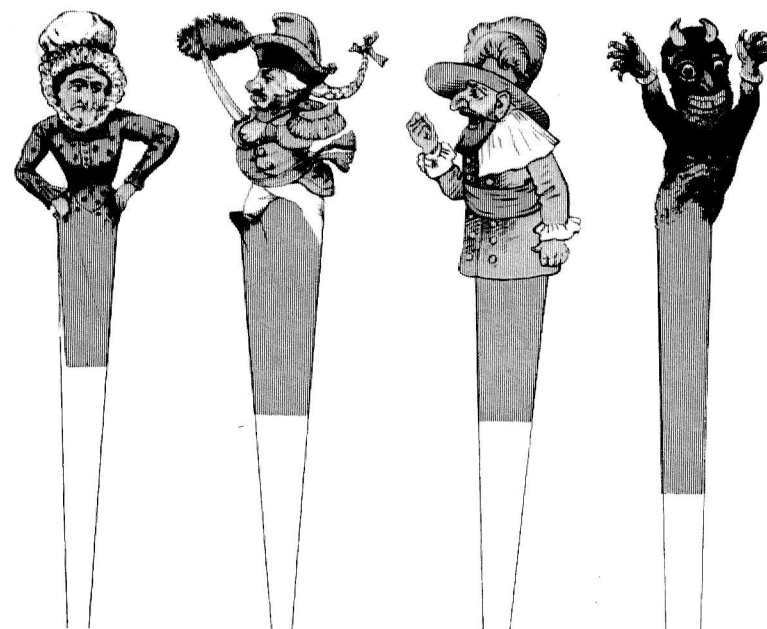
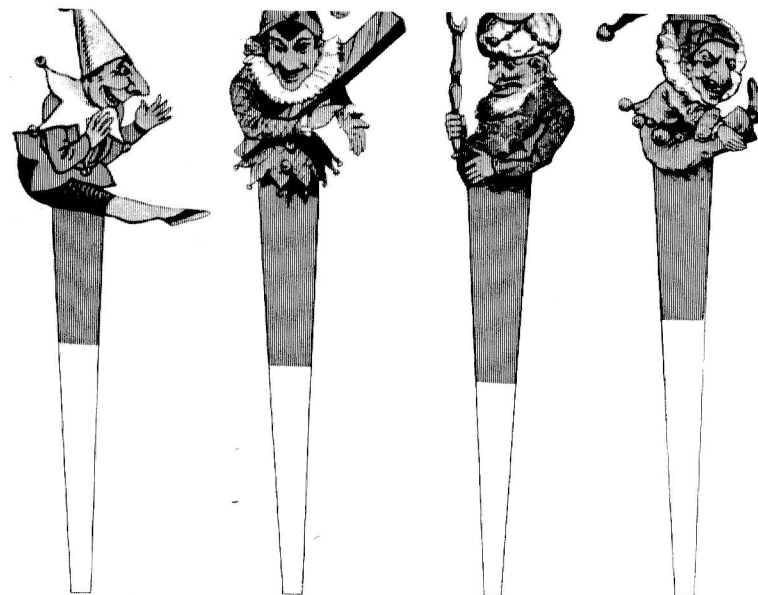


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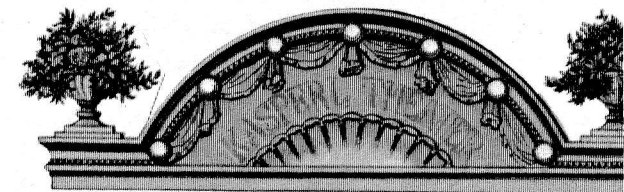


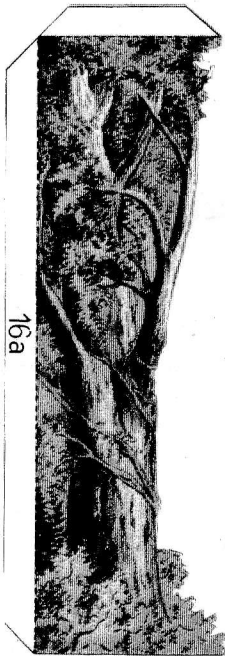
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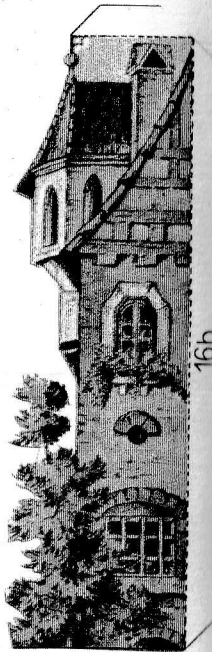
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16a



16b

VIRGILIO PIÑERA THE ACTÆON CASE

1944

translated by MARK SCHAFER

The gentleman in the yellow hat approached me to say: "Would you care to form a part of the chain...?" And added, without any transition: "You know, the chain of Actæon...?"

"Is it possible...?" I responded. "The chain of Actæon really exists?"

"Yes," he answered coolly, "but it's far more important to specify the conditions, the two conditions of the Actæon case." Unable to contain myself, I unbuttoned the top two buttons of his shirt and fixed my gaze on his chest.

"Yes," he repeated, "the two conditions of the Actæon case. The first (he in turn extended his right hand and opened my shirt halfway), the first is that the myth of Actæon may recur anywhere." I lightly sunk the nails of my thumb and the smallest finger into his flesh.

"Much has been said about Greece with regards to the Actæon case," he continued, "but believe me (and here he also sunk his thumb and fingernails lightly into the flesh of my breast), even here in Cuba or Cuzco or any other part of the world, the Actæon case may occur with total propriety." Slightly increasing the pressure of my nails, I responded: well then, your chain is going to be enormously important."

"Of course," he answered, "of course it will. Everything depends, however, on the capacity of the aspirant to the chain of Actæon," (and, as he said this, he increased the force of his grip even more). Immediately he add-

ed, as if possessed by a new boldness: "But I believe you possess the necessary qualities..." I must have let out a moan, very soft, but his ears picked it up, for he said to me—nearly shouting—"The second condition (I looked at his nails digging into my breast, but could no longer see them, a fact which I later attributed to the extraordinary increase in the volume of his voice), the second condition is that it isn't known, if it's possible to mark, to delimit, specify, indicate, to fix (and all of those verbs seemed like the powerful blasts of a train whistle) where Actæon ends and his dogs begin."

"But," I objected weakly, "then isn't Actæon a victim?"

"Absolutely not, sir, absolutely not." He was spraying great globs of saliva on my face, on my jacket. The dogs could just as well be the victims as the victimizers, and in this case, you know what Actæon could also be." Excited by that stupendous revelation, I couldn't contain myself, but unbuttoned the rest of his shirt buttons, and pressed my other hand to his breast. "Oh! You free me from such a weight!" I cried. "You lift such a weight from my breast!"

