

A Self of One's Own: Psychoanalysis, Self-Identity and Affect, 1909-1939 – A Creative and Critical Exploration

Alexander Lockwood

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Supervisors:

Dr. Anne Whitehead

Dr. Andrew Crumey

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Newcastle University

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Abstract

The thesis is in two parts: a creative component comprising a historical novel *Obélisque* concerned with psychoanalysis and self-identity, and a critical component that investigates the role of therapeutic language in the formation of identities in the period 1909-1939.

Obélisque fictionalises the performance of psychoanalysis in mid-1930s Paris. Set around the Obelisk Press publishing house, the novel explores how new forms of psychosurgery (the lobotomy) and psychoanalysis were assimilated into culture as methods of self-control, forced onto physical bodies and mental selves. It tells the story of an editor at the Obelisk who enters analysis, and creates a dialogue with the history of psychoanalysis as it affected creative practice.

The critical component is in three parts. The first offers an overview of theories of affect in relation to psychoanalytic language and therapy culture. It brings together the work of theorists Lauren Berlant, Ann Cvetkovich and Eva Illouz in studying affect to find alternatives to neoliberalism. It argues that such alternatives can be found in the modernist period, in moments of resistance to therapeutic narratives as they were being absorbed into consumer practices, legitimating the ‘acceptable’ forms that a ‘self’ could take.

The second part examines Norah James’ *Sleeveless Errand*, banned on publication in 1929 and subsequently published by the Obelisk Press. *Sleeveless Errand* is a study of an ambivalent self produced in reaction to cultural standards. The third part examines the psychoanalytic work of Marion Milner and her interwar experiments in self-analysis, which resisted emerging therapeutic languages in an attempt to find a method for self-making that was her own.

This thesis, then, seeks to assess how such emotional therapeutic narratives of psychoanalytic language shape the self. It explores what these historical moments of counter-cultural resistance to the dominance of therapeutic narratives can offer for contemporary examinations of self-making.

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Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Contents page.....	iv
Narrative Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Affect, public feelings and emotional capitalism.....	5
Chapter 2: Stuck between boredom and feeling: resistances to self-knowledge in <i>Sleeveless Errand</i> by Norah C. James.....	27
Chapter 3: Experimenting the self: Marion Milner....	50
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	73
Critical Bibliography.....	75
Novel Synopsis.....	80
<i>Obélisque</i>	82

Narrative Introduction

What does it mean to ‘have a life’? Many of us set the scale of achievements at work and in our personal lives to measure the accumulation of assets and relationships that mean something to us. Having not just a ‘life’ but a ‘good life’ would be the attainment of such things in a society of reciprocal recognition and care where there is time not only for the working day, familial and social obligations, but also to enjoy those things that mean something to us through play, leisure, curiosity, and rest. These activities of flourishing would be bodily practices free from anxiety or the loss of security, or too much sense of a future.

The problem, as Lauren Berlant sees it, is that “for many now [...] the traditional infrastructures for reproducing life—at work, in intimacy, politically—are crumbling at a threatening pace” (2012, p.5). The everyday ‘ordinary’ of people’s existence, the scene where one must ‘live’ that ‘life’, has become “an impasse shaped by crisis” (Ibid., p.8). In her study of the historical present, Berlant explores these “impasses” to ask “what happens to fantasies of the good life when the ordinary becomes a landfill for overwhelming and impending crises of life-building and expectation whose sheer volume so threatens what it has meant to ‘have a life’ that adjustment seems an accomplishment?” (Ibid., p.3).

What does it mean to “have a life”? And what methods exist to bring together the practice of novel writing, the crises of contemporary Western culture, and texts of the 1930s to engage with this question? There are two parts to this answer.

First, as Marion Milner, one of the authors explored below, says, for any creative practice to be of value it must build a bridge between inner imagination and outer reality to produce a materially objective fusion of the two that can be experienced by others, for example as literature. For Milner art is “a created way of giving the inner subjective reality of feeling an outer form, in order that it may be shared, and so also tested and verified” (1950, p.154). The inner feeling propelling this PhD into existence was a desire to explore how to flourish through creative living, while beset by the growing (and often painful)

requirements of society to align one's self-identity with normative positions offered by consumer culture and institutional regulation.

The creative work *Obélisque* tells the becoming-into-being of the recognised structures of psychoanalysis in the period 1909-1939. It is a literary novel set in Paris that, before the author's craft developed, at times flirted with chapters resembling a Woody Allen pastiche of late modernism.¹ It is also a historical novel written with hindsight and the urge to tackle questions of selfhood, language and normativity. As Berlant suggests, "the historical novel's mission [is] to transmit what it felt like to live on in proximity to a suffused violence so systemic and intensity-magnetising that it is a relief when an event expresses it" (2012, p.74). This seems the best possible description of a historical novel that maintains fidelity to a thesis exploring conditions of living and life-building, even when at times it seemed that writing it was like jumping from a bridge into that awful "permanent gap between the perfection we have in us to conceive of and the actuality of what can really happen" (Milner 1950, p.154). This means something not only for creating art but also for *creating the life one is 'having'*. As Milner goes on to say:

there is also a gap between the inner reality of feeling and the available ways of communicating what we feel. It is obviously a discrepancy that varies in degrees in different people and in different phases of society; it is a gap that is bigger whenever the conditions of our living are changing rapidly so that the old forms for describing our feeling experience become no longer adequate.

Ibid.

Milner reminds us that the affective experiences of an ever-faster-changing world of ever-more-precarious modes of living, in which feelings outstrip the forms we have to communicate those feelings, are not restricted to the contemporary, but stretch back to her writing in the 1920s, or as Woolf would have it, December 1910 (1924, p.4).

Second, the critical component reads texts from the interwar period which are not in themselves 'modernist' in style but were responding to modernist preoccupations and pressures. These include affective relations towards the

¹ See the time-travel romantic comedy *Midnight in Paris* (2012).

mass-produced fantasies of a 'good life'. I explore the works of two relatively unknown women writers from the period. Of course neither wrote the works examined here while experiencing the very worst of the exploitations of late capitalism / neoliberalism; this exploded in the 1950s in material production, and took hold politically in the 1980s as Reagan and Thatcher purged the lifeblood of capitalism of any lingering collectivist poisons. But my argument is that those living through the interwar period were subject to *some* of the early conditions of this atomism; and that they were *exactly* contemporary to the processes of how today's overwhelming crisis-laden capitalism began to shape our life-building practices in relation to self-identity. For the sociologist Eva Illouz, what developed in the interwar period was "a new emotional style—the therapeutic emotional style" (2007, p.6) which has come to dominate Western cultural practices of self-making. An emotional style takes place "when a new interpersonal imagination is formulated, that is, a new way of thinking about the relationship of self to others and imagining its potentialities" (Ibid., p.7). For Illouz, this emotional style has been shaped mostly, although not exclusively, by therapy which emerged between the First and Second world wars. Psychology, and in particular Freudian psychoanalysis, became central to how people living under capitalism came to manage their selves, to form identities and sustain relationships.

In both creative and academic components I have paid attention to the role of affects, emotions and feelings, hoping to offer insight into the ways in which activities of flourishing can be embodied and practiced. The introductory chapter draws together the work of Illouz and Berlant within an investigation that takes the consequences of shared experiences of affect or "public feelings" as its scene of critique. My argument is that an understanding of neoliberalism as an "affective technology" (Gammon 2013, p.513) is essential for studying how capitalism presses people into survivalist modes of adjustment; but that this critique needs to extend back to the time in which what Illouz calls "emotional capitalism" (2007, p.5) was being formed in the interwar period. The aim has been to turn towards what Ann Cvetkovich calls "the utopia of ordinary habit" (2012, p.191) to offer a thesis that considers how to shape practices of living that might lead to a life free from anxiety or from the loss of security, the conditions for which are happening *now*, but were also happening *then*.

The second chapter explores Norah James' *Sleeveless Errand* (1929). The protagonist Paula makes a decision to commit suicide, so despondent is she of ever achieving, or ever really wanting, the "good life" that is set before her as the social ideal. I have identified the emotion of boredom as a way of navigating through the late-modernist demands of the project of self-identity, as well as the normative values inherent in relations of the individual to society, particularly through work and consumption. *Sleeveless Errand* is an important literary link in the history of self-making up against the barrier, being, as it was, banned in the courts straight after Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). It was also the first book published by the Paris-based Obelisk Press, which appears in my creative element.

In the third chapter I offer a reading of Marion Milner's self-analytical memoirs *A Life of One's Own* (1934) and *An Experiment in Leisure* (1937). These texts (published under the pen name Joanna Field) are explorations of what a "good life" might be if, instead of being simply what is offered by the growing consumer culture, it was something one could be able to identify and make attachments to for one's self. I have turned to the momentary affectivity of an astonishment-with-living to propose that Milner's work expresses an embodied experience of resistance to the co-option of therapy by capitalism in shaping the search for selfhood and a "good life".

Chapter 1

Affect, Public Feelings, and Emotional Capitalism

1.1 What would it take?

What would it take to un-know the self? To unlearn and undo but not to un-feel nor abandon completely the thing called a *self*? It would take first of all an acceptance that the self has technologies (Foucault 1990), can be a supplement (Derrida 1974) or myth (Barthes 1993) but which, under present cultural conditions, *must not remain unknown* to the subject that has come to identify its 'I' as its *self*. That is: despite, or perhaps because of, the Freudian 'discovery' of the unconscious, the individual Western subject today is continually aware of its self within the limits of the 'I' of self-identification, self-awareness, self-discovery, and self-legitimation. And this takes place even if the subject never begins to question its thoughts, feelings and behaviours on a day-to-day basis, nor even over the course of its life, but struggles to register the consequences of its emplacement within contemporary classifications of recognition such as the family, race, class, nationality and sexuality.

To un-know the self, it would take the reorganisation of thought away from a hierarchical and dualistic frame that privileges rationality (male) over emotionality (female), to question the cultural processes by which the subject has come to identify its self in these ways within contemporary Western cultures. By doing this, it would take the form of a political force, or more precisely politics "tracked through the twisted machinations of everyday experience and meanings buried in habits of life, interpretative practices, and forms of sociality [...] beyond a narrowly demarcated politics proper" (Stewart 2000, p.245). It would work not with politics but with the political, or rather "between *politics* as a scene of antagonism and *the political* as that which magnetises a desire for intimacy, sociality, affective solidarity, and happiness" (Berlant 2012, p.252, emphasis in original).

It would take the recognition that not every 'I' has subjected its self (or selves) to the same limitations of narrative offered by Western heteronormative ways of behaving. It would also take acceptance that eruptions of new counter-cultural forms of knowing the self are "neither inherently subversive nor

inherently conservative” (Cvetkovich and Pellegrini 2003, p.1) but are “ways of life—subcultures, publics, counterpublics” (Cvetkovich 2003, p.9). And it would do this through an understanding of the “necessity for letting go of the self-images, as well as the recurrent intermittent surrender of the discursive mind” (Milner 1989, p.121).

It would take, then, if one were to follow this line of thinking towards cultural sociologist Eva Illouz’s position, the dismantling of perhaps the most effective “language ideology” in the history of Western European civilization—the language ideology of modernity—which resides in a “special belief in the power of language to help understand and control our social and emotional environment” (Illouz 2007, p.39). The characteristics of this language ideology of modernity to which Illouz turns our attention are formed by the emergence of what I have already referred to above as a therapeutic emotional style, which took shape in the interwar/modernist period and “which has dominated the cultural landscape throughout the twentieth century” (Ibid., p.6). For Illouz, the self-help therapeutic culture is an “informal and almost inchoate aspect of our social experience, yet it is also a deeply internalized cultural schema organising perception of self and others, autobiography, and interpersonal interaction” (2008, p.156). How we come to know our selves is constrained by the language choices we have available to us in articulating what we find through perceptions and relations.

It would take the recognition that the “therapeutic culture” identified by Illouz as a “*new cultural structure*” (2008, p.8, emphasis in original) is also a structure of feeling processes. Such processes have been used to communicate an ontological vision of self-making to the extent that this therapeutic perspective now operates at the very centre of Western civilisation. Illouz’s project has been to trace the events through which therapeutic discourse progressively shaped the language of selfhood in the belief that our currently accepted forms of selfhood obstruct true expressions of collectivity and sovereignty. Indeed, it is Illouz’s contention that therapeutic language atomises the individual into a project of disaggregated parts that need to be put back together, with therapeutic help, while at the same time constraining social possibilities by normalising one form of emotional style that suits capitalist consumer ideologies at the expense of others. Such contemporary modes of living are, for Berlant and others, first and foremost

“impasses” of experiencing and imagining alternatives. Berlant sees “these new aesthetic forms [emerging] during the 1990s to register a shift in how the older state-liberal-capitalist fantasies shape adjustments to the structural pressures of crisis and loss” (2012, p.7). As I have proposed, we can extend our critique further back to, and Illouz dates it precisely, the delivery in 1909 of Sigmund Freud’s Clark Lectures, that introduced psychoanalysis to the United States (Illouz 2007, p.7).

So, to un-know *this* self, it would take an assault on this language ideology as it has become embedded in the dominant construction of its means of repetition: Western capitalism. But if those living under capitalism wished to un-know those selves formed in reaction to modes of life that are self-destructive, oppressive, routinized, stultifying and/or precarious (Butler 2004) it would require them to challenge the “market-based cultural repertoires [that] shape and inform interpersonal and emotional relationships” (Illouz 2007, p.7) and begin instead to develop what Brian Massumi has called an “alter-politics of affect” (2011). Critically, it would take a vision of “neoliberalism, advanced capitalism and globalization as a series of immanent forces rather than dead effects [...] as they press upon a ‘weighted and reeling present’” (Stewart 2007, p.245). It would take in our wish to un-know the self we have made of ourselves, a willingness to embrace new scholarly trajectories in reconsidering the “conventional distinctions between political and emotional life as well as between political and therapeutic cultures” (Cvetkovich 2003, p.10). But it would do this, in agreement with Cvetkovich, not to dismiss therapeutic practices but to expand what is possible through ‘therapeutic’ approaches beyond what is offered within the “medicalized or privatized encounter” (Ibid.) that is taken-as-read in the language ideology of modernity that so successfully marries the goals of capitalism with the terminology of psychoanalysis. It would take an exploration of the ways in which affects have been implicated in the construction of self-identity; and, in terms we have already encountered, what it might mean to “have a life” (Berlant 2012, p.3).

There is the risk of a critical looseness in understanding affect, feelings and emotions and their relation to the content of any analysis. For definitions I use the glossary provided by Jonathan Flatley, for whom affects are, following Sylvan Tomkins, “amplifying, dampening, or otherwise modifying” physiological changes that “serve the valuable function of focusing our attention on something

very specific—such as a danger, a loss, or the presence or absence of a smile on the face of an interlocutor” (Flatley 2008, p.15). In contrast, emotions are “the result of the inevitable interaction of affects with thoughts, ideas, beliefs, habits, instincts, and other affects. If affects are not reducible, emotions are, and it is emotions that vary from context to context, person to person” (Ibid., p.16). As Sara Ahmed illustrates, the emotion we feel about being told “you’re late” depends on whether the person doing the telling is your child waiting at the school gates, your boss, or your best friend (2010). In addition, feelings are processes *by which we feel something*, and which can be individual but which are, in the context of social identities, structural to cultures and societies. This is how Flatley and others (e.g. Cvetkovich 2012) have employed Raymond Williams’ concept of a “structure of feeling”. As Flatley puts it: “When certain objects produce a certain set of affects in certain contexts for certain groups of people—that is a structure of feeling” (2008, p.26). One set of structures that has been analysed recently are “public feelings” explored by cultural theorists, particularly from feminist, queer and postcolonial positions, who have turned to affect, emotion and feeling to ask questions of power in relation to embodiment, to expose the “good life” fantasies of neoliberalism, and find alternatives. They ask what kinds of politics is possible if we think affect, emotion, and the public differently to, as Jennifer Cooke suggests, “explore new versions of the good life and of the intimacies we can pursue and enact within them” (2013, p.944).

1.2 The emergence of public feelings

It is in the last two decades that public feelings or public sentiments as terms have been put into circulation by cultural theorists “to challenge the idea that feelings, emotions, or affects properly and only belong to the domain of private life and to the intimacies of family, love, and friendship” (Cvetkovich and Pellegrini 2003, p.1). These academic-activists focus critical attention on the ways in which affects saturate politics and the political to expose, for example, their employment in justifying neoliberal aims such as the use of national sentimentality in the ‘war on terror’ (Berlant 2007). These scholars argue that feelings are too often mobilised and circulated in public spheres in ways that support normalising pathologies that degrade and refuse non-dominant reproductions of life (e.g. for women in general, those identifying as queer, or anyone outside of the ‘norm’ of

‘who counts’, including nonhuman animals). As Cvetkovich says, “our interest in everyday life, in how global politics and history manifest themselves at the level of lived affective experience” (Cvetkovich 2007, p.461) is to unpick the relationship between politics, history and ordinary lives, because “private or personal matters are in fact central to political life” (Ibid.). According to Berlant, public spheres are “always affect worlds” (Berlant 2012, p.226). The critique of many scholars is that when feelings are restricted to private life they are redacted of political agency. As Jenni Rice explains:

Part of the problem of a public culture built upon private intimacies is that experiences of depression, rage, ambivalence are felt first/primarily as personal, rather than a function of public life [...] It is filtered through the intimate zone of therapeutic discourse, rather than first examined as a ‘public problem’.

Rice 2012

A focus on “public feelings” brings out ordinary affects from the domains of family and therapy to reveal how such feelings are not separate from but integral to what Stewart calls that “something huge and impersonal [that] runs through things” (2007, p.87).

It is important to be precise in exploring this relationship between ordinary, private emotions and their mobilisation in a public sphere, not least to avoid reasserting them as opposites in a ‘private’ vs. ‘public’ binarism which allows the hegemonic dominance of public (male) modes of life over private and feminine experiences (Staiger, Cvetkovich and Reynolds 2010). For Berlant, feelings—particularly painful feelings—have become central to the making of political worlds; but generally in the service of traditional hierarchies. Berlant’s argument is that pain is legitimated as a “true” feeling by those hierarchies, and in the process this legitimation disempowers opposition, to the point that the simple alleviation or recognition of that “pain” (e.g. through reality TV, writing a poem, or tabloid press attention) is enough to be considered freedom, without changing the structural causes of that pain. The structural cause is the atomising late-capitalist neoliberalism we’ve already met, which “exhorts citizens to understand that the ‘bottom line’ of national life is neither democracy nor freedom but

survival, which can only be achieved by a citizenry that eats its anger” (Berlant 2000, p.43).

As Adi Kunstman notes, these pioneering critics have brought affect into discussions of social and cultural phenomena with the result that “[t]he theoretical language of emotions, feelings and affect is now broadly used in the field of social and cultural studies [with] the understanding of the social and the political as *passionate and affective*” (2012, p.4). The aim of attending to feelings in these public spheres then, as Cvetkovich suggests, is to develop a critical program that destabilises the understanding of politics as free from private feelings, to “forge methodologies for the documentation and examination of the structures of affect that constitute cultural experience and serve as the foundation for public cultures” (2003, p.11).

Distinct public-feelings projects have sought to depathologise negative emotions surrounding the attritional “wearing out of the subject” (Berlant 2012, p.28) in politics. In particular, cultural studies (and the broader humanities) has developed new grounds for analysis of contemporary life for: feeling and social resistance (Cvetkovich 2003); identity politics, feminist and queer pedagogy (Massumi 2002; Sedgwick 2003); the cultural politics of particular emotions such as envy, happiness or depression (Ngai 2005; Ahmed 2010; Cvetkovich 2012); the public and political sphere as sentimental or cruel (Berlant 1997; 2012); the ordinary affects of everyday experience (Stewart 2007) to name only a few. What sets these works apart from an application of merely psychoanalytic theory is a return to the body’s role in forging new and productive starting points for the humanities’ intervention in what Stewart calls “worlding” (2011, p.445) and the ways in which affect is interwoven with the political. Public feelings can contribute to and maintain normative values within a culture; but they are *also* emotions that can be circulated by those same or alternative systems to challenge that culture. Public feelings, then, are “neither inherently subversive nor inherently conservative. Rather [...] we must ask into the instant and consider ‘who is utilizing it, how it is deployed, and where its effects are concentrated’” (Cvetkovich and Pellegrini 2003, p.1).

Much of the focus of these studies has been on the contemporary present of neoliberalism, tracked by critics such as Earl Gammon to the post-Fordist crises of the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of counter-publics through feminism and the

civil rights movement. The genesis of neoliberalism is also a “psychogenesis” in that for Gammon, “corresponding to the rise of neoliberalism is a distinct affective configuration of the self” (2013, p.512). The machismo of affective neoliberalism is not an accident but a psychosocial response from within patriarchal cultures to the threats from non-dominant groups, and to which responses in “all aspects of sociality, including within the economic sphere [became] overdetermined by affect, that is, by anxiety and aggression” (Ibid.). Our critiques, he argues, must be grounded in a conception of neoliberalism as “an affective technology, a technology of both the self and of governance in Foucauldian terms” (Ibid., p.513).²

As I have suggested, our critical work on the genesis of neoliberalism and what is happening to us now can stretch back farther than the 1960s as Berlant, among others, has done (see Berlant 1997; Ngai 2005). If neoliberalism is, as Gammon claims, an “affective technology” of self-making, then the specific uses of language in relation to contemporary affective processes are well worth investigating. And as Illouz has argued, such language was forged in the interwar period with the emergence of Freudian psychoanalysis and the new self-help therapeutic culture. Gammon agrees. If capitalism was to outlast its oppositions, it needed a means of “affective self-control” (Gammon 2013, p.514) for a workforce engaged in production yet gaining ever fewer freedoms for its labour. So the rise of psychoanalysis and Freud’s discovery of the workings of the unconscious were not an accident. Rather, “Freud’s enterprise was historically contingent upon the psychical pressures that had been mounting on individuals with the growth of the super-ego prohibitions induced by the civilising process” (Ibid., p.515) that have been put into such good use by capitalist schemas, finding through the creation of “good life” fantasy images “the means through which subjective desire is allured into the trappings of the autonomous self” (Ibid., p.514).

It is, then, useful to draw together the work of Illouz and Berlant in asking questions of neoliberalism as an “affective technology” that shapes peoples’ lives. Both Illouz and Berlant ask us to ask how we become attached to images of the

² Here ‘Foucauldian terms’ refers to the work of Michel Foucault that has identified technologies of the self and technologies of governance as productive matrices of regulations, imperatives, rules and social restrictions that have come to be accepted as moral habits or practices in defining self- and collective identities. See Foucault 1990, 2010.

‘good life,’ to do so through exploring how capitalism became “emotional capitalism” and by asking how “psychoanalysis became the privileged site for the expression of the inner self” (Illouz 2008, p.50). As Cooke argues, the ‘good life’ is “intrinsically also a question of how we organise and live our relationality” (2013, p.944). So we should ask not simply what it means to ‘have a life’ but “why and how the therapeutic language has come to define languages of selfhood and what makes it a *cultural resource*, a way for actors to devise strategies of action that help them implement certain definitions of the good life” (Illouz 2008, p.20).

1.3 The making of emotional capitalism

For Dierdra Reber, there is currently taking place an epistemic shift from rationality to feeling, where we no longer privilege sources and processes of knowledge emanating from the head or mind—logical thought, *logos*—but are coming to allow for the primacy of bodily knowledge, of the somatic and pre-rational, for organising Western cultures’ processes of living. She calls this a “headless capitalism” (Reber 2012, p.62) and it is linked to the essential need to reimagine the free-market and globalisation as systems that are not damaging to humans, nonhumans and the ecologies on which we depend. Taking affect further than Tomkins or Flatley along a political path, she suggests we are witnessing “the full-blown emergence of an episteme inherently bounded by affect” (Ibid., p.68) where a definition would make sense as:

the prerational set of dispositions toward the self in the world given by sensory perception, emotion, and feeling, a set of dispositions that constructs a somatic knowledge organised on the autonomic principle of homeostasis. Organicity as a logica of organisation, emotional disposition as a form of moral judgement, internal equilibrium as a means of analysis.

Ibid., p.69

Organic homeostasis opposed to infinite economic growth. This is acutely different from our current “language ideology” identified by Illouz in that such organicity is not reliant on somatically-external modes of knowledge such as psychoanalysis, nor consumer culture’s circulation and repetition of those forms

of knowledge as inculcation of its psychic power (Butler 1997) or as bio-power (Foucault 2010).

For Reber, self-help therapeutic language has become a weapon of repression, in that “for the immanent ‘we’ that has no outside, revolution may only assume the form of therapy” (2012, p.88). Reber’s argument is that although a shift is happening, we do not yet know fully how to step outside of the epistemology of rationalistic thought, and that therapy in culture currently reinforces this episteme because it is so intensely implicated in capitalist rationalist processes. We are too familiar with the heady ideas of capitalism because they are “epistemically consonant with the dominant rationalist paradigm of the modern colonialism—including its neocolonial avatar—operative from the Conquest to the fall of the Soviet Union” (Ibid., p.91). Within this long period of dominance, Illouz’s work draws attention to this epistemology as firmly rooted in how capitalism and psychoanalysis have developed in synchronization. For Illouz, capitalism does not exclude the body but rather rationalises it.

Capitalism as the wider term for neoliberalism is an affective technology that utilizes therapeutic languages. According to Illouz, “Freud almost single-handedly created a new language to describe, discuss and manage the psyche” and in doing so “he addressed what had become one of the most dominant and problematic features of modern life, namely the private sphere, thereby transforming it” (2008, p.35). Key to its co-option was its textuality. That is, “Freud’s ideas worked at several levels: they confronted prevalent sexual *norms*; they offered *new narrative models* to make sense of and shape life stories; and they deployed a battery of *metaphors* to grasp the nature of human conflict” (Ibid., p.36, emphasis in original). This resulted in a specifically textual epistemology that encountered affect within the body (e.g. in hysteria) but that rationalised it into the economic sphere (preparedness for work and home-making) through its ability to be replicated and circulated, and so brought about:

‘the emotionalisation of economic conduct’ – ‘emotional capitalism’. In emotional capitalism emotional and economic discourses mutually shape one another so that affect is made an essential aspect of economic behaviour, and emotional life, especially that of the middle classes, follows the logic of economic relations and exchange.

Ibid., p.60

What Illouz terms “emotional capitalism” is an overarching set of cultural resources that reside in the practices and texts of Western culture, shaped by therapeutic language.³ If culture matters, as Illouz puts it, it is because “of the ways it shapes and orients the meanings and interpretations with which we carry on daily life and make sense of the events that disrupt daily life” (2008, p.35). It is at its most powerful when it attaches meaning to the individual self, and through this influences actions and behaviours by shaping worldviews from which people develop strategies for living (Ibid., p.57). When these strategies are constrained by a culture that accepts some modes of life and rejects others then we begin to live in a one-sided world where capitalism produces innumerable imbalances even while it is, through neoliberalism, “discursively cloaked in equilibrium” (Reber 2012, p.84).

It is becoming clear that we have reached the point where this “therapeutic emotional style” is the dominant “*new cultural structure*” (Illouz 2008, p.8, emphasis in original) for the determination of what counts for individuals in their striving for a ‘good life’. As such, it might then be possible to return to the point when this therapeutic emotional style had not yet fully taken hold, to search out forms of resistance to its normative power, before it became omnipotent as neoliberalism riding the juggernaut of globalisation. If this “porous domain of hyperexploitive entrepreneurial atomism” (Berlant 2012, p.167) is also an “emotional capitalism,” to the extent that it is difficult to conceive of a “good life” flourishing outside of market repertoires because of their emotional, as well as economic, content, then a return to when this style was taking shape (the interwar period) is a search for alternatives. The hope is that these can help us find ways to flourish rather than simply adjust to the “crisis ordinariness” (Ibid., p.10) of contemporary life through making sense of our predicaments and traumas by therapy or self-analysis or whatever language is at hand.

Turning to texts is a way to explore these questions. Texts are the repositories where cultural resources are validated, communicated and shared. ‘Texts’ here of course refers not only to the written word of literature, memoir or self-help books, but to magazines, films and other cultural materials. They are

³ As both Illouz and Zaretsky (2005) note, this was first of all for the upper and middle-classes, before filtering down to affect the lives of those who more and more had access to popular cultural forms such as the cinema and magazines.

places where, for Illouz, “modern imaginings are especially likely to be formulated at sites where expert knowledge systems, media technologies, and emotions intersect” (2008, p.15). Texts are where everyday affective relations are brought out from where they are “buried in habits of life, interpretative practices, and forms of sociality” (Stewart 2000, p.245) to be captured, interpreted and circulated. Through the analysis of texts from within a culture, we can begin to build a picture of how affect works for certain people living under certain conditions: to identify the structures of feeling at work in the formation of patterns of life that may lead to flourishing or may lead nowhere at all. As Berlant says, however, “the key here is not to see what happens to aesthetically mediated characters as equivalent to what happens to people but to see that in the affective scenarios of these works and discourses we can discern claims about the situation of contemporary life” (Berlant 2012, p.9).

In particular for Illouz it is a question of the textuality of self-help therapeutic culture that needs to be placed under scrutiny. This is something I come to address most fully in the chapter on Milner, of the practical matter of how creative living through “ordinary habit” (Cvetkovich 2012, p.192) that includes writing can be a “cultural resource” to help us flourish, be counter-cultural; but which, as alluded to above, through the spreading of therapeutic narratives via self-help books, magazines, reality TV and film, can also reinforce the language ideology of modernity and its intertwining with psychoanalytic terminology. This pushes us deeper into impasses that are usually negotiated—in the present moment—through this dominant therapeutic form. That is because, for Illouz, as resources, the “self” and “texts” both give the subject something to identify with in the same way:

I understand the self as an inextricable ensemble of cognitions and emotions. Similarly, I argue that texts insert themselves into action in two main ways: through cognition and through emotions. [...] If cultural materials such as novels, movies, self-help literature, or television programs have any impact on us, it is not only as hermeneutic devices helping us make sense of our world but also as cultural devices that tap into, elicit, and channel complex emotional apparatuses (such as indignation, compassion, longing for love, fear, and anxiety.) The significance of the novel, of contemporary advice literature, or of much

of media culture lies primarily in their capacity to draw the reader in through a set of emotional responses.

2008, p.15

Such “drawing in” is essential to the process of attachment to objects, images or scenes of desire that form imaginaries of what it might be to have lived well, or at all. In her critical (even unhappy) study of happiness, Ahmed explores this “drawing in” process. Happiness, perhaps that ultimately desired of all emotional states, is “about learning to be affected by objects in the right way [...] Being good becomes then about how one feels feelings” (2010, p.36). Cultures form when we learn together to be affected by objects that are “already evaluated as good” by an “affected community. We align ourselves with others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness” (Ibid., p.38). If these objects are mass-produced and repetitive images of selves enjoying the “good life” then we come to believe we can only attain happiness by attaching ourselves to those images as well, despite feeling that it might be “wrong” for us, or who Reber calls “the immanent ‘we’” (2012, p.88). When we choose not to attach ourselves to such images, we become “alienated—out of line with an affective community” (Ahmed 2010, p.41). But such choosing is, as Berlant points out, sometimes impossible, and so cruel.

For Ahmed, then, “the struggle against happiness” as the mass-produced ideal of what a “good life” might be “is also a struggle for happiness as a possibility” (Ibid., p.222). The texts studied in this thesis offer two examples of where the “language ideology of modernity” are struggled against in its form of a compulsion to have a “good life” under the rapidly changing and precarious conditions of modernity. The critical analysis draws out of both Norah James and Marion Milner negotiations with how therapeutic language has come to define selfhood, and what made it a cultural resource for some, but also *why it was rejected as a cultural resource by others*.

Or, as Gammon puts it, quoting the economic historian Karl Polanyi, “the expansion of the market led to a tendency to ‘resist the pernicious effects of a market controlled economy’ [and so] the civilising process produced psychological resistance and unintended consequences that could not continue unabated” (2013, p.515). Such resistance to the language ideology of therapeutic culture also came from within psychoanalysis itself (e.g. Rank 1930). Such moments or locations of

resistance recorded for us through texts might be useful in offering new images, or processes for forming images. For Reber it is a case of first recognising affect “as an independent epistemic modality—a full-fledged mechanism for the representation of knowledge of self and world” (2012, p.92). When we have learnt how to step outside of capitalist epistemologies of infinite growth then we will:

understand the discursive forces already at work around us: those that seek to hold us captive with the promise of well-being and those that denounce ill-being and propose a new model of organic health. [...] Sense, emotion, feeling: these will be recognized as ways of knowing. Organicity and flow will be denaturalized as epistemological constructs manipulated discursively to produce social meaning. Affect-as-episteme will be intelligible as a tool of social domination as well as a tool of liberational contestation.

Ibid.

Reading James and Milner offers us examples of how to do this. As such, I intend to map out their resistances to the privileging of psychoanalytic therapeutic narratives as they emerged at the ‘moment’ between Freud’s 1909 lectures and the advent of the Second World War. I wish to outline briefly, before moving on to close analyses of these texts, the contexts in which they were produced. I begin with the question of James’ *Sleeveless Errand* in relation to the ideas and images of modernism. Such context is critical to my argument for how texts offer openings onto “alternative possibilities, for emotional as for public life” (Cvetkovich and Pellegrini 2003, p.14).

1.4 Affect, Norah James and modernism

One of the many questions posed by modernism, as Michael Whitworth puts it, was “What model of the self is adequate to modern life?” (2007, p.7). Susan Stanford Friedman sums up what many agree to be the impetus for this question: “the crisis of belief that pervades twentieth-century Western culture: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and shattering of cultural symbols and norms” (1981, p.97). Much modernist art and literature was a response to this crisis. Through movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, Vorticism and Imagism, and through individual avant-garde artists and writers, modernism became

preoccupied with articulating and creating new experiences of modernity. Particularly fascinating for modernists in questioning what self was adequate to modern life were the emerging theories of the mind:

Modernist literature displays an awareness of the complexity of the mind and the self. It is aware of the ‘fluidity of consciousness’, of the force of the unconscious, and of a division between the social and the personal self, between ‘conduct’ and ‘consciousness’ [...] modernist literature stands in significant relation to the underlying problem of which model of the self is best suited to modern life, but the complexity of self that is apparent in much modernist literature indicates a profound uncertainty about the right answer.

Whitworth 2007, p.13-14

Implicit in this relationship between modernist literature and the forms of knowledge by which the self was being shaped is the language and practice of psychoanalysis. As Friedman sees it, the focal point of the crisis of modernity leading to modernism could be found in “the new technologies and methodologies of science, the epistemology of logical positivism, and the relativism of functionalist thought—in short, major aspects of the philosophical perspectives that Freud embodied” (1981, 98). Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and practice are woven into the story of modernism. They emerged as a response to the

‘second industrial revolution’, roughly from the 1880s to the 1920s [when] the separation (both physical and emotional) of paid work from the household, that is to say the rise of industrial capitalism, gave rise to new forms of privacy, domesticity and intimacy [and as] new urban spaces and media—popular theatre, music halls, the kinoscope—provided reference points from which individuals could imaginatively construct extrafamilial identities.

Zaretsky 2005, p.5

For Eli Zaretsky the kernel of psychoanalysis was the creation of a “‘personal unconscious’ reflected in this new experience of personal life” (Ibid.) which dovetailed with forms of production and ways of living that emphasised individual responsibility and autonomy. For the first time psychoanalysis made possible, for more than just the elites, the Romantic project of self-actualisation (Ibid., p.86).

Exploring the relationship between psychoanalysis and the cultural models of the self that have developed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been the project of many critics across the humanities and social sciences. Even if, as Zaretsky argues, over the long term psychoanalysis was “ultimately consumed by the sociology and culture of personal life to which it originally gave critical expression” (Ibid., p.11), for Illouz, it “resonated with the quest for authenticity that was at the epicentre of the nascent and intensive consumer culture” (2007, p.8-9).

Modernism, as both part of and resistant to this “nascent and intensive consumer culture” is understood here as the high artistic and cultural practices considered to cover the years 1870-1940; although because modernism was not called as such at the time but only in retrospect, and because there is still argument about what modernism encompasses in its relation to modernity, then its employment as a term is useful as both a label and as a site of debate that remains open to revision or expansion. This revision and expansion has been the goal of many since the 1960s and the emergence of second wave feminism and postcolonial studies (e.g. Felski 1995). Illouz’s work is a continuation of this, and makes the link between the emotions and this ‘moment’ of the emergence of psychoanalysis. As argued above, new models of the self explored in modernist writing and art are illustrative of the modernist’s “special belief in the power of language to help understand and control our social and emotional environment” (Illouz 2007, p.39). This modern emotional style was implicated in but continues to work far beyond the borders of modernist literature; it can be found in the advent of advertising, the rise of occupational psychotherapy in the 1920s, and the emerging forms of popular culture such as the cinema and women’s magazines (Zaretsky 2005, p.123). What is critical about Illouz’s approach is its emphasis on the study of therapeutic discourses as they permeated cultural forms and social relations in helping “make a strong case for the claim that language is central to the constitution of selfhood in that it is a dynamic means of experiencing and expressing emotions” (2008, p.10). It is this claim that I wish to examine.

First, what modernism might encompass can be expanded by looking not at ‘high-modernist’ texts but by giving critical attention to relatively unknown and formally non-innovative works that are more mired in the everyday. *Sleeveless*

Errand by Norah C. James is such a work. Here I follow Meaghan Morris who asserts: “I prefer to study [...] the everyday, the so-called banal, the supposedly un- or non-experimental, asking not ‘why does it fall short of modernism?’ but ‘how do classical theories of modernism fall short of women’s modernity?’” (1988, p.202). Morris’s trajectory is one that itself follows Elaine Showalter’s intent for reclamation of women’s realist writing from the (then-) contemporary studies of modernism that privileged the male writer or the tiny number of women writers considered part of the movement (1979, p.35).

Second, the history of emotions and the cultural implications of feeling and affect are more than relevant to modernism studies. For Sianne Ngai “feelings are as fundamentally ‘social’ as the institutions and collective practices that have been the more traditional objects of historicist criticism [...] and as ‘material’ as the linguistic signs and significations that have been the more traditional object of literary formalism” (2005, p.25). As Ngai suggests, following a thread teased out from Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, “literature may in fact be the ideal space to investigate ugly feelings that obviously ramify beyond the domain of the aesthetic” (Ibid., p.2). I explore two emotions as they appear in *Sleeveless Errand*: boredom; and an unnamed and complex trauma felt when expressing feeling. It is in the tension between the difficulty felt in expressing trauma from the First World War and the intense boredom of everyday life in its decadal ‘aftermath’ that opens up a space for negotiating new forms of affective experience. Although it is far from the innovative modernist work of Gertrude Stein or Virginia Woolf, I argue this tension in James’s novel is similar to what Sianne Ngai has termed ‘stuplimity’—a neologism for an ‘ugly feeling’ that restricts and suspends agency in reaching ‘adequacy’ in selfhood—that is a combination of traumatic shock and boredom, and one that is specifically modernist in its origination. This space created between these two emotions in *Sleeveless Errand* is an example of what Cvetkovich calls “sites of investigation [...] of how affective experience can provide the basis for new cultures” (2003, p.7). I expose where these ‘new cultures’ are constitutive of restrictions placed on the agency of individuals to feel and act and, as such, are charged politically with what Berlant identifies as “the pressure of an intensified, elongated present moment where affective, experiential and empirical knowledge norms seem in disarray” (2008, p.5). This modern disarray began with the ‘nascent and intensive

consumer culture' at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. As Martin Pugh notes, "the society of obsessive consumer and shoppers that the British have now become owes its origins to the interwar period" (2008, p.viii). It is my contention, following Illouz, that this "elongated present moment" and the "despair of not mattering" (Berlant 2008, p.8) that are hallmarks of today's crises find their source in the moment when "psychoanalysis became the privileged site for the expression of the inner self as well as a site that encouraged introspection, a focus on feelings, and most of all, a search for the lost and true self" (Illouz 2008, p.50). It is through the study of how the two emotions, *boredom* and *unwanted feelings about 'the expression of the inner self'*, are articulated, that I hope to get closer to how an understanding of therapeutic emotional style continues to matter in today's negotiation of identity and lived experience.

Finally, in relation to *Sleeveless Errand*, the text opens a space for an affective experience in which the individual is able to resist the cultural demands of the period to advance towards a therapeutic self-knowledge. In the end a resistance to understanding herself leads to the suicide of the female protagonist, Paula.⁴ By exposing these resistances to the emergence of a therapeutic emotional style I will, I hope, contribute to work that explores questions of "the emergence of new cultural codes and meanings and to inquire into the conditions that make possible their diffusion and impact throughout society" (Illouz 2008, p.5).

