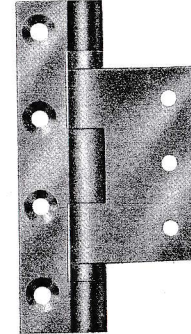


MECHANICAL BULL

RAKETE FESTIVAL, VIENNA



MAY 22, 2026

SLOW READING CLUB

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1736

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MAROSA DI GIORGIO

trans. Jeannine Marie Pitas

XI

The gladiolus is a spear, its edge loaded with carnations, a knife of carnations. It jumps through the window, kneels on the table; it's vagrant flame, burning up our papers, our dresses. Mother swears that a dead man has risen; she mentions her father and mother and starts to cry.

The pink gladiolus opened up in our house.
But scare it, tell it to go.
That crazy lily is going to kill us.

XV

The mushrooms are born in silence; some of them are born in silence; others with a brief shriek, a soft thunder. Some are white, others pink; that one is gray and looks like a dove, the statue of a dove; still others are gold or purple. Each one bears—and this is what's awful—the initials of the corpse it comes from. I do not dare to eat them; that most tender meat is our relative.

But, come afternoon the mushroom buyer arrives and starts picking. My mother gives him permission. He chooses like an eagle. This one white as sugar, a pink one, a gray one.
My mother does not realize that she is selling her race.

XVIII

At that hour, the tiny underground creatures were starting thier work (those ones that wear heavy coats and work to the rhythm of drums: toc-toc). At that hour the moon had reached the summit of its brilliance, and all the doves scattered over the moon. But from a distance those birds looked like butterflies, great, sparkling flies. The doves flew over the moon, pecking at it, caressing it.

All of this became clearer as I watched the scene from the black forest of orange trees. And my grandparents sitting there, frozen, thier cloaks a pale pink, thier ill-fated braids.

They always held some too-brilliant thing in their hands; they showed it; they hid it. Is it a fallen dove? I stepped closer, looking, asking—Or is it a little hare from among the irises?

But they always gave me the strangest reply.—It is a saint, they said.—It is San Carlos, San Cristóbal, Santa Isabel.

I cannot put my memories in order.
The moon wrecks them every time.

XIX

Beyond the land, through the air, in the full moon's light, like a lily's stem, it loads its side incessantly with hyacinths, narcissi, white lilies. The wolves draw back at the sight of it; the lambs get down on their knees, crazy with love and fear. It moves on, goes off like an errant candelabra, a bonfire; it goes towards the house, passes the cabinets, the hearth; with only a glance it burns the apples, illuminates them, wraps them in candied paper; it flings colored stones into the rice; it make the bread and pears glow. It drives itself into the table like a November yucca branch; it hunts a star, it stuffs itself with candles, pine nuts, little bottles. It breaks into the bedroom, spins over my dream, over my wide-open eyes; it floats in the air like a three-tiered crown of pearls, a lamp. It is a fish, a coral branch outside the water, each piece of coral as swollen as a bud or a lip. It flies back toward the moon; it scares the horses and owls, who break into flight and instantly stop. It calls to me. To me, sleepless, and we go off beyond the hills, away from the night workers who tried to mow it down like a hydrangea.

XXIII

The gladioli are made of marble, of pure silver, of some ghostly fabric, organdy; they are the bones of Most Holy Maria; they are still walking through this world. For a long time these spectral stems have followed me. At night they come in through the window; if I am sleeping, they enter my dream; if I am awake, I find them standing at the foot of my bed.

The gladioli are like the angels, like the dead. Who can free me from that tenuous stem, from the gaze of that blind man?

XXXV

I remember the white, folded cabbages—white roses of the earth, of the gardens—cabbages of marble, of most delicate porcelain; cabbages holding their children inside.

And the tall blue chard.

And the tomato, a kidney of rubies.

And the onions wrapped in silky paper, rolling paper, like bombs of sugar, salt, alcohol.

And the gnome asparagus, turrets of the kingdom of gnomes.

I remember the potatoes, and the tulips we always planted along them.

And the snakes with their long, orange wings.

And the tobacco of fireflies, who smoked without ceasing.

I remember eternity.

YUKIO MISHIMA

trans. John Bester

Of late, I have come to sense within myself an accumulation of all kinds of things that cannot find adequate expression via an objective artistic form such as the novel. A lyric poet of twenty might manage it, but I am twenty no longer, and have never been a poet at any rate. I have groped around, therefore, for some other form more suited to such personal utterances and have come up with a kind of hybrid between confession and criticism, a subtly equivocal mode that one might call "confidential criticism."

I see it as a twilight genre between the night of confession and the daylight of criticism. The "I" with which I shall occupy myself will not be the "I" that relates back strictly to myself, but something else, some residue, that remains after all the other words I have uttered have flowed back into me, something that neither relates back nor flows back.

As I pondered the nature of that "I," I was driven to the conclusion that the "I" in question corresponded precisely with the physical space that I occupied. What I was seeking, in short, was a language of the body.

