

Eavesdropper

by

Maja Li Härdelin

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As a child, Maja Li Härdelin faked illness to skip school and spend the day with her mum, who would lower her voice to keep her daughter from listening in on her private conversations: 'But the whispers only amplified the content.'

Remembered fact and dramatised self-reflection mix to become synthetic consciousness at the bottom of being. Amplification, then: as a child, Maja Li Härdelin (or her persona in the film) faked illness to skip school (she used the power of falsity to define responsibility differently) and spend the day with her mum (a caregiver who flips into alien with a change of tone), who would lower her voice (is the voice the seat of spirituality?) to keep her daughter from listening in on her private conversations (mutual betrayal and sex are not far away here): 'But the whispers only amplified the content.'

In the first of several unexpected encounters, the 'unknown being' appears. It is a gnome with grey, wrinkly skin and a malicious voice which adds the register of the supernatural to that of psychoanalysis, in the context of a discussion about 'the gospel of truth'. By the artist's own admission, "gnome" is an inadequate term for the nameless things that lurk 'in the corners of reality'.

When you pick up contraband within the real to enrich and augment relations to other humans or other beings, signification begins to heave and drift. The micro-event attains a staged, meaningful quality: a cushion or illuminated specks of hovering dust assume a

filthy eloquence; filled chocolates become slips of the tongue. Even in fairy tales, mundane materiality is not saturated with meaning like these obscene definitions of perfection.

As above, so below: eavesdropping, not simply to transgress the taboo but to affirm the real as a multi-dimensional ecology. Unless you are as fundamentalist about 'the gospel of truth' as straight religious people are there is irony at play in mystical reality, in the simple sense that irony places truth elsewhere than it is supposed to be. Irony dynamizes and renders movable the notion of truth, thereby shifting the focus away from truth-as-such to the means and ways with which it is mediated – a profoundly aesthetic proposition.

Yes, the unknown being eats children. 'We are closing in on the possibility of understanding people', the professor says. Family... Nationality... Maybe music allows for eavesdropping on other dimensions? Daring to play loud enough. Permanent penetration of the skull. Through its own meandering logic, alterity can appear through tiny holes.

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