1.5 Marion Milner, astonishment, and *having lived*

Marion Milner began writing in the 1920s, and the texts explored here record her conflict with ideals of the "good life" offered up by culture. The paradox of the "good life" as the ideal in contemporary capitalist societies is that in striving for its promises one would have missed this thing called *living* while busy with the thing called *work*. As Berlant has starkly illustrated, we are bound to "good life" fantasies by the mechanism of our optimistic attachment to an object of desire, or rather "a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and

⁴ Although not the male protagonist, Bill: as Angela Ingram hints at but which Whitworth best articulates, drawing on Shari Benstock and Woolf's *Three Guineas*: "A woman's experience of leaving a society from which she is already excluded is very different from a man leaving his native patriarchy" (Whitworth 2007, p.227).

make possible for us” (2012, p.20). Berlant argues that this way of attending to the desired object as forged through promise allows us to recognize that our attachments are inherently optimistic, although the caveat is they may not always “*feel* optimistic” (Ibid., p.20). Berlant argues that it is the strength of this affect—optimism—attached to this “cluster of promises” shaped into a pattern of reciprocation and emotionality that we recognise as the “good life,” that keeps us bound to fantasy even as it crumbles in the “overwhelming ordinary *disorganised* by capitalism” (Ibid., p.8, original emphasis). But why *this* particular fantasy of the “good life”? And why are other ways of living so rarely available to us if we want to ‘count’ as citizens or risk being tallied among “garbage-can populations” (Ogilvie 1995, p.116)? An optimism that attaches us to “what is already not working” (Berlant 2012, p.263) is “cruel” because:

subjects who have *x* in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object/scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the content of the attachment is, the continuity of its form provides something of the continuity of the subject’s sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world.

Ibid., p.24

The thing to hold onto becomes the *attachment itself* as it comes to represent the form of what living might mean. Maintaining the affective relation and turning over the mechanisms for survival so they become a reassuring repetition, even if life sounds like a car not starting, is seen as an achievement. Or as Berlant puts it, in her analysis of the Belgian film, *Rosetta*, which led to that country’s soul-searching public debate about the fate of its low-waged and unemployed:

The ongoing prospect of low-waged and uninteresting labour is for Rosetta nearly utopian: it makes possible imagining living the proper life that capitalism offers as a route to the good life. That the route is a rut matters not to Rosetta: when the world exists between the routinized rut and the ominous cracks, she chooses the rut, the impasse.

Ibid., p.163

For Rosetta, as for millions of others *and more all the time*, the idea of giving up the fantasy is too much to bear losing, where “the loss of the promising

object/scene itself will defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything” (Ibid., p.24).

Any hope about anything. It is a phrase that resonates with its own repetitions, a notion of arbitrary optimism, a free-floating anxious faith in search of an object to attach itself to, something, *anything*, to be hoped for, at least, *take this scene of living, for example, it’s not what you hoped for, but surely it’s better than nothing?* It is a phrase and idea that echoes across affective relations between illusion and reality that are at the heart of Marion Milner’s study of creativity, *On Not Being Able to Paint* (1950). It is here in her third book that we see Milner synthesising the methods of self-study and self-making that were begun in her earlier works and in her career as a psychoanalyst. Her first two works are my focus because it is these earlier books, written in the interwar period, that offer the seeds of a critique of the emerging “therapeutic emotional style” (Illouz 2007, p.6) that is implicated in the creation of “emotional capitalism” (Ibid., p.5) and its more recent contemporary fragmentation of people’s lives in the form of a weighty neoliberalism. What Milner does in these two books is develop a method for deciding how to live by trusting one’s feelings. Trusting one’s feelings also meant having to trust the chaos of her unconscious and her affects. This focus on affect came long before the “affective turn” in cultural theory, but can be read in the belief that Milner’s texts, documenting her method of living, “suggest ways that affects can be mobilized and circulated to create new and *counter*-cultural forms” (Cvetkovich and Pellegrini 2003, p.1, emphasis in original). Milner’s work is, I argue, counter-cultural, because her method entails a turning away from the normative processes of sociality too easily found in work, family, relationships, education and leisure pursuits, to discover for herself what it was she felt, rather than rely on “reach-me-down mass-produced mythology” (Milner 1937, p.233). To do so, Milner embarked upon a lifelong experiment of reflexive attention and introspection that included practice as a psychoanalyst but was not limited by its processes or vocabulary. Milner wanted to know that her affective attachments were felt internally and directed towards objects in the world of her own choice. As she writes in *An Experiment*, she did not want to be led into believing, or rather *feeling*, something she did not. She felt, rather, the need to become and remain aware of her own attachments:

since if it was not deliberate it will be furtive, but none the less powerful and at the mercy of public exploiters of furtive emotion—the politicians, the atrocity-mongers, the popular press; and also the psychological necessity to find one’s own pantheon of vital images, a mythology of one’s own, not the reach-me-down mass-produced mythology of Hollywood, of the newspapers, or the propaganda of dictators.

Ibid.

For Milner, culture was controlled by “the manipulators of images in public life” (Ibid., p.224) who created these ideas, products, objects and scenes of desire “quite irresponsibly for their own financial advantage [and] at times of national stress in elections they were also used politically” (Ibid.).

Her method proposes that to create things of value there is a need for a fusion of the inner imaginative ideal and the outer external world; that is, the ideal images one would like to turn into things, including a life for oneself, and the materials and contexts in which one could make them, which in art could be paint and paper, and in living could be one’s relationships and leisure. She argued that there was always a gap between the inner and outer. It was those who could move between a fusion and de-fusion of inner and outer, without being paralysed by this gap, nor the loss of ego when fused, nor by the inevitable disillusion of the final created thing when held up to the ideal internal image, who knew what it meant to “have a life” that was original and self-defined. For Milner, this would be an affective, embodied satisfaction that changed *both* inner and outer worlds:

in the satisfying experience of embodying the illusion there has in fact been an interchange. Since the object is thereafter endowed with a bit of the ‘me’, one can no longer see it in quite the same way as before; and since the ‘me’, the inner experience, has become enriched with a bit more of external reality, there is now a closer relation between wishes and what can really exist and so it offers less cause for hate, less despair of ever finding anything that satisfies.

1950, p.154

As already mentioned, she felt the gap between internal and external realities was “bigger whenever the conditions of our living are changing rapidly” (Ibid.). The conditions of living during the interwar period *were* changing rapidly, stimuli for

taking up writing her diary in an attempt to capture the wind of thought and feeling, nowhere illustrated better than by the picture of the black, whirling, Indian drum she drew that she believed reflected inner chaos, but which was drawn, she later noted, on the first day of the outbreak of World War Two (Ibid., p.33).

Her route to discovering what it might be like to have *lived* was not provided by capitalism, nor was this route a rut, but was found through addressing, as Christopher Bollas puts it, her “relation to the self as an object” (1991, p.4). Milner analysed the processes of attachment one has to one’s fantasies/illusions/scenes of desire, and of how, as for Berlant, those attachments can be hopeful, or cruel, hindering one from ever living the life one hopes to lead. Or, if managing to accept a temporary loss of ego in the process of fusion and de-fusion necessary to create (a painting; a life), then one would not simply be anxiously on the lookout for “any hope in anything” or, as Milner phrased it, the “despair of ever finding anything that satisfies” (1950, p.154); one would instead have managed to detach oneself from impossible or toxic fantasies, to recognise and accept illusions and fantasies of one’s own, and find a way to create them in the world.

From the very outset Milner was relating herself to her life as an object via an exploration of affective attachments in the everyday, developing what Cvetkovich describes as “a mechanism for building new ways of being in the world [which] belongs to the domain of the ordinary, to activities that are not spectacular or unusual but instead arise from everyday life” (2012, p.191). Milner was rejecting the capitalist production of our affective attachments as provided for us, in favour of her own. As she wrote:

The need for such a method in these days is obvious, a method for discovering one’s true likes and dislikes, for finding and setting up a standard of values that is truly one’s own and not a borrowed or mass-produced ideal.

1934, p.12

For Milner, and for this thesis, to analyse the crises of the present was to generate creative responses, leading to “new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself, which requires debating what the baselines of survival should be

in the near future, which is, now, the future we are making” (Berlant 2012, p.262). That, anyway, is the hope running through the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Stuck between boredom and feeling: resistances to self-knowledge in *Sleeveless Errand* by Norah C James

2.1 *Sleeveless Errand*, the Obscenity Trials, and the launch of the Obelisk Press

On 9th November 1928 Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* went on trial at Bow Street Magistrates Court charged with obscene libel under the Obscene Publications Act (1857). As Angela Ingram notes it was "the book, rather than the author" on trial, and was a test case in which works addressing a 'theme' (lesbian relations) "could be banned without regard to its presentation" (1986, p.343). The response at the time suggests it was a "meritorious dull book" (Woolf 1980, p.193), although the witnesses put forward by its publishers attempted to defend not its literary value but the author's right to freedom of expression. The view of the Court, after rejecting the defence of the novel's merit, was that it was "a disgusting book" (Brittain 1969, p.137) and the judge fined its publishers, Pegasus and Jonathan Cape, twenty guineas each, and ordered all remaining copies to be destroyed.

Hall's novel appears in most critical studies of censorship because of its place in the history of both the obscenity trials and the queer literary canon, and perhaps, suggests Bonnie Kime Scott, because 1928 was also the year in which women caught up with men in the project of modernism. While everything may well have changed on or around December 1910, and while the self-appointed 'men of 1914' (Yeats, Eliot, Pound) were celebrating their own projects, for Scott, alongside the prosecution of *The Well*, 1928 marked an "important moment for modernist writing by women: it was the year in which women in Britain were granted the vote on complete equality with men [and] the year of *Orlando*" (Scott cited in Whitworth 2007, p.24). It was also the year in which Woolf delivered her famous speech to Cambridge students, later published as *A Room of One's Own*. The prosecution took place in a period of heightened debate about the stakes involved in writing and publishing 'obscene' literatures. As Ingram records, in "the months between the withdrawal of *The Well* and the failure of the appeal (August-December 1928), the newspapers and weeklies were full of articles and letters to editors about 'obscenity' and censorship" (1986, p.345). Hall drafted her own letter

for the papers, which she asked others to sign, and which appeared along with articles such as E.M. Forster's and Virginia Woolf's 'The New Censorship' published in *The Nation and Athenaeum* the same month.

Sitting in the public gallery at the prosecution of *The Well* was a young woman working as a publicist for its publisher, Jonathan Cape, called Norah Corder James. James had finished the manuscript of her own novel, *Sleeveless Errand*, earlier that year, and offered it first to Cape's Chief Reader, Edward Garnett who, among other roles, had already acted as informal literary agent to D.H. Lawrence (Whitworth 2007, p.28). Garnett accepted James's manuscript, but was overruled by Jonathan Cape himself, who had been put off by the scandal of publishing *The Well*. James's book was then rejected by Leonard Woolf at the Hogarth Press before finally being accepted by Eric Partridge at Scholartis Press. The novel was to be published on 21st February 1929, but, the evening before, every copy still in the Scholartis offices was confiscated by the Metropolitan Police, who also visited every bookseller who had placed orders. James discovered *Sleeveless Errand* had been suppressed the next day when she read a newsstand placard.

As Alan Travis documents, the Home Secretary at the time, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, was a Conservative and well-known campaigner against decline in public morality, and it was his decision to send the book to the Director of Public Prosecutions in a series of acts against literature that Arnold Bennett also termed "the new censorship" (2000, p.85). At its trial under the same prosecution brought against *The Well* of obscene libel, *Sleeveless Errand* was defended on the grounds that it had "intended to 'portray and condemn the mode of life and language of a certain section of the community'" (Ibid., p.81). James herself defended this position. In an interview carried in *The Times*, James said that her novel was "an extremely moral book and a condemnation of the people and the life it portrays" (cited in Ingram 1986, p.346).

The prosecuting Counsel's claims were that it consisted of: "a conversation by two persons utterly devoid of decency and morality, who for the most part were under the influence of drink, and who not only tolerated but even advocated adultery and promiscuous fornication" (Ibid., p.346). Figures including Bennett writing in the *Evening Standard*, and Rebecca West in *Time*

and Tide, defended the book on the grounds of literary merit, a contribution book historian Neil Pearson labels as “disingenuous” (2007, p.66). Despite these attempts, the book was found guilty of obscenity and 785 of the 799 copies seized by the police were destroyed, with the others going to the various libraries, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Home Office, for reference.⁵

Somewhat hyperbolically, the editors of the 1942 *Twentieth Century Authors* claimed the book had become “probably the most suppressed novel ever published in England” (Kunitz and Haycraft 1942, p.716). Yet as Pearson notes “even by the standards of 1929 the language of *Sleeveless Errand* is not extreme” (2007, p.65). In the American edition only three words were cut from the original manuscript. James later wrote: “It never occurred to me that it would be considered obscene to let the characters in it use the language they used in real life” (1939, p.230). As Kate Flint (1993) suggests in her study of the relationship between women’s bodies and censorship, James’s position as a woman author may have worked against her, particularly in the wake of the Hall obscenity trial. For Ingram what the censor saw in *Sleeveless Errand* was not so much obscene language but a wider challenge to a patriarchal status quo:

[w]omen and men were failing to pair off and marry and have babies. Worse, middle-class, heterosexual women were acting fairly autonomously, had access to money and young men and fast cars (whose engines they understood better than men did). That they drank in after-hours places, cursed a lot, and had socialist lawyers [...] they were survivors, ‘women of the aftermath’.

1986, p.351

For Ingram, both *The Well* and *Sleeveless Errand*, in their different ways, portrayed “how utterly *unalluring* heterosexual life often was” (Ibid., p.349) and this was reason enough for them to be banned. Modernists, as Whitworth argues, often found themselves in trouble with the censors because they “wished to represent the body and sexuality as fully as possible, and, more generally, wished to depict the full range of human behaviour without having

⁵ ‘Seized Novel Condemned: All Copies to Be Destroyed’, *The Times*, 5 March 1929, p. 13.

to place it in a moral frame” and which meant censorship was also “sometimes an indirect consequence of other politically radical aspects of the texts” (2007, p.15).

In the case of *Sleeveless Errand*, it certainly wasn't because of its literary quality. In his history of the Obelisk Press, Pearson discredits *Sleeveless Errand* as “a deeply terrible book, maudlin, melodramatic, and fatally upstaged by its obvious and unabsorbed influences” (2007, p.412). Virginia Woolf called *Sleeveless Errand* “a vulgar book, but nothing in it to raise the roof” (1978, p.29). The fact that none of Norah James's seventy books are currently in print and that almost no critical work exists on her supports these positions. I would suggest, although *Sleeveless Errand* is far from a lost classic, these criticisms are unfair; not all of the reaction at the time was as negative. The book sold well in America, and was translated into at least six other languages (Ingram 1986, p.347). In 1934, Malcolm Cowley, then literary editor of the *New Republic* magazine, sent out a series of letters to a number of America's leading novelists and critics asking for a list of ‘good books that almost nobody has read’. T.S. Matthews, the literary editor of *Time*, named nine books that included *Sleeveless Errand*, commenting: “A story of post-war London; one of the few convincing suicide stories I remember.”⁶

Yet as Pearson also notes, “More interesting than the novel itself, and certainly more important, is the story of how the book's persecution in Britain kickstarted Jack Kahane's publishing career” (2007, p.413). Jack Kahane was the founder and publisher of the Paris-based Obelisk Press, which occupies an important although relatively forgotten position in the history of literature for publishing the works of D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin and Lawrence Durrell as well as re-publishing Radclyffe Hall and Norah James and a host of others, many now out of print. Founded in 1929, it was the creation of the Englishman Kahane, born in 1887 and who during World War One caught tuberculosis and was nursed by his French wife. His subsequent injuries from the war and his lengthy recuperation gave him time to write his own novels, which were “light, risqué and humorous” (Ibid., p.56) rather than obscene, the first of which was published in March 1923, *Laugh and Grow*

⁶ http://neglectedbooks.com/?page_id=340

Rich, and that, after a ban from WH Smiths, sold well. However, his second, *Love's Wild Geese*, an attempt to write something more sophisticated, bombed. His third novel, *The Gay Intrigue*, also sold poorly. Kahane kept writing, but by 1928 needed money to support his wife and four children.

From Paris Kahane followed the case of *Sleeveless Errand* and managed to get hold of a copy, and agreed a deal with Eric Partridge to secure the English-language French publication rights, as well as paying Edward Garnett five hundred francs for an introduction to the new edition. It appeared in French bookshops by the end of March 1929 at the price of a hundred francs a copy. As Pearson says: "Kahane [had] made a decision: financed by what he saw as inevitable profits from potboilers such as *Sleeveless Errand*, he would publish the next generation of unpublishable geniuses" (Ibid., p.67). *Sleeveless Errand* made him a profit of four hundred thousand francs, which gave him the money and confidence to go on to publish a number of modernism's most radical and notable authors. Kahane advertised in the London press, announcing that "in the event of other books of literary merit being banned in England, [he was] prepared to publish them in Paris within a month" (Kahane 1939, p.224).

Ingram's 1986 work making the connection between *The Well* and *Sleeveless Errand* for a feminist criticism of censorship; and Pearson's history making the case for *Sleeveless Errand's* role in the establishment of the Obelisk Press and its position as the first link in the chain of other banned yet more enduring books, do enough to ensure James has her justifiable position in the record of twentieth century literary history, particularly the record of censorship. However, despite the length of the overview presented, it is not so much its historical position I'm interested in. The expressions represented are worth exploring *because* of their mundane and vulgar articulations of the emotions of everyday life. James's story is one that pivots around decisions made in response to life situations where other possible outcomes no longer seem tenable, and provide particular and revealing responses in moving towards questions of modern identity and selfhood in search of the "good life"; questions that cannot be answered by the art and literature of high modernism alone.

2.2 ‘Well, you’d better start thinking about how to die’

Sleeveless Errand, James’s first novel, is deeply autobiographical. Not only is the story instigated by the breakdown of a relationship, following James’s own experience of being jilted by a lover, but the main character Paula Cranford’s history follows James’s early biography. This includes an irrevocable split from her father; a short stint at the Slade School of Art before leaving to help the war effort; interest in and commitment to the Suffrage movement, as well as working as a Trades Union organiser at the Pensions Issue Office (see James 1939; Pearson 2007). Much of the action takes place, as the censors noted, in cafés, bars and restaurants and revolves around banal conversation had while drinking. One particular venue, ‘The Haunt,’ was modelled on a place James knew, “The Cave of Harmony, just off Tottenham Court Road [...] frequented by artists and writers” (Ingram 1986, p.347) including Radclyffe Hall. Where the novel diverges from James’s life is in the decision reached by its protagonist, Paula, to commit suicide ostensibly in response to romantic failure. Paula tells her ex-lover Philip that she is going to end it all; he doesn’t believe her, and she doesn’t repeat herself. She leaves his flat and goes and sits in a Lyons coffee shop to work out the practicalities of the matter:

‘Well, you’d better start thinking about how to die—think of the whole matter impersonally—dissociate it from yourself, otherwise you might start crying again even here—that would be too bloody. But how could you dissociate it from yourself when you were filled with the terror of being once more alone. Well, why be? Why not go straight off to one of the men you know who wanted you? Simply because it wouldn’t help at all. You’d still be absolutely alone inside.

James 1929, p.16

The novel has already opened with a mixture of strong negative emotions: resentment and discontent. The jilting lover Philip resented her intensely for a number of reasons: “He resented her control; he resented her beauty, because it no longer moved him; above all he resented the fact that she had not reached the same stage of discontent as he had” (Ibid., p.5). Interesting here are two twisting overlaps of emotion. The first is that he resents no longer feeling the same as he did previously about Paula’s beauty (it no longer “moves” him).

The second is the concatenation of emotions and their causal relationship that seem to contradict one another. Philip resents Paula “above all” because she had not reached the same stage of discontent in their relationship as he has. That is, he is made to feel something—a withdrawal from their relationship—that she is not feeling. This problem of ‘equity’ that is disconcerting for the man is part of the new “emotional style” where “the discourse of psychology engineered a new form of sociability and emotionality at the basis of which were two key cultural motives: that of ‘equality’ and that of ‘cooperation,’ for relationships were forged between people who were presumed to be equals” (Illouz 2007, p.17). Beneath this discontent is another emotion—an implied guilt at his own withdrawal, or not so much guilt as a fear of discomfort, or as Philip says (with patent relief) when Paula has left, “how perfectly bloody that’s been” (James 1929, p.13). This appears to set up the novel as a failed romantic tragedy, which would make sense in the context of James’ other works, typified by *The Hunted Heart* (1941) and its love triangle published by the Modern Book Company’s romance imprint. But there is more going on in *Sleeveless Errand*. It is the novel’s attempt to articulate a ‘dissociation’ from expectations placed on the self by society, and the search for a language in that dissociation, that are worth investigating further.

While sitting in Lyons, where “thousands of other young ‘business women’” went “each day to buy lunch for one shilling” (Pugh 2008, p.176), Paula is spotted as being in a desperate state by Bill, an architect, who has just found his wife in bed with his best friend. When she leaves he follows her out, and he approaches her as she slumps down to the ground while standing on Waterloo Bridge, fearful that she is about to jump. They both recognise in each other the same desperation, and quickly share the idea that they both want to commit suicide and enter into a bond to do it the next day. Paula has already decided how—by driving over a cliff in Eastbourne. She would hire a car the next morning for it once she had set her affairs in order and written a will: “Thank God you could drive and had plenty of money. Pretty awful to have your choice of suicide limited by the amount of cash you possessed” (James 1929, p.16). The rest of the novel is then taken up with the conversation between Paula and Bill on their way to Eastbourne, a journey that takes them through a number of bars, clubs, restaurants, hotels and the company of

different versions of 'The Crowd', a heavy-drinking coterie of men and women reminiscent of Waugh's "lost decade" (Waugh 1993 [1945]). It is the behaviour of the women in these groups that Ingram argues particularly upset the Home Secretary and Director of Public Prosecutions in 1929 "as 'unutterable' and 'foul'" because these "women didn't all want to get married and have babies, didn't consider 'family' sacrosanct, and didn't think other people should have control over their bodies. (And in the case of James's novel, didn't even like war)" (Ingram 1986, p.347). Those women who did have children 'boarded them out' so they could work and drink, as Paula explains to Bill:

"But they do work—and a lot of the women even have a child or two. If that child's boarded out it generally means that the woman has a job. All the men work. Yet they hardly sleep at all and are like this as a result."

"They all look pretty unhealthy. That's the first thing that I noticed."

"They are. It's this stupid life, and London. Being sensitive people, they've had to cover it up somehow. Most of them are a little unbalanced."

James 1929, p.41

James's claim to portray as immoral the behaviour of her characters suggests she saw her novel as sitting within what Nicola Humble has since called the "feminine middlebrow" fiction of the early twentieth century, which has been the subject of increasing critical attention (see Humble 2001, Light 1991). Most recently Hilary Hinds has sought to ask "what common ground there might be between the specifics of the British interwar social and political configurations and the recurrent disappointments of these novels' heroines" (2009, p.294). In her reading of texts from 1920-44 she pursues the affective turn in literary criticism to explore "an altogether quieter, less histrionic, more apologetic, and diminished feeling, and one that has not attracted anything approaching the same degree of critical attention: namely, disappointment" (Ibid., p.293). Paula's responses to the situations in her life resonate with Hinds's emphasis on disappointment, and with both Ian Craib's recognition of the modernist model of "the inherently divided, unsatisfied and necessarily

disappointed nature of the self” (1994, p.32) and with Laura Quinney’s restricted application of disappointment as a “stage of the self estranged from the hopes of selfhood” (cited in Hinds 2009, p.298). As Quinney continues, disappointment is neither insignificant nor ephemeral but a general response to what Hinds aptly terms “the subjective and social consequences of the failure of hope” (Ibid., p.299).

However, *Sleeveless Errand* both sits outside the “feminine middlebrow” and goes further than articulating a feminine disappointment. There are a number of reasons for this. As Ingram suggests, James’s intent to condemn the life of the characters she portrayed doesn’t quite succeed. Instead, *Sleeveless Errand* “argues for options—however ‘mixed’ they are; argues for suicide, birth control, pacifism” (1986, p.351) and fails to support post-war efforts to renew British identity through a “conservative modernity” (Hinds 2009, p.302) of fixed social relations, marriage and women’s domesticity, as did much of the “feminine middlebrow” of the time. As Alison Light proposes, the middlebrow was the place where the post-war feminized middle class redefined itself with “the idea of a nation of benign crossword puzzlers and home owners, enjoying privacy and moderation and domestic consumption [...] through the pleasures of domestic life” (1991, p.106). As Hinds illustrates in her study of E.M. Delafield’s *The Way Things Are*, published in 1927, the disappointment of an unconsummated affair and the idealisation of romantic love is replaced by articulations of “the pleasures of domestic life” that were considered superior (2009, p.312). But in *Sleeveless Errand* there are no scenes of domesticity or (successful) romantic love; the relations are external to domestic life and take place in the loci of liminal transience: hotels, bars, restaurants, cars, shows, hospitals and peoples’ bedsits. Paula is a working woman: a failed artist, then a journalist. Paula and Bill spend the night in the same bed but share no physical or romantic intimacy. And in opposition to Hinds’ suggestion that “within the wide canvas of the feminine middlebrow novel, there is a striking structuring of the narratives through the disappointments of their female protagonists” (Ibid., p.301) the final emotional expression of Paula’s suicide contains a refusal of such disappointment.

Further, Hinds is quick to point out that the “designation of disappointment as feminine” is not “essentialised” (Ibid., p.307), and she argues that “there is a historical specificity to the forms, channels, and dynamics of feminine disappointment” that are as readily applied to the treatment in *Sleeveless Errand* of Bill’s disillusion with relationships as it does with Paula’s. When Paula calls Bill romantic and he denies it, she says “you must be, or you wouldn’t be planning suicide just because you’ve built an illusion round your wife which she’s knocked down” (James 1929, p.103-4). And although the novel suggests that Paula’s disappointment in love is the reason for her suicide, we see it as the catalyst rather than cause. It is instead that Paula and ‘The Crowd’ are “‘held together by sheer boredom. They run away from themselves into this. We hate each other, but we can’t stay away.’ [...] Paula felt she could not bear the place another second” (Ibid., p.41).

2.3 ‘They’re Tories and their friends bore me horribly’

This is not the first irruption of boredom in relation to the practices of modern life for herself and her contemporaries that Paula experiences. While Paula sits in Lyons’ coffee shop considering her life, including the death of her fiancé during the War, in which had “come the realisation of the agony of love” (Ibid., p.16), she realises that it was in fact a profound boredom with the “good life” that has led her to opt for suicide:

That time, because of the pitch of excitement at which you were living, you hadn’t thought of killing yourself. Just drunk a great deal when you weren’t working like Hell, so that there hadn’t been time to think about it frightfully. But afterwards you’d realised that you couldn’t bear to be alone very much, just filled up the days with people, people, people. Most of them bored you stiff half the time.

Ibid.

This boredom colours all her perceptions. As she tells Bill her life story, she stops to ask “Isn’t this all boring you intolerably?” (Ibid., p.85). Arriving at ‘The Haunt’ she notes: “Not more than twenty people were present. Nearly all of them looked bored” (Ibid., p.62). Then of her family friends: “They’re Tories and their friends bore me horribly” (Ibid., p.93). At one point, she wonders if in fact she was just “born bored” (Ibid., p.59).

But if it is not disappointment that Paula is feeling, is it definitely boredom? It is worth asking because of the flexible and often over-determined sense of the word. As Elizabeth Goodstein reminds us “the language of boredom remains ambiguous” and “gives rise to difficulties in interpretation” (2005, p.102). Most critical and philosophical accounts attempt at least a partial disambiguation with other terms such as the Greek *acedia*, *ennui*, *malaise* and *melancholy* (see for example Svendsen 2005; Crangle 2010). However, as Lars Svendsen suggests, boredom is a modern and quite specific emotion that emerges with Romanticism. “The word ‘boring’ is bound up with the word ‘interesting’; the words become widespread at roughly the same time and they increase in frequency at roughly the same rate. It is not until the advent of Romanticism towards the end of the eighteenth century that the demand arises for life to be interesting, with the general claim that the self must realize itself” (2005, p.28). For Goodstein, boredom emerged as a mass phenomenon in the nineteenth century and “constitutes a critical term in the vocabularies in which writers, artists and scientists, social reformers, politicians and historians manifested their ambivalent fascination with the ways in which the psychical landscape of human experience, too, was being transformed” (2005, p.101); although by the mid-nineteenth century Romantic melancholy was already being replaced by the material effects of modernisation (Ibid., p.168). Boredom, as “an historically contingent mood or condition” (Gardiner 2012, p.38) finds its contemporary meaning under the aegis of modernism, as Patricia Meyer Spacks notes: “[f]ictional (and poetic) evocations of boredom multiplied exponentially in the twentieth century, partly for reasons implicit in the common understanding of modernism, which posits an isolated subject existing in a secularized, fragmented world” (1996, p.219). Boredom was a common experience in the interwar period and, for Goodstein, “signified, if anything, the lack of an inner life” (2005, p.99).

For Svendsen, “[b]oredom can be understood as a discomfort which communicates that the need for meaning is not being satisfied” (2005, p.30). Looking more closely at modernist writers contemporary to James, boredom was a central theme and often-used starting point for Virginia Woolf’s fiction, as Sara Crangle persuasively illustrates, although, as she notes, in Woolf’s diaries the difficulties with writing and publishing “appear to be less about

boredom than about her own thinly veiled anxiety” (2008, p.217). It would not be difficult to assume that Paula’s boredom is such a ‘veiled anxiety’ in facing industrial capitalism and the quest for an adequate model of the self after the war. As Renata Salecl summarises, referring to Robert Lynd’s famous study of life in so-called ‘Middletown’, “the late 1920s saw people subjected to a compulsive need to work, the pervasive struggle to conform and the frantic endeavour to cram their leisure time with constant activity, while caught in the chaos of conflicting patterns with regard to cultural requirements” (2004, p.4). For Salecl, as for Zaretsky, these pressures of the rise of industrial capitalism and the imperative to develop personal autonomy led to the emergence of new forms of neuroses and anxiety, all of which are close to a characterisation of Paula’s experience in *Sleeveless Errand*.

However, Paula’s boredom is much closer in tone to what Goodstein calls the “democratisation of skepticism” (2005, p.99) that sits in judgement on modern life. When Paula and Bill reach Hove on the way to Eastbourne and fall in with a cabaret performer called Percival, who takes them to dinner at Hove’s finest hotel, Paula, drunk, can’t hide her contempt at the world around her:

“But they all look so bored. Just look at them.”

Percival was surprised. He had been thinking how wonderful it must be to be able to afford to stay in a place like the Royal.

“But Miss Cranford,” he said, “they can’t be bored—why this hotel’s the best in Hove. They don’t take in just anybody here, you know. It’s very expensive.”

“That’ll account for their expressions, perhaps. God, they look like half-dead fish. Makes me want to throw a plate on the floor so they’d jump.”

[...] He thought,

“She doesn’t understand that they look bored because they’ve got plenty of money. No need to pretend to be cheerful and have no worries.”

James 1929, p.152

Paula’s is a ‘profound boredom’ that exists where, as Svendsen put it, “one is no longer able to find one’s bearings in relation to the world because one’s very relationship to the world has virtually been lost” (2005, p.19). As Percival

guesses, Paula has lost her relations to the cultural expressions of modernity found in wealth and leisure. When Bill attempts to persuade her that it's not all so bad, she replies:

“I know all that. It would pass in time—probably in less than a year I'd be in love with someone else. What you don't know is that this is the excuse I've been waiting for to get out of it all. Oh! I know I'm decadent and morbid. Living hasn't ever seemed worth while, and this has simply clinched my desire to die. Even when I was at the best part with Phil, in the beginning I wasn't very happy for more than a little while now and again. I mean I still got tight and that sort of thing. You see it's the uselessness of it all.”

James 1929, p.57-58

When at the very end Bill tries to reason with Paula that she is seeing herself “in too dark a shade—so many things you've told me show you up as rather a good sort” (Ibid., p.207) Paula replies: “No, you're wrong. [...] I'm not going from any quixotic idea that because I'm part of the plague spot I ought to; no, it's simply that I'm unutterably bored. [...] I've tried all the possible sensations that aren't too revolting, and I can't get a kick out of any of them” (Ibid.). What Paula has come to is an exhaustion with, as Svendsen explains it, a search for ‘The Moment’:

The Moment—the actual Meaning of life—only appears in negative form, that of absence, and the small moments (in love, art, intoxication) never last long. The problem, first and foremost, lies in accepting that all that is given are small moments and that life offers a great deal of boredom between these moments. [...] A source of profound boredom is that we demand capital letters where we are obliged to make do with small ones.

2005, p.154

This is Paula's experience when she thinks, but stops short of vocalising, that:

It isn't all the large sorrows that you can't bear, it's all the mean petty unhappinesses that finish you. The big sorrows you can share with others. It's the little things that you're ashamed of that finish you. They eat up your defences of self-control so that when the big thing comes along you're ready to be smashed up.

James 1929, p.23

For Svendsen, following Heidegger, this ‘profound boredom’ can be an opportunity for philosophy; or for Virginia Woolf, boredom was an essential corollary to creativity, what Gardiner describes as the paradoxical “manifestations of boredom [that] can also tap into collective ‘wish-images’ of an emancipated humanity” (2012, p.38). But despite her joyful memories of the time spent at the Slade and on holiday “just doing nothing except write and read and walk” (James 1929, p.90) Paula cannot “believe in patching things up—I’d rather have the whole system changed” (Ibid., p.92). There is no positive side to Paula’s boredom beyond the emancipation of suicide—other than the overturning of modernity and industrial capitalism, of course.

Such an ending on its own would seem as hopeless as the depressive “downward path” of Jean Rhys’ novels being written at the same time (Marshik 2006). But while Paula’s boredom “involves a deficiency of affect that is reflexively felt to be dysphoric—stultifying, tedious, irritating, fatiguing, or dulling” (Ngai 2005, p.269) it is not the only emotion she feels nor the only judgement she makes on her condition. Both Paula and Bill have experienced traumatic losses from the First World War (a fiancé; a brother) as well as, in Paula’s case, a traumatic childhood. It is the retelling of these experiences, and the rejection of imposed therapeutic narratives to try and explain them, that lead Paula, particularly, to try and escape from the traumatic feelings she has and the injunction to express them. These are not directly about the war, but rather about what the war has forced her to face in the expression of her inner self and of the need to ‘have’ emotions at all. It is the space opened up between thought and speech in the novel around these feelings that offers an insight into how the “emotional style” of therapeutic narratives were at first “an informal and almost inchoate aspect of our social experience” yet which have become “deeply internalized cultural schema organising perception of self and others, autobiography, and interpersonal interaction” (Illouz 2008, p.156).

2.4 War, neurosis and the pain of verbal disclosure

Garnett (1929) called *Sleeveless Errand* “a real diagnosis of the War generation’s neurotics.” Towards the end of the novel Paula tries to make

sense of the currents of thought and feeling that have brought her to commit suicide, and the war has prime billing. She says: “We don’t know how to make happiness for ourselves or others [...] I think that perhaps we’re still suffering from the War more than we realise” (James 1929, p.202). In her reading of Delafield’s *The Way Things Are*, Hilary Hinds points to the female protagonist’s “reluctant awareness of the manner in which her beliefs, ideals and decisions are not the properties of her unique individuality, but rather the shared fate of a whole class of women like her” and how this “feeds her disappointment” (2009, p.308). For Hinds, Delafield’s “production of disappointment [is] a marker of more widespread structures of feminine feeling at this time” (Ibid.) and its protagonist’s reluctance at accepting her status as one of a class is understandable in the culture of self-autonomy and personal life promoted by the rise of industrial capitalism. In a similar way, Paula’s awareness of her own status as one of the “so-called women war-workers” (James 1929, p.205) grows slowly through the novel, until her peroration at the end of the book as she persuades Bill not to accompany her on the final drive over the cliff. Paula explains that:

[...] what I’m saying is, that as a whole, my generation are rotten to the core. Freedom came too quickly for us. We weren’t ready for it. We had no reserves with which to meet the deadly disappointment after the War of finding ourselves workless, and husbandless and useless. [...] The only thing my sort can do is contaminate [the girls of today] as little as possible.

Ibid., p.204-5

The end of the war and the uncertain conditions of the late 1920s, including the precarious nature of work due to the depression and the prejudices still held against women, meant that many women were left with lives restricted to those they had experienced before the war (Pugh 2008, p.181). For Illouz this provided psychologists with the opportunity to act as “‘knowledge specialists’ who developed ideas and methods to improve human relations, and who thereby transformed the ‘structure of knowledge’ or consciousness that shaped the thinking of laypersons” (2007, p.17). It created the conditions for “a paradigm of subjectivity and sexuality that had only entered into the domain of popular middle-class culture in the early 1920s”

(Hinds 2009, p.308). For Hinds, as well as confirming the potentiality of unconscious desires, this “popular Freudianism” confers “a subterranean foundation to feminine disappointment by positing a psychic substantiveness to feminine desires that cannot simply be subsumed, or contained, by a dutiful adherence to the domestic” (Ibid., p.308-309).

This would at first appear to be the case with *Sleeveless Errand*. There are a number of nervous breakdowns in the book related to the war, most straightforwardly that of Bill’s brother, broken by the trauma of service (James 1929, p.127). The neuroses Paula relates, including her own, are not as easily classified. Her mother’s alcoholism and death are complicated by the loss of her two sons in the war, but also her husband’s affair. Paula’s mother could have been following the advice of the women’s magazines at the time, which “argued that women should not be misled by relatives and friends into punishing errant males by resorting to the law; rather they were advised to take an understanding view of male psychology” (Pugh 2008, p.141-2). As Paula tells Bill and then thinks to herself:

“God, it was hellish! Mother staggering about, stupid with all that cheap booze she drank. God it was bloody!—I wonder what sort of a complex it gave me? It was ghastly. [...] I suppose it was hysteria as well as drink, but I didn’t understand what that was.”

James 1929, p.80

Paula blames herself (“pretty cowardly of me!” (Ibid.)) for not doing more in caring for her mother. But without an understanding of what was happening—the hysteria—Paula withdrew from the situation. Her lack of knowledge of her mother’s hysteria is now understood, showing an awareness of psychoanalytic concepts and how they had permeated the culture in the early part of the twentieth century; and of what “complex” her parents’ behaviour would have left Paula with, although she remains unwilling to analyse what that might be. Paula’s position as one of a “rotten” class of women, especially in comparison to the younger generation, reaffirms and strengthens the novel’s articulation of the experience of profound boredom as a reaction to everyday life. Paula acknowledges that there are plenty who see good in the world, but she can only see the negative.

Within all of this is Paula's insistence throughout of how she 'hates' "having my emotions involved". The "mind-occupying things" (Ibid., p.98) of the practicalities of her suicide leave Paula "much more cheerful" (Ibid.) as she no longer has time to feel. This brings us back to what Illouz explores in her study of therapeutic narratives and the ways in which they permeated the interwar period, and that appeared in the literature of the time as what Hinds sees as "the invocation of a taken-for-granted popular Freudianism" (2009, p.308). These were narratives which are part of the "specificity of contemporary ways of thinking and socio-historical circumstance" (Ibid., p.308) to be taken into account when articulating the generation and transmission of affects. Hinds notes the numerous references in *The Way Things Are* to this popular Freudianism, including "the subconscious self (48), sex-complexes (73), repressions (141), neurosis (109), inhibitions (152), dreams (206), and nymphomania (270)" (Ibid.). At various points *Sleeveless Errand* notes a similar knowledge of psychoanalysis and its popularisation into broader cultural life. When Bill first comes back to Paula's apartment, as Paula is readying herself for bed, he studies her bookshelf. "There was no kind of order about their arrangement. James Joyce, Conrad, The Week-End Book, Edna St. Vincent Millay, H.G. Wells, Freud, and Liam O'Flaherty were all together" (James 1929, p.72). Both Paula and Bill draw on psychoanalytic terms. Paula calls herself "a hopeless egoist and I've let myself become a neurotic emotionalist" (Ibid., p.207). When she tells Bill about her thoughts on children, Paula says: "Been told it's a complex I've got. Means I don't really want a child at all. That my idea about not being good enough to have one and all the rest of it is just rot. Don't know. Even got analysed to try and think differently—didn't work—analyst said my defences were too strong" (Ibid., p.113). And this same idea of complexes appears as Paula refers to her family life:

I've always resented family ties and I hate people knowing what's happening if I'm having a bad time. It's supposed to be some unpleasant complex, secretiveness; I've got it all right if that's what it means."

"Oh, that's complex stuff," Bill said, "awful bunkum from what I've heard about it."

“Do you think so? Well, please go on about you now.”

Ibid., p.93

James herself said that her novel about neurotics wasn't neurotic (cited in Ingram 1986, p.352). Yet if a psychoanalyst's definition of neurosis at the time was “a distrust of our own selves” (Horney 1937, p.34) then the novel's mode of narration, evidenced here, where speech and thought are divided and relate different tonal experiences of the emotions felt about lived experience, then perhaps James was not fully mindful of the affects at work in her novel. As a drunk Paula says at one point “My lips are numb and there's a gap between what I'm saying and me” (James 1929, p.191) but the disjuncture of the narrative form suggests that it is not simply the booze, or the war, that has 'done in' her generation, nor her 'utter boredom' at life, but the access to and privileging of internal reflection:

She thought, “I ought to have gone alone until I was mellowed through experience and had achieved real self-control. But, after all, would I ever have known this without the bitter lessons I've had? Suppose I ought to have known, ought to have remembered what my people were like and realised that it meant I should need more self-control and *knowledge of myself* than other people needed. Instead of which I've just let myself go to pieces. [...] I'm so neurotic that I'm really glad to leave life in this violent way. How silly it all is; how incredibly stupid I've been. Why did I ever have to come into the world?”