If my self was my dwelling, then my body resembled an orchard that surrounded it. I could either cultivate that orchard to its capacity or leave it for the weeds to run riot in. I was free to choose, but the freedom was not as obvious as it might seem. Many people, indeed, go so far as to refer to the orchards of their dwellings as "destiny."

One day, it occurred to me to set about cultivating my orchard for all I was worth. For my purpose, I used sun and steel. Unceasing sunlight and implements fashioned of steel became the chief elements in my husbandry. Little by little, the orchard began

to bear fruit, and thoughts of the body came to occupy a large part of my consciousness.

All this did not occur, of course, overnight. Nor did it begin without the existence of some deep-lying motive. When I examine closely my early childhood, I realize that my memory of words reaches back far farther than my memory of the flesh. In the average person, I imagine, the body precedes language. In my case, words came first of all; then—belatedly, with every appearance of extreme reluctance, and already clothed in concepts—came the flesh. It was already, as goes without saying, sadly wasted by words.

First comes the pillar of plain wood, then the white ants that feed on it. But for me, the white ants were there from the start, and the pillar of plain wood emerged tardily, already half eaten away.

Let the reader not chide me for comparing my own trade to the white ant. In its essence, any art that relies on words makes use of their ability to eat away—of their corrosive function—just as etching depends on the corrosive power of nitric acid. Yet the simile is not accurate enough; for the copper and the nitric acid used in etching are on a par with each other, both being extracted from nature, while the relation of words to reality is not that of the acid to the plate. Words are a medium that reduces reality to abstraction for transmission to our reason, and in their power to corrode reality inevitably lurks the danger that the words themselves will be corroded too. It might be more appropriate, in fact, to liken their action to that of excess stomach fluids that digest and gradually eat away the stomach itself.

[...]

My composition teacher would often show his displeasure with my work, which was innocent of any words that might be taken as corresponding to reality. It seems that, in my childish way, I had an unconscious presentiment of the subtle, fastidious laws of words, and was aware of the necessity of avoiding as far as possible coming into contact with reality via words if one was to profit from their positive corrosive function and escape their negative aspect—if, to put it more simply, one was to maintain the purity of words. I knew instinctively that the only possibility was to

maintain a constant watch on the corrosive action lest it suddenly come up against some object that it might corrode.

The natural corollary of such a tendency was that I should openly admit the existence of reality and the body only in fields where words had no part whatsoever; thus reality and the body became synonymous for me, the objects, almost, of a kind of fetishism. Without doubt, too, I was quite unconsciously expanding my interest in words to embrace this interest also; and this type of fetishism corresponded exactly to my fetish for words.

In the first stage, I was quite obviously identifying myself with words and setting reality, the flesh, and action on the other side. There is no doubt, either, that my prejudice concerning words was encouraged by this willfully created antinomy, and that my deep-rooted misunderstanding of the nature of reality, the flesh, and action was formed in the same way.

This antinomy rested on the assumption that I myself from the outset was devoid of the flesh, of reality, of action. It was true, indeed, that the flesh came late to me at the beginning, but I was waiting for it with words. I suspect that because of the earlier tendency I spoke of, I did not perceive it, then, as "my body." If I had done so, my words would have lost their purity. I should have been violated by reality, and reality would have become inescapable.

SUNSET DEBRIS (1986)

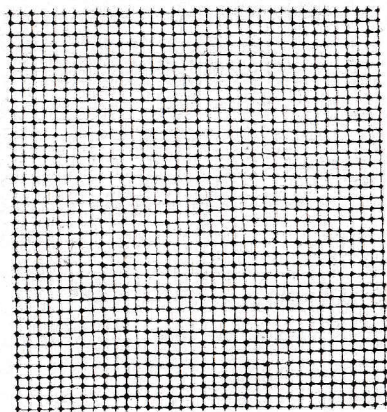
RON SILLIMAN

from THE AGE OF HUTS

Can you feel it? Does it hurt? Is this too soft? Do you like it? Do you like this? Is this how you like it? Is it alright? Is he there? Is he breathing? Is it him? Is it near? Is it hard? Is it cold? Does it weigh much? Is it heavy? Do you have to carry it far? Are those the hills? Is this where we get off? Which one are you? Are we there yet? Do we need to bring sweaters? Where is the border between blue and green? Has the mail come? Have you come yet? Is it perfect bound? Do you prefer ballpoints? Do you know which insect you most resemble? Is it the red one? Is that your hand? Want to go out? What about dinner? What does it cost? Do you speak English? Has he found his voice yet? Is this anise or is it fennel? Are you high yet? Is your throat sore? Can't you tell dill weed when you see it? Do you smell something burning? Do you hear a ringing sound? Do you hear something whimpering, mewing, crying? Do we get there from here? Does the ink smear? Does the paper get yellow and brittle? Do you prefer soft core? Are they on their way to work? Are they feeling it? Are they locked out? Are you pessimistic? Are you hard? Is that where you live? Is the sink clogged? Have the roaches made a nest in the radio? Are the cats hungry, thirsty, tired? Does he need to have a catheter? Is he the father? Are you a student at the radio school? Are you afraid to fail? Are you in constant fear of assassination? Why has the traffic stopped? Why does blue fade into green? Why didn't I go back to Pasco and become a cop? Why does water curl into the drain in different directions on either side of the equator? Why does my ankle throb? Why do I like it when I pop my knuckles? Is that a bald spot? Is that an ice cap? Is that a birth mark? Will the fog burn off soon? Are her life signs going to stabilize? Can you afford it? Is it gutted? What is it that attracts you to bisexual women? Does it go soggy in the milk? Do people live there? Is there a limit? Did it roll over when it went off the road? Will it further class struggle? Is it legible? Do you feel that it's private? Does it eat flies, worms, children? Is it nasty? Can you get tickets? Do you wear sunglasses out of a misplaced sense of increased privacy? Do you derive