He looked down at my breast, where he had likewise placed a free hand, and said to me, matching words to action:

"Of course, if it's so easy; if, after understanding it, it's so easy..." The characteristic sound of hands scratching around in the dirt could be heard. "It's so easy," he said (and his voice was now a melisma). "Imagine the scene: the dogs discover Actæon... yes, they discover him as I've discovered you; Actæon, seeing them, is filled with savage joy; the dogs ardently desire that Actæon escape; the dogs believe that it would be best for Actæon to be ripped to shreds; and, do you know...?" (here he was filled with a deep dismay, but I quickly reanimated him by burying my two hands up to my wrists in his chest). "Thank you! thank you!" he said to me in his thread of voice, "the dogs know perfectly well that they would remain in an inferior position with respect to Actæon; yes" (and I inspired him with confidence by sinking my nails deeper and deeper into his chest), "yes, in this unrewarded, almost ridiculous position, if they want..."

"Excuse me," I said. "Excuse me for interrupting" (and now my voice called to mind the same whistle blasts he let out), "but you live convinced" (I said this while covering him all the while with a downpour of saliva) "that the dogs will not stand for this disgrace, for this ominous condition that is victory. No! No! Somehow, sir," I was shouting, "they will not remain, rest assured, be convinced of that; I assure you, believe me, those dogs will be devoured as well... by Actæon!"

At this point, I couldn't say who pronounced the last words, for, as we matched words to action, our hands were penetrating the deepest regions of our respective chests, and as we matched action to words (it would have been impossible to distinguish between one and the other: my voice corresponding to his action, his action to my voice), we were becoming a single mass, a single mound, a single elevation, a single, unending chain.

SAMUEL R. DELANY
TIMES SQUARE RED,
TIMES SQUARE BLUE

1999

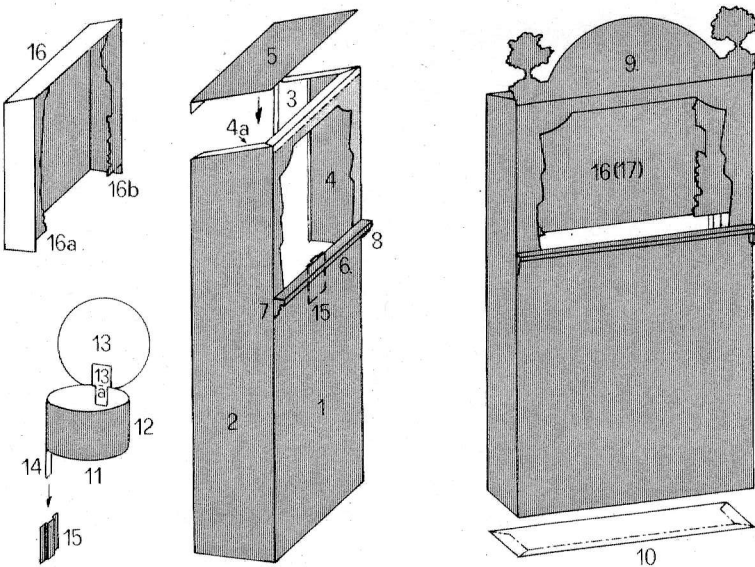
As long as there is something like experience, it is not entirely mine.
 —AVITAL RONELL, Finitude's Score

§1.1. We are all aware that landlords and tenants exist in a fundamentally antagonistic relationship. Generally speaking, throughout most of what we might call the middle classes of our society, landlords tend to be somewhat better off financially than their tenants. Certainly the class war is as strong there as between any groups save, perhaps, workers and employers.

With that in mind, here is a tale:

A black woman born in Nottaway, Virginia, my maternal grandmother came from Petersburg to New York City at age eighteen in 1898 and moved to Harlem in 1902, when it was still a German neighborhood. With my grandfather, an elevator operator in a downtown office building and later a Grand Central Terminal redcap, she took rooms in the first house in Harlem opened to blacks, on 132nd Street between Seventh and Lenox. Owned by a black man married to a white woman, the house rented to men and women working as servants in the neighborhood. My grandmother told of returning to her rooms after work, while the Germans sitting in front of their houses along Seventh Avenue played zithers through the evening.

A number of times in the sixties and seventies, Grandma spoke of the social practice in the twenties, thirties, and, in a few places, into the forties, of the landlord's annual or sometimes semiannual visit to her apartment. My sense



is that these visits were notably different from the monthly visits to the landlord to pay the rent—in the days before universal banking.

Expected by both tenants and landlords, the visits allowed tenants to point out directly to the building's owner any breakages or repairs that were needed. The owner got a chance to see how the tenant was treating his or her property. By opening the door for less formal ones, these scheduled visits established an arena for social interchange. From them, landlords gained a sense of the tenants as individuals and tenants took a sense of the landlord as a person.

In no way did the social practice obviate the socioeconomic antagonism between the classes. But it tended to stabilize relationships at the personal level and restrict conflict to the economic level itself—keeping it from spilling over into other, personal situations. What eroded this practice of landlord visits was, first, the economic forces of the Depression. Pressures on tenants (from the exhaustion of having two or three jobs to the anomie of having no job at all) became such that tenants began housing extra materials or extra people in their apartment to the point that a good day's cleaning could not cover over the evidence. Models for bourgeois living standards became less available, as did the time and the energy to implement them. Landlords found themselves unable to afford keeping the facilities in the first-class condition tenants expected.

Tenants began to see the visits as prying. Landlords began to see the visits as a formal responsibility empty of content and—finally—an unnecessary nuisance, in which they had to listen to demands they could not afford to meet. Repair work was now delegated to a superintendent whose job was to carry out those repairs as inexpensively as possible. While more stringent rules were instituted to restrict property-damaging wear and tear, in practice tenants were now allowed greater leeway in what they might do to the house. Older tenants saw the failure of the landlord to visit as a dereliction of responsibility. But younger tenants cited the “privilege” of better-off tenants in more lavish properties, often paying far higher rents, to forgo such visits. Why shouldn't the privilege of the better-off be a right—the right of privacy—for all?

[...]

§1.3. At the rhetorical level, the trace of the social practice my decade-and-a-half dead grandmother spoke about still lingers in the language, as tenants on the Upper West Side speak about our landlords' “seeing to” certain repairs, even though the landlord will not and does not intend to set eyes on anything within the front door of the building—just as the term “landlord” is itself a rhetorical holdover from a time and set of social practices when the important things the owner was “lord” over were, indeed, “land” and the “tenants to the land,” rather than the buildings erected upon it.

§1.4. The betraying signs that one discourse has displaced or transformed into another are often the smallest rhetorical shifts. The shift from landlord visits to superintendents in charge of repairs is signaled by the rhetorical shift between “the landlord saw to the repairs” as a literal statement and “the landlord saw to the repairs” as a metaphor. I say “shifts,” but these rhetorical pairings are much better looked at, on the level of discourse, as rhetorical collisions. The sign that a discursive collision has occurred is that the former meaning has been forgotten and the careless reader, not alert to the details of the changed social context, reads the older rhetorical figure as if it were the newer.

As are the space of the unconscious and the space of discourse, the space where the class war occurs as such is, in its pure form, imaginary—imaginary not in the Lacanian sense but rather in the mathematical sense. Imaginary numbers—those involved with i , the square root of minus-one—do not exist. But they have measurable and demonstrable effects on the real (i.e., political) materiality of science and technology. Similarly, the structures, conflicts, and displacements that occur in the unconscious, the class war, and the space of discourse are simply too useful to ignore in explaining what goes on in the world we live in, unto two men yelling in the hall, one a landlord and one a tenant, if not mayhem out on the streets themselves, or the visible changes in a neighborhood, like Times Square or, indeed, the Upper West Side, over a decade or so, and the specificities of rhetorical shift.