Ibid., p.194-195, my emphasis

Here *Sleeveless Errand* articulates an at-best ambivalent encounter with the psychoanalytic as a language and as an “emotional style” in its dismissal of popular Freudianism as “a load of old rot”. In almost every case of psychoanalysis, therapy, complexes, neuroses or introspection mentioned in *Sleeveless Errand*, there is a narrative rejection of that particular “emotional style”. Paula does not so much fail to gain access to knowledge of herself, even at the same time as diagnosing herself as neurotic, and then chastising herself for her reflection; she refuses it. While the novel is not a high-modernist philosophical repudiation of the “popular Freudianism” that was in circulation at the time, it does provide a far more ambivalent relationship to

the take up of psychoanalytic ideas than Hinds hints at in the “feminine middlebrow”.

But beyond this, the ideal of verbal disclosure as key to social relations is refused by this vacillation between thought and speech, where each character thinks one thing, generally traumatic, and says another, often a bathetic pronouncement about the same situation. Where thought-processes in the novel often dwell on the traumatic experience, the speech acts elide and negate this trauma with utterances that are both bored and boring. So, for example, Paula’s own breakdown is similarly ascribed to both the end of the war and to the existing circumstances of her upbringing and model of life, and is again described in this break between what is said and what is thought:

I was working like mad at the time, and racketing about at night. After the war I got a job as a journalist for a while until I had a bad nervous breakdown. Friends put me into hospital—they thought I was going off my head.”

She thought, “I believed I was too.” [...]

“I was there for ten weeks. [...] I had to fight with myself for a long time because I wanted to die—it all seemed so futile—I didn’t do it because of the people who’d been decent to me. [...] The place I stayed at is quite near the cliff we’re going over to-morrow. The spot always fascinated me—I used to avoid that particular walk.”

She thought, “In the end I loved that holiday—just doing nothing except write and read and walk—completely cut off from people and emotions. How I hate having my emotions involved. It’s always been disastrous as far as I’m concerned.”

Ibid., p.89-90

It is this movement, from speech to thought represented as speech but not ‘disclosed’, that produces a space in the narrative where we are forced to face Paula’s impending suicide for what it is: not simply boredom with life, or the response to the shock of war, but a refusal of the new “emotional style” where she is *supposed* to know herself. It is a refusal of “the boundary confusions built into the structure of these feelings, whether in the form of inside/outside, self/world, or psyche/body” (Ngai 2005, p.22). What Paula lays bare for us, as Illouz proposes, is that “modern identity has indeed become increasingly publicly performed in a variety of social sites through a narrative which

combines the aspiration to self-realization with the claim to emotional suffering” (2008, p.4). Paula refuses the future of this public performance. This is why it is so jarring when the third person narrator suddenly restricts us access to Paula’s thoughts. As Paula and Bill talk obliquely about the suicide pact, Paula smiles at Percival queerly. “‘No, probably it’s a good thing,’ she said, and he wondered what was in her mind” (James 1929, p.136).

Up until this point we have had, through the narrator, as much access to Paula’s mind as she has. We have been lulled into our own desire to know the other’s mind as a means or at least suggestion that it is possible to *know what is in our own*. But quite abruptly, the narrative blocks this expression of feeling: suddenly we cannot get away from this distance between ourselves and Paula. If we did not know why this was, Paula soon tells us:

she knew at last why she had always been a failure; she was too introspective, she expected too much from people she loved, she dreaded the change in their feelings, which from the outset of a relationship, she expected; this attitude had always made every human contact impossible once her emotions were involved; [...] she knew that she was an introvert, that from childhood she had relied upon fantasies to make life bearable.

James 1929, p.194

For Illouz, psychoanalysis, in dominating twentieth century culture, offered individuals a “language ideology” which, promoted by therapy, offered a number of beliefs: “that self-knowledge is gained by introspection; that introspection can in turn help us understand, control, and come to terms with our social and emotional environment; and that verbal disclosure is key to social relations” (2008, p.244). But Paula rejects introspection as a failed means to help her come to terms with her ‘social and emotional environment’: “only the abnormally introspective can loathe life as I do—hating life must mean an unhealthy mind” (James 1929, p.23). It is this non sequitur that echoes the overlapping emotions with which the novel opens, and which damns the “language ideology” of introspection as leading to nothing but the “unutterable” both for Paula, and, as Ingram suggested, the censors. It is instead her own fantasies that she had relied upon to make life bearable.

Unable to connect to those fantasies, any remaining “optimism” for the “good life” seems either lost or “unbearable”, a loss of all hope of what Berlant identifies as “the subject’s sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (2012, p.24).

2.5 Conclusion

How is *Sleeveless Errand*’s articulation of emotions similar or different to those found in other texts of modernism that deal with boredom and the difficulty in expressing feelings associated with a new “emotional style” shaped by the language of psychoanalysis?

The boredom of Paula in *Sleeveless Errand* is a similar boredom to that which Crangle has explored in the works of Virginia Woolf, who “pits the perception of boredom as a conduit toward a self-affirming vision against a rejection of the inherent dullness of continually acknowledging the self” (2008, p.211). But for Crangle what emerges in novels such as *Orlando* and *The Waves* “is a sense that the boredom behind Woolf’s creative desires—both authorial and fictional—is informed by a longing to abandon the stultifying sameness of selfhood for the endless unknowns of otherness” (Ibid., p.211). Woolf approached this in her literature even while, like Paula in *Sleeveless Errand*, finally ending her own life. In *Sleeveless Errand* there is little redemption in Paula’s boredom approaching the other or otherness; in resisting the need for emotions, Paula also does away with the imperative to share those emotions. For Illouz in the “new psychological imagination” of post-war modernity, “the true self became opaque to its bearer and now posed special problems. It required that one overcome a number of emotions—fear, shame or guilt—which were most often unknown to the person in question and required a new skill in the use of language” (2008, p.28). *Sleeveless Errand* captures the language of the working and lower-middle classes of interwar Britain which have, under the pressures of everyday life, either given up these skills, or refused to learn them.

In a way, then, James’s *Sleeveless Errand* is closer to the mundane experiences of everyday life that fascinated and repelled Woolf. Woolf, in her privileged class and financial position, could only perceive from outside the mundane boredom of the working war-women and their suffering of

“prejudice and discrimination [...] from man-made rules” (Pugh 2008, p.185). Perhaps what James has over Woolf in this instance is not the skill of an author, where Woolf “subtly, persistently differentiates between bourgeois melancholia and the boredom of the urban, anonymous, over-stimulated, and distinctly average human-being” (Crangle 2008, p.217); rather, James *does not* attempt this literary division. In Woolf’s short story ‘The Lady In the Looking Glass: A Reflection’, published the same year as *Sleeveless Errand*, Woolf “depicts the boredom of the return to the self, in the process exploring and affirming the self as defined by otherness” (Crangle 2008, p.221) in a creative move that offers the hope that “a bored self remains determined by, and might move towards, the endlessly interesting unknowability of otherness” (Ibid., p.227). But *Sleeveless Errand* rejects this ‘reflection’ as impossible for the war-women. The reflection or introspection does not work for them. Instead, James simply lays bare the boredom itself as felt and experienced by a single working woman, and offers no such return, no such affirmation, no escape towards an ‘endlessly interesting other’—and the only remaining choice is no choice at all.

While lying in bed together after meeting, Paula describes to Bill a period of her life in which her mother is jealous of her, she makes few friends and feels lonely, becomes restless and disobeys her father, particularly in rejecting domestic work, while dreaming of becoming an artist or journalist, and is ‘finished off’ by falling ill with appendicitis. The experience of preparation for the operation, of being anaesthetized and then operated on, coming round from that, has prepared her, she realises, for suicide: “You moan and struggle as you try to become once more part of the body that lies breathing and pain-racked on the bed. No, to-morrow can’t be much worse than that” (James 1929, p.84). This is conveyed as thoughts in Paula’s head, unshared with Bill, lying in bed opposite her.

What Paula in fact then says next seems incongruently optimistic: “Then when I was better I went to the Slade. I took up sculpture. I loved that time. I loved the work. I loved meeting men and women of my own age and discussing all the questions that seem so important before you’re twenty” (Ibid., p.84-5). Paula can see no point in sharing her trauma. Instead, she shares what has become, in the new emotional style, accessible to her in this

“endlessly interesting unknowability of otherness” of the other person—“men and women of my own age” and “all the questions that seem so important before you’re twenty”. It is this failure of faith in the verbal disclosure of trauma to lead to self-knowledge, and the “procedural quality” of “therapeutic communication” (Illouz 2007, p.38) that ‘does for’ Paula. The split narrative between thought and speech, between feeling a trauma and being unwilling, rather than unable, to express it in a rejection of the imperative to share and discover the self (and other) are, in the novel, “moments of conspicuous inactivity [that] remain affectively charged” and produce an “inherently ambiguous affect of affective disorientation” (Ngai 2005, p.14). This leads to death: the almost sublime, in the metaphysical sense, ending where Paula drives over the cliff and “very deliberately, she let the golden kiss of the sun fall upon her eyes and dazzle her, so that she did not see when she had reached the edge” (James 1929, p.217).

Chapter 3

Experimenting the Self – Marion Milner

3.1 Introduction

Oh, that dreaded moment of starting to write in the morning, how I keep forgetting my own discovery that I must start with an image, that's the way in.

Milner 1989, p.29

So wrote Marion Milner (1900-1998) in her memoir *Eternity's Sunrise* (first published in 1986) as she reflected on a life and the process of making sense, through writing, of what her memories might mean to her. Milner was a British psychoanalyst and author whose work has been credited with influencing many practising and theoretical analysts including D. W. Winnicott and Christopher Bollas (see Letley 2013; Bollas 1991). She wrote a number of books before *Eternity's Sunrise*, including her monumental case study of the neurotic woman 'Susan' in *The Hands of the Living God* (1969) and numerous analytic papers collected in *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men* (1987). Her memoirs and case studies were republished in 2010 by Routledge, followed in 2013 by a biography by Emma Letley. I am interested here in her first two books *A Life of One's Own* and *An Experiment In Leisure*. It is possible to describe both as psychological autobiographies. They are the reflexive record of an individual's self-analysis of thoughts, emotions and behaviours, which she investigates in the manner of a detective similar to Freud's early self- and dream-analysis. Although she had not entered analytic training at this point, *A Life of One's Own*, suggests Letley, is "the book in which Marion Milner discovered psychoanalysis" (2013, p.25). If that is the case, however, then it was an analysis of her own making. As Helen Taylor Robinson puts it: "She was a thinking and writing self before professional expertise developed her further" (2011, p.320).

Both *A Life* and *An Experiment* are narratives of exploration that draw on Milner's diaries in an attempt to understand what, for her, a "good life" might be. They are an experiment in narrating a sense of self out of affects, emotions and beliefs, interrogated through a social-psychological study of attachment. It should

be noted that although Milner's psychoanalytic training did not begin until 1940, her psychological knowledge was better than the layperson's. Her degree was in physiology and psychology, and she worked in management psychology before entering the field of educational psychology, and was heavily influenced by Piaget's work on the child (Letley 2013; Milner 1987). It is, though, her passionate interest in creativity and her criticism of Freud's exclusion of the study of its forms, and also perhaps what some critics have come to read as her relation to the mystical (Sayers 2002) that assigns her legacy, even now, close to the margins of psychoanalytic investigation. As Letley says:

Milner has always been difficult to place; where does she belong? The psychoanalytic establishment does not really know what to make of her, what to do with her. [...] Milner is clearly anti-professional. Her method as indicated is decidedly unscientific, her approach is a long way from any aspirations towards seeing psychoanalysis as a science.

2013, p.166

Psychoanalysis was for Milner always an interpretative process that began with one's subjective understanding of the world. Milner began *A Life* by stating: "It took me years to learn that I must never begin my search by looking in books [...] Finally I decided only to read books that would keep my heart up, books that would give me the mood I wanted rather than information" (1934, p.31). This "mood" sought for is a "*Stimmung*" in the Heideggerian sense, an atmosphere that would facilitate internal change, or what Jonathan Flatley posits as "a kind of affective atmosphere [...] in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular affects can attach to particular objects" (2008, p.19). For Flatley, as for Milner, this type of knowledge is "authentic in the sense that it tells us what is collectively possible at that moment" (Ibid., p.22). A large part of the success of Milner's method in finding a life of her own is that she paid great attention to the active ability to put herself into counter-moods. She developed a method of self-making that reclaimed agency for her affective attachments to objects of desire away from the prevailing "mood" of "confusion" and "reach-me-down mass-produced mythology" (Milner 1937, p.233) of contemporary culture, towards one that, as Flatley following Heidegger says,

exacted agency in relation to them, singularly and collectively. [But] one cannot just decide to change one's mood. [...] One must come to know what kinds of practices, situations, or encounters (such as seeing friends, going to a concert, settling down to write, attending a political rally, making a trip) are capable of producing a counter-mood.

2008, p.23-24

This "coming to know" is the work of Milner's self-analysis, not only documented in, but made *through* the writing of her first two books. What follows is the extrapolation of how she did this, and the argument of why her efforts are relevant for us.

3.2 The momentary affect of astonishment-with-living

As Stuart Hall has shown, identity became in the modernist period "a 'moveable feast'" where individuals perhaps first became fully aware that their self might be "formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (1992, p.277). As a young woman living through the fragmentation of old cultural structures and the creation of new ones, Milner was left confused by the discrepancy between the life she was living and her feelings about that life. Her diary keeping was then "the deliberate endeavour to find a way of coming to terms with daily experience" (Milner 1934, p.10). This focused first of all on discovering her "purpose" having been prompted by a Pelman self-help programme she attended (Ibid., p.84). But she found that the purposes of life grounded in work, leisure pursuits and relationships left her:

drifting without rudder or compass, swept in all directions by influence from custom, tradition, fashion, swayed by standards uncritically accepted from my friends, my family, my countrymen, my ancestors. Were these reliable guides for one's life? I could not assume that they were, for everywhere around me I saw old ways of doing things breaking down and proving inadequate. Not only was I dubious about trusting the dictates of a social tradition which had landed us in the war, but the voice of that tradition was so confused that I did not in fact know what it was telling me to do, what sort of life it did require of me. But what else was there?

Ibid., p.24

So Milner set herself a task “to look at the facts of my own life” (Ibid., p.25), and to do so “not according to tradition, or authority, or rational theory, but by experiment” (Ibid., p.28). Her diary keeping, as Letley points out, “was ‘a struggle to slough off the old caterpillar skin of an outworn ideology about the relation of thinking to doing, of mind to body’” (2013, p.78). Her preliminary attempts were inauspicious: “Rather oppressed with the number of things to be done” (Milner 1934, p.35). She continued by “*recording the important moments of the day*”⁷ (Ibid., p.42) but the entries that followed were concerned with everyday relationships, having her hair cut, buying a pair of shoes when she should be thinking about work. The mundane nature of the high points in her day left her no nearer to understanding her purpose, or why, even, she should need one. This so depressed her that she then left off writing her diary for nearly a year. When she later returned to the experiment and, as she had learnt to do from reading philosophy and Buddhism, let her mind go blank with a wide attention—what we would term meditation or mindfulness practice—she discovered not only what *did* interest her, but also that there was a reliable method for going below “surface thoughts” and into a whole other way of thinking and feeling. As she wrote a few months into the practice: “It now occurred to me that my automatic self might not hold the same views as my deliberate self” (Ibid., p.64). As her confidence grew in the practice, she began to connect this mode of being with experiences of joy: “If just looking could be so satisfying, why was I always striving to have things or get things done? Certainly I had never suspected that the key to my private reality might lie in so apparently simple a skill as the ability to let the senses roam unfettered by purposes” (Ibid., p.81-82). In attending to bodily states through practice, she came to understand not only what made her happy, but why, previously, she had trusted her feelings so little:

Public reality, what was agreed fact about the external world, did not seem able to tell me what was important for me, or what to do in order to live in accordance with the laws of my own being. But might there not perhaps be a private reality, a reality of feeling rather than of knowing, which I could not afford to ignore?

Ibid., p.29

⁷ Italicized quotations denote actual diary entries rather than Milner’s narrative investigation.

Her breakthrough came not by a focus on the content of her life, but with her “interest gradually shifting from what to do with my life to how to look at it” (Ibid., p.44). That is, through perceiving the forms of her attachment, rather than the contents she was, or felt she *should* be, attached to. For this she continued with practices of mindfulness, what she called “feeling oneself down into my heart” (Ibid., p.71) and finding in present moment tasks such as sewing (Ibid., p.75) and playing ping-pong (Ibid., p.74) the means to cultivate a different kind of attention, a counter-mood; not seeking out purpose, but a way to “let go and be free”:

I had at least begun to guess that my greatest need might be to let go and be free from the drive after achievement—if only I dared. I had also guessed that perhaps when I had let these go, then I might be free to become aware of some other purpose that was more fundamental, not self-imposed private ambitions but something which grew out of the essence of one’s own nature.

Ibid., p.96-97

Early on in her experiments Milner came to the conclusion that “the ordinary everyday perception of things which serves us pretty well when going about daily practical affairs is not the only kind of perceiving that the mind can do” (Ibid., p.112). The more she turned to this other way of perceiving her life, the more she “began to have an idea of my life, *not as the slow shaping of achievement to fit my preconceived purposes, but as the gradual discovery and growth of a purpose which I did not know*” (Ibid., p.89). As John Turner summarises, her method came down to a struggle between two kinds of seeing:

a kind of denotative, or objective seeing, necessary to perceive the otherness of the created world in all its difference from the self, and a kind of poetic, or oceanic seeing, necessary to suffuse the otherness of the outside world with the sense of self. [...] Such seeing might be recovered in later life in love, in art, in dream, in the analytic hour, in what she called ‘moments of illusion’; and such moments were ‘the essential root of a high morale and vital enthusiasm for living’.

2002, p.1070

Although it was not an altogether pleasant process. There are numerous moments where Milner has to come to terms with darker, destructive emotions, and the

processes by which her unhappiness, she begins to realise, is partially self-created from the repression or censorship of such feelings:

Then I remembered feeling jealous [...] and all my other jealousies and how I won't own up to myself about unpleasant feelings so I think I'm colourless, emotionless. Coming home late I thought how my list of 'wants' was a very censored one, only those that my 'self' approves of.

Milner 1934, p.41

And yet when she gave herself over to the method, she found “as always before, the dread of annihilation merging into a deep delight” (Ibid., p.191). For Milner, these moments were not simply perceived, but brought about embodied change in Milner’s concrete world *through the perceiving*: “Best moments were mostly very small moments of a total change in the way I was perceiving both the outer world and myself” (Ibid., p.218-9).

So rather than find her ‘self’ in the *momentous*, she followed the *momentary*. The perceptions Milner documents that she finds most important are all momentary: “It was the busy flutter of wings and twitter in the tree-tops that I loved most, or the hurried importance of starlings on the lawn, or of a wren collecting nest materials” (1937, p.26) and often connected to nature. But what is important about these moments is that her focus on bodily affects led to not simply the content of her desires, but a recognition of the processes of affect that bound her to such images. By this way she came to understand an affect she could put her trust in: *astonishment*. It began as the tracking of “the feeling of interest” (Ibid., p.xix) but moved through experimentation towards recognition of the force behind those moments being the “mysterious and astonishing fact of simply being alive” (Ibid., p.187). And her discoveries around the method itself, of paying attention, says Letley, “left Milner ‘astonished at what my diary keeping had shown about the power of the unconscious aspects of one’s own mind, both for good and for ill” (2013, p.27).

This “astonishment” is an affective moment, or rather cluster of affects that runs like “a rosary of beads” (Milner 1989, p.36) through her work. It is the means by which Milner made sense of unconscious attachments. Through letting astonishment lead her conscious thoughts towards what it might mean for her to “have a life” she became able to trust her feelings and provide us with an embodied

scene of desire of her own making. But it is understanding the method, or rather the forms, of how such an affect might make a “true” attachment to an object of desire, that is most original in Milner’s work. The mixture of phenomenology, self-analysis and mindfulness, synthesised through a writing process in relating to one’s unconscious, is perhaps what made Milner “decidedly unscientific” in the eyes of psychoanalysis from the post-1945 period onwards. But it was not only that. For Milner’s method to *work* in rejecting the normative “good life” fantasies with which she struggled, she would also have to reject the “emotional therapeutic style” by which those fantasies were formed via the languages of self-help and psychoanalysis. And yet Milner became a psychoanalyst; indeed, a *Freudian* analyst. But Milner, in these first two books, and throughout her work as an analyst, *did* reject this “emotional therapeutic style” in favour of her own method, and most powerfully in relation to creativity; but creativity not simply in terms of artistic production, but as the generative capacity to *create a life*.

3.3 Milner’s resistance to consumer culture messages *and* psychoanalysis

According to Hall, psychoanalysis was one of the five great de-centrings of identity (the other four being Marxism, Saussurean linguistics, Foucauldian power, and feminism (1992, p.286-9)) which began to clear away what “Marxists and liberalists saw [as] archaic relations and attachments” (Ibid., p.314) to outdated symbols and images. For Illouz, Freud’s ideas could not help but “fire the censored imagination” of his contemporaries (2007, p.9). This was because Freudian theory “resonated with the quest for authenticity that was at the epicentre of the nascent and intensive consumer culture” (Ibid.). For the philosopher Susanne Langer, writing in 1941, the psychological field had “developed beyond all prediction” because of this “generative idea—the germ of a complete reorientation [...] The sudden vogue of such a key-idea is due to the fact that all sensitive and active minds turn at once to exploiting it” (1941, p.22-23).

Western cultures readily adopted psychoanalysis as part of their reorganisation of private life to consumer patterns. Nowhere were its symbols more prevalent than in the texts of popular culture. Both self-help literature and film were emerging cultural industries, which continue today to be platforms for the “diffusion of psychological ideas and for the elaboration of emotional norms”

(Illouz 2007, p.9). These texts were involved in embedding “knowledge systems” into popular culture, circulated and “formalized in visual and textual genres propagated by the mass media” (Illouz 2008, p.18). Book and periodical publishers and film-makers “seized upon a language which could accommodate both theory and story, generality and particularity, non-judgmentality and normativity” (Illouz 2007, p.10). And the psychologist, and particularly the psychoanalyst, whose main concern was rationalising the intimate private sphere through making the unconscious conscious, became “knowledge specialists” (Ibid., p.17) who helped laypeople shape their selfhoods accordingly.

Milner did not have much truck with these forms of knowledge in the manner in which they were communicated through popular, or even professional, culture, and consistently rejected advice literature and self-help programmes in favour of the development of her own method. Although she had “ranged fairly widely through psychological literature for the purposes of my work” when she “thought of it in relation to my own problems it filled me with despair” (Milner 1937, p.150). This was not resistance in classic analytic terms, but an understanding that there was something left out that was central to her experience of trusting her feelings. In both *A Life* and *An Experiment* she discovered “the more I read scientific books on psychology the more I felt that the essential facts of experience were being missed out” (Milner 1934, p.12). In an editorial review of *A Life* from the magazine *Personnel Management* the radical nature of Milner’s affective processes of attachment to objects of desire is captured:

“In an age of ‘private lives’ very few of us have lives of our own. The lives that provide no copy for the popular film or the best seller, are invaded by the machinery of the economic system. A fundamental problem of our time is to re-conquer the territory [...] That is why the industrial hemisphere needs this thought so much.”

cited in Milner 1934, p.224

And yet Milner did begin training as a psychoanalyst, after attending a lecture in 1938 given by D. W. Winnicott. She could not remember exactly what was said in Winnicott’s lecture, “but I did get the feeling that, contrary to the impression that some Freudians had given me, the main ideas I was preoccupied with could be accommodated within the Freudian metapsychology” (cited in Letley

2013, p.51). She saw psychoanalysis as *one*—rather than *the*—tool in her exploration of getting “clearer ideas on this great tangle of human behaviour” (Milner 1934, p.52). But, as Letley suggests, Milner was never satisfied with psychoanalysis or Freudian thinking in the areas of study that she was concerned with: of embodiment, feeling, and, most importantly, creativity. On being accepted for training in 1940, she “tried to keep a diary of misgivings about the theory I was trying to learn and when I came to give seminars myself I sometimes advised my students to do the same” (Milner 1987, p.9). This was not just a professional scepticism, but a distrust of the theoretical rigidity of the psychoanalytic field, including the strict Kleinian and (Anna) Freudian schools that led to the formation of the Middle Group with which she was most often aligned (Letley 2013, p.45), as well as unease with the ways in which psychoanalysis was being used—manipulated—within wider cultural settings.

Milner did come to accept Freudian theory—up to a point. Freud’s greatest gift was that he “did allow that people like me, who think mostly in images, do exist” (Milner 1987, p.59). But Milner diverged from Freudian theory over “some misgivings I had felt about what seemed to me the too-narrow aspect of the classical Freudian concept of symbol formation’ (Ibid., p.280). Much of this was to do with the Freudian concept of the unconscious, or rather, what was and was not ‘in’ there as expressed in advice literature and popular Freudianism. Freud and his followers recognised the kinds of thinking noted above by Taylor, the logical and irrational, or what Milner called blind thinking and wide attention. But Milner did not see the irrational as subordinate to the logical, nor requiring what was in the unconscious to be brought into consciousness and rationalised away. Rather for Milner, the ‘irrational’ unconscious was essential to the development of a fulfilling and creative life; in fact, *more* fundamental than, and pre-existing, the rational. In her later role as psychoanalyst, Milner confronted the “popular, and misguided, view of the Freudian unconscious” (Letley 2013, p.158) as a theoretician of the subject. As well as the unconscious being full of things people were not willing to admit, she emphasised what else might be in there. There is no doubt, says Letley summarising Milner, “that we do crucify our imagination, kill our ‘capacity for understanding others’” (Ibid.) by thinking of the unconscious as full of only bad things to be disposed of, which came to be the popular belief of the unconscious. But what Milner had already started as an experiment in her first two books was an

engagement with processes that addressed the irrational mind through non-logical means, by returning to the necessity for an acceptance of illusion and the inner unconscious imaginative world as an essential part of each individual. That is, Milner was *always* concerned with an over-reliance on the conscious mind that was coming to the fore, she felt, in cultural life in the interwar period and after.

So if psychoanalysis had, amongst other ontologies, effected a decentring of the formation of a stable subject identity, Milner, living with the immediate consequences of that decentring, set out to develop a method that would correct what she saw as errors in popular psychoanalytic relations to the methods of self-making. And even though she became a Freudian psychoanalyst, it was long before then that Milner began her process of struggling with “the problem of how truly to trust ‘the unconscious’, trust the emptiness, the blankness, trust what seems not to be there” (1987, p.5). Her early misgivings led to her critique of Freudian theories in their failure to adequately include the processes of creativity in its field of study, as it became, she argued, enamoured instead with questions of content: of dreams, neuroses, texts.

Both post- and pre- her training as an analyst, Milner’s misgivings about psychoanalysis revolved around one central problem: the mistaken rationalisation of the chaotic unconscious through Freud’s emphasis on a ‘scientific’ approach. As Robinson says, Milner was “radical” in that she tried “to invert Freud’s thesis that we are at the mercy of our unconscious, which subverts our consciousness in every way” (2011, p.320). Milner did this, continues Robinson, “by saying, are we not, rather, at the mercy of our overly rational, unspontaneous and uncreative selves (our deadly ‘consciousness’), which means we do not become knowledgeable about our unconscious and use it for the powerful and enabling tool that it is?” (Ibid.). For Milner, the reliance on a rational means of understanding the unconscious not only missed the point, but was fundamentally treacherous for self-making. She saw logical thought as “incapable of taking in an all-round view of any situation, it could never make well-founded decisions. This meant that one could never feel quite sure of anything” (Milner 1934, p.127).

What was missing in Freud’s discoveries was a conception of the nature of the creative process. Milner felt this was necessary “for the full understanding of Freud’s work” (1987, p.206-7). This “other way of thinking [...] which is not based

on making that rigid distinction between subject and object that logical thinking does” (Ibid.) had a fundamental relation to creative living. The mistake in Freudian thought and its popularisation in film, magazines and advice literature, was that it placed too much emphasis “on the content of the wishes revealed, not on the specific processes which make it possible for the creative artist to embody the wishes in such meaningful symbols” (Ibid., p.210). For Milner, writing in 1956 in her article ‘Psychoanalysis and Art’, perhaps one of her most important works, “Freud became so interested in the content of unconscious phantasies that he neglected their structural form, even though it was he who had first enunciated the laws of that form” (Ibid., p.213).

In her paper, Milner put forward an argument that it was the structural form of phantasy—illusion and dis-illusion, and the processes of going between the two without destroying the ‘good’ ego—that allowed the individual to live creatively, to love free from doubt, and to form her own affective attachments. But here the crucial affect is not optimism, nor hope, as they might be for Berlant in the forming of a new political; it is the very specific affect of “astonishment with living,” the “momentary delight” of fusion between subject and object that changes both inner and outer worlds through interchange, that is central to *then* creating optimism as a collective emotion. For Milner, being able to endure the chaos of the unconscious while at the same time not giving up on the social, requires this affect of astonishment. In this, Milner produced something that Freud could not: she looked to the creative/poetic function and explained it as a means of determining for oneself, through affective attachment, objects of desire which astonished her. These were individually her “beads” that strung together added up to a *life*; this did not happen by following normative rules, what a “good life” might be, but by finding one’s own processes to trust unconscious forces.

So for theorists who have returned to phenomenology and more-than-representational theory that engage with affect and embodiment (e.g. Grosz 1994; Massumi 2002; Stewart 2011;) there must be an interest in Milner, whose bodily method for trusting her feelings about how she might want to live predated Merleau-Ponty’s work on “motor intentional understanding” by at least a decade (Merleau-Ponty 1945). And in particular, this early development of a method for affective self-knowledge is most powerful when explored through the question of how to not only *have* a life, but to *create* one. It is to Milner’s focus on creativity as

an alternative to Western consumer capitalism's predefined paths of self-making through alienating work, a limited range of leisure pursuits (e.g. sports, shopping) and recognised classed and gendered institutional relations, that I now turn.

3.4 Affective Astonishment, Creativity, and the Good Life

It is through astonishment that Milner says: "I had found that there *was* an intuitive sense of how to live" (1934, p.205). But as psychologist Steve Bearman (2013) writes, once a somatic body has been re-found as a source of knowledge in the process of self-making, there is a risk of an individual basing all life decisions on these pre-rational felt senses. Emotions are articulations of affects that are, as Flatley warns us, constantly in an imbricated flux. So if we are currently "witnessing the radical apogee of an epistemic shift from reason to affect" (Reber 2012, p.63) where attention to bodily practices gives us "an epistemically affective approximation of being in the world" (Ibid., p.69) then we need to be careful not to completely do away with remembering our felt senses are changeable. As Bearman suggests, "following the felt sense will lead to greater aliveness, but integrating the felt sense with well-developed rationality will lead to more holistic and sustainable decisions" (2013). For Milner, such an integration came later, when she developed her bodily method towards the creative process, and documented it in her book *On Not Being Able to Paint*. Creativity for Milner was not merely about artistic production such as painting, but as Winnicott put it, "she wishes to say that it is for her (and perhaps for everyone) the primary human predicament" (cited in Letley 2013, p.70). It is on returning to her earlier books that we can see Milner's emphasis on creativity as the core practice of living in both *A Life* and *An Experiment* as useful to us in expanding upon recent affective critiques of the "good life".

In psychoanalytic terms, Milner explained that her earlier method of mindful, present-moment wide-attention was, as Kelley Raab summarises, "surely known at moments to all of us in childhood but is often lost in adulthood because of our purpose-driven lives" (2000, p.191-192). Taking this further, as Janet Sayers suggests, Milner saw that "creativity and psychological aliveness generally involve returning to the infantile illusion of inner-outer fusion with our mothers and the world around us" (2002, p.113). Through her method, Milner was re-searching for her ability to contact and fuse with her creative unconscious that first recognises

itself as other in the dis-illusion of the original mother-infant object relation (see Bollas 1991). The nature of Milner's illusions is grounded in a recognition of their affective attachment, which were sometimes to physical objects such as animals or sunsets, but were also attachments to ideas, images, or internal feelings. They are what in *Eternity's Sunrise* Milner finally calls "beads" (1989, p.36). Milner's method then became a lifelong "study of the momentary" (1934, p.48) and of "momentary delights" (Ibid., p.70). What, in fact, Paula in *Sleeveless Errand* could find no joy in, only boredom; what Virginia Woolf earlier called "moments of being" (Woolf 1985), although it unclear if Milner knew this reference. Milner said herself: "So I set out to find a moment to moment technique, some way by which in ordinary times, when I was neither overtired nor emotionally wrought-up, I could still make sure of not slipping into all the mistakes and contractions of blind thinking" (1934, p.178). It is these moments, rather than more 'significant' socially-ordered events of what a "good life" should be ('The Moment') that Milner is interested in, and which, in the process of writing them down, come to shape her resistance to the normative processes of self-identification.

For Milner, then, the repetition of infantile feelings of fusion and de-fusion were essential not only for artistic production but, primarily and first of all, to the recognition of one's affective attachments. Only then could one also detach from the affects that bound one to mass-produced illusions of the "good life". And she was adamant that such a process "is not just passively experienced but actively used, with the intent to make something, produce something" (Milner 1987, p.196-7). It is this *active* process in Milner of directing feelings towards making something (not just *anything*, but a *life*) that is political in the creation of scenes of desire and attachments. For Milner, living in a period where such processes of reproducing life were fractured but not yet crumbling, the impasse of modernity which "demands both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance that collects material that might help to clarify things" (Berlant 2012, p.4) could still be addressed and negotiated, and an alternative means of self-making selected. The promise of a move "towards rational, universal and cosmopolitan identities" (Hall 1992, p.289) still felt possible, as perhaps today for some of us it does not, knowing better about neoliberalism's effects where we struggle "from the middle of disrepair" (Berlant 2012, p.266). Although even for Milner, as she records in her second book, *An Experiment*, the new proposals for self-making offered to people

through the mass media and leisure was a “distortion of facts for the sake of arousing and exploiting the feelings of the masses [that made] me feel physically sick, as though the ground had fallen away under my feet” (1937, p.xx).

So through her method, Milner found a way to construct an integral self without giving up on the social. She did this, suggested the psychoanalytic art theorist Anton Ehrenzweig, who became a friend and correspondent, because her method dealt with “finding truly potent imagery to replace the abandoned clichés [and developing] a new approach to an ego psychology of creativeness” (cited in Letley 2013, p.35). The abandoned clichés were the manipulated images of consumer capitalism and normative life practices. Milner’s work has resonance here with Cvetkovich’s proposals to develop counter-cultural practices for social change through the *feeling* that one has *lived*. This is also the type of politics that Berlant advocates and maintains a hope for: a scene of the political that holds “the potentiality for reinventing the bodily practice of politics and therefore the production of political subjects projecting out to each other affective assurance and solidarity” (2012, p.260). Milner’s psychology of creativeness was not only focused on artistic endeavour, but, far more importantly, and *first*, on creating a means—a process—of living one’s *own* “good life” of affective attachments.

But does Milner’s method—developed in a different period, under a different regimen—offer us anything today in helping us negotiate a different kind of politics? It is reasonable to ask if Milner’s method was any different from the exercises of self-development via self-help and psychotherapy in both personal lives and public spheres that were taking place around her, e.g. psychologist interventions in the workplace? For Illouz, such exercises as Milner’s might perhaps “demand and imply a value rationalisation of personality. *Wertrationalität* is the process of clarifying one’s values and beliefs, and the process of making our ends conform to pre-established values. What do I want? What are my preferences and personality?” (2007, p.32). Such questions continue to “haunt advice literature” today, but it was in this interwar period when they began to first adopt the “language ideology” of psychoanalysis, particularly for women (Ibid.).

Is this what Milner was doing? I argue not. If self-help literatures “do not advise attempting to change the external circumstances of one’s life or propose their reader question the socio-political structures or material conditions which determine it” (Cooke 2013, p.946) then Milner roundly rejected such messages in

the popular press, magazines *and* formal psychoanalysis (in this period) to develop a method for self-making that was firmly counter-cultural, preferring “to learn, not from reason but from my senses” (1934, p.13). This was not a surface rejection. Even though Milner was well aware of “psychoanalytic interpretations” she did not try to force them “upon what I observed if the spontaneous wanderings of my mind did not seem to lead me to them” (1937, p.xxi). Rather, her method was also embodied, and in that, it was a rejection of the strictly psychoanalytic, which, she believed refused the body’s role in understanding the self; and as such, she was also rejecting the consumer culture’s adaptation of the psychoanalytic “language ideology” found in advice literature and education- and work-based treatises on communication for the control of private lives and public worlds.

At the end of *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant comes again to discuss the relationship between private lives and the public sphere. Berlant’s question for optimism as the affect which attaches us to fantasy is: can it help us maintain a desire for the political while dismantling the toxicities of “good life” fantasies? The political is where social change can happen, which not always, but can sometimes, overlap with formal politics (but increasingly not much). For Berlant, “the public’s binding to the political is best achieved neither by policy nor ideology but *the affect of feeling political together*” (2012, p.227, emphasis in original). Such affective attachment manoeuvres the subject into a Kleinian depressive position, where she is able to acknowledge “the broken circuit of reciprocity between herself and her world but who, refusing to see that cleavage as an end as such, takes it as an opportunity to repair both herself and the world” (Ibid., p.259).

The hope is that attachments to the political (via optimism) would take up, in psychoanalytic terms, “an anarchist political depressive” position that “would enact repair by performing a commitment to repairing politics without needing clarity or consensus on either of the two traditionally legitimating motives for political action: an ends-oriented consensually held good-life fantasy or confirmation of the transformative effectiveness of one’s actions” (Berlant 2012, p.260). Berlant invests her “hope” in this alternative politics, which is found, as for Cvetkovich (2003), foremost in the counter-cultural archive of DIY/anarchist activist productivity that offers “something focused but polymorphous [that] can magnetize people to a project of producing images of the good life that emerge from the sense of loose solidarity in the political” (Berlant 2012, p.261-2).

How does Berlant see this working? What happens in Berlant's critique at this point is that optimism becomes not an affect but an emotion—what we've already seen Flatley "contrast to affects" in distinguishing emotions as those things that are both shareable in language, and which can change from person to person and in context. What Berlant does is situate her:

optimism in the noise of the *transitional moment*, in the way it slows down our gaze at performatively democratic activity by linking it to a context where solidarity comes from the scavenging for survival that absorbs increasingly more people's lives.

2012, p.262, my emphasis

Optimism arrives in language as a sharable emotion but only *after* a *momentary* affect is found *slowing down* the process of *looking differently*, not at an anxiety in reasserting the current potential of "good life" fantasies, but looking at what is actually going on in people's lives. It is the "energy" of fantasy, or illusion, that "generates this sustaining commitment to the work of undoing a world while making one [...] to distort the present on behalf of what the present can become" (Ibid., p.263). That is, to put it another way, it is *not actually optimism* which is the starting point for a new imaginary of the political, but a much more momentary transition found by slowing down the processes of examining the scenes of desire to which one is already attached. And this momentary affect that can bind individuals and collectives to the political is what Milner found eighty years before, through slowing down perception to a wide attention: the astonishment with living found in everyday practices, a momentary feeling that is an "ordinary affect" which "works not through 'meanings' per se, but rather in the way they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas and social worldings of all kinds" (Stewart 2007, p.3). Or, as Ahmed puts it "when I think of what makes happiness 'happy' I think of moments. Moments of happiness create texture, shared impressions: a sense of lightness in possibility. Just think of those moments where you are brought to life by the absurdity of being reminded of something, where a sideways glance can be enough to create a feeling that ripples through you" (2010, p.219).

Milner's method, then, is one that takes seriously "questions like 'How do I feel?' and 'How does capitalism feel?' as starting points for something that might

be a theory but could also be a description, an investigation, or a process” (Cvetkovich 2012, p.4-5). It offers a process of experimentation in living affectively together in a scene that is a recognition of true feelings. It is *political* without a pre-defined purpose, an embodied politics of affect where the ability to tolerate the gap between inner imaginative ideal and outer external reality, and to go on living, is the essential generative energy of a private life that can then be shared through art, craft and other utopias of habit, in reimagining what the world might look like outside of capitalist imagery. By revisiting Milner’s resistances to the “therapeutic emotional style” that was taking shape, we can also advance attention to our bodily affective practices in the making of a new politics. As Milner implores at the end of *An Experiment*, “why not teach us to understand our feelings better, to know what we really want, so that we would be less at the mercy of unscrupulous exploiters who like to rush us into what suits them?” (1937, p.220).

Milner was hopeful that we could still imagine ways of living in Western societies that lay outside pre-defined capitalist forms of sociality. Central to the imaginative power of her method and its reimagining of the scene of the political was the production of writing itself. It is not only the content of her work, or her thoughts, but the active form of production, that, as Cvetkovich says of certain forms of writing, seeks “to circumvent the conscious mind in order to generate material from the places of feeling, including the body” (2012, p.77) and that are central to the affective project of reimagining the political. Milner’s writing exemplifies such a form.

3.5 On writing as means of self-making

how curious this process of writing is.

