

Janey is a peasant.  
Janey is expensive,  
but cheap.  
the peasant is the street.  
language  
to get rid of language

(Translate into English:)

I listened to the smouldering ship's engines that were carrying me alone, and relaxed. I shouldn't have. I should have grabbed a buoy and jumped overboard; flagged down a passing tramp to carry me straight back to the Athens Hilton and the airport.

1. Is there a black head here?
2. Yes Mrs (Janey), it's near.
3. This head isn't Janey's. (Lit. This head isn't the property of Janey.)

## THIS SEX WHICH IS NOT ONE (1977)

Luce Irigaray

trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke

### The Looking Glass, from the Other Side

*Alice's eyes are blue. And red. She opened them while going through the mirror. Except for that, she still seems to be exempt from violence. She lives alone, in her house. She prefers it that way, her mother says. She only goes out to play her role as mistress. Schoolmistress, naturally. Where unalterable facts are written down whatever the weather. In white and black, or black and white, depending on whether they're put on the blackboard or in the notebook. Without color changes, in any case. Those are saved for the times when Alice is alone. Behind the screen of representation. In the house or garden.*

*But just when it's time for the story to begin, begin again, "it's autumn." That moment when things are still not completely congealed, dead. It ought to be seized so that something can happen. But everything is forgotten: the "measuring instruments," the "coat," the "case," and especially the "glasses." "How can anyone live without all that?" Up to now, that's what has controlled the limits of properties, distinguished outside from inside, differentiated what was looked on with approval from what wasn't. Made it possible to appreciate, to recognise the value of everything. To fit in with it, as needed.*

*There they are, all lost, without their familiar reference points. What's the difference between a friend and no friend? A virgin and a whore? Your wife and the woman you love? The one you desire and the one you make love with? One woman and another woman? The one who owns the house and the one who uses it for her pleasure, the one you meet there for pleasure? In which house and with which woman does—did—will love happen? And when is it time for love, anyway? Time for work? How can the stakes in love and work be sorted out? Does "surveying" have anything to do with desire, or not? Can pleasure be measured, bounded, triangulated, or not? Besides, "it's autumn," the colors are changing. Turning red. Though not for long.*

*No doubt this is the moment Alice ought to seize. Now is the time for her to come on stage herself. With her violet, violated eyes. Blue and red. Eyes*



that recognise the right side, the wrong side, and the other side: the blur of deformation; the black or white of a loss of identity. Eyes always expecting appearances to alter, expecting that one will turn into the other, is already the other. But Alice is at school. She'll come back for tea, which she always takes by herself. At least that's what her mother claims. And she's the only one who seems to know who Alice is.

So at four o'clock sharp, the surveyor goes into her house. And since a surveyor needs a pretext to go into someone's house, especially a lady's, he's carrying a basket of vegetables. From Lucien. Penetrating into "her" place under cover of somebody else's name, clothes, love. For the time being, that doesn't seem to bother him. He opens the door; she's making a phone call. To her fiancé. Once again he slips in between them, the two of them. Into the breach that's bringing a woman and a man closer together, today at four o'clock. Since the relationship between Lucien and Alice lies in the zone of the "not yet." Or "never." Past and future both seem subject to quite a few risks. "That's what love is, maybe?" And his intervention cuts back across some other in-betweens: mother-Alice, Lucien-Gladys, Alice-her friend ("She already has a friend, one's enough"), tall-short (surveyors). To mention only what we've already seen.

Does his intervention succeed? Or does he begin to harbour a vague suspicion that she is not simply herself? He looks for a light. To hide his confusion, fill the ambiguity. Distract her by smoking. She doesn't see the lighter, even though it's right in front of her; instead she calls him into the first bedroom where there must be a light. His familiarity with the house dispels the anxiety. He goes upstairs. She invites him to enjoy her, as he likes. They separate in the garden. On of them has forgotten "her" glasses by the telephone, the other "his" cap on the bed. The "light" has changed places.

He goes back to the place where he works. She disappears into nature. Is it Saturday or Sunday? Is it time for surveying or love? He's confused. There's only one thing to do: pick a fight with a "cop." The desire is compelling enough to make him leave at once.

No more about cops, at least for the time being. He finds himself (they find each other) near the garden. A man in love and a man in love with a woman who lives in the house. The first asks the second or rather the second asks the first, if he can go (back) and see the woman he loves. He is beginning to be frightened, and begs to be allowed . . . Afterward.

Good (common or proper) sense—any sense of propriety or property—escapes Lucien. He gives things out, sets them in motion, without counting. Cap, vegetables, consent. Are they his? Do they belong to the others? To his wife? To somebody else? As for what is his, it comes back to him in the dance. Which does not prevent him from allowing others to take it. Elsewhere.

So he comes (back) in. It's teatime. She . . . She? She who? Who's she? She (is) an other . . . looking for a light. Where's a light? Upstairs, in the bedroom, the surveyor the tall one, points out cheerfully. Pleased at last to come across a specific unquestionable, verifiable fact. Pleased that he can prove it (himself) using  $a + b$ , or  $1 + 1$ , that is, an element that repeats itself, one that stays the same and yet produces a displacement in the sum; pleased that it's a matter of a series, of a sequence. In short, of a story. Might as well say it's true. That he had already been there. That he . . . ? That she? Was? Wasn't? She.

For the vegetables no longer prove anything. "I must have eaten them." "I" who? Only the "light" is left. But it isn't there to shore up the argument. And even if it were, no trace of what has happened would remain. As for attesting that the light has moved from here to there, or stating that its current whereabouts are known, or naming Alice's room as the only place it can be found, these are all just claims that depend on "magic."

Alice has never liked occultism. Not that the implausible surprises her. She knows more than anyone about fabulous, fantastic, unbelievable things . . . But she's always seen what she talks about. She's observed all the marvels first-hand. She's been "in wonderland." She hasn't simply imagined, "intuited." Induced, perhaps? Moreover, from a distance. And across partitions? Going through the looking glass, that's something else again.

Besides, there are no traces of such an adventure in that gentleman's eyes. It's a matter of nuances. So if it's urgent for him to get out of the house at once. He won't? Then she's the one who'll leave, who'll desert it. The out-of-doors is an extraordinary refuge. Especially in this season, with all its colors. He too goes into the garden. Right up close. So one no longer has the right to be alone? Where is one to go? If the house and the garden are open to all comers. Omniscient surveyors, for example. It's imperative to hurry and invent a retreat they can't get too. Curl up somewhere protected from their scheming eyes, from their inquiries. From their penetration. Where?