[...]

§4.2. Two orders of social force are always at work. One set is centripetal and works to hold a given class stable. Another set is centrifugal and works to break a given class apart.

The first set runs from identity, through familiarity, to lethargy, to fear of difference—all of which work to hold a class together. These are the forces that the networking situation must appeal to, requisition, and exploit.

The second set has to do, however, with the needs and desires that define the class in the first place: hunger, sex, ambition in any one of a dozen directions—spatial to economic to aesthetic to intellectual. These forces militate for breaking up a class, driving it apart, and sending individuals off into other class arenas. This is the level where, in a democracy, contact functions as an anti-entropic method for changing various individuals' material class groundings. The reason these forces work the way they do is simply that when such desires and needs concentrate at too great a density in too small a social space over too long a time, they become that much harder to fulfill—even when you pay generous honoraria to people who might help fill them, to move briefly into that crowded social space and dispense data about the process, without dispensing the actual rewards and benefits that those involved in the process seek. Love/desire/awe/fear/ discomfort/terror/ abjection (horror) is the human response range to greater or lesser power differentials.

The centripetal forces work to tame the components of that response. Those components underlie and are the centrifugal forces.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT LESSONS

1795

The first book of a series which I intended to have written for my unfortunate girl.

LESSON I

CAT. Dog. Cow. Horse. Sheep. Pig. Bird. Fly.
Man. Boy. Girl. Child.
Head. Hair. Face. Nose. Mouth. Chin. Neck. Arms. Hand. Leg. Foot. Back.
Breast.
House. Wall. Field. Street. Stone. Grass.
Bed. Chair. Door. Pot. Spoon. Knife. Fork. Plate. Cup. Box. Boy. Bell.
Tree. Leaf. Stick. Whip. Cart. Coach.
Frock. Hat. Coat. Shoes. Shift. Cap.
Bread. Milk. Tea. Meat. Drink. Cake.

LESSON II

Come. Walk. Run. Go. Jump. Dance. Ride. Sit. Stand. Play. Hold. Shake.
Speak. Sing. Cry. Laugh. Call. Fall.
Day. Night. Sun. Moon. Light. Dark. Sleep. Wake.
Wash. Dress. Kiss. Comb.
Fire. Hot. Burn. Wind. Rain. Cold.
Hurt. Tear. Break. Spill.
Book. See. Look.

Sweet. Good. Clean.
Gone. Lost. Hide. Keep. Give. Take.
One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten.
White. Black. Red. Blue. Green. Brown.

LESSON III

STROKE the cat. Play with the Dog. Eat the bread. Drink the milk. Hold the cup. Lay down the knife.
Look at the fly. See the horse. Shut the door. Bring the chair. Ring the bell. Get your book.
Hide your face. Wipe your nose. Wash your hands. Dirty hands. Why do you cry? A clean mouth. Shake hands. I love you. Kiss me now. Good girl.
The bird sings. The fire burns. The cat jumps. The dog runs. The bird flies. The cow lies down. The man laughs. The child cries.

LESSON IV

LET me comb your head. Ask Betty to wash your face. Go and see for some bread. Drink milk, if you are dry. Play on the floor with the ball. Do not touch the ink; you will black your hands.
What do you want to say to me? Speak slow, not so fast. Did you fall? You will not cry, not you; the baby cries. Will you walk in the fields?

LESSON V

COME to me, my little girl. Are you tired of playing? Yes. Sit down and rest yourself, while I talk to you.
Have you seen the baby? Poor little thing. O here it comes. Look at him. How helpless he is. Four years ago you were as feeble as this very little boy.
See, he cannot hold up his head. He is forced to lie on his back, if his mamma does not turn him to the right or left side, he will soon begin to cry. He cries to tell her, that he is tired with lying on his back.

LESSON VI

PERHAPS he is hungry. What shall we give him to eat? Poor fellow, he cannot eat. Look in his mouth, he has no teeth.
How did you do when you were a baby like him? You cannot tell. Do you want to know? Look then at the dog, with her pretty puppy. You could not help yourself as well as the puppy. You could only open your mouth, when you were lying, like William, on my knee. So I put you to my breast, and you sucked, as the puppy sucks now, for there was milk enough for you.

LESSON VII

WHEN you were hungry, you began to cry, because you could not speak. You were seven months without teeth, always sucking. But after you got one, you began to gnaw a crust of bread. It was not long before another came pop. At ten months you had four pretty white teeth, and you used to bite me. Poor mamma! Still I did not cry, because I am not a child, but you hurt me very much. So I said to papa, it is time the little girl should eat. She is not naughty, yet she hurts me. I have given her a crust of bread, and I must look for some other milk.
The cow has got plenty, and her jumping calf eats grass very well. He has got more teeth than my little girl. Yes, says papa, and he tapped you on the cheek, you are old enough to learn to eat? Come to me, and I will teach you, my little dear, for you must not hurt poor mamma, who has given you her milk, when you could not take any thing else.

LESSON VIII

YOU were then on the carpet, for you could not walk well. So when you were in a hurry, you used to run quick, quick, quick, on your hands and feet, like the dog.

Away you ran to papa, and putting both your arms round his leg, for your hands were not big enough, you looked up at him, and laughed. What did this laugh say, when you could not speak? Cannot you guess by what you now say to papa? — Ah! it was, Play with me, papa! — play with me!

Papa began to smile, and you knew that the smile was always — Yes. So you got a ball, and papa threw it along the floor — Roll — roll — roll; and you ran after it again — and again. How pleased you were. Look at William, he smiles; but you could laugh loud — Ha! ha! ha! — Papa laughed louder than the little girl, and rolled the ball still faster.

Then he put the ball on a chair, and you were forced to take hold of the back, and stand up to reach it. At last you reached too far, and down you fell: not indeed on your face, because you put out your hands. You were not much hurt; but the palms of your hands smarted with the pain, and you began to cry, like a little child.

It is only very little children who cry when they are hurt; and it is to tell their mamma, that something is the matter with them. Now you can come to me, and say, Mamma, I have hurt myself. Pray rub my hand: it smart. Put something on it, to make it well. A piece of rag, to stop the blood. You are not afraid of a little blood — not you. You scratched your arm with a pin: it bled a little; but it did you no harm. See, the skin has grown over it again.