Milner 1937, p.159

Or as Cvetkovich says: “What is going on when you can’t write?” (2012, p.19). For Cvetkovich, who turned to the writing of memoir as a form of therapy and as an aid to her academic work, the field of creativity, when considered in relation to blockage “can be thought of as a form of movement, movement that manoeuvres the mind inside or around an impasse” (Ibid., p.21). Academic work on emotions is

particularly implicated in the crafting of these “new forms of writing and knowledge that come from affective experience, ordinary life” (Ibid., p.23). It is not easy work. As Stewart says of her book *Ordinary Affects*: “The writing has been a continuous, often maddening, effort to approach the intensities of the ordinary through a close ethnographic attention to pressure points and forms of attention and attachment” (2007, p.5). But the motivation remains, as Cvetkovich summarises, “a desire to develop forms of scholarship and writing that offer alternatives to critique and new ways to describe feelings—or the intersections of mind and body that encompass not just more cognitive forms of emotion but the embodied senses” (2012, p.24). This might be considered a break with representational theory within the humanities (e.g. Thrift 2007). What it does represent is a “commitment to creativity, or to pursuing one’s own ways of thinking and being” (Cvetkovich 2012, p.22).

It is this “commitment to creativity” that set Milner on the way to writing her self-studies. But while Milner’s preoccupation was how best education and then psychoanalysis could encourage creative living, the force of her work is that it is not only generative of a method in its *content* but also its *form*. Throughout her work, Milner establishes the physical process of writing as central to the discovery of her affective attachments. Her search began “from the conviction that unless I wrote about it I would lose my way” (1934, p.30). She was convinced that it was only in this form—“a direct personal account [...] could it have any value to others” (Ibid.). She proceeded like “the traveller who climbs a mountain” (Ibid., p.44) where “every effort to articulate desires, however incoherent, was a step forward” (Ibid., p.59). Writing came to embody the creative act of generating a life of one’s own; it became “a creative act which continually lit up new possibilities in what I had seen” (Ibid., p.44). The surprise of how writing contributed to her method did not cease to astonish her:

It was as if I were trying to catch something and the written word provided a net which for a moment entangled a shadowy form which was other than the meaning of the words. [...] Not only did I find that trying to describe my experienced enhanced the quality of it, but also this effort to describe had made me more observant of the small movements of the mind.

Ibid., p.71

That is, for Milner, the process of writing is a creative process of perception, or rather of an “idea of creativeness as not simply perceiving, but as deliberately relating ourselves to our perceiving” (1987, p.250). It is this deliberate relating of ourselves to our perceiving through wide attention that lifts Milner out of her impasses of blind thinking. The impasse already referenced by Cvetkovich when thinking about writing blockages is the same, arguably, as that which Berlant discusses in relation to Rosetta’s routinized rut, “a time of dithering adaptation from which someone or some situation cannot move forward” (2012, p.4-5). But every time Milner put her thoughts into words, “the same thing happened [...] the act of writing a thought was a plunge which at once took me into a different element” (1934, p.60). And it is again the affect of astonishment that mobilizes the possibility for organising the realisation of a *self*, one’s lived experience, differently; that acts as an embodied energy to create one’s own “pantheon of symbols” for living through this writing.

Writing here, as creative production, takes the form of resistance to the shaping of a self through surface thinking that accepts the affective attachments of normative ideologies. Writing is, in the psychoanalytic sense, a *transitional object* (Bollas 1991) between the original fusion of infant-mother, and the imaginative, illusive ideal of *her self as object in the world*. Milner’s texts are embodied affects—astonishments—not just in their content (writing about astonishment with living) but in their form as memoir, a “direct personal account” that has become embedded in the real world (“endowed with a bit of the ‘me’” (Milner 1950, p.154)). This creativity of the self as an object is Milner’s resistance to early Western neoliberalism’s mechanisms by which selves are created in the shape of consuming, limited identities. And they offer us a model of self-defining creativity that is image-led, and that takes into account the creative unconscious as the way out of our current political impasse: “In order to know it, you had to be continually trying to say things about it” (Milner 1937, p.235). What I believe Milner’s method, embodied in her writing, does, is make social critique possible: here and now. As Cvetkovich puts it, when alternatives to the current status quo found in concepts such as spirituality and utopia:

are conceived of not as transcendent but as available here and now (through practice) and, analogously, when social critique does not take the form of

looking for a deeper meaning of a 'real' politics that lies elsewhere, emotional expression doesn't have to be converted to something else called 'politics' to be meaningful.

2012, p.200

Milner's process of writing, where "words run freely in writing to give shape to fears and overcome it" (1934, p.148) is in kinship with Cvetkovich's vision of the embodied nature of a creative practice necessary to bring about a renewal of the political through the "emotional expression" found in her diaries and her narrative investigation of those diary entries. That is, Milner's investigative method of writing is *literally attached to her "bits" of writing*—her diary entries—which become "bits of me" and which takes the form of a habit of everyday practice that become political through its prioritisation of the affective attachment to practice itself, rather than outcomes, and which forges "new understandings of the political" (Cvetkovich 2012, p.202). For Cvetkovich, "creative practice—and scholarship as creative practice—involves not knowing, trusting to process and to a holistic intelligence that encompasses body, mind, and senses in order to see what happens, rather than having an answer to writing a dissertation, transforming depression, or planning a life" (Ibid.). She could have been easily describing Milner's method. It is also perhaps what Berlant is talking about when she says her theories "are thought by way of writing, and not just thought in writing" (Berlant and Cooke 2013, p.969).

For Illouz, however, there is a problematic here that requires exploration. If Milner was impelled to write as a means to understand the psychological problems of defining for oneself one's attachments to objects or scenes of desire, then is this a reification of psychoanalytic processes that became embedded in popular culture—of a privileged textuality that reinforces rather than challenges the ascendancy of the "emotional therapeutic style"? As Illouz argues, "it is impossible to analyse psychological culture without being struck by the overwhelming importance of textuality in that culture. Psychology is a cultural formation in which a mass of written texts come to organise and structure the practice and modes of speech and oral interactions" (2008, p.17).

Milner's work, from this point of view, could be seen as adopting the forms by which psychoanalysis spread most successfully into culture, and so failing to

provide any new method for countering “good life” fantasies and their attachments. For Illouz, this is because “the intertwining of textuality with emotional experience” (2007, p.33) is the very process by which “the language ideology of modernity” has come to “control our social and emotional environment” (Ibid., p.39). It is a fantasy of the power of language where “‘writing down’ an emotion ‘locks’ it in space in the sense that it creates a distance between the experience of the emotion(s) and the person’s awareness of that emotion” (Ibid., p.33). This is where the current “language ideology of modernity” becomes perhaps, in Berlant’s terms, “cruel” in that “the locking of emotions into written language gives rise to the idea of ‘pure emotion’ [...] inscribed in texts and apprehended as fixed entities, to be detached from the self, observed, manipulated, and controlled” (Ibid., p.33). And not (only) controlled by one’s self, of course, but by others, particularly those for whom the manipulation of emotions is to their financial and political advantage through advertising, the media, and organisational institutional power. The focus on textuality is promoted through cultural processes because it comes “to interfere with decisions that require us to use our ‘intuition’, ‘insight’, or snap judgment” (Illouz 2008, p.245).

But if this “reflexive act of giving names to emotions in order to manage them [and fixing them] in the deep self of their bearer” (Illouz 2007, p.33) gives them an ontology that continues to decentre the processes by which individual selves might come to define their own affective attachments, both in Milner’s time and in our own neoliberal present moment, then, even as Illouz herself admits, this “goes against the volatile, transient, and contextual nature of emotions” (Ibid.). Milner uses language to understand her social and emotional environment, but she does it in a way that actively, knowledgeably resists the language ideology of modernity. Rather, Milner’s work is contemporary for us because of the emphasis on finding new symbols emerging from one’s own astonishments. Rather than seeing her struggle to come to understand her own life and her destructive, negative emotions as needing to be converted to something more active in order to become politics, in Milner “such work attends to felt experience as not only already political but as transforming our understandings of what counts as political” (Cvetkovich 2012, p.110).

3.6 Conclusion

Finally, it is at the level of the breath where Milner finds the creative act at its most simple and radical. In discussing a patient, a young boy, and taking from his analysis the artist's use of her medium ("this pliable stuff that can be made to take the shape of one's phantasies") she argues that it "can include the stuff of sound and breath which becomes our speech" (1987, p.99). And so it is, not only for the artist, but also for the person who is intent on creating not a picture but a life. That is, a person does with breath, with mindfulness, with wide attention to the body as the process of resisting mass produced symbols, what "the poet does with words, when he uses them to give the organism an appetitive interest in external reality, when he makes the earth become charged with affective colouring, and glow with a strange emotional fire" (Ibid.).

The person who wishes to create a life for her self made up of her own symbols and affective attachments can do so, then, through finding not replacement fantasies for the "good life"; but by building habits of everyday practice, which includes writing, but in its fundamental form, is an attentiveness to nothing more than *expressing feeling in her own way*. This is Berlant's "affectsphere to counter the one that already exists" (2012, p.263) or Massumi's "alter-politics of affect" (2011) where being affectively "in the present of the political and the sensual is what matters and not any ends or preconditions" (Berlant 2012, p.260). It is this commitment to creativity through the expression of feeling as a political end in itself that is one of the hopes we have of how to "break the double-bind of cruel optimism, not re-entering the normative public sphere while seeking a way, nonetheless, to maintain its desire for the political" (Ibid., p.227). For Milner, it was in forms of creativity such as writing and painting, but ultimately *in feeling affectively as the fundamental scene of living*, where the processes for producing alternative fantasies that could be "good enough" for having lived would be generated. As she writes, "Yeats was right: forms of which man expresses his being alive are as powerful a force for change, though in a different way, as any deliberate attempt to get things done, because it is these which change men's hearts—particularly one's own heart" (1937, p.188).

Both *A Life of One's Own* and *An Experiment in Leisure* are contemporary to the emergence and establishment of these principles and of Illouz's conception of "language ideology" that found shape in an "emotional therapeutic narrative" by

which individuals were coming to define their selfhood. Milner's astonishing, powerful, instructive and *hopeful*, indeed *optimistic*, life and work, was to discover for herself a method of cancelling out normative subscriptions to a fantasy of a "good life" as constructed by those with vested interests in capitalism's requirement to continually get us to consume more, and to "have a 'personal life' in the form of a sense of self that lies outside the circuits of capital" (Cvetkovich 2012, p.17-18). Milner's method fits into what Berlant's idea of "new idioms for the political" (2012, p.262) might look like, and that make sense in the context of rapidly changing cultural ideas and practices of what a "good life" might be. The method she discovered can also be used by *us*. Just breathe.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

In the study of these texts, following Berlant, I have attempted to explore patterns of resistance within the social context of modernism “to derive what’s collective about specific modes of sensual activity toward and beyond survival” (2012, p.9). The aim has been to uncover normative processes, in the hope that such work can offer us a means to understand how we can begin (again?) to resist the worst exigencies of precarious living under neoliberalism. Such academic and writerly practices help us create “tools for transformation” (Cvetkovich 2012, p.2) in our everyday lives, which could form “a basis for the utopian project of building new worlds in response to both spiritual despair and political depression” (Ibid., p.191).

My method has been to attend to the explicitly affective nature of experiments, in both fiction and memoir of the interwar period, of relating to oneself as an object of study, and of the resistances to psychoanalytic therapeutic narratives in those experiments. For Norah James’s character Paula in *Sleeveless Errand*, what remains of apprehending the self as an object is the question with which I began the second chapter: “What model of the self is adequate to modern life?” For Paula, it is a model without introspection, a rejection of the “emotional style” of therapeutic narrative culture that blocks the path to happiness. Or as Paula puts it: “It had always puzzled her. This intangible something that had kept people from doing what they wanted” (James 1929, p.173).

Writing in *A Life* and *An Experiment*, Milner’s work offers us the ability to take up a position of resistance to both consumer ideals of the ‘good life’ as well as to the abuses and misunderstandings of psychoanalysis in the work of capitalist repetition. Her processes of writing, which I have shown to be central to Milner’s creativity and self-making, were not incidental but an essential element of Milner’s method for trusting her feelings; as creative writing has been for my own attempts at discovering how, as Michael Pye (2013) writes of Milner, “events and experiences add up to a life.” What Milner provides us with is not a template for new types of fantasies; new contents. She provides us with a process to create new forms of illusion that are our own through a recognition of psychic creativity as fundamental to our living. Forms of fantasy are determined by their modes of

attachment; by which affects, in which strengths, we become attached to the relation. For Milner, an astonishment with living cultivated through changing her perception, slowing it down, is the source of energy that allows an individual to detach / de-fuse from the destructive fantasies of Western consumer capitalism by returning to the scene of original creativity, not merely as an artistic output but creativity as “worlding—an intimate, compositional process of dwelling in spaces that bears, gestures, gestates, worlds” (Stewart 2011, p.455).

In both analyses, it all comes back to attachment. The relation of the attachment is bound to the object or scene through affect. A relation that is formed via affective attachment becomes cruel when what we are attached to, what becomes hoped for, is damaging for us, and the attachment itself becomes all-important, because, in a world without options, what we see as the only option is the predominant normative fantasy of the ‘good life’. When we are attached to this, even as it keeps us on the treadmill, and squeezes our relationships into fixed and dull patterns, driving us towards economic consumerism at the expense of healthy and spiritual engagements with a material world outside, we cannot let go of the fantasy. We cannot detach, because the fantasy is what we still hope for, even as we come to understand it is either impossible or toxic for us. The continuity of our attachment to this fantasy becomes not just something, not just anything, but *the* thing, the self’s very sense of what it means to keep living and look forward to being in the world. Paula in *Sleeveless Errand* detaches from these ‘good life’ fantasies but can find no replacement. There was no other option than suicide, not even the rut. But Milner and, I argue in this thesis, also Berlant and Cvetkovich, provide us with another option: to not just ‘have a life’ but to create one, for ourselves, not as objects of neoliberalism, but as co-creative subjects of a ‘self’ of our own.

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Novel Synopsis

April, 1934. Psychoanalyst Ben Hayes arrives in Paris for a sabbatical to finish his book on art and neurosis, and let emotions cool with his wife after an affair with a patient. He attends a seminar where the famed Portuguese professor of neurology, António Egas Moniz, reveals plans for surgery to cure ‘overemotional’ behaviours. Ben also meets there a young woman, Maríne Cizeau, who is looking for psychoanalysis.

Ben discovers he and Moniz are both attached to the Necker Hospital. Ben is asked to review Moniz’s plans by the chairman, who is sceptical of Moniz’s claims. Ben finds there’s no evidence and begins work on a report to halt Moniz. Ben meets Maríne again through friends, Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin. Maríne works at the Obelisk Press; she’s set to publish Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*. Maríne has developed her own method of editing, acting out scenes from the novels but then falling into a paralysis; but her publisher will no longer indulge her neurosis. Ben sees her as a central case study for his book. In their first session Maríne kisses him, ‘moved’ to play out a scene from a novel she’s editing. At a reading by the author Charlie Furlong, Ben watches as Maríne is whipped. Encouraged by Maríne’s behaviour, Ben introduces ideas on the use of touch in analysis into their sessions.

Ben submits his report on Moniz, who is refused permission to perform surgery, so he takes his plans to a rival institute. Literature and medicine then collide: Moniz is a poet, and Ben is shocked to find Maríne is editing Moniz’s work. Ben tries to persuade her to drop Moniz but she threatens to end analysis. Then Ben and Maríne are invited to Anaïs Nin’s country house to celebrate the completion of Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*. There, Maríne reveals she has another book by Moniz—a monograph on the surgery. Ben feels betrayed and betrays Maríne in return, refusing to step in as Miller attacks her editing methods. Maríne throws the manuscript, and herself, into a swimming pool as part of “plunging into Miller’s flow”. Ben takes her back to Paris and cares for her as she falls into neurosis.

Maríne's author, Charlie Furlong, disappointed with publishing failure, commits suicide. The Obelisk is raided and Maríne put in jail. She has been evicted from her lodgings, so stays with Ben. Her publisher takes away her responsibilities except for Moniz's poetry; she pins her hopes on it. Ben fears how Moniz's books will 'move' her and in a panic throws the monograph in the bath. Maríne discovers it is ruined and packs her bags. A tussle ends up in a sexual act, but at the last minute Ben runs out. She sees it as a betrayal—he is unwilling to cross a line he led her to transgress. She leaves.

Ben turns to the authorities at the Necker for help, but is cast out as his methods using touch in analysis come to light. While packing, he realises his study and diagnosis of Maríne's case has disappeared; she has used it to sign herself over to Moniz and his surgery, and Ben abandons her to her fate. He receives news that Moniz was stopped mid-procedure—but how far did Moniz go? Moniz flees to Portugal, while Ben returns to New York and his wife, and finally sees how Maríne was put at risk not by Moniz's methods, but by his own.

Obélisque

1

THE LETTER LAY on the welcome mat. I picked it up, stared at the New York post-mark. March 1st. Why did Americans insist on mixing up the right order of things? She'd posted it six weeks ago. And yet I had left for Paris six weeks before that! I recognised her hand, of course, the strong loops and steady yet brief horizontal bars over the accents on my new address. I slapped it into the palm of my other hand, irritated that the concierge had not left it downstairs with the rest of the post. To collect later, when this difficult day was over.

'Hello Benjamin,' she'd written. 'Running away again?'

Otto and Karel were waiting at the Café Zebra on rue Brevis. They were sitting at the long bar in the corner near large terracotta pots springing with palm fronds. Otto was looking troubled as usual, that resigned expression that made him look like a bullfrog. If he had only been taller, how much more his theories may have been heard. Karel was entertaining him, a broad, toothy smile hidden away behind that unkempt beard. They were both drinking coffee and *berechkova* in thimble-sized tumblers. I took a third stool and sat with them.

'Is it not a little early, gentlemen?' I shook hands with Otto, tired behind his glasses. 'It's not even nine o'clock.'

'Ah,' said Otto. 'You cannot come to the Zebra, it seems, without being bought,' he picked up the tumbler, 'I mean bribed, of course, into the resistance.' He nodded sideways. At a table in the back sat half-a-dozen men arguing over the German aggression in the Sudetenland. 'Listen,' he said.

'They are playing word games at the moment,' explained Karel quietly. 'The Czech government banned the German National Socialist Party last week, but of course that does nothing. This crazed Nazi Henlein creates the Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront which is the same thing but under a new name. And Hitler, of course, thinks this is wonderful.' Karel drank half his liqueur. 'A German homeland in my country? We don't go to Germany and piss in the street and say

“now this is Czech,” do we? But, ah!’ He picked up his coffee, looking me in the eye. ‘You have your little island, England.’

The men at the table stood and hollered toasts, smashing glasses together.

‘Perhaps you’d like something for your courage today?’ asked Karel, shaking his glass.

‘We’re not going to start a fight,’ I said, laughing uneasily. We were heading to one of the mind-cure events that had sprung up in Paris that year. ‘But we can’t give this professor a free platform. We must defend our science.’

‘*Your* science,’ said Karel, clapping his hands. ‘I am a sexologist now.’

Otto shook his head, said something in German I didn’t understand. A young man at the table glanced our way. That was how it was getting.

‘Otto thinks I am a double deserter,’ Karel laughed. ‘First we abandon Freud, and now I abandon you both. But I am coming! I want to see if this professor has read your latest letter.’

‘He will offer you a duel on rue Calais,’ said Otto, rather absent-mindedly.

‘With scalpels and not guns,’ added Karel. ‘Benjamin! Do not look so aghast.’

My mouth was dry. I thought of Faith, her letter. *Running away again?* No. Today, was that *running away*? The men talking politics pulled on their coats. It was mid-April, but Paris had not yet admitted spring. They were off to oppose their foes, and so were we. I nodded at Karel, who let out a satisfied grunt.

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘a small one, but then we must go, or we will miss his talk.’

Karel shouted at the barman. Otto was watching me over his glasses, and then simply shrugged.

We left the Zebra and made our way to the Hôtel Marrakech and registered for the symposium, organised by the Pelman Memory Training Company. I’d copied the details from an advert in *Le Figaro* some weeks earlier: ‘Provocative Debates on the Future of the Mind.’ We took coffees and wandered among the gazebos and banners that had transformed the foyer of the Marrakech into an arcade. Books piled up, as did attendees. There was a board announcing sessions on mental training and memory building, to sell their programme rather than further scientific understanding. At the top, his name. ‘Egas Moniz, Professor of Neurology’, enemy of all psychologies, not only psychoanalysis. But our science had become a particular *bête noire* for this ludicrous Portuguese Napoleon.

‘Oh, look, Benjamin, he’s at your hospital,’ said Karel.

I blinked and looked again. Karel was right. In the small print: the Necker Hospital. I turned, steadied myself. A bewildered guest stepped out of the hotel lift, unsure of what he’d walked into. I might have wondered myself. A salesman in a pinstripe suit caught my eye, waved a pamphlet at me. I went over.

‘Is it a battle?’ he asked.

‘Is what a battle?’

‘The efficient brain that made the savage a king makes the captain of industry today.’

A few tables to my right a young woman in a dark jacket leant over and picked up a book. She was wearing a white blouse under her jacket, a smart skirt and black stockings. She had short hair tucked under a cloche. I watched her read the back of the book and open to the first page, study it intensely.

‘So who am I?’ I asked the salesman, ‘the savage, the king, or the captain?’

He kept smiling.

‘Would you like to sign up? You only pay for the weekend, but inherit a lifelong network—our beginners’ session—the Berber Room! What matters most in life is *you!*’ he shouted as I walked off. I found Otto reading the same pamphlet: *Mind and Memory*. He looked up over his glasses.

‘Memory is the curse of being alive, Benjamin. It stops us being present. We must always make sense of the past, it seems, in our drive to control the future.’ He squinted, a sure sign he was building up to something. In seven years I’d learnt to interpret his looks with a kind of telepathy. The great Otto Rank. He was leaving for New York, permanently this time, and there was no reason not to believe him. The attacks from Freud had worn him out. Yet if it *were* permanent this time, he had not left me with instruction in how to carry on our project. Perhaps this was it. ‘We cannot detach ourselves from the past. We need to historicize.’

‘What do you think of their methods?’ I asked, looking at the pamphlet.

A bell went off. The first session, the keynote and the reason we had come, was about to begin.

‘Ours is the great challenge of the psychological era, Benjamin. Psychoanalysis has become perverted. A denial of feeling and of conscious decision-making in favour of unconscious drives. Our wills are denied and our

souls shrivelled. You and I,' he clutched the pamphlet to his chest and looked up, 'we desire that analysis give up on the quest for self-knowledge. It only makes the world a less feeling place. But man is *irrational!* The denial of his nature will only lead to his madness, and that *cannot* be abated with rationality, with these *tests*.' He waved the pamphlet at me. 'The pity, my friend, is that you will be excommunicated for what you practise. You and I will be forgotten until others in a more enlightened—or desperate—time come back to the principles underlying our work.'

'If this is a pep talk, Otto...'

'They will try to throw you out of Europe. Freud will see to it, if the Germans don't.'

I turned away. The final bell rang, and the foyer was emptying in fat convocation. I hurried us into the hall, and we found what seats we could. Within seconds two men walked onto the stage and stood behind a lectern. The crowd fell silent and he was introduced, the politician and professor, the most incongruous speaker that day, considering he had nothing to say about mental training except carefully-worded criticism. This was my first view of Moniz in the flesh. He was about sixty, his waist rounded like the trunk of a cedar and his suit cut to hide such things. He was in Paris for similar reasons to mine, here temporarily, to complete a piece of work. His hair was impeccably parted, oiled and flat. My first impressions were that he was a vain man, used to his public. He spoke English with a faint Latin accent, and before long he was talking with confidence on what he considered to be the worst failures of psychology.

'Or, I wish to talk not of the disasters of analysis,' he said, despite having done so for at least quarter of an hour, 'but of the advances *we* have made in biology. That is, of the discovery of the physical location of neuroses.'

Indeed, he was *that* type of doctor. A trend in austere times: a return to the past; the mind as mass. He offered nothing new. His attacks on psychoanalysis were much more an attempt to distract from his own fiascos. The hall was hot and I used my copy of *Mind and Memory*, one left on each seat, to fan the air as I watched Moniz present what he called his angiographs, imposing images of the brain magnified sixteen times. Pictures of tumours within the cortex, clarified and striated with purple dye.

‘Our incorrect thoughts become fixed in the nerve fibres,’ he explained, pointing to ‘diseased’ areas with a cane. I’d read this in his rebukes to my letters, both published in *Le Monde* and *Le Parisien*. Ah, yes, the discovery of the seat of neurosis. What rubbish. ‘Here, we can see them between the frontal lobes. Overemotional and unproductive behaviours we wish to put right in our patients are fixed here.’

After the presentation ended Moniz left the stage to applause and walked down the aisle between the seating. I got up and followed into the foyer. My heart was racing. I caught him between the emptying hall and revolving door and stood in his path. He seemed to be expecting me. I looked around for Otto and Karel but couldn’t see them. I apologised for keeping him and asked my question. He gave a perfectly polite answer, and in no way satisfying.

‘But you’re wrong,’ I said, among a small crowd attracted by our disagreement. ‘There’s no proof your pictures show evidence for neurotic behaviours.’

‘You are a doctor?’ he said playfully. He understood who I was. Doctor Benjamin Hayes, from the letters pages. ‘Then your ignorance of biological fact I cannot understand.’

He spoke not to me but to our crowd. He went to push past me. I stepped into him and smiled.

‘Your studies are on rats and corpses,’ I said. ‘Not people.’

He stopped and smiled. His teeth the white of orange blossom.

‘Yes, I understand,’ he began. If I thought he was to recant, I was wrong. ‘You have careers to protect. But your analysis veers too far from the biological basis. Psychiatry has lost itself in the forest of psychopathology. My angiographs show knots leading to improper behaviours. Our results fit. For our patients, not only our rats, of course.’

It drew laughter, sarcastic and bass.

‘The mind—’ I fought to be heard, ‘the mind does not work that way.’

‘But what if it does?’ asked a woman, standing to the side. She spoke at just that moment when both Moniz and I drew breath. It was the woman I’d seen earlier, studying the book.

‘Excuse me?’

‘What if it does work as the professor said?’ repeated the woman. ‘If neurosis were tangled knots?’

I glared at her, not knowing who she was or why she had interjected.

‘But the mind—’

‘I do not deal with the mind,’ said Moniz. ‘I work with the brain—something real.’

‘Yes,’ said the woman. ‘But are the two the same thing, Professor?’

He looked at her, as surprised as I.

‘Every study you have read on the subject of that relationship—if you have read any, *mademoiselle*—is either merely spiritual, or out of date,’ he said crisply. He was applauded as a showman. I looked at the young woman, but she was not floored by his attack. She seemed to be assessing Moniz, and, I felt, not unpleasantly, myself. Moniz was rubbing the fingers of one hand with the palm of the other, and before I had the chance to speak he held up a hand and the crowd quietened.

‘We have today made preparations for our first subjects.’

‘Subjects for what?’ I asked. ‘What do you plan to do?’

A bell rang. People did not move.

‘Yes, what do you plan to do?’ asked the woman, parroting me.

‘We are medical men, you and I,’ he said. ‘Are we not obliged to aid their suffering?’

‘You mean... those pictures,’ I waved a hand at the conference hall, ‘to guide you in—’

‘Cutting the knots out?’ the young woman finished my thought. ‘Is that what you mean to do?’

‘To cure the anxiety of man—’ he began loudly.

‘But if you are wrong, will you be able to repair them?’ the woman interrupted.

He went to speak, but pain or some thought crossed his face, and he stopped. He looked at both of us with a pitying glare, and with a deft nod exited the conference. I followed him with my eyes as the crowd dissolved. I looked around for the young woman, but she had disappeared too. Then someone took hold of my arm. Karel was pulling me away to a quiet corner.

‘You defend analysis so violently, Benjamin, yet analysis does not even recognise your ideas. It throws you out for following Otto and not Sigmund. Why do you defend it when it attacks you?’

I shrugged angrily. Otto came over, redoing his tie.

‘Well, Benjamin.’

‘Your disciple is always fighting, Otto,’ said Karel, looking at me. ‘Do you think this is good?’

‘Well,’ repeated Otto. He pushed his spectacles up his nose, rather ostentatiously. ‘For our ideas to flourish, it is not the enemies of psychoanalysis we must oppose, but the enemies within.’

‘It isn’t analysis that has it wrong.’ I was as angry with him as with Moniz. ‘Just Freud’s rigidity. I can put aside internal differences against a common enemy. Otto, did you hear him? He plans to—’

‘The enemy is already within,’ Otto interrupted. ‘We do not need to incorporate the other to be confronted with the battle that lies ahead of us.’

I turned away. Moniz’s words, the *front* of that young woman, were all I could think of.

‘Otto,’ said Karel, shaking his head. ‘You really must relax!’

Otto left to go and pack, while Karel went to arrange dinner. I had one more thing to do. In the margins of my diary next to the entry for the day I’d scribbled ‘for MM?’—*McCall’s* magazine—who wanted an article and would pay a hundred dollars. The move to Paris had been expensive. ‘As long as it is provocative,’ my editor Freddy Smit cabled back from New York, ‘I’ve heard what that mind-cur lot are like.’ Freddy didn’t make grammatical mistakes.

So twenty minutes later I found myself in the Berber Room looking for a seat with perhaps a hundred other ‘beginners’ seeking a short cut to self-awareness. On the stage was the gentleman who had introduced Moniz, our master of ceremonies, a short man with wild blond hair. He wore a blue bow tie and a grey three-piece with the gold chain of a pocket watch looping over his stomach. His eyes were piercing, trained for the impression of looking into one’s soul, no doubt. I moved to the end of a row to take up a seat when I saw the young woman from earlier sitting in the row in front. She had taken off her cloche and was brushing her black hair with her fingers, pulling it away from her face. I moved along and sat down next to her and smiled.

‘That seat’s taken,’ she said, barely looking.

Uncommonly irritated, I apologised, shifted one seat further away.

‘That was courageous of you. Earlier, in the foyer.’

I registered her size, shape, smell. The package was pleasant, but she was not classically pretty. She had a sharp nose and thin lips. She looked nothing like my Faith, even if there was something in their manner they shared. Her perfume was citrus and she had an air of asperity that warned me off. Thank God.

‘Was it?’ she asked. ‘What part?’

‘Confronting the professor.’

‘It’s the same as you were doing.’

I sensed someone coming along the row and moved out of the way as a young man, apologising for being late, dropped into the seat between us. He had brown eyes and a tan and thick blond hair curling into his eyes. He was twenty years younger than I. He nodded a brief hello and tapped the young woman on the leg and pointed forward.

‘Look, *Maríne*, he’s about to start. Prepare to be revolutionised!’

Maríne. She didn’t have a French accent—she was as English as I was.

Chatter around the Berber Room came to a stop. Our host introduced himself as Joseph Williams from the London headquarters, threw his arms out wide, and began his guide to ‘the Science of Self Realisation’. Soon into his talk he left the lectern and wandered among the rows, sharing his wisdom as he did so.

‘Which of you feels they have undeveloped talents? Perhaps smile, nod—yes, you sir—cannot make decisions?—many of you are living below your potential—well,’ and then he raised his own hand as if he were the first sinner at the gates of Saint Peter, ‘for are we not *all* failing to reach our potential every day? Don’t we *all* have more we could achieve?’

Two young men at the end of the rows began handing out pencils.

‘Well, what’s this for?’ said *Maríne*’s companion, studying his.

Maríne said simply, ‘Writing, Charles.’

‘We’re all recorders of our inner lives now,’ said Charles to no one in particular. On the platform the speaker Joseph Williams drew back a curtain to reveal a poster.

‘Before we begin with the crucial part of your journey, it is most important you understand,’ he said, pointing at the poster, and read out a manifesto dealing

with *objects in life* and a *path to discover how to be and become a person*. I noted the epithets for my article. He tapped on the poster as if he were leading a rendition of a song from the trenches, songs I knew from men I'd treated in London at St Thomas's when just qualified. For some reason I could not help but mouth along to his words: *We are more apt to fall short of our life's purpose not because of the many gaps in our knowledge, but because we are not faithful to what we know. PELMANISM*, he sang with emphasis on every second syllable, *cures mind-wandering and concentration will become a habit. PELMANISM*, he repeated, *is the science of right thinking, to use the powers that you know about, and to discover hidden, unsuspected powers. The only difference*, he chorused twice, *between success and failure is a question of efficiency.*

'So what are your unsuspected powers, sir?' the young man, Charles, whispered to me.

'Mind reader, perhaps,' I whispered back. 'And you?'

'I'm a bird man,' he said. I thought of those freaks of nature that travelled with circuses. Women covered in hair and men in feathers.

'Will you be flying away?'

'Oh, I can't fly,' said Charles. 'You see, I'm a bird without wings.'

Maríne looked wearily at both of us.

'Charlie, this gentleman doesn't want to hear about your strange caprices.'

'But I—' I began, before Charles interrupted me, whimpering.

'Maríne, he's a mind reader. He would have known anyway.'

She looked across Charles. There was a strange accusation in her eyes.

'Are you?'

'Of course not. I'm an analyst.'

'A *psychoanalyst*?' asked Charles. He put a hand on her knee. 'You just get luckier all the time, don't you?' She looked away swiftly. 'Maríne is quite desperate to meet you, I'd expect, Doctor...'

'Hayes. Benjamin.' Maríne kept her face turned away. Just then small squares of paper were passed along and instructions given to write down what we considered the object of our lives. I tucked the square into the back of my notebook and opened to a page and sat staring at it while Charles began scribbling. After a moment he showed what he'd written to Maríne.

Joseph Williams, at the end of our row, was still proclaiming.

‘—you are losing ground all the time. You are drifting, my friends, *drifting*. Your growth, both mental and moral, is retarded. You have a brain capable of wonderful things. But what if you are neglecting that machine? What if it is not properly oiled?’

‘Now he’s talking,’ said Charles. ‘And what oils your wheels?’

‘...if you are devoid of a crystal-clear purpose you are not getting the best out of yourself...’

‘And if you *are* crystal clear?’ said Maríne to neither of us. ‘What are the consequences?’

A woman in front hushed us. When I looked back at Maríne to answer her, she turned away.

The room was ordered into groups, a clamour of scraping chairs and nervous introductions. We arranged ourselves into a three. Charles turned his own notepad upside down and shook its pages.

‘I’ve always had an object in life, but now it’s an obligation I’m rather disgusted by it. Beauty, that’s what I’m aiming for. Words that might mean something. What do you think, Mr Hayes? Should we know our purpose?’

‘It can do more harm than good.’

‘You see, Maríne? But what’s it got to do with training the mind, these *objectives*?’ He snorted and turned to me. ‘Ah, Maríne here is *very* focused. But what about you, Mr Hayes. Why are *you* here?’

‘Yes, what about you?’ Maríne added. ‘Will you share your purpose?’

‘Of course,’ I said, but I was surprised by Joseph Williams shouting right over our heads.

‘This is the soul of Pelmanism! In *every* case it will be the *feeling* you’ve unearthed that’s the motive-power.’ He looked down at us as if it were we three alone whom he was speaking to—and had disappointed him—then he was heading back to his lectern. ‘The desire—*desire!*—that’s truly effective is no simple willpower. It is the emotional drive that will see your purpose fulfilled.’

‘“The soul which has no fixed purpose in life is lost; to be everywhere is to be nowhere.” Montaigne, I think,’ said Charles.

‘The soul hasn’t a feeling for purpose,’ said Maríne. I perked up; it was a strange, truthful answer.

‘What have you put down?’ I asked her. ‘Is that it, what you just said?’

If she was desperate to meet me, she gave no such clue. She held out her square of paper quite offhandedly, making it difficult to read. Charles laughed. Before I could think I felt a sharp pain rise up through me, from my feet. It was as if I'd walked barefoot across a beach and trodden on a shell. The word, which had floated out of focus, became sharp again. *Unexpurgated*. Meaning what?

'Is that a publisher's term?' I asked.

'Do words belong to a profession?' she replied.

'Oh, certainly,' said Charles, 'to lawyers, mainly.'

Maríne ignored him.

'Of course, in *yours* they do, don't they? You've a whole new vocabulary of invention.'

'Doesn't it mean complete?' I deflected. 'With nothing taken out?'

'It does,' said Charles. 'But Maríne, do you mean to uncensor my soul, or just my book?'

The room began to arrange its chairs into lines, and Joseph Williams was pronouncing, '...energy's first demands came from the human body...'

'Maríne's a funny one,' Charles said, leaning into me. I felt his weight at my shoulder, a friendly camaraderie. She, however, was staring ahead into space where neither her companion nor I were of much importance. Charles dropped to a whisper. 'Everyone edits the stuffing out of us, but Maríne saves us from all that. The others cut our words to pieces, but she puts them all back in.'

I saw neither of them again that day. The session came to a close with some principles on how we were to change our lives, beginning with, as Joseph Williams instructed, which seminars we should attend next. Maríne hurried off. Charles made polite conversation to the fact we were both now members in the cult of Pelmanism, and went after her. As I looked around later, I imagined they were lunching in one of the cafés drinking Ricard and sniping at each other in their fractious, niggling but productive dynamic. I endured a lecture from the Englishman Benson, who presented results from using the Pelman System to improve the efficiency of eighty-four workers in a Lancashire textiles factory. The half of my mind given over to the mind-cure movement was quite full of revulsion. I took notes, found myself thinking of what authors she worked with and how they, as many had, may have misused psychoanalysis by turning it into

a popular Freudianism, selecting the bits that suited their plots and depositing the rest. When the symposium was over I ignored a final attempt of the salesman to get a signature for his weekend course. I waved him away with my clutch of leaflets and, waiting a moment longer, and then giving up on seeing them again, went to catch up with Karel and Otto. I walked via my office to collect the package I'd wrapped earlier and went to Restaurant L'Escalier, which served Otto's favourite Puy lentil soup, and found them bickering. Another reason Otto was leaving: we'd been in each other's pockets too long.

Over soup I gave Otto his leaving present, a sculpture I'd had made especially by an artist with a studio out at Pont-de-Flandre. It was too heavy a gift for someone about to cross the Atlantic. His bags were already gone to the port. He twisted it around, studying it from all angles.

'It is a fine piece of work,' said Otto, and then placed the sculpture by his wine. 'Thank you, I shall put it pride of place on my consulting desk.'

'Are you still going to consult?' asked Karel. 'I thought you were going to write your memoirs and chase skirt?'

'It's *your* hand,' I said, pointing at the sculpture.

'I do not chase skirt,' Otto replied. 'As for my memoirs...' he looked at the sculpture. It was a fine piece, I thought, Otto's left hand, his index finger stretched out just a little, as if subtly making a point. 'You have immortalized me, Benjamin. You believe my soul is now captured in that figure, and not my work?'

I took a long sip of wine.

'People will be curious,' said Karel, 'you cannot leave your story unwritten?'

'Our story is not finished yet.' Otto hiccupped, and dabbed at his lips with his napkin, took a drink of water, dabbed them again. He turned back to Karel, who had his napkin tucked into the collar of his shirt and was eating heartily, dipping large chunks of bread into the soup, and hoisting them into his mouth. 'Do not forget, Karel, as you are embarking upon research into the sexual realm, that intellectual curiosity causes the deepest doubt to our soul's existence.' Otto looked at my soup. 'Are you not eating, Benjamin?'

'Today, it has curdled his stomach,' said Karel. 'You fight too much, Benjamin. Or did you find the young lady and she rebuffed you?'

He sat there beaming his messy smile.

‘I was researching for an article.’

‘Oh, come on... a young woman throws herself on your mercy in the middle of a fight, and you hanging around all day to *write an article*.’

‘I have quite enough—’ I toyed with the idea of telling them about Faith’s letter, but thought better of it.

‘Ah! We are only jealous,’ laughed Karel. ‘With your good looks, not going grey like poor Otto.’

‘You fear death,’ said Otto, slapping his napkin on the table. He pushed his hair back from his crown. ‘It is a sign of wisdom.’ Then Otto turned to me. ‘We are all cursed now, Benjamin. Perhaps we will come out of it on the other side.’

‘Of death?’ I asked.

‘Haha,’ he laughed, but there was not much mirth in it. ‘Psychoanalysis. Every human invention carries the seed of its own destruction. Marx said this. There is no reason to believe psychoanalysis is any different.’

‘It will destroy itself?’

‘All ideologies are destructive.’ He looked at my soup. ‘If you are not going to eat that...?’

A brandy and a Monte Cristo and that would be the last time I’d see Otto for a year, sending him off with the model of his hand tucked uncomfortably under his arm, and with no more epithets. The controversial Otto Rank, first son of Freudian analysis yet excommunicated by the father for his patricidal theories. I’d read *The Trauma of Birth* when it came out, and everything of Freud’s after seemed brittle and false. I followed Otto from London to New York, to Faith, and then back to Paris. Now, at the third turning, our own separation.

It was past midnight when I reached my apartment, but I was unable to sleep. I made notes for my *McCall’s* article on this ‘science of right thinking’ and its ‘mental laws’ that could make the mind efficient through priority lists, mathematical exercises and the properly formatted word test. As long as one knew what one’s purpose in life was to begin with. I sensed the reasons for Professor Moniz’s invite. His angiographs and their programme held the same basic view of the brain: that it is governed by rigid regulation; that its functions are fixed into place. They differed only in what to do about it. I saw Moniz standing on the platform and pointing a cane at his pictures. Crenellated visions

of a world unknown. Then I thought of the young woman, Maríne. *What if you are crystal clear?* My mind itched and there seemed no way to scratch it. I got up and stepped out onto the small balcony that looked over the Seine, the night succulent in its smells, blanketing. Looking out at Paris and its mesmerising lights, thinking of Faith and the lights of Brooklyn we could see from our apartment. *Running away again, Benjamin?* I folded the letter and put it in the pocket of my bathrobe. *Not running away, but running to.* I'd made that clear before I left.