pleasure from farts in the bath? Is there an erotic element to picking your nose? Have you a specific conceptualization of earwax? What am I doing here? How do the deaf sing? How is it those houses will burn in the rain? What is the distance to Wall Drugs? Why do they insist on breaking the piñata? Is penetration of the labia sufficient to support a conviction? Is it a distraction to be aware of the walls? Is it bigger than a bread box? Which is it? When you skydive, do your ears pop? Do you bruise? Did the bridge rust? Is your life clear to you? How will you move it? Will you go easy on the tonic, please? Do you resent your parents? Was your childhood a time of great fear? Is that the path? Do the sandpipers breed here? Is that what you want? Have your cramps come? Do you tend to draw words instead of write them? Do you have an opinion about galvanized steel? Who was John Deere? Are you trapped by your work? Would you like to explore that quarry? Is it the form of a question? Where is Wolf Grade? Are your legs sore? Is that a bottle neck? Who is the Ant Farm? Where did she learn to crawl like that? Is the form of the dance the dancer, or the space she carves? Can we go home now? Who was that masked man? Does he have an imagination? Will he use it? Is it obvious? Is it intentional? Is it possible? Is it hot? Why did the mirror fog up? What is the context of discourse? What is the premise of the man asking a passersby if they have change for a dollar? Who took my toothbrush? What made her choose to get back into the life? What is the cause of long fingers? What is the role of altered, stretched canvas on wood supports, hung from a wall? Why do they seem so focused, intent, on their way to work? What makes you needle happy? Why does he keep large bills in his shirt pocket? How do you locate the crosshairs of your bitterness? What was it about shouting, mere raised voices, that caused him always to go out of control? Do you hear that hum? Is there damage? Is the answer difficult or hard? Is each thing needful? If there was a rip in my notebook, how would you know it? What makes you think you have me figured out? Why do my eyes water, devoid of emotion? What is the difference between a film and a movie? Do you want sugar? Why does my mood correspond to the weather? How do you get down to the beach? Is the act distinct from the object? What did you put in the coffee? Did your ears pop? Would you prefer to watch the condos burn? Where do the verbs go? Will you ever speak to the issue of cholesterol? What is a psychotropic? Does pleonasm scare you? Kledomania? Who leads the low-riders? What is the relation between any two statements? Is anything as tight as anal penetration? Will we stop soon? Will we continue? Where are those sirens coming from? Is it necessary? Is it off-white? Is a legitimate purpose served in limiting access? Will this turn out to be the last day of summer? Will

you give up, give out, over? Why is sarcasm so often the final state of marriage? Is this the right exit? Have you received a security clearance? What do you think of when I say "red goose shoes"? Why does the blind man use his cane like a wand? What is the source of your agitation? Can't you smell the rain before it falls? Are you dizzy, faint, nauseous? Do you have chills? Can you help it? When is the question a form of order? Does order mean a form of command? Do rabbits scratch? Do words peel their outer meanings? Is that your hair? What if I want this so plain you can't see it? Have you noticed all these women with asymmetrical faces in their too-loud makeup? What is so special? What is an ice pick? Do you have involuntary erections without probable cause? What time do you have? Does it begin to wear thin? What about struggle? Do I dare to eat a peach? When do you rise? Why is the verb the second word? Have you watched how new graves begin to move down the slope of that hill, how it fills? What are you trying to tell me? Is that the island? How do they make carbon paper? Is it too hot? What about this? How does a harbor harbor? What of an art of sensory deprivation? Do you like to go down? Will you be able to make it? At what point does meaning begin to blur? Is that a flag in the rain? Is there anything suspicious about the dead? Will you flush when done? What sort of experience will I be forced to exclude? Are you ready? Are you certain? Do you feel this? Is this it? Do we turn here? Will it rain? Aren't you afraid I'll go on endlessly, shamelessly, pointlessly? Do you know that the true structure of a prison is built around its illegal commodities market? Don't you think your fever correlates with stress? Don't you watch those bank clerks each morning, waiting by the door to be let in? Isn't anyone ready to describe real life? How does syntax shape the chair? Where is that woman going with a cake in a box? How did you come to love flow charts? How is a sentence true? Do you see that woman in the crosswalk, turning first this way and then that, as if dazed, uncertain as to the way to go? How soon before I turn into an old man with a bedroll under one arm and a paper bag full of rags and clothes in the other, talking to myself as I walk? What is the source of the dull pain in the jaw? What is the emotional dimension of circumcision? Why do people stare at you? What do they say? Do you care for your cuticles? Are you aware of vessels in the eye?