M. NOURBESE PHILIP ZONG!

2008

		means	evidence
			means
		mortality	
		means	policy
			means
truth	means		
means		voyage	
	overboard	means	market
sufficient	means		means
means		slaves	
	support	means	more
foul	means		means
means		dead	
	three butts	means	want
necessity	means	water	
means		means	water
	provisions		
perils	means		

HUSSEIN BARGHOUTI

THE BLUE LIGHT

2008

translated by FADY JOUDAH

THE STORY OF THE ROCK

I received a real rock in the mail. One cubic meter of stone. "Incredulous." A post-office slip from East Jerusalem said I had a package. When I got there, I was told by the staff that it would cost me twenty thousand dollars. "Say what?" Yes: one dollar plus another plus another to twenty thousand. I thought about walking away from this clowning around, but it occurred to me that the cost likely indicated an extraordinary content. I sold our house in the refugee camp, borrowed six dollars from my paternal uncle, five from a maternal one, sold my books etc., until I gathered the whole amount and received the rock. At first, I couldn't believe my eyes: a rock! stamped from various countries. It looked like the rock's journey began in Sydney port and from there to Marseille and from there to Pearl Harbour and on and on. For half a century the rock had been going around ports and crossing borders until, at last, it reached the port of Haifa and then the port office in Jerusalem, colourfully tattooed with stamps and stickers.

For this, I'd sold everything I owned. I put my mother and younger brother up in a cheap motel in Old Jerusalem as I waited for God's help. I still had to pay porters to deliver the rock to the motel. I wasn't too crazy to leave it at the post office after all the money I'd spent. The rock stayed in the corner of the cheap motel room. The motel was so cheap it would get less than one star, a decimal of one. It had no water, running or still, hot or cold. "Incredulous, I mean really," my mom said as I stood in front of the rock, thinking. "We ended up in a motel because of your rock and your brain," she said,

"and your brother can't go to school because of your rock?" For my mom, this was not "our" rock but mine alone.

In 1948, an uncle of mine travelled to the US and didn't come back. The rumour was he owned bars in Las Vegas, never married. I thought maybe in his old age he sent the rock to check if he had any heirs. I rang him. He said he'd never heard of me or my birth and would sue me if I ever contacted him again. Then I thought the rock had an archaeological value of some kind. I sent a piece of it to the Hebrew University. The results came back a week later: worthless. With one dollar, they said, you could purchase a cubic mile of this kind of rock.

Due to its entertainment quality, the story reached the media. Wherever I went, people asked me: "How's the rock doing?" I found a remote small cafe in the suburbs of West Jerusalem where nobody would know me. I needed to contemplate the situation of the rock. I ordered Arabic coffee from the thin Jewish Russian waitress. She served me the coffee and said, "It's on the house. How's the rock doing?"

As a last resort, I thought of renting a car to take the rock to a mountaintop and roll it down to the wadi. I was conflicted because of my guilt. I made my family suffer in a cheap motel over a rock that I rolled down a mountain. As a compromise I made a promise to myself that I'd never forget the finale: how I rolled the rock, how it rolled—all of it would dwell in my memory. But my perseverance increased. I started to have nightmares about the rock. No more nightmares. I bought paint and painted the rock with bright colours, orange, yellow, red and whatever might please an onlooker. I wanted to feel happiness when I looked at it myself. Instead, I dreamed that I was in a vast moonlight valley full of coloured rocks, rose, yellow, red, etc., and that I was running along the rocks like an orphaned child calling for his mother. Then another dream: a rock the size of half the Earth on my head, and me, as if a compressed sponge, breathless. Then another dream and so on and so forth. How do I get rid of the rock? At last I found a solution: I decided to worship it. I bought two candles, placed them before the rock with wine chalices, and put the mail slip on top of the rock. Piously and quaveringly, I spent hours every night on that spot. The rock clearly possessed a mysterious force beyond anyone's capacity to comprehend.

A tourist guide friend of mine came to visit me. The minute he spotted me he laughed so hard he fell into pieces. He came because he'd heard my story but didn't expect I'd reached the point of worshipping a rock. I suggested to him that he should bring his tourists to my cheap motel. "Why?" He asked. "I'll tell you why: I will write a fabricated history of the rock, that it was holy during Canaanite times before the Romans seized it in some BCE year. Eventually the rock was lost until bedouin stumbled on it during the Crusades. Let me work out the details, and I will publish them in a handsome gilded booklet that draws tourists to the rock, and we will split the profit."

He gave it a long think then, suddenly, as if out of a trance said: "Deal." For a month I burried myself in books at the Hebrew University library. I completed a brochure in which I paid attention to the accuracy of events in time and place, fortified with quotations from the works of various historians. And off to the printers. In no time everything was set on a new path. I made back all the money I'd lost, signed a contract with a Swiss publisher to turn the brochure of the rock into a book, and from one project to another I went. But one night, deep into this magnificent game, the police came and surrounded the motel. A fat officer spoke: "You're under arrest. And the rock, as you know, now belongs to the state, as do all relics and finds, You have broken the law." I was cornered so I bargained: "I'll give you the rock, but let me keep the money. Otherwise it will be a public scandal in the papers that will tarnish the state's reputation and damage tourism."

We made a deal. The police took the rock to the museum of antiquities in Jerusalem near Hebron's Gate, and the years rolled on. One day I was passing by the museum. A long line of tourists stood waiting to see "the rock," and in each tourist's hand was the brochure I'd written. I laughed and kept on moving, but after a few steps, I stopped and said to myself: "I swear to God this rock possesses a secret." I went back, grabbed a brochure, stood in line to see the rock.

KATHY ACKER

DON QUIXOTE, WHICH WAS A DREAM

1986

*The First Part of Don Quixote
The Beginning of the Night*

DON QUIXOTE'S ABORTION

When she was finally crazy because she was about to have an abortion, she conceived of the most insane idea that any woman can think of. Which is love. How can a woman love?, By loving someone other than herself. She would love another person, she would right every manner of political, social, and individual wrong: she would put herself in those situations so perilous the glory of her name would resound. The abortion was about to take place:

From her neck to her knees she wore pale or puke green paper. This was her armour. She had chosen it specifically, for she knew that this world's conditions are so rough for any single person, even a rich person, that a person has to make do with what she can find: this's no world for idealism. Example: the green paper would tear as soon as the abortion began.

They told her they were going to take her from the operating chair to her own bed in a wheeling chair. The wheeling chair would be her transportation. She went out to look at it. It was dying. It had once been a hack, the same as all the hacks on grub street; now, as all the hacks, it was a full time drunk, mumbled all the time about sex and how no longer not even never did it but didn't have the wherewithal or equipment to do it, and hung around with the other bums. That is, women who're having abortions.

She decided that since she was setting out on the greatest adventure any person can take, that of the Holy Grail, she ought to have a name (identity). She had to name herself. When a doctor sticks a steel catheter into you while you're lying on your back and you do exactly what he and the nurses tell you to do; finally, blessedly, you let go of your mind. Letting go of your mind is dying. She needed a new life. She had to be named.

As we've said, her wheeling bed's name was 'Hack-kneed' or 'Hackneyed', meaning 'once a hack' or 'always a hack' or 'a writer' or 'an attempt to have an identity that always fails.' Just as 'Hackneyed' is the glorification or change from non-existence into existence of 'Hack-kneed', so, she decided, 'catheter' is the glorification of 'Kathy'. By taking on such a name which, being long, is male, she would be able to become a female-male or a night-knight.

Catharsis is the way to deal with evil. She polished up her green paper.

In order to love, she had to find someone to love. 'Why,' she reasoned to herself, 'do I have to love someone in order to love? Hasn't loving a man brought me to this abortion or state of death?'