I dreamt that night of an old man who took off his hat and revealed himself as having Professor Moniz's face but Joseph Williams' wild hair, who then chased me through place Saint-André des Arts with an amber-headed walking stick, until I had my back to the river and nowhere to go except to jump into the water. I woke in the middle of the night in a sweat, stark and attacked.

2

My Dearest Faith—

I scrunched up the paper and threw it into the wastepaper bin by the side of my desk, which was accumulating white balls like a billiards table. Each time I thought of Faith some cold possession took me, as if my skin had thickened and I had only the blunt knife of intellect to cut through the fat. *It is not your intellectual ambitions you need to nurture, Ben, it is your emotional life that needs attention, yes, yes, but how* did one do that when caulked in anxiety about one's current project, one's future? My book had stalled for the past year, and I had found no way in New York to unstick my writing. I leant back in my chair, looked out the window of my office onto the gravel courtyard. The Necker Hospital, or L'Hôpital Necker - Enfants Malades, as it is still properly known, previously two separate hospitals for adult and children that merged after the war, was my institution in Paris. I worked in the department of François Debuchy, a cheery and studious Parisian. The Necker prided itself on its progressive nature; it had established a separate ward for analytic practice in 1919. It had kept meticulous case notes in both French and English. Through a frighteningly straightforward communication between New York and Paris, I'd arranged to work in François' department for six months—my French was rusty, but many of its patients were still expatriates, hanging on for the good times to return. Otto had been my proxy, signing papers. The arrangement would allow me to dig in the hospital's archives. *Yes, Faith, my book!* A study of the creative artist, building on Otto's work exploring emotional artistry and its bedfellowship with neurosis. I knew Freud and his *Männerbund* would repudiate any new work that used Otto as a starting point. *But I believe in it, Faith.* I searched the Necker archives for material. In return I treated a few of the hospital's English-speaking cases and took a small stipend.

Faith was of course another analyst—where the trouble started. Her speciality was a feminine psychology. I persuaded Faith from having any

involvement with the pedants at the New York Society, which is more than I could do for myself. A man moves towards his forties with the swiftness that mortality hurries along, past the hillocks of mid-life that once, from youth, seemed like far off mountains. A name on notepaper, a board position, an educational role, things a man of thirty-seven could not turn down. Yet seven years of their ever-increasing American dogmatism was more than I could deal with.

Running away? A holiday, my love!

When we met she wore a long red dress with a slit up the one leg to just above her knee. Her hair, the red of bound books, was turned up into not so much a bun as a turret, and kept in place with a silver pin that could have picked the lock to the Bank of England. Otto warned me. ‘She is a Cancerian, Ben. Her water runs much deeper than she allows you to put your feet in. Don’t be fooled.’

Faith, how can I return to you without having achieved something worthy—

Faith was not the fooling type. She was playful, though. We would lie in bed and imagine we were abducted in one of Wells’ alien space crafts. We used whatever was around to construct our flight through the galaxy. The empty bottle of Bathtub became the rocket ship of our abductors, the ice tongs their implements of torture. The plates from which we’d eaten a late night snack of bagels and gefilte fish from the Jewish bakery at the bottom of the block became our sun and their distant star, a weaker light at the centre of an alien galaxy. We flew past the rings of Saturn and out beyond the last signpost of life, that newfound shadow Pluto, great and stern receiver of souls leaving this universe. Were they kindly, our abductors? Were they probing? Did they extract our souls? This always made Faith wriggle with a delicious discomfort. These questions split us down the middle, and I betrayed a dislike for them. Faith would become excited, roll away and lie on her elbow and contemplate the problem, the space between us as wide as Orion’s Belt. Although I *could* look at her for longer, the way her breasts still held against the gravity of this pitiful planet. For me the joy was in being abducted together by these creatures with their tentacles and two mouths, which were every bit as composite and imaginable as our fears, blended in the same way. But at the climax, she knew where the play ended. I wanted to stay lost in the story. When we returned to Earth, it took me longer to adjust.

‘Perhaps they did more experiments on you,’ she would say.

Faith, my greatest experiment—

And with that aberration of love lettering consigned to the bin, I put away my pen and paper and went to see François. I sat on a bench along the corridor from his office and read the morning paper, waiting patiently as he arrived. He greeted me, and he was right: it *was* a fine morning. I followed him in. He turned to face me, arms folded.

‘You do not need to tell me,’ he said first. He raised an eyebrow, pleased to have caught me off guard. ‘News travels very fast. We have all been reading your letters with great pride, Ben. If you ask me, this Professor Moniz is a,’ his voice dropped a level, ‘how you say, cracked pot?’

I laughed, but only mildly.

‘He has an annual position. He comes for a week or a month and walks around as if he is King Louis with his ivory cane.’ François threw open his arms. ‘Always some great plan of action he brings. You are defending us proudly!’ The smile left his face. ‘He is powerful. We are a smaller department. Oh, I’m not warning you. How you say...?’

‘Advising?’

He smiled.

‘François, can you ask Renaud that I see him?’ Benoit Renaud was chair of the hospital’s board. ‘I want to discuss what this man is planning to do.’

François sat behind his desk. He pulled out a piece of paper and began writing. I did not suppose that there was any rush, and yet an hour later he came to my office. He glanced at the wastepaper bin.

‘Composing, Benjamin?’ he said, pleased with himself but also rather white.

‘Thoughts,’ I said, ‘merely ideas for my book, they are not coming smoothly this morning.’

‘Ah, thoughts,’ said François, a formality in his voice, a timbre of anxiety. I stood and leant on the corner of my desk. ‘Yes, I have arranged the summons. You will see Renaud now.’

‘Now?’

‘I am speaking English, yes?’

Then François was laughing, his duty discharged.

Renaud and Moniz were waiting for me in the hospital’s presentation theatre in the basement of the Necker, where students took their lectures on anatomy and

surgical procedure. The air was cold, metallic. Renaud was sandy haired and half-Flemish, florid and piggish. He'd agreed to my secondment to his hospital, and we had exchanged pleasantries when I arrived, but other than that left me to my work. Moniz was waiting, faultlessly dressed, although I could see he wore a toupee. He did not look too willing. *Two to tango, Professor.*

'I believe you pursued Professor Moniz with a question at this... *thing*,' said Renaud. His words echoed around the theatre.

'I was hardly pursuing.'

'Well, it is your business what you were both doing there. But Professor Moniz is prepared to answer you more fully today. Aren't you, Egas?'

'Have I caused trouble, Benoit?' I asked. Renaud waved my protests away and raised his eyebrows at Moniz. Moniz did not respond. In that grey, lightless basement, the silence was stifling.

'I will show you how I plan to alleviate the pain of my patients, Doctor Hayes,' he said finally, 'and then you will be able to say what you think—'

'I'm quite able to say that now,' I interrupted.

Moniz sighed, and began again. 'We got off, I believe, on the wrong foot.'

'We stand on different ground.'

'Yet our host believes we must stand together to work under his roof.'

I turned to Renaud. 'Is that correct?'

'I cannot have two of my guests fighting in public.'

'Public debate is healthy for our democracy,' I said.

Renaud laughed unpleasantly. 'We are not in America now, Benjamin.'

I sucked my teeth, turned to Moniz.

'I'm sure we can rub along. Do you agree, Professor?'

'Rub along?' His face said: *No, I doubt we can rub along.*

I turned to Renaud, thinking of the archives. 'It's not impossible.'

'Good,' said Renaud. 'Egas, why don't you bring her out now?'

Moniz didn't move at first. Then I registered what Renaud had said. Bring *her* out? Moniz left us momentarily through an internal set of double doors, and returned wheeling a cage set on casters. It was not a bed with a woman laid out dead and cold, as I had feared (or worse, living) but a miserable looking creature sat back on its haunches, eyeing the room and fingering a small toy doll.

'An ape?' I asked. Its fur was tattered, dull and simian and waif.

Moniz put on a white theatre coat. The ape bared its teeth at us but I did not think it was out of fear. Only in the New York Zoo had I seen monkeys and apes, only in the Hollywood blockbusters of that lost Tarzan boy, but never so close. Her odour filled the theatre—thick and sour and matted, like hair that has not been washed. She made a high wheedling sound each time she breathed out.

‘This creature,’ began Moniz, peering between the bars, ‘is about to demonstrate something critical for the future of medicine. Do you see where we have cut into her head?’

I nearly laughed. I looked at the animal, her shaved skull, stray hairs growing back. There were four sutures at the front, two on either side. Moniz took a handful of fruit from a pocket and passed it to the creature. She groped and ate. From a shelf below the cage Moniz took a small rectangular machine with three coloured caps that lit up one after the other, green red blue. He knelt and slid the machine into the bottom of the cage, never turning from her as he did so. The machine was attached to a controller by a wire, which Moniz kept in his hand.

‘What’s her name?’ I asked.

‘Her name?’

We locked eyes for a moment, then he turned to the caged creature. ‘She has been set the task to copy the pattern of lights. If she does it correctly, she is rewarded. If she fails, she is shown the reward that she has lost. Now, watch.’

Moniz teased her forward. She dropped her toy. He pulled it from the cage. The monkey sat at the front with the machine and its three unlit caps in her lap. Moniz pressed a controller and red and blue lights flashed one after the other.

‘We took a portion of the left frontal lobe,’ he said, turning back to us, ‘but she was more than able to perform.’ The animal touched the red cap. It lit up. Then the blue. ‘See how well she does?’

‘She’s intelligent,’ I said.

‘She was an agitated creature,’ said Moniz.

‘But not now?’ asked Renaud.

‘That is it,’ said Moniz. ‘Not since the second operation.’

Moniz took a grape from one of his pockets and handed it to her through the bars of the cage. The monkey took it and pushed it into her mouth. Her teeth were flat and grinding. Moniz pulled away the machinery. From another pocket Moniz took a yellow cap and replaced the blue. ‘We have never taught her

yellow,' he explained. He slid the rectangle back into the cage. Red, green, yellow, yellow, green. The animal hesitated. She touched the red cap, then stopped. She moved backwards. 'This is new for her. It does not mean she has lost the ability to solve problems. But watch her response.'

Moniz took from a pocket a handful of grapes and showed them to her. In her eyes a mote of intelligence, enough to register the lost reward, but no rage. She patted around for her toy.

'Almost serene. It is her over-emotional response that has changed. Before, she would have shaken the bars. But since the white matter *between* frontal lobes was excavated in the second operation,' he placed a hand on top of the cage, 'she shrugs her shoulders and carries on.'

There was a pause in which the air settled around us.

'Won't you give her back her toy?' I asked him.

Moniz looked at me and then slid the machinery out and put it under the cage. He picked up the doll and pushed it through the bars. She took it, held it to her face.

'Her reasoning is unimpaired, but her agitation is gone. Now she is unaffected.'

I looked at him.

'Unaffected? You call this—'

'Thank you,' said Renaud, stepping between us. 'This has clarified things.'

Moniz slapped the top of the cage with the flat of his palm. The animal barely responded.

'Before, she was very anxious. Then I did this,' and he lifted a finger, and cut through the air. 'I could act more quickly in Lisbon, but the shape of the new is...' he hesitated. I could see what shape it took, this '*new*', and its outline was a hunched-over figure in a cage. He began again. 'There is a story of when Columbus reached the Indies. The natives said afterwards they didn't see his ships. Their minds could not register the shape of the new. That does not mean he did not arrive, Columbus and his men. Discoveries. Is that not what we became doctors for?'

I huffed, crossed my arms.

'I thought that was to aid their suffering?'

Renaud was sniffing. 'The board has been good at spotting ships, Egas.'

‘Is this what you plan to do once you have your angiographs?’ I asked.
‘With your patients?’

‘You do not think I care for my patients? You are wrong.’

‘Did she have something *wrong* with her?’ I asked, pointing to the animal.

‘Now,’ said Renaud, lifting his hands. ‘For now, Benjamin, you will agree, Egas has been most accommodating in providing an answer to your question?’

Moniz put out his arms.

‘There will be honours in this, if we act.’ Not for the last time I saw him listening to voices that were not in the same room. ‘We have changed how this creature behaves by addressing her emotions. An elegant act.’ He pulled himself up to face us. ‘No need for years of talking.’

‘The mind does not work—’ I began.

‘Imagine your wife in great emotional pain,’ said Moniz. I flinched, hoped he didn’t see.

‘That is appropriate?’ Renaud asked.

‘What treatment would you allow?’ Moniz carried on. ‘A simple operation, and so quick.’

‘A *what?*’ I shouted.

Moniz turned, threw out a hand as if presenting the case one more time.

‘Tell me,’ he said, and he turned to her, the tragic creature. ‘If I can do such things with this animal, would it not also be possible to relieve the anxiety of man by surgical means?’

Renaud and I left the theatre and began the walk back upstairs. I stumbled more than once, and Renaud put an arm out to steady me. We walked in silence. He led us up a flight of steps and along a corridor. I’d not been in that part of the hospital before. Above a set of doors hung a sign no longer legible. Renaud took off his glasses as we walked and wiped them on the tails of his whites.

‘I’ve read your letters,’ said Renaud. The suddenness of his voice shook me. He put his glasses back on and blinked, wetting the world back into view. ‘You oppose what Moniz is doing.’

‘I oppose his attacks on psychoanalysis. But this is...’

‘Yes, analysis is growing up. But then so is neurology. And what then is a little sibling rivalry?’

We carried on through the dim corridor to another set of doors. I had a strange sense of vertigo, as if all those corridors were stretching my distance from the world. We made our way to a ward with a dozen beds, the utility of illness and medication lining the walls. I couldn't help but shiver; Renaud nodded as if this were the correct response. On the beds were patients laid out like lumps of clotted cream, sheets the colour of bread and pillows like burrs of butter. The windows were green as if they opened out into water. A nurse spoke to Renaud in French. She considered *me* an appalling vision of some foreign dream, which I was, I realised, to her. We walked along, the nurse a step behind us.

'Who are they?'

'Psychotics. Schizophrenics. Some with dangerous pasts. Many on lithium. One or two we have tried with malarial injections, with varying success.' He looked over his glasses. 'There is nothing useful for your work here? It is a thin line, however, no? How do you say? A rainbow?'

'Spectrum? Between my work and this?'

'Now,' said Renaud, stopping. 'This is she.'

A young girl lay front down on her bed, a grey blanket thrown over her upper body. Her hair was syrup-like, blonde weeds, burnt at its ends. Her smell was sugary. There were pink spots on her cheek.

'The electric shower?' I asked. Renaud frowned.

'Her diagnosis was psychosis with mental inertia. The treatment so far has been galvanization and oxygen twice a day, and in between, rest, no visitors, wet packs. Also Cardiazol. It stops her fits. But we are moving away from those treatments. She has improved greatly.'

The nurse gave the girl a slap across the legs and folded the blanket over her to cover bruises, pulling it down so it covered her feet. I looked back along the ward's monotony of illness.

'It is painstaking labour,' said Renaud, reading my mind. 'We are never finished here.'

'What's her name? She can hardly be eighteen.'

'You see, I've been making myself familiar with her case. I do not see many patients.'

I studied her, searching for a reason why Renaud was sharing all this misery.

'You didn't want Moniz to show *me* that ape,' I said.

Renaud took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. The redness in his cheeks faded to white.

‘Egas has asked me for a patient. I would like to be sure that his procedure...’

‘You didn’t know... Not until this demonstration...’ and I waved a hand upwards.

‘Egas believes his procedure will be best for dealing with neurosis—’

‘It’ll be best for himself.’

‘—which is your field, no? The neurotic. We are hoping to move her to your department soon.’

We have just today made preparations for our first subjects. Moniz lied to the crowd!

‘Will you assess his methods for me, Benjamin? An independent view, while you are here?’

‘Independent? He won’t be fooled by that, Benoit.’

He shrugged, aware he had limited options.

‘I’m sure you will find it an interesting task.’

I looked at the girl.

‘You don’t trust him.’

Renaud wiped his glasses again.

‘It seems that cutting into the brain to remove emotions and behaviours...’

‘Is the idea of a cracked pot,’ I finished for him.

Renaud smiled. ‘So you will do this for me, Benjamin?’

Hemicrania, maigrain, mygrame, magryme... pain, aura, sickness, the same experience for two and a half thousand years. I had a liking for the medieval mygrim. That night it came on without warning. No. I’d felt it coming. An itchiness along my neck and back, my inability to respond to Faith’s letter, Otto leaving with bitterness and relief, being lost for words in the lobby of the Marrakech. That monkey, his suggestion: *imagine your wife....* I woke from a nightmare. I retrieved my dream diary, which I had left, optimistically, amongst the unpacked things, and wrote down what hadn’t dissolved. *Deep water. Dark water. Charles and Maríne on a raft and I in the sea, it was the Atlantic, stretching out my hand to grab the oar... And then neither deep nor dark but a stagnant pool, and then changed again, a fast river and in that river faces of*

people flushing away. Wet curls of red hair, a broken basket, a cry, a scream... For whatever good it does: dreams as a defence, maze-like. In the morning I managed to call the Necker and cancel my appointments without revealing too much. I went back to bed without a thought worth writing down. My journal for those next four days is blank: the frustration of an interrupted life. I had not suffered an attack since arriving in Paris, and I had not expected it, when it came, to strike me so forcefully. And yet those empty pages I consider now something of a blessing. To have a corner of the self that remains unknown is to have a part that is unreachable, secret. Safe.

I returned to the Necker five days later, and Renaud wasted no time putting me to work. In my office I found a collection of newspapers and medical journals from the hospital library. I learnt many things I did not know before firing off my letters to the various newspapers. He was indeed, as François had *advised* me, a powerful figure. A former Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs and a signatory at Versailles, back when he could hold something as delicate as a fountain pen. Many would see no reason why such a great man could not make this new leap. *But into blindness! Madness!* I discovered Moniz's association with the Necker followed Versailles, when Clemenceau offered him a position for services to the nation. There was no hospital in Europe after the war as advanced or experimental in neurology than the sanatorium of the Necker, whose children were, I read with a churning stomach, usually orphans and wards of the Republic. Moniz worked with Jean Sicard, then its leading neurosurgeon; together they developed a process of injecting opaque substances into the body to improve x-rays. Not quite his angiography then, but on the path. Then followed some opposition. Whether it was hospital politics or politics proper, with a military coup in Portugal, I could not make out. Either way, the outcome was to send Moniz back to Lisbon. Although on the discovery of his cerebral angiography he was quick to return and make the announcement in his friend Sicard's company, before the older man's death. I noted, with a small shameful smile, that Moniz had not been awarded the Nobel. His angiography was not a new invention, said the Committee. Important work, but it merely furthered the discoveries of others. It must have come as a great disappointment. And what about the fate of that animal? I wrote down what I'd learnt from his demonstration. Was it terror or disgust that made my notes feel limp? To toy

with the heads of men and women, to be the first to cure the anxiety of man by surgical means... *We are medical men, you and I.* I turned on the desk lamp. It had grown dark, the whole day passing and I had barely noticed. I read through the rest of the notes. I gleaned all I could from the news clippings. There was plenty of material on his angiographs, but nothing on what he was now aiming to do with them. I would need more. I pulled out some paper and set to work.

The night before the Pelman symposium I'd called my good friend in Paris, Anaïs Nin, to try and persuade her to come with me. I'd first met Anaïs in 1932 when she walked into New York's Chelsea Hotel on the arm of Otto, who had never been more pleased than that night, a socialite reception, with Anaïs the talk of the party in her snakeskin dress. Anaïs was married to an American financier, Hugh Guiler, but he did not figure in her artistic or analytic life. He was the long-suffering cuckold, avoiding truth by international travelling—his business was sugar. Anaïs' affair with Otto, which appeared to stretch out over years, would count only a few months if added up consecutively, and ended when she left New York that year. Otto became jealous of our friendship, and affronted when Anaïs and I joined forces to argue him round from his more controversial proposals. When I called Anaïs she was not at her town house. I tried their place at Louveciennes. I'd almost given up when she answered. I read her the advertisement to entice her.

'Benjamin, it does not sound like my thing at all,' she laughed.

'A hundred sham psychologists arguing over ideas from Sunday's newspaper? You'll love it.'

'You will need to make notes. I will be a chatterbox in your ear.'

I heard the clank and whirr of machinery.

'Are you in a war zone?'

'Henry's printing a pamphlet. We've converted the annexe, put in a hand press. It's a performance piece on *Hamlet*, you'll enjoy it. It has all the elements of the modern artist, anxiety, loneliness—'

'You're forgetting shame.'

'Yes, how *is* the book?'

'Better if you and Henry would let me interview you.'

'You know Henry does not have much time for psychoanalysis.'

Anaïs had met Henry Miller, a wild, degenerate and utterly charming American a few years before. They were literary confidantes and emotional confessors; other things.

‘He’s made the same mistake. He believes we’re all Freudians.’

‘He believes you’re after his soul.’

‘Hmm,’ I said, ‘I suppose he’s not wrong. Well, how about you bring me a copy of this “Hamlet” when you come to this event with me?’

I was reproached, but with tenderness and an invite to Henry’s grand exposé of the Shakespearean nightmare in a week’s time at Le Cheval Bleu.

And if my migraine had lasted a day longer, I would not have made it. But I did not want to miss the opportunity to see Henry read. Le Cheval Bleu was tucked away down an alley in the Latin Quarter. It was warm, Paris bubbled. The club was smoky and loud. Anaïs stood at the back. Henry sat on a stool beside her. He was not tall or attractive, thin and even scrawny. A microphone hung from the ceiling. A door to a back room was open, letting in a taste of light and a blush of cold air.

‘You came,’ said Anaïs. We kissed. ‘It will be good for you.’

‘Hello, Henry.’ I leant in to shake his hand. ‘You’ve an audience.’

Henry was in his usual cream shirt and linen jacket but had taken off his glasses, which had steamed up. He was squinting into the crowd. Anaïs put a hand on his shoulder.

‘You know Bogdán? Drove that awful yellow thing?’ she said.

‘He’s dead,’ said Henry. He shouted over a burst of laughter, ‘Poor crazy thief!’

‘We just found out,’ said Anaïs. ‘He left home Tuesday but never arrived at the Dôme.’

‘I’m very sorry to hear that,’ I said. ‘Were you close?’

Henry looked up at me, still squinting.

‘I’d kill myself if all I had was the Dôme.’

I noticed Anaïs was looking over my shoulder. I turned and watched a tall young man and a woman with angular features and short dark hair come over carrying drinks. As they moved into the circle of light I started with a little shock.

‘This is Charles,’ Anaïs said. ‘A friend of Henry’s.’

We shook hands. Charles flicked the tips of his blond hair from his eyes.

‘Yes, we’ve met,’ I said.

‘Really?’ said Anaïs. ‘Well, what an interesting world.’

‘Yes, terrifying,’ said Charles, smiling at me, ‘our mind reader, Anaïs. I told you about him.’

‘So you did. Yes, Benjamin, this was your mind-cure event?’ I nodded. ‘I did not put the two together, but of course Benjamin is famed for his powers of insight.’ She smiled conspiratorially at me, but I was only half paying attention. ‘And this is Maríne,’ said Anaïs, introducing us. ‘Well, I suppose she is our editor too. Have you met?’

I shook hands with Maríne. Her eyes in that dim light were glass. Seeing her sent a shiver through me as it did that first time.

‘Hello again,’ I said. ‘Are you well?’

‘Better than you’ve been,’ said Maríne.

‘Oh, I might have mentioned you may not make it,’ said Anaïs. ‘Your headache? But here you are!’

‘Yes,’ I said, irritated. ‘Here we are.’

Charles floated over to Henry. ‘Are you ready?’

‘In a minute, boy, in a minute,’ said Henry and he clutched his pamphlet and threw his arms out to gather us round. ‘How about this? Ruby cabled from Brooklyn last night, no good luck message, that bitch is *never* kind, says she was talking to her old man, and he’d seen some actor called, wait, Henry Miller playing *Hamlet* at the old Empire Theatre in 1899.’ He took a slug of his drink. ‘No, stop—now *this* is it. *This* is the thing. Says there was a review in *The Post* the day after, her old man remembers it, it said—now get this—he went on stage, that Henry Miller, even though he *just* got a telegram saying his father had died! Consider that! His father, now Bogdán. What kind of omens are they? Playing *Hamlet*! You think their ghosts are coming to spook me? What a night! All the sick Danes and sick Hungarians and sick Millers. More than one night can handle? Bring them all on! Keep that bastard Bogdán company in the ether rather than gump up *my* show.’

‘Incredible,’ said Charles, a hand on Henry’s shoulder. ‘I knew there were spirits here for you.’

‘He ain’t in hell yet. Too dumb sensible for Bogdán to go anywhere direct.’

I listened to their giddiness, boys working one another over. We moved to the side of the stage while Charles stood close to Henry with a ruffle of notes. With a puff of his cheeks Henry took hold of the microphone. A spotlight came on and he heralded the crowd to silence and, with hardly a note of introduction, began. The crowd drank him in. He loomed above them like an albatross. He was blasé; he knew every twist in his tale. Hamlet was the ghost of us all, his own haunting. That it was each of us, not the Prince, who was soulless and unwell. Hamlet was Henry and Henry was Hamlet, joined by their acts of love—for what else was writing? what else was revenge?—protected from the worst that war could do to them. ‘Even if they *goose step* right up to the gates of Paris,’ he shouted, ‘but they can’t! Purity has no doors.’ This was how to live, Henry proclaimed. ‘Let it burst out. Then there’s nothing they can take from you. No privacy! No intimate truths!’ Henry sat down, leant forward, jumped up, threw off his jacket and wiped his brow. I saw him speak rather than heard the words. They worked their way in, an infection, and I felt it come on too late. Slowly but with little I could do I slipped sideways, like an accumulation of silt that has reached its limit against the bank. I put out a hand but I did not know whom I held onto. Quietly and not to interrupt Henry’s flow I was carried into the back room.

Someone shut the door. I looked the other way. No smelling salts, just a little time. I focused on a shelf at eye level. A jug, papers, a novel by Katherine Porter. I looked around. Maríne was opposite.

I breathed deeply four or five times, smiled as best I could.

‘Thank you.’

‘It’s hot in there,’ she said. She sat back and lit a cigarette. She offered the pack to me, but then withdrew them. ‘No, you shouldn’t. I’ll get you some water,’ and she ran off on her toes to a washroom. I heard the search for a glass, its rinsing out, and the water slide from the tap. In the club a loud cheer went up, followed by clapping, and then Henry again, indistinct and raging. She handed me the glass and sat down. The water soaked my throat. She smiled, smoked.

‘You carried me in here?’

‘You’re not very heavy, are you? Charlie went back out.’

‘Don’t you want to—’ I looked at the door.

‘Charlie will repeat it all.’ She took a long drag on her cigarette. ‘Word for word.’

We sat listening to Henry, the turns in pitch and phrase of his performance.

‘Have you read it?’ I asked. ‘His pamphlet?’

‘I’ve read one or two things. His piece on Balzac for the *Nouvelle Revue française*. But is he good enough?’

‘Good enough for what?’

‘To carry a whole book. Henry’s more about the performance. He’ll publish it himself he says, if I reject it. But really he wants me to take it. He wants to be *recognised*.’ She took a drag on her cigarette, blew smoke at the ceiling. ‘Too concerned with his grandiose...’ she searched for a word, ‘still, we’ve agreed to look at it, this *boundary-crossing* work.’

I was slipping down into the seat, into her words. There was a warning in them. She crossed her legs, resting her left elbow in her right palm, framing her face.

‘You’re his editor too?’

She leant towards me.

‘He insists it will be *unpublishable*. Do you think he understands what that means?’

The door was flung open and a roar flooded over us, shouts and cheers and clapping.

‘Thank God that’s done,’ said Henry, bowling in. Charles and Anaïs followed. She came over.

‘Ben,’ she said, crouching. ‘I’m sorry I didn’t come straight away.’

I nodded, pulled myself up.

‘A hundred readers,’ shouted Henry. ‘If they’ve taste and discernment, what more can you ask for? Apart from their money?’ He winked at Charles. He jumped over to the Katherine Porter and took it by the spine, letting the pages out like a secret latch. ‘These books are dead,’ he said. He dropped it on the floor. ‘Phew. Did you see them lap it up? They wanted that bad, didn’t they, kiddo?’ Charles had a bottle in his hand and was pouring out drinks. ‘Break the boundaries!’ shouted Henry, taking a glass. ‘Send a deluge. Run amok!’

‘So what are you going to do with it, Henry?’ asked Marine.

‘Nothing! This,’ he was waving his pamphlet, ‘this is already finished.’

Henry placed his hands on my shoulders. He was dripping with sweat.

‘I’ve got you to thank for my confidence, Benno,’ Henry said. I looked at him, not understanding. He span around and away. Charles, Maríne and Anaïs had drinks. Charles approached me, Anaïs put out a hand.

‘Come on, Anaïs, the man needs a drink,’ said Charlie.

‘Yes, I think that would do me some good,’ I said.

Charles smiled with a spiteful sympathy as he poured a whiskey and then went and stood by Maríne. Henry clinked glasses with us all. The whiskey burnt my throat and my eyes went around in their sockets as if I’d been punched. Henry was ranting, swinging his arms as he half lurched, half danced around the room.

‘I nearly fell apart for a while writing it, but you talked me round. I’ve got the guts for it. Who says I ain’t? I can hold out, write what I please. Screw the censors. Screw the publishers. Screw them all!’

He faced Maríne as he shouted. Maríne stared back, calm, unmoving.

‘Just imagine it! These grotesques inside me, and to think I hadn’t written a line about them—only heroes and dove-like girls. That’s what they asked for, wasn’t it? Well, screw them—tonight proves them wrong. Bogdán, you there?! Miller, Hamlet? Are you tuning in? And you, Benjamin boy,’ and he crouched in front of me, an inch from my nose.

‘Henry!’ Anaïs called sharply.

‘You, Benno, you showed me this valuable thing. You couldn’t bear it.’

His eyes were cold blue and his lips hessian, his breath hot and whiskery. He stood and span and fell into Charles’s arms.

‘But Henry—’

‘A shattering realisation for me! To be absolutely responsible for my writing. Even by knocking you out!’ He kicked a heel backwards. ‘Shattering,’ he repeated, laughing.

‘Henry—’ I tried again, but the words would not come out.

The club emptied and Henry wrangled with the owner for his slice of the night’s profits. I went and waited in the alley and took some air. A small lamp, six foot of a circle of light. I opened a pack of Gitanes I’d found, felt someone at my shoulder. It was Maríne. I offered her a cigarette. We stood smoking.

‘So, did you get an answer to your question?’ I asked after a while.

Maríne closed her eyes, opened them again.

‘The other day, at the symposium you wanted to know what the consequences were of knowing your purpose in life. Did you get your answer?’

‘Oh yes. You know about cause and effect. You’re the analyst, after all.’

I began to respond, but she interrupted me and touched my arm.

‘You say you’re a psychoanalyst. Are you a *Freudian*?’

‘Mademoiselle Cizeau,’ I said, with a weary smile. ‘And would that matter?’

‘Doesn’t it matter to you?’

‘Oh a great deal. Yes, I am a Rankian.’ I looked up at the light, and the moths fluttering around it. ‘Doesn’t quite have the same ring to it, I admit. There would be no science without Sigmund—that’s not a slogan, by the way. Where is your friend?’

‘Charlie? Off saving someone’s soul, in his own way.’

‘A funny bird.’ Her face was the inverse of a smile. ‘Has he saved yours?’

She laughed. It pulled her cheeks tight, as if she had not laughed for a while. I saw her teeth, the red of her tongue, imagined the taste of her mouth, shook the thought away.

‘So are you looking for analysis?’

She took a drag on her cigarette and blew the smoke above our heads. From the club I could hear loud voices coming closer, and then three of the bar staff, a man and two women, bowled past us gossiping in French and away down the alley. We waited for them to turn the corner.

‘And what does it mean to be a Rankian?’

I laughed. ‘Where should we begin?’

‘You agree with theories of the ego. What about sexuality? Fantasy?’

‘Am I being interviewed, *mademoi*—’

‘You can call me *Marine*.’

‘But that’s not your real name?’

‘What is?’ she asked. ‘Real?’

‘You’re back onto the subject of fantasy? So I *am* being interviewed?’

She was tapping the fingers of one hand on the elbow of her opposite arm.

‘Most analysts I’ve spoken to aren’t interested.’

‘Why is that?’

She looked at me for a moment.

‘Do you try to fix people?’ she asked. ‘Because I don’t want to be fixed.’

‘Ah!’ and I smiled, put a hand on her arm. She looked at it, but didn’t move away. ‘No, Maríne. We may agree on much, it seems. Otto—Otto Rank?’ I waited, but she did not show any recognition, ‘Well, Otto and I, and many others, many more every month, believe that the quest for self-knowledge is destructive. It merely makes people doubt themselves more. You cannot understand the irrational with rational means. Freudian psychoanalysis is too prescriptive. It tries to make people fit to society’s norms. We believe there is no norm.’

‘So what do you try and do?’

‘We help people live creatively,’ I said, feeling my chest swell. My head went light, I gripped her arm to steady myself.

‘The cigarettes,’ I said. She wasn’t convinced. ‘Well. It often comes afterwards.’

‘After?’

‘A migraine. The faint, it comes after.’

‘Always?’

I closed my eyes, rubbed my face with my hands, gave her a smile.

‘You know, Maríne, I’m not really seeing private clients. Most want to build an analytic relationship, and I won’t be here more than six months—’

‘That will be enough.’ She looked very serious. ‘It’s a very specific issue.’

I thought of that one word she’d written down on the square of paper: *unexpurgated*. Her strange answer to the soul’s purpose, and what she thought of the inventive language of psychoanalysis.

‘I agree. We can work something out. Analysis goes on for far too long. It does no one any good, except the analyst, of course, and his bank account.’

‘And your publications,’ she said. I stared at her. ‘You’re writing a book. Anaïs told me.’

I took out my wallet and handed her a card. She tucked it into her jacket.

‘In two days. Eleven o’clock? The porters will direct you.’

There was a sudden softening to her face. Charlie came out with their coats and took Maríne by the elbow and with brief goodbyes led her away. Neither asked me a second time to share their taxi.

3

Two days later Maríne arrived at the Necker, exactly on time. She knocked and came in, and I gestured towards the seat she should take. My office was not large enough for a couch. Maríne sat down. She was wearing the same dark jacket and skirt, a uniform of purposefulness. She was holding a small clutch but did not wear gloves. She had already removed her cloche and held it with her bag. She filled my office with a perfume that I now recognised as hers. I moved from behind my desk and sat in the chair opposite. I'd placed a small clock on the shelf; I'd seen my patients belonging to the Necker in the treatment rooms, but this was a private consultation. The clock was tucked in between a volume of Nietzsche's *Morals* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir*—or rather, *The Red and the Black*, my French still not having improved much. I checked the time and smiled again. I was looking forward to what might happen. There was a fiery intelligence behind her brown eyes. They had large flecks of orangey-red around the iris, and she made me think of a tawny owl, the female of the pair, something of their stricken association with bad luck.

'We only have six months,' I smiled, inviting her to talk. 'Tell me what you'd like to discuss.'

She crossed her legs and leant forward. 'My purpose in life.'

'Which is...?'

'I *did* show you.'

'Your note? Yes. Unexpurgated? Perhaps you can explain what that means a little more.'

She sighed, as if I had let her down. I looked at the clock: *a minute!*

'I edit books,' she began. She leant further forward, perched on the edge of the chair, armed and prepared. 'There is not a problem with this.'

'Very well,' I said, amused.

'I edit in a way that is faithful to the content—to let everything stand.'

'Charles, your companion, mentioned you were a fine editor.'

She neither confirmed nor denied it.

‘You put it all back in,’ I continued.

‘Things never before written, banned books. Taboo. The censors cut them because—’ She stopped. I hummed, waved a hand, suggested I did not listen to the censors, she could go on. ‘But do you *understand*? These books aren’t just taboo. They say things *never said before*.’

‘I would suggest you read some of *our* theory. Most things have been said before.’

She looked at my shelves, and then at my desk. My manuscript: *Artistry and Neuroses*.

‘Oh, I imagine.’ I did not like the way she said it. ‘Charlie’s always waving some new journal around on this or that theory. His book’s saturated with them. So six months is long enough for you?’

‘Long enough for what?’

‘To write about my case?’

I laughed, somewhere between shrill and trapped. I glanced quickly at the loose pile of thoughts shaping itself into a book.

‘That’s why I’ve come to Paris, yes. I’m writing a book on artists and their relation to neurosis.’

‘And now?’ she asked. ‘What about with me?’

I crossed my arms. I coughed, took a moment.

‘I help reduce the gap between potential and achievement. You *were* seeking that, yes?’ She sat motionless, not even a nod. ‘Now, will you explain to me what you do as an editor?’

‘I do not have a problem with how I edit these books,’ she repeated. ‘But it has consequences. It leaves me... *Moved*, you could say.’

‘Moved? Moved to what?’

‘I am not interested in safe. These books are not *safe*. Neither should I be.’

‘The only thing I know so far is that you perhaps cannot tell fantasy from reality, and—’

‘I want to know if you can help me.’

I waited, feeling irritable. She took the cue.

‘It leaves me unable to work, my reactions. My publisher is worried about money. Always has been, but things are worse now. I’m his only editor. He

would get rid of me as well, but I know how to handle these books, the ones he really wants to publish. I make them what they are, Benjamin.'

'In how you edit?'

'And none of the authors trust him to do it,' she carried on. 'My publisher, Jack, says he cannot afford to lose me for a month after each book. It's been getting longer each time. I've been to see doctors, of course. Normal doctors, you know, medically qualified.'

I harrumphed around in my chair, thinking of the years at St Thomas's, the suffering, the drudgery.

'They prescribe me some drug. Tell me to get some air. All nonsense.'

'So you believe it is a psychological problem?'

She uncrossed her legs and sat back.

'I don't believe it's a problem. Can't you hypnotise me or something?'

'Well!' I laughed, shook my head. 'I don't want to have you under my *control*.' I put my hands on the arms of my chair. I wanted to walk around the office, get thoughts moving. Outside I could hear colleagues passing by my door, the clack of their heels on the stone.

'So, you are committed to editing books in whose reality you somehow lose something of yourself, which leaves you... immobile, unable to work. Is that it?'

'I am not neurotic.'

I scratched my head, smiled again, let out an audible sigh.

'Can you give me an example? Of what happens to you when you...'

'Would that help? I'll show you that if I need to.'

'You mean you'd rather not? I don't want you to be forced into anything...'

She said nothing. I frowned.

'What about the mind-curiers?' she asked.

I stopped what I was about to say, changed tack.

'Is that why you were at the symposium two days ago? To find something easy to help you?'

She shook her head.

'No. Although I thought some of the ideas were quite interesting.'

'Such as?'

She leant forward.

'He's at this hospital, isn't he?'

I looked away out of the window. The sun came out from behind clouds and a much harder, violet light entered the room and lit the dark red rug between us. Specks of dust in the air, sparks of some floating life, and I remembered Joseph William's words in my head, *drifting, drifting*.

'Who do you mean?'

'He said his pictures could identify neurosis. I didn't know you would be colleagues.'

I pictured Moniz's angiographs, his tapping at the pictures with his cane.

'We have *very* different approaches.'

'If he's correct, then people could change overnight.'

'But he is *not* correct. And there's nothing in his method that would *increase* your creativity.'

'It's a new invention. There was no psychoanalysis thirty years ago, either.'

'Psychoanalysis is a discovery. Not an invention.'

'A discovery?' she laughed. 'Like sailing down the Congo?'

'I have studied psychoanalysis now for a decade,' I said loudly. 'I understand its limitations as well as its powers, and—it will not "fix" anyone, you are who you are, and—'

'I don't want to be fixed.'

'His ideas are foolish,' I snapped, moving towards her and, I believe, I even wagged a finger, 'and dangerous. The mind does not work that way.'

I crossed my legs and felt a cough in my throat. I gave it a good clearing.

'Perhaps that professor really will be able to cut out the negative emotions,' she said, staring out of my window onto the inner courtyard of the Necker. I didn't like the way she sat, the way she was swinging her leg over her opposite knee as if contemplating a pair of shoes rather than invasive surgery. She turned back to me. 'Do you think it's possible, Benjamin?'

'I have more of a view on that than you might imagine.' I paused. I flattened the palms of my hands on my knees. 'What you are seeking, if anything, seems to be akin to what these mind-curers are offering, if I can say, more than what Professor Moniz is able to do—which, I might add, is nothing.' I was repeating myself. 'He's no invite to perform any procedure, that's for certain.'

She crossed her legs, weighing up my words. A rejection? Simply defensive? I realised, not altogether shamefully, that I was pleased to have put her into some confusion.

‘So what about their Science of Self Realisation then? Is *that* along the correct lines?’

She crossed her hands in her lap. I searched her eyes for motivation.

‘Do *you* think it is?’