**EPIGRAM ENGRAVED ON THE COLLAR OF A DOG
WHICH I GAVE TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS (1736)**

ALEXANDER POPE

I am his highness's dog at Kew;
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?

THEODOR W. ADORNO

trans. Rodney Livingstone

Los Angeles, end of May 1942

I dreamt I was to be crucified. The crucifixion was to take place at the Bockenheimer Warte, just by the university. I felt no fear throughout the entire process. Bockenheim resembled a village on Sunday, deathly quiet, as if under glass. I observed it closely on my way to the place of execution. I imagined that the appearance of things on this my last day would enable me to glean some definite knowledge of the next world. At the same time, however, I declared that one should beware of arriving at premature conclusions. One should not let oneself be seduced into ascribing objective truth to the religion practised there simply because Bockenheim was still at the stage of simple commodity production. That aside, I was worried about whether I would obtain leave from the crucifixion to attend a large, extremely elegant dinner to which I had been invited, though I was confidently looking forward to it.

Another night

I was talking with my girlfriend X about the erotic arts with which I thought her conversant. I asked her whether she had ever done it *par le cul*. She responded very frankly, saying that she could do it on some days, but not on others. Today was a day when it was quite impossible. This seemed quite plausible to me, but I wondered whether she was speaking the truth or whether this wasn't just a prostitute's pretext for refusing me. Then she said that she could do quite different things, more beautiful, Hungarian ones, of which I had never heard. In reply to my eager questioning, she said, 'Well, there was Babamüll, for example.' She started to explain it to me. It soon turned out that this supposed perversion

was in reality a highly complicated, to me entirely opaque, but evidently illegal finance operation, something like a safe way of passing worthless cheques. I pointed out to her that this had nothing to do with the erotic techniques she had promised me. However, she stuck to her view and replied in a supercilious tone that I should pay close attention and be patient – the rest would come of its own accord. But since I had completely lost track of the connection, I despaired of ever finding out what Babamüll was.

Los Angeles, 10 January 1943

I was visiting an American brothel. It was a large, distinguished-looking establishment. Even so, anyone who entered had to undergo endless formalities. He had to register, fill in a questionnaire, and speak to the madam who ran the place, her assistant and finally the woman in charge of sales. By the time it came to making a choice, it turned out that the administration occupied almost the entire brothel, so that the girls were left with nothing more than a small, untidy communal room. It reminded me of the hotel room of some travelling virtuoso where the unmade bed has to serve as a seat for the all too numerous visitors. The girls felt very cramped. There were no more than five or six of them, all either unprepossessing or downright ugly. Only one of them seemed pretty to me; she was cowering on the bed, naked but otherwise quite harmless. She was called Eads. (Motif: Wildgans's Sonnets to Ead. The previous evening I had written a sonnet for R.) She had only one flaw: she was made entirely of glass, or perhaps from the same elastic, transparent synthetic material that my new braces are made from. One could even see through her head. She was not actually dead, but had a sort of life, though not a real one: it seemed to be connected with the suppleness of the material. I couldn't make up my mind whether to have her. Of course, I did not fail to notice that the woman in charge of the girls was herself very attractive, although somewhat plump. I explained to her politely that I trusted she would not feel insulted, but her position in the brothel made me feel that she would be free from prejudices, and that since she was so much more attractive than her protégées I would like to ask her if she wouldn't like to do it with me (motifs: the madam in the Sphinx in Paris). She seemed flattered, but during the elaborate negotiations that followed, the dream went dark.

Fragments, Los Angeles, October 1944

There was a large party at which Trotsky was present. He was the centre of a group of disciples to whom he was lecturing in an animated and somewhat authoritarian fashion. The question arose of whether one should speak to him. I voted in favour, adding that one should not talk politics, but simply that it would be inelegant to cut such a renowned guest. – In an otherwise completely destroyed German city, I saw a giant, blackened church spire. Overjoyed, I exclaimed, ‘So the cathedral is still standing’, only to be told that this was not Frankfurt, this was Magdeburg. – A very pretty brunette kissed me with great skill. But she insisted on keeping her cigarette in her mouth during the kiss.