'Why can't I just love?'

'Because every verb to be realised needs its object. Otherwise, having nothing to see, it can't see itself or be. Since love is sympathy or communication, I need an object which is both subject and object: to love, I must love a soul. Can a soul exist without a body? Is physical separate from mental? Just as love's object is the appearance of love; so the physical realm is the appearance of the godly: the mind is the body. This's why I'm having an abortion. So I can love.' This's how Don Quixote decided to save the world.

What did this knight-to-be look like? All of the women except for two were middle-aged and dumpy. One of the young women was an English rose. The other young woman, wearing a long virginal dress, was about 19 years old and Irish. She had packed her best clothes and jewels and told her family she was going to a wedding. She was innocent: during her first internal, she had learned she was pregnant. When she reached London airport, the taxi-drivers, according to their duty, by giving her the run-around, made a lot of money. Confused, she either left her bag in a taxi or someone stole it.

Her main problem, according to her, wasn't the abortion or the lost luggage, but how to ensure neither her family nor any of her friends ever found out she had had an abortion, for in Ireland an abortion is a major crime.

Why didn't Don Quixote resemble these women? Because to Don Quixote, having an abortion is a method of becoming a knight and saving the world. This is a vision. In English and most European societies, when a woman becomes a knight, being no longer anonymous she receives a name. She's able to have adventures and save the world.

'Which of you was here first?' the receptionist asked. Nobody answered. The women were shy. The receptionist turned to the night-to-be. 'Well, you're nearest to me. Give me your papers.'

'I can't give you any papers because I don't have an identity yet. I didn't go to Oxford or Cambridge and I'm not English. This's why your law says I have to stay in the inn overnight. As soon as you dub me a knight—by tomorrow morning—and I have a name, I'll be able to give you my papers.'

The receptionist, knowing that all women who're about to have abortions're crazy, assured the woman her abortion'd be over by nighttime. 'I, myself, the receptionist confided, 'used to be mad. I refuse to be a woman the way I was supposed to be. I travelled all over the world, looking for trouble. I prostituted myself, ran a few drugs—nothing hard—, exposed my genitalia to strange men while picking their pockets, broke-and-entered, lied to the only men I loved, told the men I didn't love the truth that I could never love them, fucked one man after another while telling each man I was being faithful to him alone, fucked men over, for, by fucking me over, they had taught me how to fuck them over. Generally, I was a bitch.

'Then I learned the error of my ways. I retired... from myself. Here... this little job ... I'm living off the income and property of others. Rather dead income and property. Like any good bourgeois, ending her introduction. 'This place, throwing open her hands, 'our sanctus sanitarium, is all of your place of safety. Here, we will save you. All of you who want to share your money with us.' The receptionist extended her arms. 'All night our nurses'll watch over you, and in the morning,' to Don Quixote, 'you'll be a night,' The receptionist asked the knight-to-be for her cash.

'I'm broke,'

'Why?'

'Why should I pay for an abortion? An abortion is nothing.'

'You must know that nothing's free.'

Since her whole heart was wanting to be a knight, she handed over the money and prayed to the Moon, 'Suck her, Oh Lady mine, this vassal heart in this first encounter; let not Your favour and protection fail me in the peril in which for the first time I now find myself.'

Then she lay down on the hospital bed in the puke green paper they had given her. Having done this, she gathered up her armour, the puke green paper, again started pacing nervously up and down in the same calm manner as before.

She paced for three hours until they told her to piss again. This was the manner in which she pissed: 'For women, Oh Woman who is all women who is my beauty, give me strength and vigour. Turn the eyes of the strength and wonderfulness of all women upon this one female, the female who's trying, at least you can say that for her this female who's locked up in the hospital and thus must pass through so formidable an adventure.'

One hour later they told her to climb up pale and green-carpeted stairs. But she spoke so vigorously and was so undaunted in her being that she struck terror into those who were assailing her. For this reason they ceased attacking the knight-to-be: they told her to lie down on a narrow black-leather padded slab. A clean white sheet covered the slab. Her ass, especially, should lie in a crack.

'What's going to happen now?' Don Quixote asked.

JEAN GENET THE THIEF'S JOURNAL

1949

translated by BERNARD FRECHTMAN

Brno—or Brünn—is a city in Czechoslovakia. I arrived there on foot, in the rain, after crossing the Austrian border at Retz. Some petty thefts in stores kept me going for a few days but I was without friends, astray amidst a nervous people. I would have liked, however, to rest a while after my turbulent trip through Serbia and Austria, after my flight from the police of those countries and from certain accomplices who were out to get me. Brno is a wet, dismal city, oppressed by the smoke of factories and the color of stones. My soul would have relaxed there, grown languid, as in a room whose shutters have been drawn, if only I could have gone a few days without worrying about money. German and Czech were spoken in Brno. There was a kind of war going on among rival groups of young street singers. A group which sang in German invited me to join them. There were six of us. I took up the collection and handled the money.

Three of my companions played the guitar, one the accordion and the other sang. One foggy day, as I was leaning against a wall, I watched the group as they gave a concert. One of the guitarists was about twenty years old. He was blonde and was wearing a plaid shirt and a pair of corduroy trousers. Beauty is rare in Brno; I was charmed by his face. I stood and looked at him for a long time and I caught him exchanging a smile of understanding with a fat, pink-cheeked man who was very conservatively dressed and was holding a leather briefcase. As I walked away, I wondered whether the young men realized that their companion made himself available to the city's rich queers. I walked away, but I made it my business to see them a number of times at various street corners. None of them were from Brno.

except Michaelis Andritch, the one who became my friend. His gestures were graceful without being effeminate. As long as he was with me, he never bothered with women. I had the surprise of seeing for the first time a homosexual whose bearing was manly, even somewhat blunt. He was the aristocrat of the troupe. They all slept in a cellar, where they also cooked their meals. Of the few weeks I spent with them there is nothing much to tell, except of my love for Michaelis, with whom I spoke Italian. He introduced me to the manufacturer. The man was rosy and fat, yet he did not seem to put much weight on the earth. I was sure that Michaelis felt no affection for him; nevertheless, I pointed out to him that theft would be more beautiful than prostitution.

"Ma, sono il uomo," he said to me arrogantly.

I doubted it but pretended to believe it. I told him about a few thefts and said that I had been in prison: he admired me for this. In a few days, with the help of my clothes, I became a glamorous figure to him. We pulled off a few jobs and I became his master.

I shall allow myself a certain coquetry and say that I was a clever thief. Never have I been caught red-handed, in flagrante delicto. But the fact that I know how to steal admirably for my earthly profit is unimportant; what I have sought most of all has been to be the consciousness of the theft whose poem I am writing; in other words, refusing to enumerate my exploits, to show what I owe them in the moral realm, what I build with them as a basis, what the simplest thieves are perhaps dimly seeking, what they themselves might achieve.

"A certain coquetry...": my extreme discretion.

