sont décédés. Et après, petit à petit bah, des amis qui ont perdu des proches, et petit à petit tu apprends que tel ou tel ami était là-bas, et qu'elle l'a survécu. Et donc il y a, comme des gens qui sont traumatisés de ça, avec qui tu commences à en parler, à vivre. Et en fait c'est c'est très bizarre. En fait je te raconte ça parce que, ça met du temps, et puis petit à petit on te dit oui mais Paris est une fête il faut continuer à s'amuser et cetera, c'est pas évident parce que t'as *peur*. Et moi j'avais jamais senti ça. Et j'ai une amie israélienne euh qui m'a dit mais tu sais, moi j'ai vécu à Tel Aviv et en fait tu vis avec une, une sorte de peur sur ta gueule parce que t'as l'impression qu'il va y avoir des bombes tout le temps, et du coup, je sais ce que vous avez vécu mais nous on le vit tout le temps. Et je me suis dit bah ouais, mais en fait je le pensais pas le vivre une fois à Paris. Ça m'a fait penser au, à 9/11 en fait parce que du coup tu

te dis, mais pourquoi ? Qu'est-ce qui fait qu'il te vient un truc pareil quoi ? Euh, voilà c'est une expérience très bizarre parce que, c'est ton quartier, c'est des choses que t'aimes, que tu mets du temps à apprivoiser à re-apprivoiser. Et un jour, quelques mois après tu te retrouves en terrasses. Et parfois t'y penses et tu dis tiens, maintenant j'ai plus peur mais, j'ai une vue qui est complètement modifiée, un peu dangereuse, un peu plus, changée. J'ai beaucoup pensé à un moment je me suis dit il faut que je parte de Paris. Ça ne va pas plus,

et puis je me suis dit ma vie est là, en fait. Mais euh, voilà. Je ne sais—on y pense encore parfois mais, voilà. La vie a repris et maintenant, heureusement d'ailleurs, parce que sinon—mais c'est vrai que c'était des moments qui étaient complètement—j'avais jamais vécu ça de ma vie et c'était quelque chose d'assez, affreux, en fait. Ouais, vraiment.

Est-ce que tu te sens en sécurité, en ce moment ? À Paris et dans, dans le quartier, plutôt ?

Oui. Je me sens en sécurité. Après, je trouve qu'il y a, est-ce que tu vois ce que c'est l'incivilité ?

Non.

Euhm. La civilité c'est quand les gens sont *polis*—

Oui, je comprends ce mot, donc c'est l'inverse.

Et il y a de plus en plus d'*incivilités* donc des gens qui ne sont *pas* polis, qui te *poussent*, qui te rendent des dents, qui sont, agressifs, je ne l'ai jamais ressenti avant, et là je le ressens. Et ça ça me dérange énormément. Et là est-ce que c'est parce que je vieillis ? Et c'était déjà présent avant mais je le voyais moins ? Est-ce que c'est le quartier ? Parce que c'est vrai que dans le troisième je vivais un peu moins ça. Je *trouve* qu'il y a quelque chose de beaucoup plus *dur* dans les rapports aux humains, dans quelque chose de—alors après je sais pas si, bon moi je pense qu'il a eu un avant et un après, vraiment. Mais déjà parce que,

en France, tu sais,
on a un problème de racisme, assez fort. Euh, il y a le front national, tu vois—

Oui

—l'extrême droite qui, qui est très présent. C'est vrai que ce genre d'événement *permet* à des populistes et a des extrémistes d'avoir d'un coup les paroles qui sont difficiles. Et toi, t'es là en train de dire oui mais là il faut différencier tout donc du coup même la population tu vois je sais pas même les gens musulmans même les gens qui étaient immigrés se sont senti hyper euh touchés donc il a dû—tout a été mélangé, et c'est compliqué, c'est très compliqué parce que tu te retrouves dans une société qui finalement juge chacun et chacun commence à se regarder bizarrement—fin, c'était affreux quoi, c'était une période affreuse déjà qu'on avait pas besoin de ça, mais bon, c'était dur, c'était dur. Et puis après ce qui est drôle c'est que moi qui travaille dans l'événementiel euh je suis en rapport avec des marques et je dépende du budget de communication autant de dire que tout a été coupé parce que des gens voulaient plus communiquer ils avaient peur. Et après on a vu les impacts sur le tourisme de Paris on a vu l'impacts sur euh, les problèmes que les hôtels avaient, nous-même quand on voulait organiser les événements, maintenant on a des tonnes et des tonnes de sécurité. Et le fait de me rendre compte, pour *revenir* à cette histoire du taxi quand je me suis réveillé, qui passe, c'était le moment en fait où il y avait eu ces attentats—fin le tire en fait dans l'onzième, c'était les coups de feu, puisque c'était l'heure des coups de feu. Et effectivement ça ne ressemblait *pas* à des coups de feu, ça ressemblait à des, chez pas, des coups de pétards ou des feux d'artifice tu vois donc—évidemment tu vas pas penser à des coups de feu.