Los Angeles, 29 October 1945

Visit to Anatole France. A highly elegant lift – black as ebony – brought me up to his room or office. The door was ajar; the room, a corner room all in red. I knocked and France told me to come in right away. He was a tall, slim man in his early forties, smoothly shaven, with brown hair, quite unlike any of his pictures. He wore a black, strikingly well-tailored velvet jacket. The conversation turned first to his latest novel, whose title I still knew when I woke up, but then instantly forgot. This was followed by a discussion with sharply diverging views, polite, but uncomfortable. Then my glance fell on two photographs. One represented France himself, the second showed a lady very elegantly dressed in an old-fashioned way, with a plunging neckline, whom I instantly recognized as an actress and whose outstanding beauty I greatly admired. It was the writer’s mother. ‘I too am a child of the theatre’, I said to him: ‘my mother was a celebrated singer.’ At this moment the transformation took place. France, evidently delighted by my confession, changed before my eyes into a young, highly seductive woman with provocative breasts which pressed hard against the V-shaped neckline of her black lace dress, and long, black silk stockings. I kissed the top of her breasts, her mouth, played with her legs, and it was settled that from now on she would be my mistress. She asked whether she could come with me to the opera the following Tuesday – it was now Friday – to *The Marriage of Figaro*. I agreed enthusiastically. She said she wanted to go to the *matinée*, for children. This put me in a highly embarrassing position. I tried to explain to her that I had already

invited Maurice Ravel to that very same children’s performance. I gave her a highly rational account of the latter’s mental illness from which I concluded that he was only capable of enjoying performances for children, and this explained why I could not cancel the arrangement. But I had the feeling that this explanation did not go down well and woke up with the fear that my new love had already passed its highpoint before it could even blossom properly.

Berkeley, 24 March 1946

During the night before the decisive quarrel with Charlotte, I had a dream. As I awoke, I remembered her final words: ‘I am the martyr of happiness.’

16 June 1960

The night before I left [for Vienna], I dreamt that the reason why I cannot relinquish all metaphysical hope is not because I cling to life, but because I would like to wake up with G.

Very fucking chainlessly on golden floors go.

They demanded
some unrecording hair
from the back
and brought it right out.

Everytime
the hair turns weasel
're gonna feel the weight of a mouth rouging its gathers. Dearing arms will just
go wrong. The road's snow will hold . And 'll have to look very fucking sadly
at mirrored tooth, alone in the basement, in the piles of clothes, garbage, pieces,
tools, hangers, there. Behind and under all that 'll have to get. No one should
ever see the mirrors and how they are narrow needles.

Now it's wrinkled the dress.
Arrangements
of
host and hostess bored in the books
of north rich rooms.
The nipping dog
the front steps.

Dear One
Dear Eaten One Dear One
Fix me
I crushed my ankle in the snow of saying it is so hard and ridiculous
Is this the message? We die and rush into the planet

ANNE F. GARÉTTA

trans. 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 crystallized 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 summarized 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 friendship, 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'm 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 unorganized 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 assertions emitted 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 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 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 offense at my incessant urging, A*** found it all quite amusing. This was a good sign. Certainly the variety of my pleas was astonishing; one often 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 seemed at first to be a passing blaze of concupiscence was, over time, taking on real form.

Our daily telephone conversations 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 any ridiculous or insignificant detail, were taking on the meticulous traits of familiarity. It was winning A*** over to the possibility of such a relationship. Its incongruity, 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 completely 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.

* * *

Finally it no longer seemed to be a perilous trap to plan a vacation together, an idea I had secretly been entertaining for a long time now. I convinced A*** to go away with me to Munich for a few days just before Christmas, with no ulterior motive, in keeping with our "and if..."

We left, pretending for a laugh that it was our honeymoon, where of course nothing scandalous would actually happen. One morning, after a night of work, we boarded the first plane for Munich and settled into a comfortable hotel room around noon.

[...]

The [hotel] room had only one bed and we slept side by side in a platonic concubinage, as if this sort of asceticism were natural for us, or agreed upon in advance. There was a hint of perversity in this game; before I went to sleep I kept calculating all the possible consequences of transgressing. That A*** had conceded to come away with me and to share a bed with me, that sleeping next to each other had seemed to go without saying, could have been a sign that I had permission to succumb to the temptation currently putting my perseverance to the test. I was excited by the proximity of A***'s body; I didn't know whether to suppress this excitement or to give it free rein. What was it that A*** really desired? Each night, a ray of light, passing through the slightly opened curtains, illuminated A***'s sleeping face, and I couldn't help but stare. I was hoping that our unconscious nighttime bodily movements would culminate in a compromising position in the morning. But A***, always waking before me, eluded all fortuitous languor.

In the evenings, we would take a walk through the English garden nearby. At night, we would have dinner with some of A***'s friends before beginning our nocturnal wandering. We would walk from one club to another in the sharp cold of those December nights. The night before our departure, we completed a farewell tour. I still remember the amazing ambiance of the trashy dive we found ourselves in, a meeting point for homosexuals of all stripes, where A*** knew the owner, who was a former dancer. In the penumbra, further obscured by cigarette smoke and the movements of perspiring bodies packed one against the other, a barely visible transvestite burlesque show was unfolding. By contrast, the awkward stiffness of the Sans-Nom bored me and so we returned a bit earlier than usual to pack our bags. Worn out from visiting a number of museums that afternoon, I collapsed onto the bed, asleep, without taking the time to undress. From the depths of an intractable slumber, for a very brief moment, I vaguely perceived someone leaning over me, a vision of A***'s face near mine, the sensation of being tucked in. Then I plunged back, muttering, into an interrupted dream.