‘I need *something* to help me,’ she said after a while. ‘Jack, my publisher, does not want to put up with this again. He says he cannot work—that he cannot pay for a neurotic. Can you help, Benjamin?’

I kept my eyes firmly on her. She didn’t squirm, as some do.

‘This purpose in life of yours, Maríne, this way of living. It may cause the neurasthenia you suffer from. Although as I have said, things do not work so simply within the unconscious. In fact we prefer to see things as dynamic, not causal. At the core of things we have a need for recognition, and it is really only an expression of the desire for immortality. You said so yourself.’

‘Did I?’

‘Yes, of Henry. That he wants you to publish him so he can be *recognised*.’

She hummed a little, so I carried on.

‘True artists seek recognition for their soul’s immortality, not self-knowledge for their security. There *is* no security. And so they create with a passion that others might call neurosis. And so do you, Maríne. Or so it seems to me at this early stage. This is why you fall into paralysis. You create, you edit, with what others might call neurosis, but I do not. So I will not try to fix you.’

‘So what will you do?’

‘I will *recognise* you. Then you will stop these faints. These periods of “uselessness”—do you see Maríne? Your true creative psyche resists being fixed. All we need to do is witness your soul’s work.’

‘My purpose in life?’

‘Exactly. I will not try to help you know yourself better. That is quite a waste of time.’

She sat quietly looking at her hands for a moment and then looked up.

‘You’re not what I anticipated,’ she smiled in some terrible way. I laughed.

‘And much more than that, too—I will help you be *more* creative.’

I heard the ticking of the clock and felt sunlight falling along the bottom of my trousers, warming my legs. I stood and went to my desk and flipped open my notebook. I looked at what I'd written down from the symposium, imagined handing it to her, saying: *This is what I didn't show you the other day: my purpose in life.* I looked up, closed the pad and crossed my arms on the desk.

'So, we can begin this week,' I said.

'Yes. Here?'

I shook my head. If she wanted the unexpected...

'Why don't I come to your office? Observe what you do?'

'Observe?'

'My method, Maríne, is to immerse myself in the process. Psychoanalysis has learnt much from ethnology. Not everything can be understood *on the couch.*' She didn't respond. 'Our aim is not merely to understand. We should not deny your life dynamics. Shall we begin there?'

She stood and pulled her cloche to an angle that gave her an industrious air, and smiled.

'Then let us begin there.'

It was an hour later before it occurred to me we had not even discussed a fee.

During a walk around the Luxembourg Gardens, a week too early for the cherry blossom, I asked Anaïs about Henry's book and so learnt as much as I could about my new charge. She worked for the Obelisk Press, a small publisher on the Right Bank that published most of the decade's taboo books. The Irishman Joyce and his overpriced curiosity *Pomes Penyeach*, but never the behemoth *Ulysses* that had brought him fame; *The Well of Loneliness* by an Englishwoman, Radclyffe Hall, turgid, so Anaïs told me, with lesbian browbeating and banned accordingly. It printed a dozen books a year, and sold them mainly to expatriates and travellers, who were little threat to France's propriety. Its publisher, Jack Kahane, an old soldier who married a Frenchwoman after the war and never returned to England, had a simple model: publish books with notoriety, those banned—or in the case of Henry's, likely to be—by the courts in London or Washington. The Obelisk nurtured a reputation for the otherwise unacceptable, attracted writers of that spirit, and it attracted Maríne too. It published fiction and poetry, sometimes memoirs and travel

writing, as long as they were too obscene for publication by the major houses, cut to ribbons by Simon & Schuster, were slaughtered by Chatto and Windus, or were dark blue cloth-bound editions of William Morrow with the guts stricken out. The Obelisk took them in and re-published them complete. *Unexpurgated*, as her note that day said. And yet Henry was going to be wilder than all of them. He had an agreement with this Jack promising a thousand copies and another five hundred if the first run sold, sent out at ten francs less for a '*deuxième édition*'. Jack wrote books himself—not good, said Anaïs—and saw the works of his authors as capital in the venture of self-making. Henry despised him as the worst type—tight, sickly, clinging to his author's talent, chasing fame—but as a publisher there was no one else. Maríne was Jack's editor. Henry was wary of what she would do with his work, but Anaïs could not say what exactly. I remembered Maríne's scepticism that evening at Le Cheval Bleu, and how Henry had attacked her. But Henry's complaint did not marry with what Charles said at the symposium—didn't Maríne save them from all that butchery? That night I mulled it over listening to Gershwin's *Second Rhapsody*, and the next morning I dressed in my best suit and collar and, as we had arranged, walked across the city to the Obelisk's offices on rue Saint-Honoré on the first floor of one of Haussmann's buildings. I went in the open door and up a flight of steps to find one large room with desks, box files and filing cabinets and paper everywhere, on chairs and sofas and sills. At the front of the room were two large windows guarded by a balconette, through which a breeze fled in. Maríne was alone. She wore a long black skirt and a white blouse, her uniformity broken by a small orange flower clipped into her hair. She led me towards the back of the room. There was a heavy desk and a grand bookshelf, eight feet tall, shelves lined with blues, greens, yellows. She gestured I should sit down and left me there. I fell into a low sofa. I heard a kettle boil, and went through the speech I'd formed in my head on the way over. She brought coffee, pressed down the plunger and poured. From a pocket she pulled a small bottle of Crème de Noyaux and took off the lid and poured and passed me a cup and sat down.

'It's for my authors, usually. To loosen them up.'

'Is that what you're trying with me?'

She looked amused then narrowed her eyes.

‘I have to drag them in by the hair when I need them. They have such long hair. They think it’s rebellious. I always look for short hair on an author. I’m sure you’re not interested in that.’

‘You’d be surprised.’

She swept a hand in the direction of the bookshelf.

‘Do you like them, Benjamin? These are our d-bs.’

‘D-bs?’

‘Dirty books.’

I studied the shelf. Books with pages quivering, waiting to be picked up, purchased, torn like bread and dipped in wine, devoured.

‘So, what would you like to observe?’ she asked.

‘Perhaps that is the wrong word. I don’t wish to sit apart.’

‘You want to join in?’

‘Get a feel for the dynamics of your present moment.’

‘I see.’ She nodded and drank her coffee in short, noisy sips.

‘Perhaps you can explain what you were doing at the mind-cure event. Why you went with Charlie—’

‘Charlie came with me,’ she interrupted. She poured herself a little more Crème de Noyaux and banged the bottle on the coffee table. ‘I was there to see how many books they were selling. See if it’s worth muscling in. Do you think it is, Benjamin?’

‘I know a little about the mind-cure movement. You may—’

She came and sat next to me and topped up my coffee. Slim fingers, no rings.

‘Oh, it wasn’t my choice,’ she explained, tucking the bottle away. ‘Jack, I told you about him.’

Maríne leant over to the desk and opened a drawer and took out a copy of *Variety* magazine. She showed me his picture: bespectacled, in his fifties, thin and befuddled, wearing a trilby. He did not look like the publisher of taboo I was expecting. She put the paper back in the drawer.

‘He sent me. I’d rather publish things I believed in. Do you think I can? Does this Science of Self Realisation work?’

‘Are we to discuss their work?’

She sat very still, making a decision, and then shifted away from me.

‘Oh, don’t worry. I thought you might have an opinion, that’s all.’

‘Well I do,’ I said quickly. I recalled my article for *McCall’s*. ‘There’s no harm in self-help’s momentary celebrity. Those with genuine neuroses will soon reach the limits of what can be administered through a personality test in the pages of a magazine. I only hope they don’t part with all their savings before they realise it.’

She stood up and went to the bookshelf, sniffed the books. I watched her shoulders rise and fall.

‘These are what it used to be about. Now it’s all about knowing oneself.’

‘And you agree that’s a bad thing?’

‘I suppose it *is* fashionable. My authors all think it very punk. They say everything is “rum” or “punk” or “such a fag”. They want to write about *the self*. Facts, not fiction. It’s what Henry’s writing. A novel, but not fictional.’

‘Will Henry’s be one of your d-bs? Your dirty books?’ I asked. ‘Boundary crossing?’

‘Do you think it’s a good thing, this mixing up of fantasy and reality?’

I took a moment to rearrange my jacket. She turned and looked at me.

‘You untangle, don’t you? You unpick the fact from the fantastical, not mix them up?’

‘Can you not do that?’ I asked. ‘Publish this sideline and not worry about *believing* in it?’

Her eyes narrowed, her mouth falling at the edges. She sat down and topped up the cups with liqueur, even though they were barely touched. She began to say something but didn’t finish, and I heard what she did. Steps. Before I knew it I was looking up at a young man who gave me an unfriendly glance before trying a smile. He bit it down, let it faint away.

‘Hello Maríne. I’m early.’

Maríne introduced us. Gawen Brownrigg was twenty-two. English, fey and slovenly, well bred. Untamed hair. He had come to agree the final elements of his manuscript.

‘You don’t mind, Gawen? Benjamin’s come from New York just like you. Gawen was in college there, Benjamin.’

We looked at each other. I imagined lonely semesters in New York prep.

‘I’m from London originally, of course,’ I said. ‘I’ll make some coffee.’

I stood and watched a mix of suspicion and relief cross the young man's face. A few minutes later Marine joined me in the kitchen.

'Take this one,' she whispered, crouching and taking a bowl of sugar from a cupboard. Loudly: 'I thought you might be looking for this,' and then in a whisper again, 'published by The Bodley Head but censored. Cut, he says, to ribbons. Makes me think of red ink and typewriters. What about you, your heart?'

'My heart?'

'Will you help me, Benjamin? I need to convince him to accept a new title. He's very stubborn. Perhaps you can talk him round?'

'Well I don't know about that...'

The kettle was whistling and she took it off the gas.

'We'll publish soon. And then what will become of him, my little boy Brownrigg? He's splintered by his writing. Can you tell? It's gotten under his fingernails, like Chinese torture. Of course you can tell—you're the analyst. What will the day of publication herald for him, do you think?'

I slammed around the drawers feeling rather put on the spot.

'What he wants from all this,' she carried on, pouring water into the pot. 'Last week he came to the Obelisk to tell me he wouldn't ever write another good book. He thought I needed to know.'

'And did you?'

'Don't forget the sugar,' she said loudly, and left the kitchen.

I returned with the coffee. Brownrigg was pacing around the office, touching books, noting their bindings, their wraparound claims. Marine sat with a pile of papers on her lap, touching her fingers to her tongue to wet them. I poured the coffee and picked up the bottle of Crème de Noyaux.

'Do you?' I asked Brownrigg, making a tipping action over the coffee.

He nodded, a small furious event. I poured, roils of alcohol curling through black, then I rather over-filled mine. Brownrigg circled the office. He picked up a rakish cover, a reclining nude shadowed in white and green. He flicked through the pages. He turned the book over, and then back to the cover.

'He was a war reporter, wasn't he, Packard? Wrote something about my father during that U-boat thing above Russia in *The Times*. Not the obituary, unfortunately. So is it anything like mine?'

Maríne did not look up, intent on the page. ‘Not an awful lot.’

He sat down, took his coffee and leant over.

‘I suppose she’s working her magic on you too?’

I pictured him off Long Island shooting wildly at geese. He waited for a reply and then gave up.

‘We’ve thought of a title,’ she said to him.

‘So you still think... What’s it going to be?’

Maríne leafed through the pages. ‘Here. You draw your character in,’ she said, running her finger across the page, ‘then here’—she was, I realised, being purposefully vague—‘and here. You call Dorcas a star first, and then Rebecca. What do you think? *Star Against Star*?’

He started twitching his right foot as it rested on his left knee.

‘No. I didn’t write it for them to be stars. Won’t people think I’m arrogant?’

‘No,’ said Maríne, but the pause was too long. He mooched in his seat. There was a moment’s difficult silence. I was waiting for her to pull me in. Then Brownrigg startled me.

‘So what do you think?’

I looked at him, imagining the kiss as he’d fashioned it between Dorcas and Rebecca, pursing their lips like two fat blacksmiths stripped down to vests and told the price of iron is up.

‘It’s a terrible title,’ I said, feeling strangely pleased with myself, ‘but I am no publisher.’

He glared at me for a moment, before a strange, soft light touched his face. He was smiling like a clown, as if I hadn’t spoken.

‘*Star Against Star*,’ he said. ‘Yes, don’t like it. But go ahead. I won’t be trouble. Was it your idea?’

Maríne didn’t answer. She glanced at me quickly. Then he was up, shaking out his arms.

‘Is there anything else?’

‘Nothing we need you for. Except,’ and she looked at me, smiling, ‘lunch?’

Brownrigg shook his head. ‘I’ve got to file. So when next?’

‘Gawen’s at the Hôtel du Lac for the Press Ball,’ Maríne explained. ‘He’s writing for *The Tribune* and *The Post*.’

I was suddenly homesick for my apartment, Faith, the smell of her hair.

‘When we have the proof, in a couple of weeks. You’ll still be at the hotel?’

After he left Maríne shuffled the manuscript into a neat packet of pages, found some paper and wrote *Star Against Star* in bold pen, and clipped it to the manuscript. The room was very still all of a sudden, and I felt rather cold, and shivered.

‘There was one moment,’ she said, and lit a cigarette, ‘when the writing moved me. It’s my measure of the work, remember?’ She took a drag. ‘Oh, it *urged* me to feel something, but like a pamphlet seller, like a greengrocer when I have no appetite for fresh grown things. Like a government poster: “*Protégez-Vous Contre La Syphilis*”. You’ve seen those?’

I said nothing.

‘You wanted to observe, didn’t you?’

‘Doesn’t all great writing move its readers?’

‘Not in the way you mean it.’

‘And how do I mean it?’

She blew out smoke. ‘It’s flat. Weakly plotted.’

‘What about that kiss?’

She put out her cigarette and came and sat next to me and before I knew what was happening she kissed me fully, forcefully, her tongue in my mouth. The books in all their rainbow colours shone into my eyes until I came round from blindness and felt her tongue run over my lips once more, for a last time, and I tasted the ash of the cigarette. She sat back.

‘The cold tea of love,’ she laughed, and that coldness ran into my toes. She sat on the desk, the orange flower in her hair as bright as the books behind her. I needed air but all I could grasp was vapour and vacuum.

‘It’s the only way to know, Benjamin. Does it move me to *actually*...? Oh, but you see.’ She winked at me. ‘So it did after all. Do you see now? I’m sure there’s a name for my condition. You analysts have a name for everything. Something with an x in it?’

I balked. ‘What do you mean condition?’

‘Oh!’ she interrupted. ‘But we’ve got six more months. Please, you said you didn’t diagnose.’

She stared triumphantly. Then that stiff smile turned into a grimace and her eyes filled, and she turned and put her face into her hands and began heaving.

Just like a film star, I thought, before the notion fled. Her crying kept on awfully, as if she were pulling black bile from the very dark depths of a well. I went to her, thrown down on her desk, snaked around the boy's manuscript, a pen in its inkstand, a pile of envelopes and letters and notes, and her coffee cup empty. I put a hand on her shoulder. She was crying in sharp staccato. I put a hand under each of her armpits and lifted her up and manoeuvred her to the sofa where I sat her down, hands still over her face, tears and mascara leaking out through fingers. I kept a hand on her shoulder until she stopped crying. She pulled out a handkerchief and padded at her eyes. I went into the kitchen with the coffee pot and rinsed it out and made a fresh pot and brought it back and poured us two cups, picked up the Crème de Noyaux and pushed it down the side the sofa. I sat there for a moment, my hands in my lap, waiting.

She sniffed, wiping her nose on the handkerchief.

'Sorry.' Her voice broken, smaller.

'There's no reason to be.'

She blew her nose. Her eyes were watery, red, difficult to read.

'But there is, isn't there? I shouldn't do those things. Or at least that's what I'm told.'

'And who tells you that?'

'I can't be moved to action all the time. Isn't that what I'm meant to repress?'

I wanted to raise my coffee as a guard. Perhaps I did.

'Forgive me, Maríne, but it sounds like you read that out of a book. It isn't something I suggest.'

She looked at me squarely. And then something flattened her out against the sofa.

'I'm sorry.'

This time she meant it. I tapped her on the knee and left my hand there and she clasped it in hers.

'How does it make you feel, analysing people? It makes sense to you that what *I* do moves *me*?'

'Are you saying that scene in that boy's book moved you to—?'

I felt the weight of her hand on mine; rather that, than the heat and shape of her leg below.

‘They do take me over. It’s my calling.’

‘Your “calling”?’

‘Editing, Benjamin. For all these new books.’ She looked incredibly happy through her teary eyes. ‘But don’t try to fix it. Please, whatever you say. It *is* a new way of editing, because... because...’

She made a quick movement and I thought she was going to kiss me again but no, she was only standing up, pulling her hand from mine, going over to the bookshelf. She pulled down a plain brown book with a patterned spine. A wraparound kept the book together with the slogan, *Banned in London*.

‘It’s the book that brought me here. If you want to find out.’

‘Brought you here?’

It was a book called *Sleeveless Errand* by Norah C James. Its name, the woody texture of its hardback cover gave me a connection to something, but I did not know what. I weighed the book in my hands. I looked up—certainly up, as if I was falling. I looked at the books and had the feeling of being inside a story, washing over me in their bright primary colours like a particle, a wave, a great mystery of the new atomic world rent for a moment visible and swarming. I put my hand on the arm of the sofa and then reached for my coffee, but it was empty.

‘What do we do next?’ she asked me.

‘How about you introduce me to this Jack?’

That evening I went and bought a large sketchbook from the art store at Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève. I bought an unlined book. I often used diagrams in making connections on my cases, rather than writing in sequential narrative. I sat in the Café Rennes with the sketchbook in front of me, acting the scholar, eavesdropping on young men and women savouring their difficulties ahead, formulating analytic puzzles to test myself. How this couple would overcome the young man’s misery at not being allowed to stay in her rooms. How this young girl would tell her mother she wanted to become a singer. I whipped open the sketchbook and on the first page, at its centre, wrote the name of Maríne Cizeau and began to trace out what facts I’d learnt about her, what else she’d told me that day. How she came to Paris. She had been working in literary London as an editor, before that as a desk clerk, with Jonathan Cape. They had a book banned on the day of publication, and all copies confiscated by the Metropolitan police

and burnt in a large pile on the cobblestones of their station at Marylebone. It was *Sleeveless Errand*, the book she'd given me. It wasn't a title she'd worked on, so she had not read it at the time. A few months later in Paris on a romantic weekend with some gentleman, walking past the bookstalls that line the Seine between the Latin Quarter and Notre-Dame, she caught sight of a book with the same title. She picked it up, ran a hand over the binding and the publisher's phallic logo on the spine, the Obélisque de Louxor from the place de la Concorde standing on a plinth in the shape of a book. On the inside frontispiece was the address. She finished it by the time their train returned them to London.

A week later she left her job and England and with barely any money headed to Paris. She landed in Calais and worked her way to the capital; first in a tourist bar, then as a department store *midinette* in Rouen, and then a ticket collector on the Canal de l'Ourcq that served the slaughterhouses at La Villette. She learnt some French in that time, and then, when she had saved enough money, she reached Paris' centre, found lodgings in a hotel in Montmartre and visited the Obelisk the next day, and was hired by Jack Kahane. By then she'd changed her name. It was 1930, spring, only a few months after the Crash, but the Obelisk had made a great deal of money on sales of that banned book. Jack was looking to expand. She came along at just the right time.

4

The next morning I went early to the hospital determined to work. The sun moved slowly from pane to pane in the south-facing window that overlooked the courtyard. It was the exercise period. A handful of patients strolled along the gravel paths, sat on the stone benches by the roses and gardenia. I prodded my manuscript with a nib. I picked up my pen and found a scrap of paper. *The artist*, I began, thinking of her young boy Brownrigg, *popularises neuroses to express disapproval, some fundamental battle with their self, and warps it so intensely in his art that what he is left with is a symbol drained of meaning. It is, ironically, to these imaginary worlds the 'neurotic' turns for release.* I glanced at the book Maríne had given me, *Sleeveless Errand*, its brown binding a dull camouflage at the far edge of my desk. *The cold tea of love...*

Suddenly an olive-skinned man kicked at the door and, without waiting to be asked, entered. He was tall and stocky, covered in puppy fat at one time, over-mothered. His face was old and young, naïve and arrogant. The porters had told me about him. Almeida Lima, Portuguese, a surgeon and Moniz's personal secretary. His arms were full of papers. My request for more information on Moniz had been relayed. He looked at my desk and at my manuscript. I quickly cleared a space.

'You'll find everything in order,' he said, putting down his load. He spoke good English.

'Is there an order?'

'The publications are mainly in your language. Professor Moniz has been extremely thorough in directing us to scour the entire medical field for work on the fixed location of emotions in the brain.'

'That couldn't have taken very long.'

He smiled tightly. I prodded the folders. Five, blue and black, and they took up half-a-foot of air.

'I don't believe we've met?'

‘Of course, you are used to more verbose speculation in your field.’ He went to leave, but at the door he stood and turned. ‘I understand you can get a whole book out of two or three case studies.’

‘Would you like to borrow one?’ I waved a hand at my Freud. ‘The cases on homosexuality?’

‘You are invited to observe our work this evening. We will be conducting a first experiment on a human subject—not a *living* subject.’ He was pleased to shock me, though it was the act of a frustrated man. I saw Renaud’s hand in the invitation. After Lima left I banged my fist on the folders and slumped in my chair. New York all over: fractious, oppositional. *Well, Faith, I thought, you’re right about some things.*

It had begun with Moniz’s comments to a journalist in the pages of *Le Monde*. I happened to come across the article on the train from Le Havre, only hours after landing that January. Laid bare in the interview with Moniz was his hostility towards our analytic approach to suffering, and our growing popularity. ‘Psychoanalytic concepts are more appropriate for literature and the arts than for the practice of medicine,’ Moniz told the journalist, who had travelled to interview him at the Egas Moniz Lisbon School of Cerebral Angiography. A whole school! ‘Psychoanalysis can never be a science with its incursions into the metaphysical.’ I had pulled out my writing paper and penned a response before my train alighted at Gare Saint-Lazare. The letter was published two days later. I had not expected Moniz to respond so vehemently. And from there our public spat spiralled.

I wondered what Lima had meant by that—not a living subject. I would not have long to find out.

The severed head was attached to the operating table by some sort of clamp. A new tool commissioned by Moniz for the practical matters of surgery, to sit on the clavicle of a living person. I looked again at the poor fellow, whoever he had been, now reduced to this: an appendage to a trolley, prepared for excavation. I breathed lightly; iodine burnt my nostrils. Moniz wore an operating gown, although his hands were not gloved.

‘I know what you are thinking,’ he said.

‘You’re a mind reader as well?’

‘You are thinking we have lost our heads.’

Lima shot off an appreciative little laugh.

I closed my eyes, waited for the gagging reflex. The air of the theatre was dry, unspecific. I did my best not to remember those young men at St Thomas’s and not so much their injuries but their stories of what *they* had seen. Of all the things I remembered when I opened my eyes was the image of the aliens Faith and I imagined together, their implements of abduction and torture, except this time it was something I could not wake up from, the reality bodiless and floating and altogether awful.

‘No, I apologise. This is disrespectful to our...’ he wavered, ‘our patient.’

I shivered and crossed my arms. I watched Lima circle the contraption, tightening its screws. The brace held the head at the sides of the cheekbones, level with the middle of the ear; and then again at the stump of the neck, which had been wrapped in blue muslin in an attempt at discretion. It looked like a sculpted portrait of a foreign legionnaire, his scarf fending off the desert wind. Lima gave each of the clamps holding the contraption to the table a final turn.

‘So, our new procedure,’ said Moniz. ‘Shall we begin?’

Lima stood, waiting and devout.

‘We must practice,’ said Moniz, ‘to get the right consistency for the injection. Monkeys are useful, but at some point... you understand?’

Lima wheeled forward a trolley with a confectionary of instruments. Moniz moved towards the table, and I came closer. In the middle was a bottle. Inside was a clear fluid that I guessed from his papers was pure alcohol. Next to it was a large metal syringe with two hoops at the base of its plunger. The needle was encased in a protective sleeve. Stood on an easel was the angiograph for this ‘patient’. Magnified, it covered a board at least one square metre. It was to my eye unrevealing. Yet something led Moniz to think a severing would prove something. End something. Lima marked the top of the forehead with a charcoal stick then cut two crosses. Its deep odour escaped. I winced, swallowed down spit. The poisoned stink of carcass and withering membrane. Lima folded back the skin and took a trepanning drill and slowly, with a grinding of all life, went through the skull.

‘We have made entry above the frontal lobes.’ A yellowish fluid seeped out. ‘This patient had a history of melancholia, anxiety and paranoia. You can see the knots in the sections we are exposing.’

He pointed to the angiograph. I could not see any knots.

‘It is the frontal lobes that are the seat of psychic activity. Fixed thoughts—those you would call neurotic—are maintained by nerve pathways that have become pathological. Effective treatment requires their destruction.’

Lima picked up the syringe and removed the protective sleeve and with his other hand took the lid from the bottle. Lima drew the alcohol in. When it was three quarters full, he held its tip over a silver kidney dish and depressed the plunger. Alcohol arced through the air, splashing and hissing.

‘You have lost your words?’ Moniz asked.

I forced myself to watch. Lima positioned himself above the head and its two entry holes. He pushed the syringe into the left and pressed the plunger. Lima pushed the syringe further into the brain until a marker on the needle hub was level with the entry point. He withdrew. The syringe dripped across the scalp before he took a cloth from the trolley and wiped the needle. He repeated the procedure in the right side, pushing in, withdrawing, wiping the needle down.

It was finished. Lima wheeled first the trolley full of implements and then the operating table, severed head still clamped, through the double doors. Moniz and I remained. Moniz took off his white coat and hung it over the rail by the seats. His lips were moving, but I couldn’t hear the words. It was the beginning of another migraine, one that would lay me down for a week, hollow and immotile. It was doing its job, and his words were a long way away. Then they rushed back at me.

‘—be faithful to what you have seen here today in your report?’

I felt a cloudy certainty overcome me. I cleared my throat.

‘Why not a... scalpel?’

‘We have not found the right implement. But I agree, alcohol may not be the most exact of means.’

‘How do you know it works, Moniz?’

From the other room I heard a clatter; Lima, undoing the clamp.

‘Panic attacks, trouble with balance,’ Moniz went on. ‘Merely nuisances, but they ruin a life.’ He walked over to the angiograph. ‘My procedure is especially

for the recovery of an emotional life, Doctor Hayes. If we had gotten to him sooner, we would have given back to him his faculties. Lima will conduct an autopsy now, to see the extent of—’

‘But how do you know it will work on someone *living*? How do you know it won’t obliterate...’

Moniz stood a foot from me. The pores in his skin, the flare of his nostrils, were an offence to life.

‘I do not expect you to understand a technical philosophy. It will alter lives in days. Not years.’

‘You have a divine impatience, Professor,’ I said, taking off my whites. ‘It may take you to hell.’

He ran a hand over his angiograph.

‘And can you tell me, Doctor Hayes,’ Moniz said, ‘where has inspired more genius than hell?’

That afternoon I looked through Moniz’s papers. His formal articles taken from medical journals; letters from other neurologists published in the contributions pages, professional and praising, particularly an American called Spitz, colleagues from Germany and Sweden and the principality of Luxembourg. There was also a tranche of personal papers. Not written for anyone to read, but what looked like workings out, questions on method and the processing of ideas, it was difficult to tell as they were in Portuguese, and a migraine was beginning to cover me in its crystals. I took two of the folders with the most interesting looking material, those published works and letters in English, and left the Necker, taking a taxi home and fell into a dark malaise, the pain restricting me to hobbling about my apartment without any sustenance or stimulation.

It was a week later, as I sat at my dining table, the windows open but with barely a breeze, that the migraine was fully lifted, and I risked some wine, a little Burgundy from the café around the corner and made notes. I started with a dozen pieces, all published from the beginning of the previous year, written in Portugal at Moniz’s institution. He had what appeared to be a regular column in a small medical circular for the International Society of Neurologists, and had kept all the clippings—of course. They made mention of a search for an application for

his angiographs—the tone was pompous, but also, I sensed, frustrated. I read through them carefully at first, and then more glancingly, as they provided little news of what he was now proposing. But then came a new set, written from only a few months earlier, from the fourth annual conference of the Neurological Institute of London. It sent a shiver through me, these men gambolling around Holborn and Queen Square, talking in their hushed tones of *new worlds*, of *medical advancement*. I imagined him looking from the window of his hotel room, sitting on his bed and taking off his shoes, pushing his toes into the thickly shagged rug. He has returned to his room after the day's proceedings followed by dinner, is preparing for bed. He walks barefoot across the floor and sits at the desk. There is movement in his hands. There are clouds; it gets worse with humidity, but he can still write. He sends a brief note to his wife. He asks after the children, drops an item of the hotel's toiletry in the envelope for her collection, and seals it. He stands the letter between bookend and stationery box. Then he settles into composing his column for the circular. He talks of the research presentations he has heard that day. I see him flex his fingers, read over what he has written. He places the column in an envelope and addresses it, puts it aside. The next evening, perhaps, he takes it out and revises after the day's events. He is hungry, the machinery of the hotel cranks, the fumes of dinner come to him through the vents—the flare of his nostrils coming back to me, dragon-like, drenching. But his hunger can wait. He reads again what he has written, and makes some swift calculation regarding what—how much—he should share. He writes of all that he has seen that day: a demonstration by two Americans with their own apes, an operation similar to that carried out on Moniz's monkey. But not quite. What he took from their demonstration was an unexpected result. They had been searching for the seat of executive functioning. The erasure of the creature's emotions that accompanied this incision was a side effect. I closed my eyes, watched Moniz fold the paper in thirds. He takes the envelope and places the column inside and closes it once more. He writes the address of the editor on the front and then places the lid back on his pen. He places his hands on his thighs under the table to steal a little warmth. He turns his head to the window. A side effect. He thinks to himself: what next?

Other doctors, London and elsewhere...

I went and drew a glass of water and took two tabs of Luminal. I came and sat down again, looking through the papers in the folder. I found it, or what I thought was it: the original. The date was the same. I could not read the Portuguese, but I could recognise the proper nouns of his story. I studied the original. He was writing as fast as his fingers would allow. Shaky with gout, or excitement? I looked again at the date. And yet Moniz was passing off his proposal as the culmination of a life's work! He was, was... Before the Luminal took consciousness from me with its lace glove I made the mistake of thinking him a monster and not as he was: vain, fragile, stoppable. A man.

The next morning Anaïs called and invited me to accompany her and Henry to the Hôtel Beauvais and the new physical culture club opened there. I was groggy from the revelations and the bromides, but agreed to go. We met at the métro Abbesses. The first of May, Labour Day, had passed, but there were still flower girls selling bunches of wilting lily of the valley and the streets had a dreamy, sweet smell to them. It was a warm, sunny day, perfect for where we were heading.

'It's all the craze in England,' explained Henry. 'It's the brainchild of one of yours, Benny, an Englishman, Saleeby. What did he call himself, Anaïs? A helio-hygienist, ain't it?'

'He advocates the treatment of mental distress with sunlight, relaxed airs. Let's see if it's something we can recommend to our patients.' She glanced at me. 'Or ourselves.'

'You mean nudity.'

'Benjamin, stop fussing. You are too rational.'

'Too damn English,' said Henry. 'Hey Benjy, you can let it hang out among friends, can't you?'

'But I thought you liked us? What about your friend Charles?'

Henry tucked a hand into his trouser pocket. 'Ah, he's not like the rest of you starched shirts. He escaped. Flew the nest all the way to Cyprus before he came here.'

'Benjamin's escaped too, Henry,' said Anaïs, looping her arm through his.

We turned onto rue Gay-Lussac and stopped at a puppet theatre performance of peasant farce. There was a crowd of a dozen quietly jeering. The master,

hidden in the booth, manipulated puppets in medieval dress, two lords and one lady, a triangle of violent outcomes more mélange than melee, fought for the burden of one another. We walked on.

‘Benjamin, it will be good for you. Your soul wants to express. If you do not let it out it will find its own way.’

‘Still suffering your headaches Benno?’ asked Henry.

I shook my head. ‘That’s something else.’

‘Is it?’ asked Anaïs. ‘It could not have been good battling all the time.’

‘That’s New York for you.’

Anaïs tutted and put her free hand on my arm.

‘No, *ami*, I cannot let you get away with that. You and Otto, you take up this position. Always.’

‘You know why.’

She shook her head.

At the Hôtel Beauvais we signed into *Le Club du Soleil Abondant* and undressed together. Anaïs wrapped a towel around her naked body. Henry stripped down to his skin. I changed into my bathing suit. Henry and I were similar shapes, tall, skinny, although I was more defined around the arms and shoulders. He looked constantly stretched out, swinging on the trapeze of his writing. We gave our belongings to the attendant and made our way into the atrium, Henry and Anaïs arm in arm, and I following on my toes. The atrium bustled with naked bodies, men and women. ‘Genitals before lunchtime,’ whispered Anaïs. We laughed and moved among them. I began to relax. I was not the only one in a costume, *thank God*. My eyes followed a beautiful woman with long blonde hair and unmoving breasts with large nipples, and looked away quickly, but only to find myself looking directly at a redhead, and could not help but glance at her quim, a light copper. I closed my eyes, looked up, laughed aloud. Henry punched me on the arm. ‘That’s it, Benno!’ We walked at the edges, gossiping like spirits. Other guests chatted in French and English. We sat on a bench facing the sun, risen above the walls of the inner courtyard. The windows of the hotel rooms looked down on us.

‘Do the Deputies know about this?’

Anaïs giggled. ‘Oh, it is perfect. I’m sure they’re up there now,’ she said, pointing at one window then the next. A blind fluttered silently. ‘Spying on the freaks and dissidents.’

‘They let places like this open so they can close them down,’ said Henry, ‘when it suits them.’

I closed my eyes, sat with the sun on my face. After a few minutes Anaïs took off her towel and sat naked, unconcerned with the eyes of the men who stared (a *glance* only) but who after a moment looked away and carried on with their own treatments. I could not imagine in Mayfair or Marylebone. Soho, yes, London and New York. Anaïs hummed, her eyes closed, stretched her neck.

‘Why don’t you unclothe yourself, Benjamin?’

Henry laughed and put his hand under his penis, which hung flaccidly to the left, hibernating in a nest of black curls, and flicked it around.

‘Come on Benjy. Don’t leave me with my Cubana smoking for both of us.’

A girl came by with glasses of iced water on a tray. I took three and placed them on the ground beneath the bench. We sat quietly for a while. I heard, not noticing before, the delicacy of wind chimes and the flow of water along an aqueduct into a small pool in the middle of the atrium.

‘And this Professor Moniz,’ said Anaïs, ‘he believes the pain is fixed up here?’ She tapped the side of her head. ‘Tangled like string?’

I’d told them about Moniz on our walk. I mustered a small moue; it felt far away.

‘That’s what he says.’

‘We should bring him here,’ she said, ‘that would melt away some of his knots.’

‘It can’t be true, of course.’

‘And what’s he going to do again, this fella?’ asked Henry. ‘Chop people to bits?’

‘There’s no evidence,’ I said quickly. ‘He has no proof of what he’s *chopping* into.’

‘Ah, but where’s the excitement in proof? Unless it’s bourbon, that is.’

Anaïs put a hand on Henry’s leg but otherwise ignored him. I sighed, threw my face up to the sun. Henry sat up and drained his water. We sat in silence for a while, listening to the chatter. The mood was one of ease, and I found myself

pushing my shoulders back, feeling knots I'd not realised had become tightened. Anaïs, I noticed, was watching me with a faint smile on her face.

'You cannot be so silent Benjamin, it gives you away. I *should* be hearing you undressing.'

'She wants to appraise your tackle,' said Henry. 'You've not been fishing for a while, have you?'

'How is Faith?' asked Anaïs. 'Is she coming over?'

'Good God, no!'

Henry laughed childishly.

'And so you will go home and make things up?' asked Anaïs.

'When my book is done,' I explained.

She looked at me and would not let me look away.

'That's it,' said Henry. 'The work comes first. My book comes before June for sure, that bitch.'

I was uncertain what I felt about that. June, his wife, also awaiting him in New York.

'She still supports you, Henry,' said Anaïs softly.

I cleared my throat.

'I'll feel a fool if I go back without having the thing finished. I was stuck for so long...'

'Faith won't care, Ben.'

'And, anyway,' I carried on, 'I must stay here and protect Otto's name.'

'That low down asshole,' said Henry. Anaïs tapped him on the shoulder, smiled an apology.

'It's perfectly fine, Anaïs. We're used to it.'

'What does Otto say about you and Faith?' she asked. She looked at me as if an idea had just come to her. 'Oh, Ben. You're not in supervision any longer?'

I turned my face up to the sun, closed my eyes.

'I've come to see through analysis it's not death I'm scared of,' I said.

'I am,' said Henry, 'scared shitless I'll die before I'm immortalised.'

'So what are you scared of?' asked Anaïs.

'But that's because your creative impulse is so strong,' I said to Henry. 'I really do wish you'd let me study you for my book.'

Henry closed his eyes. 'Anaïs, tell this soul-sucker where he can get off.'

Anaïs shook her head, a half-smile on her face, brushed Henry's balding head. He opened one eye and squint up at me.

'Look, Benno, why don't you go and get laid and stop worrying about us artists? How about that Maríne? You willing to soften her up for me?'

I laughed loudly. A pair of women began uttering toothy remarks under their breath.

'She could be very useful for me. My book, I mean.'

Henry laughed, his wild, deep and American bark. The women glared at us.

'Sounds like you're scared to go back without having a book under your wing, Benno.'

Anaïs tapped Henry on the leg as admonishment.

'I am *trying* to get it finished,' I said. 'It's proving more difficult than I expected.'

Henry laughed from his belly. 'See, Benno, you're an artist too!'

I shook my head. *That* would be no consolation.

'Well, stop *trying* Benjamin,' said Anaïs. 'Let things come.'

I stood and stretched out my arms, arched my back, and began a small turn around the atrium. It felt suitably Hellenic. The attendants were in white tunics and crossed sandals. Another group came in, five men, young and fair and blue eyed, speaking one of the Norse languages. Of course nakedness was part of their liberalism in the far north. Dips in the Baltic and such. The sun was more clearly above us, and the suntrap that was this old courtyard came into its brilliant zoning glory. I felt the sudden urge to strip off my bathing shorts, and tucked them under a brick. I walked back over to Henry and Anaïs. Henry was lying with his head in Anaïs' lap. I winced as I realised my penis was at eye level for Anaïs; God knows what view Henry was having.

'She's asked me for analysis. Maríne.'

Anaïs nodded but said nothing. She was relaxed, stroking Henry's head. I felt something else in Anaïs' silence—curiosity to see what I would do with such an offer.

'You watch yourself with her, Benno,' said Henry. 'She's ruthless.'

'Benjamin can take care of himself.'

Henry laughed, squinted up. Ah, the sun behind me! I put my hands on my hips. What did one do with one's hands?

‘Of course he can,’ said Henry.

‘You have a low opinion of her.’

‘You should see what she’s doing to Charlie’s book.’ He kicked a leg out. ‘It’s so fat you could slaughter it for Thanksgiving and feed Harlem.’

‘Isn’t that her job?’ I was sweating. I picked up my water and drank.

‘She’s draining him of all life! Fucking ruining the boy. He’ll be a ghost by publication, Benno. And then what do you think she’ll do with mine? But I’ve got no options, Benno. No fucking options at all, unless we find some other fool who believes in me as much as I do.’

‘Has she said what she wants from you?’ asked Anaïs.

‘She overreacts to... stimuli.’ I didn’t want to say *books*. ‘I can see she’s intelligent—’

‘Oho, you hear that? Sucked into her games.’

Henry had his eyes closed, swaying his head from side to side as if listening to a tune.

‘I am obliged to help. Anyway, that’s what I’m here for. Some interesting cases.’

Henry lifted his head up. ‘She’s a case alright.’

Anaïs put a hand on my leg and, *oh!* my penis flinched with the touch.

‘You do not need to fight with us,’ she said.

‘I didn’t realise I was.’

‘You are free to think again,’ she said. She turned to Henry. ‘Isn’t that the important thing, my love? To think without censorship? To do whatever you wish?’

‘That’s the gem,’ said Henry. His upside down face loomed up in that disembodied way we used to love as children; playing at otherworldly faces taking shape, watching the familiar disappear with fascinated disgust. I stood quickly and excused myself and reached the bathroom and vomited into the bowl. I leant my head there for a while, waiting for the images of floating heads to dissolve. When I checked myself in the mirror I was naked and white, as if a magnet had taken all my iron. An hour later, with our dosage of sun required and a thought to add a recommendation to the club for our patients, we showered and dressed, said our goodbyes and left.

Two days later a telegram arrived from Maríne. She'd arranged a visit to her publisher Jack Kahane, who was convalescing at home following a bout of tuberculosis. He'd caught the infection during the war and never shaken it off. She asked me to conceal the purpose of our visit. I didn't know if it was for Jack's benefit or ours, but we agreed upon a story. I was to provide a formal consultation on the mind-cure movement as to its credibility, its reliability, and therefore—although I was sceptical of the correlation—its ability to sell books. Jack was keen to hear the opinion of an expert and would pay me for my time. At that I drew the line.

'I cannot take money for a lie,' I protested.