August 2019, Paris

1. I finally (re)saw the Bataclan yesterday, on one of my final days in Paris. It always seems to somehow succeed at hiding itself even when I know I'm right there. A group of older French tourists with Quecha and Osprey backpacks and

hiking boots enter into the Place du Voltaire and gather around the marble memorial. Three minutes earlier I had stood before it, reading each of the 90 names carved into the stone. Some of them are written together—Elsa DEPLACE et Patricia SAN MARTIN—which strikes me as a tragically beautiful gesture. Placed beside it are two bouquets of flowers, a candle, and photos of two of the victims. Beneath one of them is written:

“Be soft. Do not let the world make you hard.
Do not let pain make you hate.
Do not let bitterness steal your sweetness.
Take pride that even though the rest of the world may disagree,
You still believe it is a beautiful place.”

There is a cool breeze and the dappled sunlight shines through the leaves to dance on the sandy ground of the park. It is le quinze août, a holiday in France, though for what reason no French person I’ve asked has been able to explain to me. Paris feels quieter today, even more shops than usual have shut down and the streets have been left decongested. This place is a crossroads, avenues intersecting and angling out in every direction—Voltaire and Richard Lenoir crossing over one another and shifting directions. Separating the two neighborhoods I love most—the special pocket of the eleventh that simultaneously signals feelings of home and of danger, and the north-eastern part of the Marais to the west. I look towards the Bataclan and imagine; I cannot. I think of Catherine and of Fred, what it must have looked and felt like to have finally exited its front doors after hours of terror you weren’t confident you’d make it out of. I was not able to ask them, I do not know. I see the dormers jutting out of its thatched roof and think of those who hid in the rafters, of the hostages from the documentary I watched last November 13 with Lily. How I wish I could talk to them, how I wish I could listen to them. The building looks lifeless, calm, empty. The restaurant downstairs is closed, probably for August vacation. I cannot imagine any life inside. The building itself appears like a monument, no longer able to serve a practical purpose. A dreadful history has taken over.

~

Est-ce que tu es revenu au Bataclan après les attentats ?

Non. Je suis jamais retourné.

Non ?

Jamais. Euhm.

Je crois que je hmmm, je sais pas si je pourrais y retourner. Vraiment. Il y a des gens, des amis à moi qui sont retournés. Et puis, d'un autre côté, il faut que ça se repasse. Je suis retourné euhm au Petit Cambodge, dîner. Parce que c'est un endroit où j'allais régulièrement. Euhm. C'est très bizarre, je ne sais pas si tu y es allée mais au Petit Cambodge en fait—

Oui

—ils ont gardé en fait des, des morceaux de carrelages en fait.

Je savais pas.

Là où il y avait des impacts de balles. Donc ils ont fait ces carrelages là. Euhm. Après, le Bataclan, j'y passe devant tous les jours puisqu'en fait c'est mon chemin et que je m'arrête et que j'ai des amis à côté. Non, je suis—mais je crois que, chez pas, après je suis allé voir beaucoup de concerts, et puis parfois t'y penses et puis parfois tu dis comment ça se fait en fait tu vas voir des concerts et regardes où est l'issue de secours quoi pour te, te rassurer et, et voilà. Et puis après il y a quelque chose de très fataliste de se dire bah si c'est maintenant, c'est maintenant. Mais ça j'avais jamais avant. Tu vois ? C'est bizarre. C'était très bizarre de se dire au final, une nouvelle vie commence dans mon appartement euh en tout cas pour *moi* une nouvelle vie et puis deux mois après, cet appartement était une sorte de de de *bunker* quoi un truc où tu te réfugies où t'as peur, je l'[*misséd word*] pas du tout comme ça. Maintenant ça va c'est plus du tout le cas fin. C'est, voilà.

Mais c'est très bizarre de se sentir comme ça, chez toi—

Ouais, ah j'avais jamais ressenti ça.

—quand même

Je n'étais jamais rentré chez moi avec ces sentiments de peur. Jamais, jamais. De marcher dans les rues de Paris en courant, parce que tu as peur, tu vois des militaires, je n'ai jamais ressenti ça. Et pourtant encore une fois je n'est pas été—là seule chose c'était que j'étais en contact avec mon ex qui a été, qui a échappé à ça. Mais euh, oui, c'était quelque chose, vraiment.