CAROLINE BERGVALL
from MEDDLE ENGLISH

SOUND sea rush PINK FUSES

by Carolee ORANGE with herself *jamestenney 1967*

REDGREEN *glistening mouth cock* RED *tree cat* Seasound RED shadow RED Sea GREEN *bodies fall back* burnt film Sea legs run YELLOW BLACK bushes trees girl runs shadow Close-up BLACK RED SEASOUND *suck window* RED *cock suck* WHITE window SEASOUND break seagulls Cockwindow mouthwindow WHITE

GREEN paintfilmcloseup cockpaint mouthchin BLACK SEASOUND Handfingers seagulls BLACK GREEN leaves leaves trees Window WHITEGREEN BLACK RED wall erect moves tree leaves PINK BLACK leaves PINKface GREEN BLACK RED SEASOUND seagulls Seapaint back seagulls WHITE GREEN skin paintstroke BLACK SEASOUND seagulls hand GREEN bleached movement arm REDglisten BLACK GREEN WHITE top RED glisteningtrees BLACK

SEASOUND close REDREDblurryArse anuscrackupside verticalarse REDhighsfemale sits WHITE *Burnt* GREEN fingers RED paintcum to left GREENWHITE handbreast REDface backleg RED SEASOUND REDface moveGREEN pubeBLACK RED SEASOUND seagulls *fuckrhythm* REDBLACK *fuckrhythm* RED BLACK Sea PURPLE bleachedface RED*rhythm* BLACK SEASOUND GREENback rest burnt film perforated BLACKpaint Perforated *Lie classical Stretchbody back*

male rest Sideleg restingWHITE Burnt film face hair close nippleEyes stars face BLACK lock face close-up grasses wind SEASOUND *she*

lies breasts back Stars face to camera Break kiss clear smile long RED BLACK film Kissclear burntfilm WHITE breast upside down fuckrhythm show breasts burnt film SEASOUNDRED shadow BLACK outline PINKbodySEASOUNDseagulls *outline* negative fuckrhythmotion BLACK spotpatches SEASOUND seagulls shapes

patches film streaked*negative*SEASOUND streaked *negative* GREENlines paint REDsoil GREENmoves *background* BLACK Star holesFace GREEN cock GREEN leaves trees Vulva hairy bushy *seacunt* leaves PINKcock REDstones Blurry BLUEGREENcock right glisteningHandring finger pull cloth mate skinpube bushy *cunt tree* linesBLACK WHITE pubegoateeGREENearGREEN BLACK flash WHITE glass GREEN face femaleSeakiss clear armBLACK hairface

Close fuckrhythm bleachedRED female face smiling burnt film PURPLE face smiling lying GREEN GREEN face PURPLE GREENWHITEbodies SEASOUNDBLACKGREEN brow clear fuckrhythm rhythm underBrow Seaface fuzzeeye closeupbleachedrest smokefacelyingpubecock RED paint lips Frownuncunthairy REDWHITE nippleBLACKpube REDcatGREENseagullsREDcockglisten meat film *fuckrhythm camera smiles to camera* arm thighs arm thighs

caress REDcat boc cat arm *big red nipple* WHITE REDBLACK Sea GREENpatchleftGREEN RED WHITE GREEN WHITENip REDArse BLUEGREEN BLACKpubeOpenperforated filmbreast BLACKstop filmGREEN WHITE BLACKRED SEASOUNDKiss BLACK shadow window shadow catarmkiss BLUEscreen WHITE window*Fingerhairy vulva swollen hairyswollencamera* Window carry light window bodymass *Standingfuckrhythm bodylock* RED seagulls*fingers* BLACK

cockglisten BLACK RED patch glisten BLACK hair close Vulva close hair BLACK RED Seaclose moves pulseRED BLACK BLACK screen RED meat patches filmBLACK cockhair ArmNail filmBLACKWHITE RED GREEN film fullbodyGREENeyesface thinGREEN BLACK SeaBLUE fullbody entwined faceBack BLUE GREEN GREENWHITE BLACKBLUE GREEN BLACK Sea WHITE grasses GREEN

white *cuntlick lieback* water lakefacehighs GREEN entwined
face upside

BLACK PINK GREEN *bodylockface cat* GREEN BLACK move
GREENBLACK Sea Sea BLACK BLUE patch GREEN streak GREEN
BLACK GREEN leaves water BLACK RED lighttrees windowlight
GREEN lights navelhair navelhair arm GREEN turn navel hairy close
RED cat wheel car treeslightbreasts smile light light trees GREEN
still window lights ORANGEwindow curtains Seacurtains
seagulls ORANGE ORANGE patches city Lightstunnel fuckrhythm lights

fuckrhythm steady *blowjobhairy fingersface* Seafuckrhythm
Down fuckrhythm lights BLACK WHITE BLACK waterwater
Sea suckfingers BLACK film BLACK fabric faces fabr
fingerBLACK GREEN faceGREEN Arsefilm CutRED finger face
WHITEfuzz arse fuckrhythm streaks filmBLACK film perforated filmRED
GREEN ORANGE fabric streakWHITE smile goateed legmuscle ringrest
stretch ORANGE Quiet slow arm *rest torn burnt film seagulls* sea arm still