* * *

Almost always alone, though aided by an ideal companion, I crossed other borders. My emotion was always equally great. I crossed Alps of all kinds. From Slovenia to Italy, helped by the customs men, then abandoned by

them, I went upstream, along a muddy torrent. Fought by the wind, by the cold, by the thorns, by November, I gained a summit behind which was Italy. In order to reach it, I affronted monsters hidden by the night or revealed by it. I got caught in the barbed wire of a fort where I heard the sentinels walking and whispering. Crouching in the shadow, my heart beating, I hoped that before shooting me they would fondle and love me. Thus I hoped that the night would be peopled by voluptuous guards. I ventured at random upon the road. It was the right one. I sensed it by the feel of my soles on its honest ground. Later on, I left Italy for Austria. I crossed fields of snow at night. The moon cast my shadow. In every country that I left behind I had stolen and had known prisons. Yet I was not going through Europe but through the world of objects and circumstances, and with an ever fresher ingenuousness. All the wonder I beheld made me uneasy, but I hardened myself further so as to penetrate, without danger to myself, their customary mystery.

I quickly realized it was difficult to steal in Central Europe without danger because the police system was perfect. The paucity of the means of communication and the difficulty of crossing the borders, which were excellently guarded, prevented me from fleeing quickly, and my being a Frenchman made me all the more conspicuous. I noticed that very few Frenchmen in foreign countries are thieves or beggars. I decided to go back to France and there pursue—perhaps even limiting my activity to Paris alone—a thief's destiny. The idea of continuing my way around the world, committing more or less important larcenies also tempted me. I chose France out of a concern for depth. I knew the country well enough to be sure of giving stealing all my attention and care, of handling it as if it were a unique substance whose devoted craftsman I would become. I was twenty-four or twenty-five at the time. In pursuit of a moral adventure, I sacrificed dispersion and ornament. The reasons for my choice, whose meaning is revealed to me only today because I have to write about it, were not clearly apparent. I think that I had to hollow out, to drill through, a mass of language which in my mind would be at ease. Perhaps I wanted to accuse myself in my own language. Neither Albania, Hungary or Poland, nor India or Brazil would have offered me such rich a matter as France. Indeed, theft—and what it involved

in it: prison sentences, along with the shame of being a thief—had become a disinterested undertaking, a kind of active and deliberate work of art which could be achieved only with the help of language, my language, and which would be confronted with the laws springing from this strange language. In a foreign country I would have been merely a more or less clever thief, but, as I would have thought of myself in French, I would have known I was a Frenchman—a status that allows none to survive—among foreigners. To be a thief in my own country and to justify my being a thief who used the language of the robbed—who are myself, because of the importance of language—was to give to being a thief the chance to be unique. I was becoming a foreigner.

* * *

I know the extraordinary calmness one feels at the moment of performing the theft, the feat that accompanies it. My body is afraid. In front of a jeweler's window: as long as I'm not inside, I don't think I'm going to steal. No sooner do I get inside than I'm sure I'll come out with a jewel: a ring or handcuffs. This certainty is expressed by a long shudder which leaves me motionless but which goes from the back of my neck down to my heels. It peters out at my eyes and dries their lids. My cells seem to be transmitting to one another a wave, an undulating movement which is the very substance of my calm. I am alive with thought from my heels to the back of my neck. I accompany the wave. It is born of fear. Without it there would not be this calm in which my body bathes—which my body attains. I have to be very careful not to flee. When I leave the store, it is very difficult for me to run, or even walk fast. A kind of elastic holds me back. My muscles are heavy and tight. But a sharp vigilance directs them into the street. I cannot see Lucien in that kind of situation. Would he falter? And what happens during a burglary? When I have broken the lock, as soon as I push the door it thrusts back within me a heap of darkness, or, to be more exact, a very thick vapor which my body is summoned to enter. I enter. For a half hour I shall be operating, if I am alone, in a world which is the reverse of the customary world. My heart beats loudly. My hand never trembles. Fear does not leave

me for a single second. I do not think specifically of the proprietor of the place, but all my gestures evoke him in so far as they see him. I am steeped in an idea of property while I loot property. I recreate the absent proprietor. He lives, not facing me, but about me. He is a fluid element which I breathe, which enters me, which inflates my lungs. The beginning of the operation goes off without too much fear, which starts mounting the moment I have finally decided to leave. The decision is born when the apartment contains no more secret spots, when I have taken the proprietor's place. And this is not necessarily when I have discovered the treasure. Guy almost always sits down and eats in the kitchen or the looted drawing room. Some burglars go to the can after ransacking a place. I won't have Lucien undergoing such rites. His is not a religious nature. When the treasure has been discovered, I have to leave. Fear then invades my body. I would like to hasten everything. Not hasten myself, not go more quickly, but act in such a way that everything is magically sped up. To be out of here and far away. But what gestures shall I make in order to go more quickly? The heaviest, the slowest. Slowness brings fear. Not only my heart but my whole body is now beating. I am one enormous temple, the throbbing temple of the looted room. I have sometimes preferred to sleep there for an hour behind a door so as to calm down rather than go out into the street and be off, for though I know that I am not being followed, I shall zigzag in and out, I shall take certain streets, I shall retrace my tracks. After a rapid theft, the experience is even more more exciting: I go more quickly, I accelerate; the sections making up the broken lines are shorter. It is as if I were being carried away by the speed itself with which I perform the theft. I wouldn't put up with Lucien's exposing himself that way. His bearing isn't furtive. In his movements and behaviour there is, as it were, a slight hesitation, a holding back, comparable to the moist mouths of most Americans. Lucien is modest.

VANESSA PLACE
PSALM

2010

Argument

- (S) Being a good people, if we were wrong, we would change.
(S) We would not change.

Proverbs

Without passion, no reason.
Without mind, no body.
Without body, your soul.
Without point, our purpose.
There must be an extraordinary.
There are contradictions.
A dog's skull is slightly thicker than our own.
We will have coffee, and, after breakfast, a short walk.
We will wear shaggy coats and carry sidearms. There will be a game of
chance. We will lose.
We will win. We will ascend to the throne and make apple fritters
drenched in warm syrup.

Arise criminals!

We will find pockets of peat and hot cross buns.
If you have no daughters, marry your sons.
Oh, what lidless day, when they took my baby away.

Psalm

I do not intend to hurt anyone.
I did not intend to hurt anyone.
O Jerusalem, we gutless few delighting
sobre tierra de libres
In perspicacity
what you would see if you were not
drown'd in sound and sight
wooly-headed as a chrysanthemum
literal as the lamb.
What we could do as one in two,
our prayers made hand-in-hand
you are my voodoo chile
my voodoo chile
Were pity pure birthright
and charity simplicity;
Were babies born not guilty
and ladies told the truth
were human nature natural
and
catastrophes unmanned,
were people made of popsicles,
accliving the summer sun
were lidless pearls more decorous,
and all our battles won
were these the these which would us please
there'd be no need for Americans
for heart would will what it would want
and all of art be
damn'd.

GARIN THE WOMAN WHO WAS FUCKED AND FUCKED OVER FOR A CRANE

13th c.
translated by NED DUBIN

However much I have been lax
since first I was set to this task,
I'll now compose a fabliau
about something I came to know
in Vézelay by the exchange.
It's not at all within the range
of my purpose to say who told it;
it's short enough and soon unfolded,
but listen, if you're curious.