August 2019, Paris

1. My last night in Paris; I always get very nostalgic and sentimental on last evenings here. I wish it felt more exciting and celebratory, but I'm sitting alone at La Fontaine de Belleville in the tenth. The terrasses felt a bit too vulnerable so I placed myself in the back corner with the hopes of finding an outlet to plug my dying phone into. No such luck. Leaving France is complicated—every time I leave, I don't know when I'll be back, and then I inevitably end up back here more quickly than I thought. It's a frightening thought to not know when I'll be back, and to also feel that, in a way, this project that I've been working on for three years is finally coming to an end. It's a strange thing to exist between the binaries of tourist and local, to not live in a place yet to have inhabited it in some way, to have to say goodbye quite often not knowing when you'll get to say hello again. I said to Caitlin this morning that I think I've realized that my love of being in Paris is really a love of being in France, of being in a place I've made into a home, a language I've built an important facet of my identity in and upon, relationships I've fostered through learning and exploring in this language. And then it's the people; the fact that I can walk back into Café Oberkampf and Holybelly and Peloton after all these years and am welcomed by familiar faces and invited into warm, comfortable, familiar corners. And that amidst this vast city, I am somehow able to find the people who have made it some version of a home for me, who have given me places and people and things to come back to. And that oral history has led me to these people. That this project has further tied and entrenched and familiarized and localized me to and in this place. That

is has allowed me to discover new people and places and histories and truths, that it has allowed me to confront the past and present, to excavate the past, to revisit emotions and accompany others as they excavate and rediscover and revisit their own, and discover new truths within the ones they already knew as I discover my own.

~

Est-ce que tu as reparlé avec le copain avec qui tu dinais ?

Oui. On s'est revu. On s'est revu, trois semaines après. On s'est revu et je l'ai invité à manger chez moi et on a beaucoup reparlé de ça. Euh. Et ce qui était drôle c'est que, lui est artiste, il est dessinateur. Et euh, et il m'a offert un dessin, en fait. Et du coup c'était très chouette parce que du coup j'ai euh, j'ai gardé son dessin, un dessin qui représente des comédiens et du coup j'ai, j'ai j'ai trouvé ça très fort. Alors je te conseille quelque chose, je sais pas si ça a été traduit, il y a une illustratrice à Paris qui s'appelle Catherine Meurice—

Ok

—que tu connais ou pas ? Non ?

Non

Elle faisait partie de l'équipe de Charlie Hebdo et euhm, elle s'est réveillée tard le matin où il y a eu l'attentat et elle est arrivée au moment l'attentat avait lieu. Donc elle a échappée, à l'attentat. Elle a survécu. Et elle était illustratrice donc elle dessinait, elle faisait les dessins un peu satiriques et tout ça. Euh, un an ou deux sont passés et elle a sorti une bande dessinée qui est un roman graphique, en fait. Qui s'appelle *La Légèreté*. Et qui est exceptionnel. À la fois drôle, parce que c'est sa *vie*, mais c'est sa vie après les attentats. Et en fait, elle explique un truc très fort c'est que, après ça, elle était vide de tout elle a perdu tous ces amis en fait, et elle a surtout échapper à la mort. Et elle explique un truc c'est qu'elle dit comment est-ce qu'on *fait* pour survivre à ça ? Et je te la fais court mais elle dit, il reste *l'art*, il reste quelque chose qui fait que l'art est toujours là. Et il restera là. Et j'ai trouvé ça assez fort parce que j'ai acheté cette B.D. peu [*missed*

word] après que ce copain m'a offert ce dessin, et je me suis dit finalement, mon *fuck you* quoi on a encore des trucs qui sont là. Et on arrive toujours à créer et ils n'auront pas ça, tu vois ? Parce qu'ils sont débiles, voilà. Il m'a offert ce dessin que j'ai gardé, qui est exposé chez moi. Voilà.

C'est, c'est super sympa.

Ouais ouais ouais c'est chouette, très très cool.

C'est bizarre de, partager—

Et on s'est jamais revus—

Non ?

Non. On s'est vus une fois après et on s'est jamais revus. Pourtant c'était quelqu'un de cool, il était très chouette et je crois qu'il me trouvait chouette aussi c'est juste que, je trouve que ça, que ça a dû *créer* quelque chose qui nous a juste unis ce soir-là, avec des gens, et je me souviens de cette fille chez qui j'étais qui je ne reverrai plus jamais, je ne sais même plus comment elle s'appelle, euhhh mais que voilà, qui nous a juste accueillis et qui nous a hébergés chez elle le temps que. Et voilà. C'est cette histoire là, quoi. Mais c'est cool. Et voilà, et je suis aujourd'hui en train de te parler de ça et c'est très, c'est très cool, mais c'était assez intense ouais.

Est-ce que tu as d'autres choses à dire sur le sujet ?

Non, pour moi c'est
ce que je voulais dire.

Oui. Bah merci.

Mais je t'en prie. C'était clair pour toi ?

Oui, très clair.

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