She didn't press the matter. We were on the métro heading to Pont de Neuilly. The train emerged from its tunnel, a sudden thrashing of rain spattering the carriage. Drops caught on the window and spurred across the glass. Haltering, sliding, an adventurous unwinding, until there was nothing left of each drop. I watched them run away, lulled into their complicated trails.

'So what do you want to ask him?'

'I'll just observe. See how you two are together.'

Maríne gave me a look that wasn't altogether complementary.

Marcelle, Jack's wife, answered the door. She wore a long white housedress and held a white cloth. Her features were small, and she had a narrow smile, not unfriendly, but stretching only so far. Behind her I could see a little boy holding a toy sword and peering past his mother's skirt.

'*Bien*, welcome.' She wiped her hands on the cloth. 'Come in, are you dry? You need towels?'

She kissed Maríne and then myself, and reminded her son Maurice he had met Maríne before. He stared at her and judged both of us no good, and ran into another room. Marcelle shut the door.

'He'll be pleased to have you as guests.' She spoke English with a thick accent. 'We've had only old men so far. Would you like tea, coffee?'

We sat at the table and waited. Marcelle lifted the kettle from the gas ring and poured hot water into a round white teapot, and put on the lid. She stood and looked out of the window into their garden as she swirled the tea around the pot. She poured into cups through a strainer the brown tea Jack loved, a reminder, she said, of his native Blackburn, tea I had not enjoyed myself for nearly ten years.

‘So you are keeping everything running?’ Marcelle asked Maríne.

‘Yes, all fine,’ said Maríne abruptly. ‘Really, he should rest. I’m managing fine.’

She took our teas and put them on a tray with some brioche. ‘So, we will go in.’

Marcelle led us up stairs with thinly laid carpet. The staircase was lined with pictures of a group of young men in suits and hats wearing rounded glasses outside a gentleman’s club with a crest of a white swan. There were also framed pictures of the front covers of Jack’s own books, the one I remember most clearly being a bright yellow daffodil. A picture of Marcelle with baby Maurice on her knee and Jack sat behind them smoking a long curved pipe. She put her shoulder to the door. Jack was sat up on his pillows with a pen in his hand and a dark look on his face, as if he had come across some challenge that affronted him. He looked two sizes too small for his pale blue cotton pyjamas, the type we provided at St Thomas’s for convalescing. Sharp lyres of hair had no jauntiness. His skin was bunched, yellowing. The room smelt of carbolic soap and of cigarettes and a strong, sickly medicine. The curtains were shut but made from thin creamy cotton so the room was filled with a gauzy light. There were small splashes of ink across the bed sheets. He looked up, holding his pen mid-air.

‘How do you spell anaphylaxis?’

Maríne looked at me.

‘You must be Jack,’ I said.

‘I suppose I must be.’ He coughed long and raspily. ‘Good, you’re here. Come in, come in.’

Marcelle put down the tray and the three of us fussed around two chairs. Marcelle opened one of the curtains. She handed us our tea and placed the brioche on Jack’s bedside table.

‘It’s an all-body shock,’ Jack explained. ‘Picked the term up while I was in the field hospital near... well God knows where that was near. Some poor sod, done in by the shelling, then gets an allergy to the drugs they gave him.’

‘Did he die?’ I asked.

Jack shrugged.

‘*Alors,*’ said Marcelle, ‘so cheerful. *De toute façon, assez discuté.* Call if you need anything.’

She pulled the door closed behind her.

‘So how’s your memoir?’ asked Maríne.

‘It’s all coming back in bits. I’m up to the end of the war at least. Now it’s Croatian girls and crazy Italians.’ He smiled and it set off a cough. His tray wobbled on his knees. The sheets of paper slipped and settled. ‘Glad you’re here though. You can take some back and start getting it typed up.’ He coughed again, and put aside his pen. ‘The accounts didn’t look good. Those last three were bad for us.’ Jack puffed out his cheeks. ‘So what are we going to do about that?’

Maríne outlined a plan for the three books that hadn’t sold. She would ask the vendors to lower their prices, or sell them three-for-one, or persuade Gertrude Stein to do a notice. She mentioned the sixth anniversary of the Obelisk, they should throw a party. Jack listened with sickly intent, his face screwing itself up the longer she spoke.

‘Titus said the Deputies gave him the rum treatment recently,’ he said, then turned to me. ‘Did me a favour once, now thinks he can come out here and lecture me. He’s taken the Black Manikin under the covers. Said I should do the same. Don’t worry, I didn’t listen. I said, “You think I’ve not had enough of covers for a while, you damn Frankie?” You get on with things, Maríne, but no flag-waving. The damn Frankies put us back in the cell quicker than you can fall over. I got a call from a friend in the paper office at the *Académie française*. The Deputies have bigger worries than our books if there’s truth about Germany. Titus heard the same. I try to read the papers here but she takes them away when the news is too bad. Isn’t it always bad?’

He punctuated his lecture by pointing his pen at us as he spoke.

‘So we’re alright. You get on with it. But no big parties on my account. Now this is my plan.’ He took a long slug of tea. ‘Ah. Now, pack up five hundred of the books, or what we’ve got left, and take them to Radway. I’ve given him a call, he’s expecting you. He’ll get them to America. Then you do your three-for-one. And no trouble with the law, do ye’ hear? No trouble, you hear me?’

She nodded. I watched for any change, but she didn’t seem offended by his orders.

Jack cleared his throat. ‘So Doctor, Maríne said you’ve got an opinion on these mind-curiers.’

I smiled and repeated some of what I'd said at the Obelisk, although not all. I was not so scathing. Saw fit to suggest their work would be popular, although superficial. That was probably an indication that they would sell *more* books, not less, as each relieved yet uncured client would seek out the next in the series.

'They do just enough to give one hope, but not enough to make real change,' I said, glancing at Maríne. 'In many ways, it's the perfect proposal. Not that I agree with that, from a professional point of view. But do they do any harm? I would rather have people buy their books and find out it doesn't work than...'

I stopped there, unsure of what I would rather.

'It works temporarily, you said?' prodded Maríne.

'Yes? Yes. Temporarily. Any focus on the self can have effects in the short term. Good and bad, and often bad if not properly contained.'

Jack coughed, squinted into the gauzy light.

'So you're saying people will buy the stuff?'

I felt unmoored. I moved around in my seat.

'Ye-es. But that is not a judgment on its professional worth. Only that people believe they need it.'

'And they will buy more books once they've tried it out,' Maríne continued, 'if the books are separated with an individual theme in each.'

'I see, I see,' said Jack, still squinting but nodding along, totting up numbers and editions. 'What type of issues? You mean bad relationships, trouble with sex, that type of thing?'

Maríne was in agreement. I looked at her, perplexed. She had not wanted to edit them. Could not *believe* in them. Now she was effusive.

'Thank you, Ben,' she said.

Jack pushed his glasses up his nose. He looked brighter, but eyed me with some suspicious colour in his eye. Then he turned away and it was gone.

'So get them to Radway.' He picked up his pen and put it in its case. 'He'll be expecting you. Good of you to agree to come visit. Yes, cleared up a lot.'

I shook my head. 'My pleasure.'

Jack tried pulling himself up on his pillows, coughing, and slumped back down again.

'I've got to get up soon, don't I? When I'm asking my girl here to do the dangerous stuff. Now, will one of you get me some more tea?'

On the métro on the way back she thanked me, explained she was trying to give Jack something to hold on to in his recovery. I was unexpected help and favour. She would arrange for my fee to be paid.

I put both hands on my legs and breathed. The métro rattled over its tracks as it pulled into a stop. I had lost track of how far we'd come, and it was only as Maríne was standing to get off I realised we were back at Concorde, for rue Saint-Honoré. She turned to face me.

'I suppose you'll want to begin properly now?' she asked. 'Analysis.'

'We have begun,' I forced a smile. 'I have a much clearer picture of what you were trying to tell me about Jack, the Obelisk, that...' *that kiss*. She didn't believe me. 'Next Monday, four o'clock at the hospital.'

She glanced back. Others watching us must have considered we were negotiating an altogether different kind of affair. The doors closed and the train moved away. I listened to the sounds of the train carriage bumping along over the rails into the tunnel. Her purpose of life came into view in her wake. Yes, I thought, she does not seek recognition from her authors or readers, nor from Jack. She sought to recognise something in herself, and had no need for them, really. She was developing a method of editing, something to outlast literature. And rather than mountains or seas to conquer she was a soul adventurer, her quest the speaking of taboos.

5

Marine arrived that Monday at four o'clock, and before I'd had a chance to lay out some guidance on how we would advance, she pulled a manuscript from her bag and rested it on her lap. It was loosely held together by string. I could see tiny markings all over the cover. There was a title but it had been scratched through.

'It's Charlie's book. Do you remember him?' she asked.

'Has it moved you yet?'

She didn't answer, was opening up the manuscript.

'And are you afraid of editing his book?'

'It takes a lot of risks. No one else, except maybe Henry, has written anything like this before.'

'So you're expecting that it will leave you immobile?'

She shook her head as if that was not the valuable thing she'd told me. Her eyes were sharp and hard, her lips ready to form an accusation. We spent the session talking about Charlie and his book. He'd posted it to Henry. They'd formed a correspondence the year before, after reading one of Henry's pieces in the *Nouvelle Revue française*. Henry convinced Charlie to leave Nicosia and travel to Paris and live with him and Anaïs at the Villa Seurat. That was Henry's commune, filled with penniless painters and writers all wishing to live as poorly as possible and create from the purchase of having nothing in the gut except one's art. Charlie told Henry to throw the damn thing in the Seine if he thought it not good enough; the new publishers Faber & Faber had rejected it already. But Henry loved the manuscript, and told Charlie about the Obelisk, asked if he could pass it along. Charlie made the journey from Cyprus, and they became blood brothers, drunken confidantes, the older, hoary Confucius to Charlie's young Ziyuan, the disciple, although Marine added she hoped Charlie would not suffer the same fate. The disciple's hair turned white at twenty-nine, she explained, and then at thirty-two he died.

‘Were you attracted to him?’ I asked.

She had the decency to think about it.

‘If I had to be, yes.’

‘To edit his book?’

‘Charlie thinks Henry’s the only man who can get it over someone like me,’ she said instead.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Charlie thinks we won’t take Henry’s book. That I’ll butcher it.’

‘Do you agree with that?’

She was sitting holding the manuscript as she talked, as if she were holding herself in the story. She saw me looking at her hands, and then raised both of them and flexed her fingers.

‘What about Jack? Don’t they have an agreement?’ I asked.

‘Jack and Henry don’t get on.’

‘And did you mind what he said about you? About Henry getting one over on you?’

‘Oh, Charlie is Henry’s busboy. No one can criticize him, or his writing. He’s a *god* for Charlie.’

‘Hmmm. Do you have a title for Charlie’s book?’

She shook her head. I thought of *Star against Star* and got up and opened the window. When I sat back down I asked her about Henry. She moved about in her seat; looked out of the window; let the brief flurry of cold air wash against her face. I thought of him lying naked on the marble benches in the atrium of the Sun Club. Swinging a leg, his posturing flaccidity. She sat up and turned to face me.

‘Do you have clients to get back to in New York? Or have you got all you need from them?’

There was a flicker at the edges of her eyes; a curiosity not altogether playful. I thought first of Faith, but then of my patients. Of Lillian.

‘They’ve not stopped calling. But you can’t let them take up all your time,’ I gave her a smile, moved quickly on. ‘Did you consider it at all a conflict? With Charlie, both editing his book and—’

‘You haven’t read his book. You would understand if you had.’

I could barely believe my own question, but there it was, resting on my tongue.

‘This was how it moved you? To sleep with him?’

She laughed, throwing her head back as far as the chair would allow. She held the arms of the seat, sniffing, the humour leaving her eyes. I could see her grip get a little tighter.

‘Oh, not yet,’ she said. ‘Not yet.’

‘Then go on.’

‘He said his wife—’

‘He’s married?’

She nodded, smiling.

‘And you knew this when you...?’

‘His book’s a challenge to monogamy. “If it’s bad for women it must be bad for us men too”.’

‘And you agree?’

‘He means bad for the soul, I think. Not one’s sock drawer. Bad for us as *humans*. His wife Lisa had been a childhood love. She’s happy enough, Charlie says.’

We both raised our eyebrows at this. Faith’s unanswered letter knocking inside my head.

‘He wanted to get his book published, and his great idol Henry Miller believed it could come true.’

‘And he told you all this? When?’

‘In my hotel room. I’m not supposed to take men there.’

‘And what did it make you feel?’

She smiled mischievously. ‘We *had* been up most of the night. You can say almost anything then.’

‘Weren’t you angry with him?’

‘It helped me understand the material. Suggestions for things to be put back in.’

‘Was that enough for you?’ I asked. ‘That the affair... to nurture your...’

She looked at me squarely.

‘Aren’t I material for *your* book, Benjamin?’

My mouth was suddenly dry. I waved for her to carry on.

‘Yes, it was enough. We’d have sex, and then work. I’d sit at the table and work on his novel.’

‘His novel?’

‘Where would be better?’

I smiled despite myself. ‘So... the sex was good?’

‘I knew what he wanted,’ she explained, her eyes sharp and satisfied.

‘Did he not feel guilt?’

‘Of course, but he wrote it all down, and it was never long enough in his head to curdle. He’s pretty sure his wife will never read his novel anyway.’

‘I mean doesn’t he feel guilty for using *you*?’

‘Oh, the young man down on his luck? The poor woman who gets caught in his enthusiasms? Becomes his secretary, his editor. But can you imagine how wonderfully eye-opening it was for *me*, Benjamin? How it helped *me*?’

It made too much sense. I told her so.

‘Oh no, it was hard work,’ she said. ‘I didn’t hide what I thought of it. It was full of cliché. Nothing *but* a new way of saying things.’

‘Unpublishable?’

‘He’s afraid he might not add up to much.’

‘Is that your professional opinion?’

She laughed lightly.

‘Don’t listen to me. I can’t be trusted.’

I made a grunting noise, turned in my seat. Frowned, did not want to be reminded of those doubts. She opened her bag once again and took out an envelope.

‘Here,’ she said.

I looked at it a while before I took it. ‘What is it?’

‘Another opportunity to observe. If none of this is making sense.’

She said it with that strange accusation I was coming to recognise but did not yet understand. I opened the envelope. It was an invitation from the Obelisk Press to ‘*a reading of extracts from a forthcoming novel by Charlie Furlong*’. I turned the card over. The signatures of Marine Cizeau and Jack Kahane were on the back under the logo.

‘I know Jack said no big parties, but...’ she paused teasingly. ‘Come. If it’s part of your *method*?’

It was the night of Charles Furlong's book reading. We got out of the taxi on boulevard Edgar-Quinet. Number 39 was a milliner's and a salon for the night so that everyone, the invite suggested, could try on different hats. I scoffed at the conceit. Henry told me to get in the spirit. A pretty young woman was keeping the door. She wore earrings that were miniatures of Eros riding a dolphin. We gave her our coats. Anaïs was in a Moorish gown, oranges and browns, wrapped around her in its inordinate length and knotted at the neck. In the milliner's studio the mirrored walls were lined with hats on pegs, hats on their boxes and on fabric busts, sitting on cabinets that had been pushed aside to make room. There were chairs along the walls, a chaise longue, but everyone was standing, trying on this hat or that, swapping among themselves with great comedy so that men wore cloches and women fedoras, grabbing for a glass of champagne from waiters as they passed and gossiping so fervently I could hear its hiss. The air was all perfume, peach and roses. On a platform in the corner a trio of bass, drums and a trumpet had been joined by a flute. In front of them a brave few had squeezed out a space for dancing, were fox-trotting or swinging or some other step that called for fast elbows.

'We're banned from talking about work, Benno,' Henry said. 'I hate perfect books. Where are they, *d'ailleurs*? In the fucking libraries, that's where, covered with dust. Not on the streets. Not bled on. Not pissed on. That's where we want to be, hey?' He jumped on Anaïs and she cried in laughter. 'You wait until you hear Charlie read. He'll blow you away. You'll want to swallow him whole.'

'There they are,' said Anaïs, pointing across the room.

Charles and Maríne stood among a group. We took flutes off a passing waiter and made our way over. Maríne wore a black dress with emerald green embroidered eyes, her hair flattened with pins. Charles half-smiled, biting his nails. Henry took him into a great bear hug, batting him on the sides of his arms, prepping him as if for a knuckle fight. Everyone was in lively conversation. I stood next to Maríne. She acknowledged me with a small smile, then turned away.

'When is it all going to start?' asked a blonde woman, whose name was Valarie.

A tall, effete man called Arthur looked at his watch.

'Oops, Charlie my boy, we need to get you ready.'

Charles opened his eyes as wide as he could. ‘Let’s get it over with.’

‘Charlie, you’re the artist tonight,’ said Henry. ‘Enjoy it!’

Maríne took Charlie by the arm. ‘A ceremony first, for luck.’

She led us into the gardens. Arthur fell in beside me. He was their fixer. The Obelisk had employed him for years for the book launches and parties. He swung his champagne glass around.

‘So what’s going to happen tonight?’ I asked him.

Arthur squealed. ‘Oh, you terrible man. How could you ask!’

We walked through a large garden. A strange artificial smoke pumped from a machine and sat over us like folds of satin. We walked arm in arm through hidden crowds—a couple kissing, a single figure smoking among the oleander—shapes never fully gathered. We reached a small stone table in the dark, the house, its voices and music, behind us and distant. On the table were half a dozen or so paper lanterns. Maríne took sheets of paper from inside her dress.

‘Here,’ she said, handing them out. ‘Everyone has to write a note, like a message in a bottle.’

‘Remember, it will land in a back garden,’ said Valarie, and she licked her fingertip and put it into the air and looked east, ‘in Vincennes. Set fire to some madame’s sheets out on the washing line.’

Maríne handed me one of the square sheets of paper.

‘Remind you of anything?’ she asked, arching her eyebrows. She handed me a pencil, and went back to Charles, who was fixing his piece of paper to the bottom of a lantern with some wire. He did the same for Valarie and Arthur. Anaïs had written hers. Henry had disappeared. Then Arthur took out a box of matches and we counted down from ten to one, and he lit each.

‘*Allez loin!*’ shouted Arthur, and let his go.

‘They go so very fast,’ said Valarie.

The lanterns became little eyes, then mysteries.

‘I’m starting to sober up,’ said Arthur. ‘And that’s never good. And Charlie! We have work.’

Charlie was puffing out his cheeks, flicking the hair out of his eyes.

‘Do we want another drink?’ Arthur asked. And then they were off, Arthur and Charlie and Maríne.

I stood with Anaïs and pulled her away. We walked further into the gardens, towards a bandstand that came out of the dark. She took her arm from the loop of mine. A group stumbled from behind a bush, laughing and clinking, stampeding through the bandstand.

‘What did you wish for?’ Anaïs asked.

‘Can’t tell, or it won’t come true. Are they still sleeping together? Maríne and Charlie.’

‘Why, do you feel guilty?’ teased Anaïs.

‘Of course not. What for?’

‘She must have taken a liking to you.’

‘Oh, why’s that?’ I look around, uninterested.

‘The invite, to see you here.’ She paused. ‘Being her analyst now, as well. Is it...’

‘Otto and I discussed it. We cannot stay *removed*, Anaïs. Not if we truly want to help.’

‘Transference is real, Ben. And dangerous.’

‘Distance only serves to understand, not change. Come, Anaïs, you know Freudian analysis is failing. It is so rigid! You hate it as much as I do.’

‘Not so much.’

Anaïs looked up, watching the bending branches of willow that hung over the bandstand. She yawned, stretching out her arms with a small, impish squeak.

‘You would take these risks?’ she asked.

‘We’re about to do something amazing, Anaïs. A true connection.’

‘I don’t want to... I’m thinking of Faith,’ she said, and sighed.

‘But you’re here,’ I laughed. ‘You wouldn’t let me get into any danger?’

‘Come on,’ she tugged at my arm, ‘let’s get another drink.’

Back in the salon the quartet had changed their arrangement. The dancers were making demands; they wanted an Argentinian tango from the *milongas*, what they were dancing to along the rue du Château des Rentiers. The flute was put away. Anaïs introduced a beautiful Japanese sculptor making giant birds out of bronze. She had field-green eyes. We talked about jazz music and about the birds of Brancusi done in gold. Of course no one went to Au Lapin Agile anymore, which was a shame. We could stumble home together if we went there, I suggested.

‘Another time, another time,’ said the Japanese sculptor.

I had lost everyone else, so followed a waiter and took a drink, wobbled suddenly, stranded and swaying. The room hushed and the lights went out. A spotlight was trained on the stage, where a young girl was curled up inside a Moses basket. A drum boomed; the room vibrated. A dancer leapt onto the stage, a young black man, naked except for a skirt to his knees. He danced round the basket and picked up the girl and she unwound, stretched, awoke. Another spotlight lit up Charlie wearing a monk’s habit.

‘An elegy for the animal in our innermost systems, the limbic, the thalamus, for the surviving ideation,’ he began, a singsong, hypnotic verse, his voice cracking, then strong. The dancer carried the girl around the stage, swinging to the rhythm of Charlie’s voice and the drum. ‘Vague movements in the dim. Swart, the lines on your hand, the rift in your ears, the sounds so low of the universe, you will live to 2015, you will be the one to bend the earth’s axis, and you will point it towards Polaris.’

Then total darkness. Breath, chests, heaving.

‘Fire. Ice. Cataclysms,’ sang Charlie. ‘What birthed you to live? What self have you become?’

The spotlight flooded back on. The girl now standing, wearing a sheet cut to her knees, I closed my eyes and purged from my mind a picture of the young girl at the Necker. On the stage the girl danced, trancelike. Then she disappeared. A door opened, the night rushed in, a bouquet of smells, some sweet and some rotten. Charlie stepped off the stage, his book held out like a preacher. The dancer fell into line, and then others—I saw Valarie, the blonde, and Arthur, who were in on it, staring forward. We were supposed to follow. The drum banged out a dirge. The drummer carried his bin in front of him, strapped to his shoulders. He wore a bowler hat. We merged into a line and followed, out into the garden. Another actor dressed in a bird outfit came and jumped in front of the procession, in front of Charlie, all feathers and long legs.

‘Follow the ostrich,’ sang Charlie.

We followed, Charlie reading in his singsong at the top of his voice.

‘The womb empties us, Pat and Puck.’

We walked to the bandstand. There were braziers burning. Charlie and the dancer climbed onto the platform. The dancer performed a search for the girl.

‘She is Self,’ Charlie sang. ‘Where has she gone?’ The smoke from the machine surrounded us, the crowd tight together, watching and singing or humming, shouting encouragement, demands. I caught the eye of Henry. I made my way over to him, looked down to find a path, looked up and he was gone.

‘Our monsters in the cellar, cut them out! Cut out their tongues. New myths,’ sang Charlie. ‘I’ve fallen into the maze, the labyrinth, looking for the Mexican hothouse. Why aren’t all walls green and alive? Overgrow, do not bloom, age, do not disappear, change, and change has its god, not Chloris, not a nymph, but Proteus, the spy, the prophet, the mutable.’

Two actors dressed in black threw buckets of water over the braziers, and the violence of the act made some gasp, some scream, some jump, as they hissed. Charlie was lost in the smoke.

He shouted a final command:

‘*Stuprum in oestris!* Find the Self! Follow the ostrich!’

More actors ran into the crowd, pushing people to move away, repeating his cries like a chorus. The crowd squealed, began to scatter. Then a hand was on my arm, pulling me somewhere—it was the actor dressed as the ostrich. He made a funny bird-like noise.

‘Where are you taking me?’

‘Shush,’ said the actor. ‘Shush.’

He led me to the entrance a sort of marquee covered in fabric, and the ostrich was pushing me in, making his strange bird-like noises. I ducked my head. A womb: hadn’t he shouted that? A maze. I wound my way around, the fabric low slung, the channel barely big enough to walk through. I turned right, left. Could still hear the drums. I pushed through curtains into a small, tented room, the centre of the marquee. A small brazier, its embers, lit the space. My eyes got used to it and I sobered up at the sounds of breathing. I squinted to see. Tied to a post, her arms out crucified, and naked, was Maríne. Her breasts smaller than I’d imagined them, the hair at the top of her legs shaved into a thin line. To her side was the dancer in the skirt now holding a splayed cat whip, long loose leather, and behind them both stood Charlie, holding out his book.

‘The whipped bitch under the apple tree,’ he sang. The dancer whipped Maríne across the stomach and her breasts. I jumped at its crack. I felt its tip. The dancer whipped her again. A red welt appeared across her belly. The dancer

whipped her again. She did not cry out, but she started each time. Her eyes open, looking at me. Too shocked to move, I stood and watched it all.

‘Was Christ born a prostitute?’ sang Charlie. ‘Jesus a damp scrotum which has lain...’

And then in that darkest of lights I watched a small trickle of blood run down her belly from the welt on her left breast, just under her nipple.

‘I’m bleeding, sir,’ sang Charlie in a strained alto, ‘I’m bleeding down there between m’legs.’

I turned and ran out, through the tunnel, slipping once and grabbing the fabric, nearly pulling the construction down on top of me. Fought my way through, thought I would never get out, and then I was out in the air, in the garden behind the bandstand. The marquee so black I could barely see it. I half-ran, feeling foolish but not altogether unafraid, across the grass to the house. The crowd were back in the salon. The band were on—the music fast. Everyone electrified, gassing, laughing, *wasn’t that... completely crazy... did you see when...* I put both hands to my cheeks, held my face, closed my ears, tucked in my elbows and forced a way through to the exit, stumbled into Henry.

‘Say, wasn’t that magnificent?’ shouted Henry, his arms out to catch me. ‘Wasn’t that swell?’

I looked away.

‘Wasn’t that just the powder?’ shouted Henry, shaking me. ‘His book will sell thousands. Millions! And it should. He’s got the scruff, hasn’t he? Boy, if I’d been writing like him at that age and not pissing up the wall in the Bowery with Jim Horton.’

‘Didn’t you see her?’ I said sharply.

‘Oh, she’s done him proud for a change,’ Henry rattled on. ‘She’s saved herself with this. I’ll forgive her fattening Charlie up if she can do this again with *Tropic*, hey Anaïs?’

I turned around, a relief to look into Anaïs’ eyes.

‘I’m almost done you know, Benno, my book. But after this, what shit it will be! No, I’ll finish it anyway. And we’ll be brothers in arms, me and Charlie. She’ll see us to that. Follow the ostrich!’

‘She was being whipped.’

‘Whipped?’ said Henry. ‘I didn’t know about no whipping.’

‘Didn’t you see it? Why was I the only one who saw it?’

‘Ben, it’s a show,’ said Anaïs softly.

‘I know that. That’s not what I mean.’

Anaïs looped her arm through mine. I told them what I’d seen.

‘She was in his performance?’ said Henry. ‘Good on her!’

‘It wasn’t a performance. She was *bleeding*.’

Henry looked at Anaïs.

‘I think it’s turned Benno crazy,’ said Henry, and then he took me by the shoulders. ‘Good! Good! See, didn’t I tell you? You’re our bellwether. You’re amazing! First I knocked you out, now you’ve swallowed him whole, Benno. Whole!’

‘Don’t be ridiculous.’

I shrugged him off and walked away, picked up another glass of champagne and stomped out into the garden. I kept to the wall of the house and found a gap in the bushes formed by a low stone bench and sat there and closed my eyes.

I don’t know how long I drifted. I jumped up, felt sick. I shook out my suit, held myself against the wall. I walked to the salon and stopped in the doorway. The party had ended, only a handful of guests remained. I’d lost Anaïs and Henry—they’d gone to La Coupole, someone said. The band was packing away their instruments. I found a half-full glass of champagne and fell onto the chaise longue and closed my eyes. The room was swimming. I shook my head, regretting every drop I’d had to drink. Someone was pulling on my arm. I opened my eyes. It was Maríne wrapped in a blanket and wearing a top hat.

‘Hello Benjamin,’ she said.

Then Charlie was there too, pulling me up. ‘Yes, so, did you enjoy it?’ he asked.

We caught a cab together to La Coupole. We ordered a carafe of wine before we’d even looked around but everyone had moved on. It was late, perhaps after two. I would have done much better if I’d gone home, but Charlie was adamant we have a drink together. Maríne didn’t talk, and I didn’t look at her. Charlie was still flooded with excitement. He pulled a clipping from a magazine out of his pocket, explained it was the latest dispatch on the Surrealists from that female journalist writing as Genêt, and wanted to know what I thought.

‘Here she is: “The cerebral sap of the Gallic mind runs in two opposite directions at once, one aiming at the destruction of a present society and the other at setting up a utopia on which nobody can agree.” She doesn’t have a clue, does she?’

‘I think she captures the movement pretty well.’

‘Hah! Surrealism maintains a devotion to your lot. *You’re* responsible. Creation and destruction of the psyche. But I’d like to finish one thing before beginning the next, wouldn’t you?’

‘Spend less time turned inwards,’ I snapped. ‘Think less of your ideas.’

He laughed. A different time, he would’ve taken it as an attack. ‘I find *that* suggestion impossible.’

‘Where do you think they’ve gone,’ I asked Maríne, ‘the others?’

Maríne was in some sort of daze. Charlie and I both looked at her, then back at each other.

‘He says I pushed him on,’ said Charlie, changing the subject, drinking wine and then wiping his mouth on the sleeve of his jacket. ‘Can you imagine? The catalyst for Henry Miller! It’s much more the other way round. But to hear him say it! So did you like it, Ben?’

‘Your reading?’

‘Maríne seems to think it went alright,’ he said, ‘didn’t you?’

She didn’t take any notice. She was still wrapped in her blanket, wearing the top hat.

‘But she keeps tinkering,’ said Charlie, quieter, but not so quiet she could not hear.

‘I thought she—I thought you left it all in?’ I said to her. Still no response; Charlie carried on.

‘Those bits are fine. But she wants me to keep *adding* stuff. She says I’ve censored myself. Says there are doors still to be opened.’

‘Yes, I heard. From Henry,’ I added quickly.

He threw the clipping onto the table between us.

‘Did you see any doors left unopened? I mean, do you think I didn’t bloody well try to open them?’ I glared at Charlie, drunk and high on his success. He threw one leg over the other, sat forward. ‘You know what she calls us?’ He glanced quickly at her. ‘We’re your “shy and offended writers” aren’t we?’

Offended! Plucked like geese in the grip of publishers. Oh, Faber has his fingers full of my feathers alright. She says her authors sob. Don't you, Maríne? Have you seen me sob?'

'I think your tone is rather inappropriate. Has she been *hurt*?'

He was sweating, nearly out of breath.

'Oh, I'm done. Done with the Obelisk. Done with what she can do for my knotted labours.'

'You should write that down,' I said, not hiding my disgust.

Charlie flopped back, laughed, put a hand on Maríne's shoulder. She didn't flinch.

'True. You've got me there. Mea culpa. But my words are fat enough already. Aboulia and co. They're from brain manuals. Well. I mean, those surgery manuals that talk about operating on the brain. I love it for the language more than anything. Words from trades stick in my tongue. I'm a fiendish reader for syllables, you know. Anomia, alexia, etcetera.'

'Yes. Maríne said you were *influenced*.' I did not want to talk about *brains* or *wombs* or *syllables*.

'Henry's the same,' he carried on. 'His best phrases are incomprehensible: "giving the womb the curette with every line". The average reader doesn't have a fig. But then *she*,' and he pushed his thumb at her, 'wants me to put *more* in! Can you understand? Oh, I suppose you don't know her so well.'

Charlie staggered up and wandered off to the bathroom. I reached over and grabbed Maríne by the arm.

'Maríne? Maríne?'

She didn't respond. I waved a hand in front of her face, feeling foolish, amateur. I saw Charlie coming back and took my hand away. He looked as if he'd had a wash.

'Anyway, you'll be printing it soon,' he said to her. 'Won't you? A first couple of hundred, she says, and we're going to take them out to the booksellers. They sell them under the counter. Send a box to America, too. We do it all at night. It's rather exciting. I'm rather excited by it.'

'Charlie, look. You don't seem bothered by what she's... how she's...'

'Would you like to come?' he asked suddenly.

I was confused, then realised what he was saying.

‘You’re inviting me to come and print your book?’

He held his hands up as if I’d caught him out at some game.

‘She said you’d be keen to see it. You’re observing us. Is that so? Anyway, has she told you about the psychology I put into it? Did you hear any of it tonight? I’d love to know. It’s all so...’

‘Did she say that?’

‘What? Oh, only in passing. We weren’t *analysing* you!’ He laughed at his own joke.

‘Charlie, have you seen this happen before? Was it her idea with the whip? What happened...’

‘Well...’ he squirmed around. ‘Well.’

‘Did you know it was going to be for real?’

‘She volunteered for that bit. I didn’t know you were going to be dragged in there on your own. I don’t know what happened there, Benjamin. There was meant to be a crowd.’

I considered it. That ostrich had known what he was doing.

‘I’d like to read that scene. Will you send it to me?’

‘I’ve only got one copy,’ he said. ‘And Henry made me do *that*. I’d rather just have thrown it in the Seine. What I don’t understand,’ he began, and he put one leg straight out, ‘what I don’t understand is what’s her problem? It’s got a goodish tone, don’t you think?’

‘If I could read—’

‘She’s not helping, you know by dragging it out. She doesn’t understand, does she? Don’t tell me she does, Benjamin. I won’t believe you.’

‘You underestimate her, Charles,’ I said quietly.

I thought he hadn’t heard, but he perked up. ‘Oh, no sir! She’s a great actor. *I’m* not. I’m not a permanent inhabitant. One can’t act on the page. Only write, and then only on Wednesdays.’

He was quiet for a while. His eyes were narrowing from the drink. Then he slumped in his seat, the wine catching up with him, the adrenaline running out. I left Maríne at the table with a word to the waiter to keep an eye on her while I manoeuvred Charlie into a taxi, paid in advance. When I came back Maríne was gone. It was okay, said the waiter, she’d gone into the toilet. She was sitting on

the lavatory, skirt around her hips. I pulled her up and walked her out of the café and hailed another taxi.

‘*On va où?*’ asked the driver.

She began to stir. I looked down. ‘Did you like it?’ she mumbled.

I pulled her up. ‘Sit, will you.’

‘Where are we going? Following the ostrich?’

‘No,’ I said, unsure myself. ‘Polaris.’

Undressed, I counted the freckles along her shoulders.

It wasn’t a horror, her lodgings. The light was not bare, and the kitchen was tucked round a corner. It was well aired. The window wide, the desk stabilized with ticket stubs from the theatre, under one leg. Out of the window I could see the Île de la Cité and pigeons on the rooftops. Among the scents of her room I thought of... I was hungry.

‘Do you have anything to eat?’

‘Oh. Somewhere. Yes. Bread?’

I stood from my chair and pulled aside the curtain that hid the small gas ring and the trolley where she kept her food. Some bread, a dish of butter. Anchovies in a glass jar. Some charcuterie wrapped in greased paper. Tins of fruit. I found a knife and cut six slices and found a plate and put them together with some anchovies and the meat, and I swabbed a pitch of butter on the side of the plate and found a smaller knife, and went back to my chair. I perched on the edge, eating. I could hear a cello below, someone at their early morning practice. Then a child screaming. I spread some butter and layered anchovy over the top. It tasted rich, anomalous, an inconsolable taste.

‘Do you want some?’

‘No. I’m alright.’

‘What are you reading?’

There was a book left with its pages open, spine down, bent but not broken, on her bedside table. It had a red cover, and the edges of the pages were gilded with gold. She looked at it, then turned back.

‘Did you see coffee?’

‘I didn’t look.’

‘I’m sure I’ve got some.’

‘I’ll look.’

‘No, don’t.’ She tried to sit up. ‘It’s a bit early.’ She settled again. ‘It’s not very good.’

‘The coffee?’

‘The poetry.’

I tried to read what was written on the front, but it was upside down, and in another language.

‘Spanish?’

‘Maybe it’s the translation.’ She looked at me for a moment. ‘No, not Spanish.’

I ate a piece of bread with a slice of sausage, its fatty globes a swirling map of white. I ground out the last of my mouthful, my jaw hurting.

‘So did we?’ she asked.

I sat up, felt the hard back of the chair.

‘Did we what?’

‘Was it any good?’ she asked. She rolled over. ‘Did you think it was any good?’

‘I’ll be going,’ I said. ‘Now you’re feeling better.’

‘So you undressed me, but we didn’t...?’

‘You were far too drunk,’ I said. She looked at me, blank faced. ‘That was a joke, Maríne.’

She tried to laugh, but it turned into a grimace. She wrapped her arms around her torso. It was the welts under her breasts. I had washed them as best I could with salt water.

‘You should get them seen to.’

She nodded. ‘He was rejected by Faber & Faber, you know. The Obelisk’s his best chance.’

‘Yes, yes, alright.’

I stood up, felt unsteady. Maríne didn’t move and I slipped out of the room and walked home and lay in my own bed, alert and frayed. When I closed my eyes I saw her naked. I opened them, stared up at the ceiling. Monday? Would she arrive as if nothing had happened? I sat up, picked up her book, *Sleeveless Errand*. The light coming through the windows. Slipped down into bed, put the book to one side without getting beyond the dedication. I would not sleep: the

alcohol, her blood, my panic. The sight of her, and then... Of course, only a show.

6

Strafed with a mixture of hope, dread and the effects of the champagne, I showered and dressed and went to the Necker with only a coffee in my stomach from the kiosk at the métro Falguière. I bantered a little while, in our ill-matched way, with the porters in reception. I'd sobered up with the warnings of Anaïs ringing in my ears. Even so, I had no intention of breaking things with Maríne. We had crossed an analytic boundary, but survived. My mood was unchanged until I gleaned from the conversations that, later that morning, Moniz was to give a lecture on his new procedure at the nearby Institute of Neurology. The purpose was to gather attendees for a daylong symposium to take place at the Necker in June. Moniz's symposium was an annual event in the hospital's calendar, and this year he would discuss the surgical intervention into psychic life. What Moniz was calling, if I understood properly, psychosurgery. I slumped in my office chair with a heavy body and riddled mind. I imagined trying to reach him across a lecture hall but falling further away into a hole, looking up at the ever diminishing rim, and seeing his face over the edge, then just his eyes, then just the black of the eyes, and inside—but no, only blackness then. When I was done I put away my notes and made my way across the city.

The concierge at the Institute of Neurology studied me over his pince-nez without a smile, and looked down his list. I was not on it. I explained I was a colleague at the Necker and showed him my papers. He looked unconvinced, but showed me the way. I found Moniz with a dozen men, including Almeida Lima—not so much a 'lecture' at all. Moniz stopped talking as I opened the door. For a moment I saw anger tighten his face. Around the walls were dozens of angiographs. He assented that I enter. The others grabbed lapels, nudged one another. I sat down at one end of a row of seats near the door and waited for Moniz to continue.

'I'm glad you've come, Doctor Hayes. You will see the advances I have made with the procedure.'

He pointed at a detailed, larger picture with his cane.

‘Here,’ he said, ‘see the knots of melancholy fastened to her centrum ovale?’

There were murmurings. Lima left the room through a back door, the show about to start for real, and came back wheeling a trolley and the body of a woman on its slab. Her hair had been shaved off, small wisps of blonde still around the nape of her neck. Thankfully the Institute’s theatres were better aired than the Necker’s. She had been married, explained Moniz, a history of anxiety reaction, sexual inadequacy, and gastro-intestinal disorders. She was fifty-three when she was taken to the Palais de Justice after wandering around the Twelfth in her bed garments, and examined in the room where all who exhibited psychotic behaviours were interrogated, in white straight-jackets, and then taken to one of the mental institutions. She had died just a few days before from unknown causes. Moniz acted quickly to get his angiograph. I had the strange, bleak sensation of seeing everything whited out, as if there was no depth to the world. I pushed forward in my seat, rounded on Moniz.

‘Your patient?’ I pointed at the woman on the trolley. ‘Was she *unhygienic*?’

‘Our procedure worked superbly,’ he carried on.

‘She was already dead, Moniz,’ I half-shouted. ‘How do you know?’

The other men turned and shushed me in French. A shudder of moustache and tweed and the reflection off the cold lecture theatre lights on their monocles and spectacles. I looked away in disgust, and focused on the woman, the skin over her skull. It had not been sewn back up. Moniz walked over to her, the polished soles of his shoes tapping on the marble floor. From a tray table he picked up a pair of forceps and peeled back the skin from the woman’s skull, except there was no skull there, just the grey and folded compartments of her brain. I looked away and remembered walking through Central Park on a warm summer’s day, arm in arm with Faith.

‘The unhealthy brain is an ugly brain,’ he said, pushing at the folds of skin, spattered red on their insides, yellowing and thick like a crust on old milk. ‘Yet look at the immensity of life. Nothing empty, nothing repeated, nothing neutral. The mind is plastic.’

I heard half the room translating for the other half, then murmurs, a glimmering assent.

‘So this is where it gets interesting, is it?’ I bawled.

Moniz stood back, the forceps still in his hand.

‘You may believe this or not, Doctor Hayes, but I expect our young patient at the Necker to be fully recovered from her paralysis. I am not a monster, gentleman.’ More translation, a small mutter of *nons*, glances.

I looked at the dead woman. If not at the Necker, then here, or some other hospital.

‘You believe that if your mind were defective, you would have the *right* to refuse a new personality. But that is not the case. We take responsibility for those who cannot.’