Garin the story-teller says
that once there lived a castellan,
neither a fool nor uncouth man,
but courtly, and well-cultured too.
He had a worthy daughter, who

was sitting by the window-pane
and saw him pass by with the crane.
She called to him and said,
"My friend, what bird have you there in your
hand,
on your father's soul?" He explains,
"By Orléans and all her saints,
my lady, it's a large, fine crane."
The girl replies, "In God's own name,
it's fat and fair and just mature;
I've never seen its like, I'm sure.
I'd buy it from you, if I could."

"My lady," he says, "well and good.
If that would please you, I will sell."
"What are you asking for it, tell?"

was beautiful beyond compare,
but the castellan didn't care
that any man have conversations
or see her, save on rare occasions.
He kept her shut up in a tower,
he loved her so, and would allow her
only her nurse for company—
no silly, foolish woman, she,
but worldly-wise and disciplined,
who saw to it her charge was penned
and oversaw her education.

Whilst engaged in the preparation
of the girl's breakfast, it occurs
on one fine morning to the nurse
that they could use another plate,
and off she hurries, doesn't wait,
back to their home, which was quite near,
to fetch the needed kitchen gear.
She didn't think to lock the tower.
A young man at that very hour
came walking by there, and he had
a crane he recently had bagged
clutched in his right hand.

Now, the girl,
who liked to look out at the world,

"My lady, for a fuck it's yours."
"Saint Peter help me now, because
I haven't any fuck to trade!
God knows, if I had, we'd have made
a bargain quickly—I'm not cheap—
and the crane would be mine to keep."
"Lady," he says, "surely you jest.
I certainly would not suggest
a fuck unless you had a lot.
Be quick and pay me what you've got."
She swears to God that, just her luck,
she's never ever seen a fuck.
"Young man," she says, "come on up now
and look for yourself high and low,
'neath bed and benches, all around,
to see if a fuck can't be found."

The youth, who was well-bred and courtly,
came to her in the tower shortly,
pretending to search thoroughly.
"Lady," he said, "it seems to me
there may be one under your dress."
She'd not much sense and knew still less,
told him, "Come, fellow; have a look."
Without delay the young man took
her in his arms with might and main
who was enamored of his crane,

placed her in bed and grabbed her shift and hiked it up, went on to lift her legs way up and held them high, and her cunt quickly caught his eye, and roughly he thrust in his rod.

"Young man, you're searching much too hard!" the maiden says, sighing and gasping. The young man couldn't keep from laughing, involved to the hilt in his game:

"It's just I'm giving you my crane;

take full possession of the bird."

"You never spoke a truer word,"

the girl says; "now be off with you!"

He left her sad and thoughtful, too,

went from the tower and traveled on,

and her nurse came back thereupon

and saw the damsel with the crane.

She trembled, and the blood did drain

out of her face, and she was short:

"Young lady, what's this bird? Who brought it here? Now tell the truth to me!"

"I bought it just now, honestly,

from a young man, who sold the bird

and brought it in here, you've my word."

"What did you pay?" "One fuck, no more; I gave him nothing else, be sure."

She saw the young man, still about and glad of what had taken place. The maiden called him straightaways and said, "Come back here, sir, and quick! My nurse was angered to the quick because you took my fuck away when you sold me your crane today. Do give it back, and be so kind not to begrudge it me or mind.

Come here, and let us two make peace."

"Missy, I'll do just as you please,"

the young man said; then up he came

and stretched her out and did the same;

he went between her legs and pounded

the fuck right back where he had found it.

When he had done, he didn't stay,

but took his crane and went away

instead of leaving it behind.

The nurse returned, thinking she'd find

the crane and put it up to roast.

"Don't hurry; it's all labor lost,"

the maiden told the woman, "for

the man who just went out that door

unfucked me and took back his bird."

The nurse, no sooner had she heard,

made of her grief such a display

and called down curses on the day

"Wretch that I am! Woe's me! A fuck?

How could I have such awful luck

as to have left you here alone?

I curse my mouth for what I've done

that ever it ate or drew breath!

I deserve to be put to death

and will be, too, I think, quite soon!"

You'd think the nurse about to swoon

and fall to the floor altogether,

but still she sets out to defeat her

the crane and dress it for the pot:

a garlic sauce, she says, is not

what's called for—pepper's her intention.

(I often have heard people mention

in many places that I've been:

"Adversity that ends up in

the pot at least gives some small comfort.")

Some it may please and some discomfit,

so what?—the nurse seasons the crane

and then has to go out again

to get a knife to open it,

and the young girl returns to sit

down by the window and look out.

she'd left the maiden in the tower that day for some man to deflower:

"Why was I given you to watch?

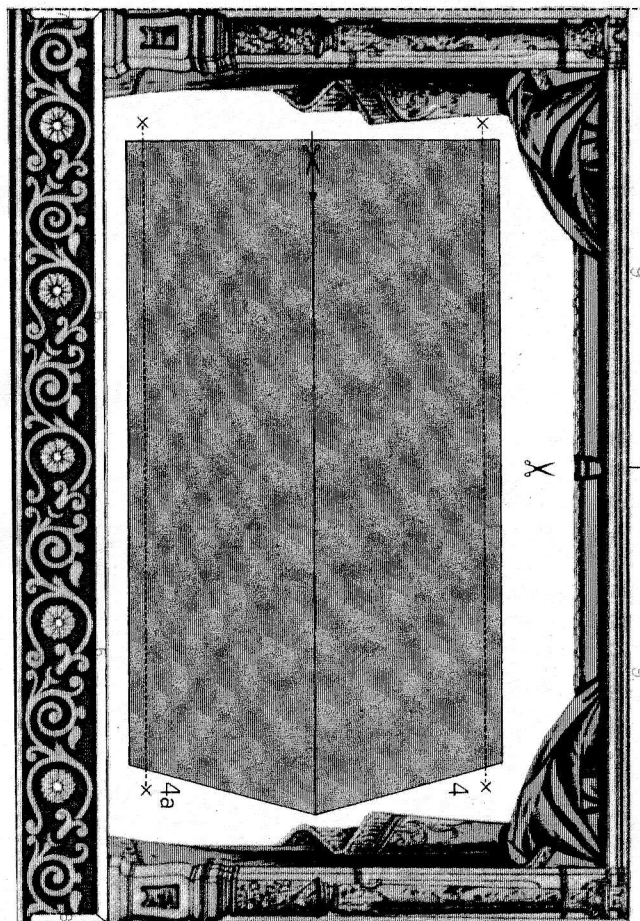
So heedlessly have I kept watch

that here you have been fucked again

and I don't get a bit of crane!

I gave the man his chance myself:

"The careless shepherd feeds the wolf!"



ANNE F. GARRÉTA SPHINX

2015

translated by EMMA RAMADAN

That evening, without a glance at the audience, I steered myself toward a table tucked to the side where I always insisted on sitting, and where A*** was waiting for me. The proclamations that I had debated nonstop en route crystallised unexpectedly at the sight of A***, and I abruptly broached the subject close to my heart, as if to get it out of the way. A declaration of love is always tedious; it exceeded my patience to dilute the exasperation of my passion in a detailed statement, to represent discursively the unbearable confusion of my immediate desire—tolerating neither delay nor explanation, so much did its urgency torment me. My intentions were clear; my speech only muddled and veiled them in incoherence. I was alternating aimlessly between snippets of narration, the minutes of my interior monologue, syllogisms and images, passing without transition from slang to high style and from the trivial to the abstract without ever finding the right tone or genre in which to deliver my words. A*** was taken aback by this unprecedented bout of garrulous, confused violence.