GREEN female runs to sea arms Quiet seagulls arm sea arm still
RingcaressGREEN PINKstillSea female to sea waves GREENBLUE
runs to run seawalks to sea walks to sea walks to sea runs sea
fuzzGREEN superimp runstosea fuckrhythm runsback tocamera
swimwear to sea GREENfuzz runsbeach fillsRestlegRest
ORANGE window curtains curtains seagullswindembrace curtains
brightdaylight curtainswindow ORANGE gold SEASOUND BLACK

NIGHTWOOD (1936)

DJUNA BARNES

When Robin, accompanied by Jenny Petherbridge, arrived in New York, she seemed distracted. She would not listen to Jenny's suggestion that they should make their home in the country. She said a hotel was 'good enough'. Jenny could do nothing with her; it was as if the motive power which had directed Robin's life, her day as well as her night, had been crippled. For the first week or two she would not go out, then, thinking herself alone, she began to haunt the terminals, taking trains into different parts of the country, wandering without design, going into many out-of-the-way churches, sitting in the darkest corner, or standing against the wall, one foot turned toward the toe of the other, her hands folded at their length, her head bent. As she had taken the Catholic vow long before, now she came into church as one renouncing something; her hands before her face, she knelt, her teeth against her palm, fixed in an unthinking stop as one who hears of death suddenly; death that cannot form until the shocked tongue has given its permission. Moving like a housewife come to set straight disorder in an unknown house, she came forward with a light taper, and setting it up, she turned, drawing on her thick white gloves, and with her slow headlong step, left the church. A moment later Jenny, who had followed her, looking about to be sure that she was unobserved, darted up to the sconce, snatched the candle from its spike, blew it out; relit it and set it back.

Robin walked the open country in the same manner, pulling at the flowers, speaking in a low voice to the animals. Those that came near, she grasped, straining their fur back until their eyes were narrowed and their teeth bare, her own teeth showing as if her hand were upon her own neck.

Because Robin's engagements were with something unseen; because in her speech and in her gestures there was a desperate anonymity, Jenny became hysterical. She accused Robin of a 'sensuous communion with unclean spirits', and in putting her wickedness into words she struck herself down. She did not

understand anything Robin felt or did, which was more unendurable than her absence. Jenny walked up and down her darkened hotel room, crying and stumbling.

Robin now headed up into Nora's part of the country. She circled closer and closer. Sometimes she slept in the woods; the silence that she had caused by her coming was broken again by insect and bird flowing back over her intrusion, which was forgotten in her fixed stillness, obliterating her as a drop of water is made anonymous by the pond into which it has fallen. Sometimes she slept on a bench in the decaying chapel (she brought some of her things here) but she never went further. One night she woke up to the barking, far off, of Nora's dog. As she had frightened the woods into silence by her breathing, the barking of the dog brought her up rigid and still.

Half an acre away Nora, sitting by a kerosene lamp, raised her head. The dog was running about the house; she heard him first on one side then the other; he whined as he ran; barking and whining she heard him further and further away. Nora bent forward, listening; she began to shiver. After a moment she got up, unlocking the doors and windows. Then she sat down, her hands on her knees; but she couldn't wait. She went out. The night was well advanced. She no longer heard the dog, but she kept on. A level above her she heard things rustling in the grass, the briars made her stumble, but she did not call.

At the top of the hill she could see, rising faintly against the sky, the weather-beaten white of the chapel; a light ran the length of the door. She began to run, cursing and crying, and blindly, without warning, plunged into the jamb of the chapel door.

On a contrived alter, before a Madonna, two candles were burning. Their light fell across the floor and the dusty benches. Before the image lay flowers and toys. Standing before them in her boy's trousers was Robin. Her pose, startled and broken, was caught at the point where her hand had reached almost to the shoulder, and at the moment Nora's body struck the wood, Robin began going down. Sliding down she went; down, her hair swinging, her arms held out, and the dog stood there, rearing back, his forelegs slanting; his paws trembling under the trembling of his rump, his hackle standing; his mouth open, his tongue slung sideways over his sharp bright teeth; whining and waiting. And down she went, until her head swung against his; on all fours now, dragging her knees. The veins stood out in her neck, under her ears, swelled in her arms and wide and throbbing rose up on her fingers as she moved forward.

The dog, quivering in every muscle, sprang back, his lips drawn, his tongue a stiff curving terror in his mouth; moved backward, back, as she came on, whimpering too now, coming forward, her head turned completely sideways, grinning and whimpering.

Backed now into the farthest corner, the dog reared as if to avoid something that troubled him to such agony that he seemed to be rising from the floor; then he stopped, clawing sideways at the wall, his forepaws lifted and sliding. Then, head down, dragging her forelocks in the dust, she struck against his side. He let loose one howl of misery and bit at her, dashing about her, barking, and as he sprang on either side of her he kept his head toward her, dashing his rump now this side, now that, of the wall.

