



## Paradoxia:

a visit to Lydia Lunch landscape

Her stories are more like a landscape painting than a work of modern art, despite the fact that the persona of Lydia Lunch is Everything Modern: imagine a life written by Tama Janowitz, directed by Julian Schnabel, and starring well, Lydia Lunch (or maybe Liv Tyler).

"Marty had a unique relationship with pain. It was almost a reminder of his existence. A safety zone where he could retreat to divest himself of all other responsibilities. Extreme physical pain elevates you to a zen-like state that shuts everything else out. It is the great divider, separating those who know not to embrace it, be cleansed by it..."

--Lydia Lunch "Paradoxia: A Predator's Diary"

By the time the no-wave movement was gathering steam in New York City, I was a Jersey girl who'd dated a enough guys from the other side of the river to grow disenchanted. Patti Smith had gone into early retirement. I was barely past twenty but ready to retire too. I needed some fucking stability, so I was dating this older guy --a journalist who'd covered the Newark riots and knew Leroy Jones. The journalist was suffering from a collision course with temporary setbacks, and living with his mother in a house that looked like it belonged to a relative of mine. But all my relatives were dead, in Florida, or had simply given up on me. So I took to the place and was nursing a cold, when out of the blue, on the blue and white checked sofa, he proposed to me. He got down on bended knee. I needed to blow my nose but it was not from emotion. All I felt was really fucking awkward. And like a cad. Had I lead him on? I was just hanging out.

I was twenty-one and Lydia Lunch was twenty-three. Life reeled her into the band Teenage Jesus and the Jerks while I was sitting in a park across the Hudson with my friends, smoking weed and drinking wine from plastic cups. My boyfriend (originally from da Bronx, now living with relatives in Jersey) was a drummer. His band played at the Ground Round on weekends in Hackensack, New Jersey. I didn't get across the river much in those days.

Lunch performed with Eight-Eye Spy and 13-13 (in her pre-Goth Queen of Siam persona); she worked

with the Birthday Party. Did some theatre and film, including "The Right Side of My Brain" and "Fingered" (for director Richard Kern).

My mother-in-law thought that if I joined the local Women's Club, my discontent would assuage beneath the barrage of banal female camaraderie. Oh yeah; sure, Ma.

Lunch stripped away the notes (or stopped dating musicians, another female evolution) and started focusing on spoken word pieces. Through her own Widowspeak Productions, she released "The Uncensored Lydia Lunch."

I was reading Marion Zimmer Bradley's "The Mists of Avalon," dragging it out toward my due date. I gave birth early, bringing "The Mists..." and my dog-eared bible, Patti Smith's "Babel," with me to the hospital. On August 9, 1985 I gave birth to a girl and became a mother. I was twenty-three and my husband was forty. When I turned twenty-four two months later, I thought about a guy I knew --a bass player-- who would be turning twenty-four the next month. I wondered what had happened to him.

I was at my most hard-body when I discovered the post-Bukowski writing of Harry Crews. Imagine my surprise when Lydia Lunch and Kim Gordon (of Sonic Youth) did their tribute to him. Lunch by now had collaborated with Herbert Selby Jr, Henry Rollins, Nick Cave, Jim Thirwell, Rowland S. Howard and Don Bajema. I was a mom on extended maternity leave. I never did go back to the conventional work force. I guess I have that in common with the Lady Lydia.

"Had to crank it up another notch. Manipulation elevated to Art Form. Put it up on the stage. In front of an audience, who like johns, pay by the hour, the half hour, or in this case, every ten minutes. Instead of pleasure, sell them pain. My pain. Their own pain. Regurgitated and spat back at them. A public platform for psychotherapy. Make them pay to be tortured. Assaulted. Abused. The audience as whipping boy, whose sex could and would be used against them.

"Obliterate the safety net that separates the spectator from the exhibitionist. The doctor from the patient. Play wet-nurse to nightsickness. Detail every form of madness, hysteria, torture, obsession. An unholy vortex of verbal abuse. A hideous din. Around which forms a cult of negation. The figurehead, a fallen Goddess, whose cruelty and hatred would be embraced. Revered. Reviled. Feared. A classic nihilist's philosophy the only dogma: "That which does not kill me, makes me stronger..."  
--Lydia Lunch "Paradoxia: A Predator's Diary"

Lunch has had books published, performances, including a collaboration with Exene Cervenka (formerly of X); she's plaster casted her own body parts, led workshops (alright, am I the only one who hasn't done *that?*), and exhibited photos. I'm still just hanging out, waiting for life to happen.

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Omega cd recommendation: "Kerouac-- kicks joy darkness," 1997 Rykodisc (including Lunch's spoken word version of "Bowery Blues"). More excerpts from her books at [Perfect Sound Forever](#). Links to [no-wave](#) and UBL's Lydia Lunch [page](#). Above photo of Lunch and Cave by David Arnoff.

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