A***'s response to the declaration I proved incapable of making was, however, perfectly clear. It could be summarised with a simple verdict: "You must not love me"—an attempt to claim that A*** was unworthy of my passion and that it would damage our friendship. A***'s propensity had always been to refrain from passionate attachments of the flesh, attachments that, once broken by misfortune, betrayal, or accident, resulted in prejudicial excess of sadness. Consequently, A*** thought it wise to disavow the idea of amorous possession, which could do nothing but exacerbate my confusion and forbid us from returning thereafter to that honest friend-

ship, that guarantee of stability, to which we would be better off confining ourselves. That response, the arguments used to justify A***'s refusal, were attempts to disorient me; in fact they did nothing but accentuate the imperative violence of my desire. They also left room for debate. All of the notions of love A***'s reasoning invoked seemed erroneous to me, and I set about proving it. Those reasons were only a pretext; I wanted the truth. I was ranting, using cunning to obtain it, and seeing that the facts were being concealed from me, I brazenly concluded that they must have been in my favour. We spent the night discussing, disputing the erroneous fables used to justify A***'s refusal, and the valid reasons for my desire. Through every tone I modulated the absolute demand and legitimacy of my passion.

In return, A*** took refuge behind a moderation far from the habitual impulsiveness to which I was accustomed. That night the inversion was complete: I made myself into a demon, and A*** symmetrically put on the mask of the angel that I had abandoned. A***'s final argument, pronounced on the threshold of the Eden, was of this order: "I rely on your friendship, and a physical relationship would annihilate it irremediably; so you must not love me, for such a relationship would be hellish. Don't ask of me what I am unable to give you without the risk of letting you down." I relate neither the exact terms of this plea—they were much more trivial—nor the precise progression of A***'s personal logic, which was much less clearly defined. And I cannot relate them simply because A*** never formulated a link between successive sentences. From an unorganised mass of statements, of partial notes and arguments, I managed to extract a line of reasoning, a collection of synthetic propositions that I subsequently reiterated to verify their accuracy. For example, the following statements, made more than an hour apart: "If I agree to sleep with you, things won't be the same afterward;" and, "I'm ill-tempered, no one tolerates me for long;" and, "We can't sleep together, we'll end up fighting because neither one of us will want to let the other take the lead." I concluded implicitly that A***, only able to imagine love as a system of power relations, could only envisage our relationship as a battle, leading irremediably to a violent rupture. I had to translate and arrange every word so that they became intelligible to me. Add to this some misunderstandings stemming from different mother tongues, and perhaps one can grasp the difficulty of my enterprise.

This resistance, despite being hard to define, did not disarm me: I persevered and I kept at it for weeks, trying to prove to A*** through every means imaginable that to succumb to my pleas and do the deed, far from destroying our affection, would only deepen and reinforce it. I insisted, tactically, on this shocking fact: A***'s not-so prudish attitude could coexist with my moral rigidity, and a carefree practice of bodily exhibition could rub shoulders with an equally strong contempt and suspicion of the flesh. In other words, that A***'s excesses could go hand in hand with my moderation and decorum. Far from being enraged by my obstinacy or taking offence at my incessant urging, A*** found it all quite amusing. This was a good sign. Certainly the variety of my pleas was astonishing; one finds oneself suddenly capable of deploying the treasures of rhetoric, imagination, and persuasion in order to convince someone to have sex—a very common ambition, and not so interesting when one thinks about it in the cold light of day. But voilà, the price that I seemed to attach to my conquest, measured in terms of the energy and ingenuity I was expending, was high enough to be flattering. What must have at first seemed like a blaze of concupiscence was, over time, taking on real form.

Our daily telephone conversation were no longer anything but a game: a hypothetical reconstruction of our relationship if A*** were to succumb to my desires. We were presenting each other with illusions, visions, and tableaux. The object of this display was to figure out how to get along without drama, how to deal with the overcrowding engendered by a relationship that we hoped would not be temporary, but rather truly invested with stable affections, tastes, habits, and lifestyles—all of which differed radically, even more each day. We discussed everything down to the most trivial details. Would we live together? And if so, how would we divide up the household chores? Would we sleep in separate beds, thus shielding ourselves from the boredom of a complacent conjugality? And if not, what type of bedding would we choose? A*** was pushing for the classic pairing of sheets and covers, I for the more rational duvet.

The slow workings of this fiction, which didn't shy away from ridiculous or insignificant detail, were taking on the meticulous traits of familiarity. I was winning A*** over to the possibility of such a relationship. Its incon-

gruity, its danger was dissipating in the soothing quietude of our constructed fable. Repetition and habit tend to diffuse excess. A*** was no longer systematically imagining the worst, no longer predicting disasters at every turn; the scenarios were becoming less catastrophic. Our union, by dint of simulation, was no longer inconceivable. The game of "and if" wore down A***'s reluctance; every day, we already belonged to each other in our imaginations. My desire was gaining power through a trick, was gaining life through a fiction.

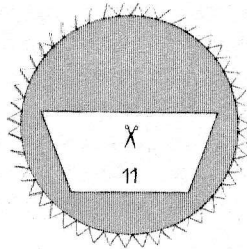


CARLA HARRYMAN PROPERTY

1982

"Come you are a mad revolutionary," said her uncle with a smile. He pointed at the wildflowers. "My vision of the aspects I more or less fortunately rendered was, exactly, my knowledge. Anything nature puts in the sea comes up. A fierce man's rainbow is in his head. If there is no Spain? If there is no Oakland? The original field, once cultivated, returns to high weeds where privacy is absolute. The shape of the story ought to be that of a spiral of doubt. The landscape demolishes the house in our heads. The conclusion is a point of departure for the speculator, but the spectacle is lacking in furniture. The pack of lies is insulted. The song is sung but where do we get the words compelling us to repeat it? My blood runs cold at the sight of death so I tell the story. If the wide obtuse inside is a yardstick in this sanctuary, perhaps the universe views the world like I see a two dollar bill abandoned in a cashbox. Kiss my ass." He stood up straight.

"Anything pleasurable tolerable but only endurable when it is remembered in the middle of the night, fields we walk on as carelessly as bamboo shoots creaking in the tropics flooded with gross species of rodents nibbling stains on trikes, dictate to any happy man what he can't live without." He held her up so she could be closer. The crystal ball glowed with murk. She cut her finger on the left front fender while trying to smash some limestone with a stick. Her uncle led her back over the property.



This reader has been assembled by Slow Reading Club (Bryana Fritz and Henry Andersen) for a collective reading session taking place at Burg Hülstorf, on June 28, 2025, as part of Droste Festival 2025: The Landlord's Game.

The reader is considered study material, for use within the collective reading session, and may not be sold or distributed outside of that context.

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