Then she began to bark also, crawling after him—barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. The dog began to cry, running with her, head-on with her head, as if to circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went. He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces, moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees.

LAURE

trans. Jeanine Herman

Today.—Only delirious but joyful iconoclasts please me.

What hell to have gotten the picture—yes there it is: wanting terribly to tell you to go to hell the way one throws oneself around the necks of those one loves.

The hell of these ponderous airs for profound things.

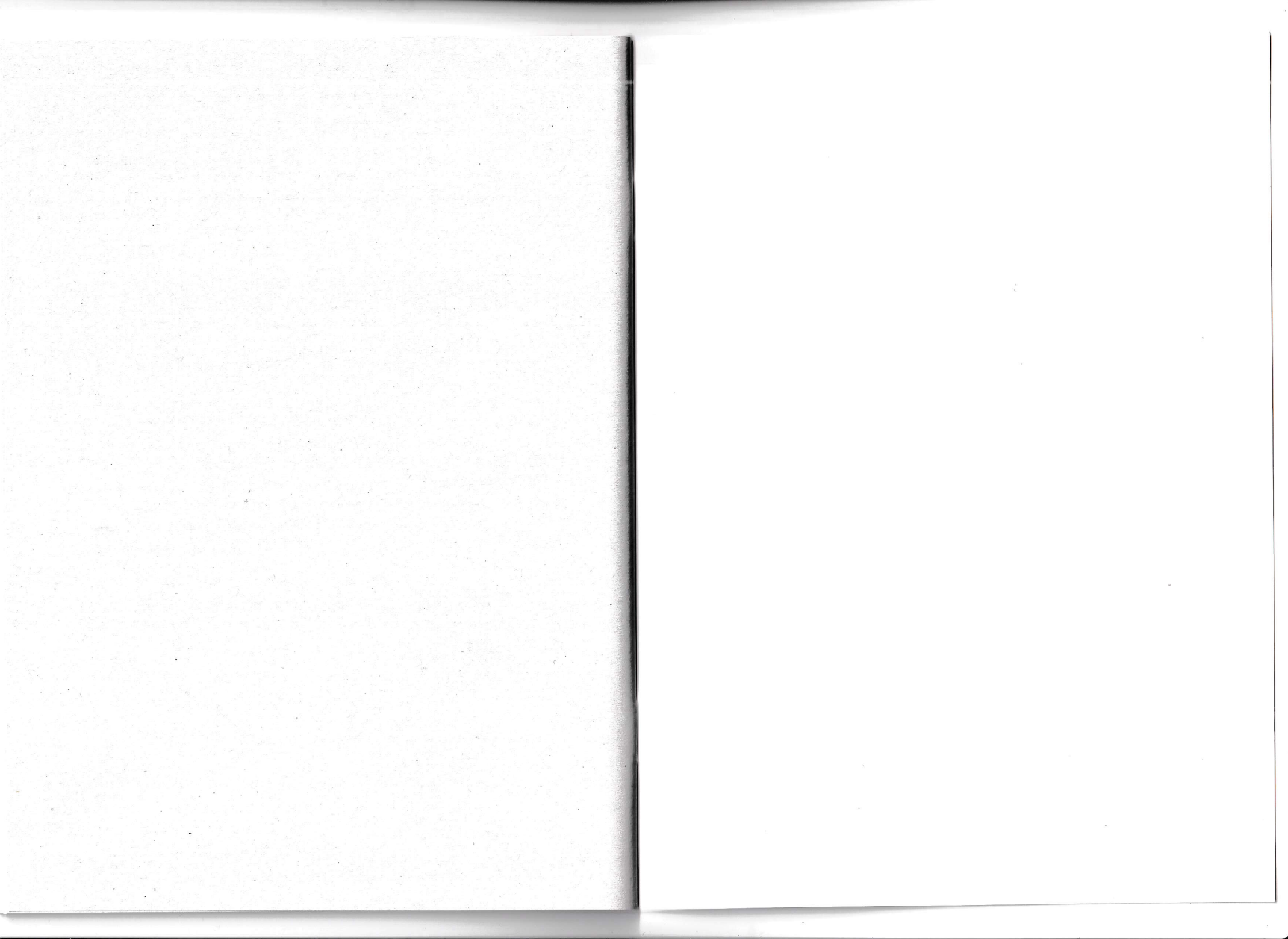
No misunderstandings: I like these great priests for their madness.

Absence of literature. Listen:

“. . . he is my playmate. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the Universe. Playful! tears and laughter, all the roles in the play. Oh, the entertainment of the world! Schools of children set free, *who* to praise? Who to blame? He has no reason. He has no brain. He dupes us with this bit of brain and this bit of reason. But this time, he will not take me in. *I know the name of the game*. Beyond reason and science and all the words, there is love. Fill the cup, and we will be wild.”

Iconoclasts, yes, but no imitations, no mincing, mawkishness, pretense.
Do you understand all this?

June or July 1938



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Slow Reading Club is HENRY ANDERSEN & BRYANA FRITZ

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