‘What *right* would you have to change it?’ I shouted.

‘Yes!’ shouted Moniz, then recomposed himself. ‘Exactly. The *right*. I have taken the Hippocratic oath. I would not pass over to the other side.’

Moniz fixed me with his gaze. I pulled away, stood up and thanked him for allowing me to witness this new stage in his work, pushing past Lima on the way out.

I spent the afternoon arranging my office around a coffee table one of the porters had brought on my request. I placed a few objects on the table, including four books: one by Freud on creative writers, Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth*, a biography of Pissarro, and a collection of short stories by Dostoevsky. A glass weight with red and white circles swirling through its centre; a ceramic pot full of dried petals; a small vase full of yellow daisies. The physical activity calmed me, and as four o’clock approached I was able to sit down, read, wait for Maríne to arrive. When she did, she betrayed no sense of what happened the night before. She did not even look as if she’d been drinking. Her appearance suddenly angered me. She put her cloche and bag down to one side. She studied me for a moment, attempting to work out my mood, and then studied the books laid out on the coffee table.

‘Do you mind if I smoke?’ Her voice was gravelly, I was pleased to hear.

‘Let me open the window then.’

I pushed it open and sat down. She lit up and conjured small talk freely, smoking and tapping her fingers on the arm of the chair. She leant forward and read the titles of the books. She shrugged, a sulky lean back into the chair. I waited for her to continue.

‘Are you done editing his book now?’ I asked. ‘Is that it?’

‘Oh, Benjamin.’ It irritated me beyond measure, so fast I could not even register the itchiness scale my spine. ‘He’ll be safe with me now. Are these yours?’

She pointed at the table.

‘Yes, they’re mine. But I don’t understand, what about your *problem?*’

‘They’re very well lined up. Oh, was I not meant to touch—?’

I shook my head and sighed.

‘Feel free.’

She picked up the Dostoevsky, ran her hand over the cover.

‘Are they part of the game?’

I pinched my lips. I *had* told her we wouldn’t fix anything. I relaxed, pointed at the books.

‘It was an accident to begin with. I’d forgotten to tidy up before a client arrived. Lillian...’ I hesitated, ‘she’s an interesting character, successful on Wall Street, which is no mean feat. I was reading them when she arrived for her session.’

‘You selected them for her?’

‘She picked up that one too. She read from the title piece, “The Crocodile”. She read some out to me and it began to open things up for her. If energy is focused elsewhere, it can free up the unconscious from the thing obstructing it.’

She turned it round in her hands.

‘Are you going to ask me to read some?’

‘You can do as you please,’ I said, pushing my knees together.

She flicked open to “The Crocodile”. It was an English translation. She looked through, searching, and then stopped and ran a finger down the page.

‘“*We’ll have a look at the crocodile! On the eve of visiting Europe it is as well to acquaint ourselves on the spot with its indigenous inhabitants*”. Is Europe a zoo to foreigners, Benjamin?’

I thought of Henry.

‘Americans are known to be curious. But I’m as English as you.’

‘Oh yes, I forgot. “*So this is the crocodile, said Elena Ivanovna, with a pathetic cadence of regret. Why, I thought it was... something different*”.’ She smiled and looked up at me. ‘“*So everything was going well, and nothing could have been foreseen*”,’ she carried on. ‘“*Elena Ivanovna was quite skittish in her*

raptures over the monkeys, and seemed completely taken up with them... The monkeys I dreamed about, I suppose, because they were shut up in the cage...". Oh, it's interesting, isn't it, what one dreams about?' She began reading again: *"Is it possible? I cried, in a surprise that may well be understood. Can the crocodile be perfectly empty?"* Well that's the question, Benjamin, can it be perfectly empty, the crocodile?

'It depends what you think the crocodile is,' I said. I faced the window, thinking not of a crocodile but of the image of that monkey, its tattered hair.

'Does she still come to you, the Wall Street woman?'

Lillian. Another reason I'd not written to Faith. We sat in silence, but for the clock ticking.

'Is she a chapter in your book?'

I frowned. Perhaps it was a mistake to leave the books out.

'Yes, she does. She is.'

'You'll go back to New York and carry on where you left off, then,' said Maríne, matter-of-factly.

'So,' I interrupted. I didn't want any more of *that*. 'What do you think the crocodile is?'

'Meaning,' she said, closing the book with a slap. 'The crocodile is meaning. It can be empty of purpose, or full. It depends on who is looking. But the question, Benjamin, is what are the monkeys?'

I froze. She smoked the last of her cigarette and put it out in the pot pourri. She returned my stare triumphantly. I recognised that look on her face. Suddenly she put a hand on my knee. I felt her fingers like little needles through my trousers. Words, Henry's, rushed in: *you're our bellwether!* She took her hand away. I felt a run of sweat under my arms, down my back. And just as she had at the Obelisk moments after that kiss, her face crumbled from triumph to despair, and she dropped the book on the table and covered her face as she cried. I sat unable to act for a good few moments. My training came back to me, and I took the box of tissues from my desk and put them within her reach on the coffee table. But as hard as I tried, I could not stop thinking of Charlie's words from the night before. *Oh, no sir. She's a great actor.* I sat and waited for her tears to run themselves out and could not get much out of her for the rest of that session. When she finished her face was set into a tired, teary and grim vacancy that

stared half at me and half beyond, similar to how she had been the night before. Here it was then, the neurasthenia, the numbness that set in and meant she could not work. This was what terrified her—that when Jack’s instructions came, she could not respond, and he, in his bedbound frustration, would grow impatient, with the Obelisk’s finances foundering on the cliffs of his editor’s neurotic... alexia? But it was not an inability to read. She apologised again. I shook my head.

‘You are trying to live a more feeling life, Maríne,’ I explained. ‘You should not apologise.’

‘Then why aren’t things getting better?’

‘People resist knowing their mortality. *Freudian* analysis no longer focuses on the aiding of people to get over this. It focuses on the useless part of analysis, self-knowledge.’ I smiled, breathed, and watched her watching me. ‘But self-knowledge *increases* the fear of mortality. You, Maríne, have seen through this. You do not want to know why you suffer these episodes. You just want us to manage them better so you can achieve your aims.’

‘So how can one survive?’

‘Your “neurotic” reactions are a reaction to what society says you *should* be feeling. That the books you edit are unacceptable, and the only “acceptable” response to them is to find them so. But these are not your real feelings.’

‘And what are my real feelings?’

‘A need for recognition, and for immortality. To believe in the bargain we strike when we realise we cannot live forever.’

She sniffed, and I passed her another tissue. She frowned through her watery eyes.

‘But why should I have feelings that aren’t my own?’

‘Society, Maríne, the formal institutions, its informal rules. These slumps are a fatigue with the world, not the books themselves.’

We sat in silence for the rest of the session. I suggested she come the next day, and we could try again. And so I left the Necker that evening with a bounce to my step, having quite forgotten her questions of what *I* had been dreaming about, what *I* believed.

The next day Maríne did not arrive. I assumed she was wallowing in her room, numb as a finger caught in a doorjamb. I sat in my office until five o’clock reading, and when the hour was struck I got up, put on my coat and locked the

door and took my impatience out on the pavements. Outside a small cinéma a board told the times for the showings. There was nothing starting for another hour. I looked around. I hadn't noticed the clouds gather for a late spring shower. I already looked like I was going to jump in the Seine, so I went home. By the Friday I'd had enough, so I walked across the river and went up the flight of stairs at the Obelisk to find Maríne at her desk and Charlie Furlong pacing around behind her. I saw anger on her face, or perhaps disgust, perhaps even pity. I felt cold and clammy under her eyes.

'You don't look good, Benjamin,' said Maríne curtly.

I laughed. 'Oh!'

Charlie looked over, wondering what I was doing here. He leant over Maríne, and it fizzed in my stomach. 'Well. Good to see you again.'

'I wasn't expecting you,' she said, 'was I?'

'No,' I said, affronted, but it was not the time to say my piece. 'No. May I?'

'Come to observe us?' Charlie asked. I entered and sat down on the sofa by her desk. She explained they were putting the final touches to Charlie's book for publication. 'We've been hard at it all week.'

Charlie did not look particularly well or excited about it all. His hair, usually so healthy, was greasy, his skin paler. Long nights, black petals of dying cyclamen under his eyes. I sat and watched them go through the manuscript in fine detail, often deliberating over single words for minutes, hours—no, not hours, of course, although the sun had gone and Maríne had turned on her desk lamp. When they came to the passage where the whipped bitch bleeds I left them to it and retreated to the kitchen, made a pot of coffee. I came back and poured for all of us, and wondered what on earth I was doing there. I drank my coffee and watched. She would read a passage, sometimes aloud, strike through, or make notes, and I quietly drew out a small notebook and began scribbling. When Maríne was focused on a task, such as editing a manuscript, she did not seem to register the sensation of being watched. She gave complete attention to her task. Her features in the act became less plain, more complicated, a word stared at too long. When she did look up as if to remind herself I was still there, it was with a sharp, serious eye; then lighter, amused, always flitting between curiosity and an accusation that was unkind, pricking. She was like a bird that roots out the seed long before it flowers. Not at Gallimard or Cape did they edit in the way she did.

And then they were done. Charlie standing behind Maríne, leaning over her shoulder, as she suggested to him some final incisions. Words cut back in. He stood up, tightened the belt around his waist. He'd lost weight, worried about what the day of publication would bring for him. Maríne explained that they would print off a few hundred. Charlie was slumped in a chair at the table. He squirmed and put down a hand on the desk. He took up his manuscript and began leafing through the pages. They made a whishing noise. I looked out of the window and had no sense of the time. He began to read, and then looked up.

'How awful. I'm sorry you had to read this, Maríne. It was a fit, you know. I'd write, and I'd come back to it and not recognise any of the words. Do you understand?'

'It will make good kindling,' she said.

'Oh, you think so?' asked Charlie earnestly.

'Throw it in the Seine. That's what you wrote when you sent it.'

She was smiling. He relaxed, then laughed.

'Yes, I remember. Silly of me. Oh God, I was a monster wasn't I? Miserable and wormy and frightened and numb. My terrible provincial numbness got the better of me, didn't it?'

'You're being unkind to yourself,' I said.

'No he's not,' Maríne cut me off. 'It needed plenty of work. Wherever I saw the emotion going soft I struck at it. You may think blindly.'

'It infected my poor little soul, didn't it, wanting so desperately to write,' Charlie carried on.

'You're not a poor little anything,' I said.

'Yes, a monster! You can say it you know.'

'Charlie, stop!' I shouted.

Maríne only raised her eyebrows. Charlie smiled at Maríne.

'Well you must help me, then. Let's do it.' He shook the manuscript. 'Let's put it out.' He looked at his book, laughed. 'All sounds such tosh now, doesn't it? I've learnt so very much. Is this really it?'

Charlie took our coffee cups and went into the kitchen, returned and then all three of us were standing. The stairs were dark. Charlie flicked his hair from his eyes.

'Did you come for something, Benjamin?' Maríne asked.

‘We’ve been awfully remiss,’ added Charlie. ‘Haven’t even asked you how you are. You know how...’ he looked at his book on the table. ‘How are you?’

I smiled grimly, and fell back into the sofa. It wasn’t long after that Charlie left, the work completed and a strange atmosphere, not quite calm, not quite finished, settled on the Obelisk.

‘You didn’t come,’ I said to her once she’d tidied up the pages of the book. She was behind her desk, twirling a pencil around her fingers.

‘But you see, you helped me Benjamin,’ she said, smiling. She patted the manuscript.

‘Did you think it was acceptable to simply not turn up?’

I knew I was chiding her as if she were a schoolgirl.

‘Oh,’ she *looked* contrite. ‘I thought, well, I woke up, and it was gone—’

‘It?’

‘The blankness,’ she said. ‘You saw it. I suppose I need to thank you.’

I snorted, turned away. ‘Really, *no need.*’

‘Benjamin, what is it?’ she asked.

I shook my head. I knew the answer. How ugly it was.

Maríne stood and put Charlie’s manuscript in her bag and threw it over her shoulder.

‘That thing must give you backache,’ I said.

‘It’s not so bad,’ she said and tilted her head sideways. ‘You get used to it. Yes. Funny the things we get used to, isn’t it? And then we can’t do without them or it makes us all skewed with the world.’

We left the Obelisk and stood on rue Saint-Honoré. She was going one way, and I the other.

‘Shall I see you next week?’ I almost bit the words in half.

‘I know I’m not cured, Benjamin,’ and she actually winked. ‘Wouldn’t want to be.’

The ambivalent spring tipped over into a hot and dry warning of summer. Each day I worked on my report on Moniz. I sank my soul into its production. And as with all obsessions, it was both stimulus and obstruction, a box for which the interlocking bolts were made from words. I had a structure born of my anger and disgust, but no arc, no grip on neurology or its rigours. François came to see

me and in his cheerful way chided me for ignoring my patients. I corresponded with Moniz, with half a dozen internal letters responded to at a rapid pace. I probed around the subject, strongly requesting names for colleagues at his institution in Lisbon or attendees at his forthcoming lecture. But he'd kept the ideas for the procedure to himself, he claimed, until he knew in what way it could be carried out. He shared his thoughts with Lima, however. Did I want to interview him? He sent me photographs, cuttings, scribbled sketches, papers by Hess and Berger and Hoche, a Nazi, the philosophy of Hegel, notes on the mind as master and the brain its slave, and then quotes from poetry, the flowers of Baudelaire, his own spurs of poetry, I was not surprised to see, poor verse waiting for the accumulation of his name to fold them in half, pressing his vanity into the flat leaves of a book. I looked at one last photo of Moniz sat at his desk in Lisbon, looking down, writing, his velvet toupee under its slick of oil, on the wall behind him pictures of himself, certificates, prizes. I asked him of the beings who once had bodies on whose heads he now practiced. *We reached them too late*, he replied. I balked at that 'we'. *They took leave of all uncertainty, happiness and suffering alike, and we were not quick enough to help them.* They would not have chosen you. *They chose to come to me, consciously or not.* You will chop them to bits at the whim of an ungrounded theory. *I cut them apart from themselves because they demand it. Our society, if you have forgotten our commitment to the unwell, Doctor Hayes, also demands this of us.* He was overwhelming me with a philosophy of himself, and I was finding it difficult to cut my way through.

I met with Maríne on Mondays and Thursdays. She was finished with Charlie's book, and her numbness had lasted only a few days. I began to shape the notes on her case into a chapter for my book. At four o'clock the following Monday she arrived in an impenitent mood. She took off her hat and gloves reluctantly. I smiled and folded my hands in my lap. She wore her familiar well-tailored skirt and had added a new woollen waistcoat to her blouse—it was a slightly colder day again—as if playing the role of a schoolmistress, perhaps an effort to inject some stringent qualities into her manner. I could see damp patches at her underarm and instinctively wanted to smell her. She sat in her chair, an impatience disguised as a smile on her lips. The episode after Charlie's reading had faded from reach, and I was growing frustrated. Only days before it had all

felt promising. But this was how analysis moved—in fits and starts—and my task was to recognise her soul-need, not try to fix her.

She began by talking quickly, vaguely about something that had happened to her. I was confused—her story did not follow any sequential narrative. Mentions of an event, a party. It was still her neurotic episode, perhaps, a new phase.

‘Has something happened, Maríne?’

She breathed heavily. I was unsure which direction this was going to go.

‘Does it work, do you think, Benjamin, their Science of Self Realisation?’

‘Ah! So, now you’ve finished Charlie’s book, which you do believe in...’

I raised an eyebrow. She looked away.

‘You need to work on something you don’t. Is this the cycle Maríne? Ideal, then reality?’

‘But what does it mean? Why is life measured by achievement all of a sudden?’

‘That’s a good question,’ I said.

‘To reach the point where you look in the mirror and say, yes, there I am finally. This creature with the bob cut and the straight, ugly thin lips.’

‘Maríne—’ I tried to interject.

‘Oh please, I know why my authors sleep with me, and it is not my looks.’

My mind was swirling somewhere outside of my body. She looked at me steadily for a moment.

‘And then him.’

I sat up. ‘Him?’

‘Oh you know who. Professor Moniz. Saying this is how it works. Up there on his podium, thwacking his pictures with his cane. All those lost connections tangled up like spaghetti in the mind. Do you think he’s self-realised?’

‘He has not “realised” anything.’

‘Realisation, I believe,’ she said calmly, a different person to the one who had talked so urgently moments before, ‘as the Pelman Company mean it, is simply about achieving your potential. Your true nature. We’re not all kind and docile. That’s not human history as I understand it.’

‘Good God, Maríne, you don’t believe this Moniz has realised *his* human potential, do you?’

‘He wants to see our pain with these pictures, and then cut it out.’

‘It’s outrageous.’ I puffed out my chest. ‘In fact, the hospital has asked me to have a closer look at the theories. I’ve written a report to say he’s got it all wrong.’

‘Has he proof?’

‘There’s none.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘It’s barbarism. It’s all the way back to—can’t you—’

‘So you don’t know for sure either.’

I grabbed my lapels, pulled my jacket tight over my chest.

‘Yes I do.’

Without warning she leant over and put a hand under my chin and lifted my face. I stared at her, feeling her fingers rub over my stubble. I tried to be calm. Clear. I was unable to stop her. I’d used touch in analysis before. But wasn’t it *me* that was meant to do the touching?

‘I wear their words as my own,’ she said in a strange intonation. She was moving my face around, examining me as if I was some artefact from antiquity. ‘I put them on like a fur coat. Like seal skin.’

‘And that’s when they move you?’ I could feel the give of her fingers against my jaw as I spoke.

‘I don’t know how to slough off their words. It feels as if I wear one over the last, as if I were wearing a dozen coats in a freezing winter.’ She shuffled forward a little, so her face was not far from mine. ‘I take them in,’ she whispered, ‘into my body.’

I held my breath, waiting. Her touch had come so unexpectedly it fixed me in my seat. She brushed the tips of her fingers across my cheek and then leant back, and then began to pull her blouse out of her skirt and pulled it up to reveal her stomach and the welts there from the whip. I stared, unable to speak. She pulled her blouse up further. She was not wearing a brassiere. Her breasts were half exposed, so close I could see the dimpled areolae, the small, pink nipples. There was the scab under her left breast, raw and shaped like a diamond. And we sat there for a miracle of time, Marine showing me all I needed to see.

We spoke little after that. She tucked her blouse into her skirt and slipped back into the grim mask of disgust I’d seen after Charlie’s. This was the next phase, then, of the numbness. For the return to some form of reality, editing

books she didn't believe in. I looked at the clock; there was still quarter of an hour left. She put on her hat and picked up her bag. I shook my head, told her to stay, but she would not, and left.

She did not arrive for our next session. I called the Obelisk but with no answer. After finishing with a last case I walked there, a stroll across the river. The door was locked so I sat in Café Ladurée opposite. One more coffee and the agitation forced me out. What could I do? Otto and I specifically *encouraged* resistance! I would have to take her out, take walks, return to observation. I followed the Quais, browsing the stalls for second-hand copies of her books: reds, greens, blues, pinks, nothing censored or banned. But I found no multi-coloured language of the Obelisk. The plane trees curled over the river, green leaves uncoiling from their pods. Coal boats ploughed around the Île de la Cité. Notre-Dame squatted black, ugly and unrepentant. Back at my apartment I felt my shoulders begin to ache; it had all given me a headache. I turned off the lights and sat in the dark as a precaution.

June arrived and with it a true European heat wave. My own office was practically unbearable by midday, so I spent more time at home. I requisitioned a small and quiet portable typewriter, which I set upon a board across the arms of a chair. Renaud has requested I complete my report on Moniz's procedure for a board meeting a few days later. So it went like this:

Moniz was not the first to consider surgical means for curing psychological diseases. As far back as 1895, while Freud and Breuer were accidentally falling on new ideas of how to treat hysteria, the American Emory Lamphear proposed that the knife could be the only means of 'restoring to reason many cases now considered incurable'. Yet Moniz was too urgent. In his papers he argued that all serious mental disorders were the result of 'fixed' thoughts that interfered with mental life. But he had levelled this theory as a generalisation of Janet's *idée fixe*, considered to be the cause of hysteria, and applied it to all mental disturbances. There was no evidence for that. Moniz had also downplayed the contradictory elements of results found by the American neurologist Brickner in the Joe A case, whose frontal lobes had been damaged in a traffic accident but whose faculties for feeling were quite intact. The idea that the frontal lobes were

the place for ‘fixed ideas’ was also contradicted by the animal studies of the American psychologist Karl Lashley. No one else other than Moniz, it seemed, was able to localise the higher function of feeling in any specific region, and this was after-the-fact, in pictures from deceased patients and one test on an ape. He gave no credit to the conference in London in April. Moniz’s references to the work of the Spanish neurologist Ramón y Cajal were tenuous and not clearly stated. I quoted Moniz’s columns from the neurology circular. There was also criticism from colleagues back in Lisbon—a more pragmatic reason to be in Paris than proximity to the important medical journals. No wonder he did not want me interviewing them. Another Portuguese neurologist, Sobral Cid, once a close friend, accused Moniz of practicing ‘pure cerebral mythology’.

The rewriting and redrafting of ideas led to others. Back in my office, staring out of the window into the bright courtyard, where it was too hot for patients to walk except in the morning or evening, I once or twice reached for my own manuscript, but then pushed it aside. No, I could not. It needed my full attention, not scraps of time dug out from under this urgent task. The most I could do was continue to note my observations about Maríne. But considering she had all but abandoned our analysis, and I had not been able to track her down, either through the Obelisk or at her lodgings, there was little I could do about that, and the chapter on her, for which I had many hopes, as well as for the connections she would give me to her authors, had faded under the hot June sun. Once I finished my report on Moniz, however, I would return to her, and my book, with some vigour.

I finished the report for Renaud in that first week of June, and took it to him. Renaud was sitting behind his desk, flicking through some papers. I sat down and handed over the report. He smiled and opened to the first page.

‘And Moniz has been helpful? He has not tried to obstruct you?’

I shook my head. ‘He doesn’t think he *can* be obstructed.’

‘Well. I am surprised. I considered he would be more difficult. But,’ and Renaud shrugged, ‘perhaps he likes you, Benjamin? Thinks you are a trustworthy man for writing this report?’

‘I doubt it very much.’

‘*Oui*. But then what do you make of this?’

Renaud's look was one of amusement as he picked up an envelope on his desk and showed it to me. It was from Moniz, requesting the pleasure of my company at a gathering at his home to celebrate Portugal Day, that Friday.

'Very curious, don't you agree?' smiled Renaud.

'Politics,' I said, sitting back. 'Keep your enemies close.'

Renaud didn't reply.

His townhouse was on the corner of rue Duroc and boulevard des Invalides, half-hidden behind birch trees. My taxi had barely come to a stop when a booming motorbike pulled up. Rider and passenger wore bronzed helmets, the rider an old brown leather jacket and his passenger, a woman in brown trousers under what looked like a borrowed coat too big for her. The rider turned off the engine and threw his leg over the seat and pulled his passenger behind him up the steps. The door opened and a warm orange light and noisy chatter from the party gathered them in. I checked myself and pulled tight my belt. The motorbike was hot and softly clicking as I passed it. At the door a servant took my coat and a young boy stopped me as soon as I was inside the door. He said something in Portuguese I didn't understand, and held up a miniature yacht with sails made from handkerchiefs. And then in English, 'my ship.'

An older woman, elegant, slim and neatly dressed, was smiling and saying 'sorry, please.' She took the boy by his wrist and pulled him to one side, attempting to prize the yacht from his hands as she spoke, but not harshly. His bright, brown eyes gave a look of mortal offense. And then Moniz was right behind them, welcoming me to his house.

'I would introduce you to Elvira my wife, but I see little José got to you first. *Dia feliz*, Doctor Hayes.'

'He's a handsome boy,' I said. Moniz's wife, the recipient of his hotel toiletries in lieu of love letters, glanced up.

The party was taking place in the large dining room at the back of the house, with French doors leading out onto the garden. The little boy came and put his head between us, still holding his boat.

'Your son is stubborn,' I said.

He looked at the boy.

'A gift. Let me offer you something.'

He poured brandies. Little José stood with his mother in an attempt to intervene in the decision on bedtime. My fingers searched for something, a loose hair, a tabletop.

‘So, your son rides a motorbike?’ I asked Moniz.

‘José is a little young, do you not think?’

I did not want to trade pleasantries. ‘Your other son?’

‘My other son? Ah! Very much like—’ the tumble of feet down the stairs. ‘Here he comes in fact.’

Almeida Lima had been the motorcyclist, and he now stood leaning on the doorframe still wearing his leather jacket. Behind Lima stood his passenger, the woman in the brown trousers. Her neck was slender and bare, her short dark hair framing her face, her smile tight and accusing and amused. I finished off my drink.

‘Hello, Benjamin,’ said Maríne.

‘You know each other?’ Moniz asked, surprised.

Moniz said something to Lima in Portuguese that was neither instruction nor admonishment and then added, ‘Dressed, as you can see, for the evening.’ Lima smiled. He was the breed of man Maríne’s authors dreamed of being—and Maríne? What breed did she prefer? Lima went to get drinks.

‘Are you shocked?’ she whispered.

‘So this is where you’ve been.’ I released my grip on my glass, put down the empty tumbler.

‘Of course you’re not,’ said Maríne. ‘Doesn’t Freud say there are no coincidences?’

I crossed my arms and uncrossed them.

‘What are you doing here? I thought you might be unwell?’

‘You sound disappointed.’

‘*Confused*. When I last—’ I cleared my throat. ‘How do you know Lima?’

‘We’ve only just met. I came to talk with António.’ She leant into my ear, whispered. ‘Almeida was going crazy. Hadn’t been let out—was on the family watch. He’s a lot of fun. I don’t think António was expecting us to go and hire a motorbike.’

‘You came to meet Professor Moniz?’

‘For a foreword to the mind-cure books, now we’re going ahead.’

‘You think *he’s* an expert?’

‘He was there too, at the conference.’

I folded my arms. ‘I know that. And what about our work?’

Maríne leant forward. ‘It’s a lot of fun, Benjamin, a bike between the legs. Have you tried it?’

Lima came over and handed Maríne a tumbler of brandy. I felt a powerful revulsion for him.

‘*Dia feliz*, Doctor Hayes.’

I nodded at him, and then looked at Maríne for too long. Lima began talking about Portugal, going on and on: its great cities and families, its most famous artistic work and books. He asked if I thought Paris more attractive than Lisbon? I’d never been. Lima asked if a country needed a father or a statesman as leader? His personality cult irritated me. What about Spain? I asked. What were father figures leading to there, with the threat of the generals? Lima didn’t answer.

Then Moniz was sweeping us towards the dining room. There were forty or so guests, some I recognised from the hospital, including Renaud. We nodded at each other, but I was too thrown to approach him. I moved into a circle with the least threatening person in the room, Nadja she was called, a Russian with Portuguese lineage, surrounded by a cloud of small, olive-skinned men. She was enjoying herself, waving around a flute of Espumante. She knew a lot about the celebration. There would be a feast, and a speech, and Moniz would be reading their national poem ‘*Os Lusíadas*’, written by the adventurer Luís de Camões. He’d penned a self-congratulatory epic, a tale of the 16th-century Portuguese explorations that brought fame and fortune to the country. The majority of ‘*Os Lusíadas*’ seemed to consist of grandiloquent speeches by various orators, from what I could make out.

‘The poem is considered one of the finest works in Portuguese literature,’ said Nadja, with her strong accent. She was beautiful, with high cheekbones. I could smell her perfume—flowery, but not overwhelming. She was thin, with dark hair. Her shoulders were pointed and bare. The men were like rosary beads waiting their turn to be blessed. Someone complemented her outfit, which she told us was the same dress Yvonne Printemps wore in *La Dame aux Camélias* just that month, but was, she said, cut by a Portuguese designer. She claimed to be a princess. It was possible. Dozens had come to Paris hinting at being

Romanov, especially in the Salon du René. Their stories were as confused as their blood line, running the way a waterfall runs, an adjustment of flow to the descent. I felt someone come over. It was Lima, Maríne on his arm.

‘We are brought up on the legend,’ explained Lima. ‘All the children know the folklore. Camões saved the poem by escaping the battlefield, swimming with one arm, keeping the other above water.’

‘You don’t think it’s true?’ Nadja asked him, holding her glass above her head and with the other hand pretending to swim. The crowd laughed. Lima laughed. Maríne squeezed his arm. I leant against a table, folded up and removed to one side to make way for chairs set out facing a small dais.

‘He’s a symbol of Portuguese nationalism,’ said Lima. ‘We do not question it.’

‘Seems you have a habit of not questioning the incredulous,’ I said.

The others stared at me, then the chatter continued.

Lima excused himself, and the others drifted away. Maríne held a cigarette and blew smoke out of the side of her mouth. It gathered around the ceiling as if it were smoke from a hundred burning ships blackening the sky.

‘I’m keen to see his pictures again,’ she said. ‘If they really do show neurosis.’

‘I thought you said it would be dull, knowing about the Self?’ I said quickly. ‘Being realised?’

‘Oh, if you had to work at it for ten years,’ she said, lifting her shoulders coquettishly.

‘What are you doing here, Maríne?’ I knew how exasperated I sounded.

‘I told you, he’s writing me a foreword,’ she said. ‘Oh, and the other thing, António’s book.’

I looked at her. ‘What book?’

She raised her eyebrows again. I breathed hard through my nose, and then we were being called to sit. I took a seat facing the dais, and waited as the rest of the party settled around me. From the dais Professor Moniz read out the ‘*Os Lusíadas*’ in Portuguese for a half-dozen nationals in the room, and then in English for the rest of us, in ottava rima, each stanza more a whack than a wave. The *Lusiads* were predestined by the Fates to accomplish great deeds. Their history, proved with victories against the Moors and Castilians, showed their

small nation had imposed its will on lesser nations. The Lusian people were exalted. And just when I hoped he was finished, he motioned for us to remain seated for a speech. I focused on a picture on the wall, a French agricultural scene, a plough pulled by an old workhorse in the evening twilight. I caught the odd word and sentence. Great deeds. Then everyone was clapping and standing up. Food was laid out on the dressers and tables around the room. I took a bowl and half-filled it with the *cozido*, a stew of smoked sausages, which another of the Portuguese contingent, a lawyer called Felipe Peres, an average-height man with slick hair and a limited range of English, explained to me were *morcela*, *farinheira* and *chouriço* floating among the cabbage, carrots and rice. I barely touched it. The servants hovered in and out with each course and wine, which Moniz pronounced on arrival but whose names and seasons I was not familiar with. We were brought back to the chairs and then Moniz, smiling and clear-voiced, took to the dais with what I guessed was his own poetry. I'd seen fragments in his letters. With a too-loud voice he began to read first in Portuguese, and then the translations. I'd had enough of the whole race of gods and let out a snort, Felipe Peres pulling at my elbow. I watched the awkward rapture of the others, including Renaud, pass into relief as I regained my senses. When Moniz finished he took the adoration of his crowd, and we all stood up. I went to leave, but then Maríne was at my arm.

‘Will you stay, Benjamin. There’s something I want you to see.’

‘Really?’ I tried to pull away.

‘Will you wait?’

I did not know what was in her eyes, but I was persuaded, and moved to the back of the room while the other guests, slowly, in good cheer, recovered their coats, said their goodbyes, and left. I was alone in the dining room when Moniz’s wife came in and started to find me there, her eyes as large as Brazil nuts. She led me to the study, where Moniz sat behind a desk with a walnut top and two small lamps that lit the room. On the wall behind him were correspondences from American hospitals, Washington Military Medical, and next to them a copy of the Treaty of Versailles. A photograph of a younger Moniz, university robes against a red brick tower and blue sky. I heard bones curl into themselves, but it was only the door hinges behind me, the maid bringing hot towels. Lima sat in a high leather armchair to the side, drinking from a sherry glass. Maríne stood by

the bookshelf, cradling her drink. Moniz waved me towards a chair. I sat down, refused a towel. Moniz took one and rubbed the back of one hand with the palm of the other, warming them. He was paler than usual. His smile did not stand out from the rest of his face. He caught me staring.

‘You are thinking, how a doctor could operate with no fingers. Or write, perhaps? Don’t apologise. It is my tastes.’ He inspected his hands. ‘Avoidable. Gout.’

He contemplated his hands, but not carefully, not with patience. I saw his bones and the shape of his pain, needle-like and cruciform.

‘So have you enjoyed the evening, Doctor Hayes? Did you try the Alcatra? Antía tries her best. She reduces the cream and watches what I eat. But she cannot follow me around the city.’

‘Thank you for the invite,’ I replied. ‘Now, I really must get home.’

Moniz leant forward, nodding.

‘I understand. As you grow older the urgency to complete one’s tasks can be very powerful. Where else but at the heart of science and culture? I am a Francophile myself.’

‘For your procedure?’ I asked, unable to hold back. ‘It is better done in Paris?’

‘Preliminary research was done at Santa Marta,’ said Lima. ‘In Lisbon.’

‘I’m sure you understand,’ Moniz carried on. ‘Not many people will have heard of the institution of Santa Marta. So we are closer to the associations here. The journals. We must publish quickly. When there is a story to tell, it must be told immediately and to the right audience.’

‘You can tell António is a poet,’ said Maríne from behind me. She came and nodded towards his desk. Between the coffee cups and glasses and letter trays was a small red book with gold edging. It was the book I saw at her place after Charlie’s book launch. Something hot and sickly poured into my stomach. Maríne waved for me to pick it up. As I did Moniz leant forward and stopped my hand on the table. His touch was heavy, fleshy.

‘It is personal,’ said Moniz. ‘A labour, but a pleasure.’

‘Did you know António was a poet?’ asked Maríne.

‘Not before tonight,’ I lied. ‘You have many talents, Professor. May I?’

Moniz lifted his hand. I picked it up and ran my fingers over the gold edging and opened to the frontispiece, a delicate drawing of a woman's contours, curving up the page like tendrils of wave grass. I flicked through the book, catching words here and there, translated into English on opposite pages except for the titles: *A mulher cair. A decisão é feita*. I shivered, unable to translate their vivacity. There were blank pages for illustrations of his verse. It felt a great weight in my hands. Over Moniz's shoulder there was a clock on the wall that for a moment I thought had stopped.

'Did we hear from it tonight?' I asked, looking between Moniz and Maríne.

'Things are nearly ready,' she said. 'We're nearly ready, aren't we, António?'

'Everything is prepared for us to go ahead,' said Moniz.

I looked at Maríne.

'You're going to publish *this*?' I asked, holding up the small chapbook.

They both said 'Yes' at the same time. I put the book down.

I looked at the clock. The hand had not moved. I felt sick. Moniz was waiting for something.

'A dirty book? I didn't realise you were that type of author,' I said to Moniz. 'Well, well.'

'I write about the body,' he said flatly. 'From science, from my work.'

'Myth and legend. Like your proposal.'

'And are not myth and legend the formula for all experience?'

I turned the book over in my hands. Unable to answer, I looked at Maríne. 'You're the editor.'

'Formula?' She stood by the desk, hovering. 'All writers claim they know that.' It was brave, or brazen, or stupid. Moniz didn't flinch. 'But they're writing prose, not poetry. They've discovered something new about it.'

'And what,' Moniz asked her, 'have they discovered?'

'Oh. Its purpose, you could say, António. It's flow. They've found a way to write the flow of things. The real flow, beneath "acceptable" life. The sex. Fucking.' She glanced at me. 'The cum.'

Lima froze in his efforts to get out of his chair. Moniz stopped himself from reaching over to take back his book. Instead he weighed Maríne's sharp features, her disproportionate words, against his need for recognition, his desire to be

published. I flicked to the back of the book, and then closed it, hoping to catch the moment there between the pages. Maríne held out her hand and I gratefully passed it to her.

‘*But* there are some small things,’ Maríne said, holding the book open.

He glanced at me. ‘Can we discuss this matter in private?’

I began to get up, but Maríne touched me on the shoulder.

‘Oh, but António, is it not for sharing?’

‘You’ve no proof of evidence,’ I said suddenly. They all stared at me as if I had just that moment burst into the room and was about to rob them. ‘That’s all I wrote in my report. That’s all.’

Moniz composed himself, turned to Lima.

‘You see?’ He turned back to me. ‘We follow different paths. You read Freud and think of how to analyse problems. We read *Mental Hygiene* and practise new procedures. What people are learning about the body. And where is the mind found, if not the body? Your psychoanalysis forgets this.’

‘You’ve not understood at all,’ I snapped. ‘You’re not—’

‘No,’ he interrupted. ‘No. I cannot understand you at all.’ He put his palms up to us. ‘But this is a night of celebration and fellowship. Let us move on.’

‘If I would say anything, António, it lacks feeling,’ Maríne said.

Moniz began to button up his jacket. He breathed three or four times before he replied.

‘You believe my poetry has no feeling? That I have failed to master it?’

‘I can see I am making you angry, António,’ said Maríne, enjoying the spectacle.

‘I am not angry.’ But in his head he repeated her name. His eyes went to his fingers. I could see his pain, not from his gout but at what he had written. I saw him age under the force of her words, and I numbered the declinations, counted the rings: decades gone with the tightness of skin, the spittle from his mouth gone. From lower down, what else was gone?

Moniz struggled from his chair. Lima reached out a hand, but it was batted away. He announced he must not neglect his family. I took the hint and stood up and looked at Maríne.

‘Almeida’s going to take me home on the bike, Benjamin,’ she said. She turned to Moniz, still turning his book over between hands. ‘Shall I keep this, for now?’

7

The next week the board met to discuss Moniz. I was a spectator as Renaud delivered my report. He paused before reading the final conclusion: that people could only accept Moniz's wild claims due to his renown, not for the strength of his theories, and certainly not on any evidence, which could not be found. Renaud reminded them that, when it came to Moniz, after all, none of them were accountable for his visiting professorship, which was a historical anomaly belonging to Clemenceau's reign and a friendship with the former chair. There was a shadow over the country. The Treaty of Versailles, for which Moniz was partly responsible, had failed. When it came to Moniz's request to trial his new operation they rejected it, although not unanimously. If I'd been hoping for his excommunication, it didn't arrive. Three of the board referred to his friendship with certain Deputies. Yes, Moniz would be allowed to reply. I walked back to my office and consoled myself that we had delivered a blow to the proposal, if not the man. I scratched at my notebooks that afternoon, writing thought after thought and then striking through them.

A few days later, Renaud came to my office to inform me that Moniz's annual symposium on the techniques of psychosurgery had been postponed. I raised my eyebrows, afforded myself a smile.

'Ill health,' said Renaud, looking out the window, and then back at me. 'A flare up of gout.'

We had worked a miracle, I congratulated myself. We'd shone light on his malpractice, and stopped his vain ambition. That evening I put Moniz from my thoughts.

My Monday session with Maríne began in a frustratingly rigid mode. She'd fallen back into her numbed state, unable to work. Jack was calling every day threatening to return, and it was all she could do to drag herself to the office and answer the phone. She avoided meetings with her authors. Deadlines were being missed and she knew it would cause trouble. But she could not edit! I did not ask

her about Moniz, but could not imagine his poetry was the cause of this episode. She cried a little and I put a hand on her shoulder, which she grasped. She wiped her eyes and nose with a handkerchief, and we carried on. She had not opened a manuscript of something worthy in two weeks. It was in those sessions that she told me about her beliefs. That it would be unfeeling to edit, in the old tradition, the books of authors who had broken from outmoded techniques. It would be like treating shrapnel wounds with leeches, a febrile metaphor. ‘Unfeeling’ is the term she used and this was the crux of her issue, a contradiction between the general emotional experience of the world and this ‘unfeeling’. An intellectual belief turned to method. It was not *feeling nothing* that she talked about, but an undoing of the things one has felt before. To open up a space. But to make room for what? To be moved, of course, in the ways her authors were demanding of readers. Editing was a phenomenon that could no longer exist as people understood it. If authors had found new ways to say new things, then so must she respond. It was being whipped by Charlie’s text, surprising me with that kiss, a different register of world-making. No one could have edited these taboo works without immersing herself as she did. Was it any wonder she fell into neurasthenic stupor? I noted that she had adopted elements of our language of *invention*. She believed in her methods completely, and she was not willing to change them. She was not simply handling a literature of pornography. Not erecting a colossus of taboo. She was developing a mode and process to rip off the mask. She was defiant again, although with something of a worn edge to her words. I needed to help her.

The analysis drifted into silence. To fill the gap she picked up the Freud I left on the table, the essay on creative writers. She read silently for a while, and then when she found a passage that she liked she began to read aloud.

‘“*But, you will ask, if people make such a mystery of their fantasizing, how is it that we know such a lot about it? Well, there is a class of human beings upon whom, not a god, indeed, but a stern goddess—Necessity—has allotted the task of telling what they suffer and what things give them happiness. These are the victims of nervous illness, who are obliged to tell their fantasies, among other things...*” well, yes, that seems to sum up writers rather well,’ she said.

My jaw clicked as I opened it. Grinding my teeth too much. She was being selective.

‘Keep reading,’ I said, stretching out my mouth in wide circles.

‘Hmm?’ she looked down, ‘Oh! “...to the doctor by whom they expect to be cured by mental treatment. This is our best source of knowledge, and we have since found good reason to suppose that our patients tell us nothing that we might not also hear from healthy people.”’ She stopped and looked up. ‘But I thought it was about writers?’

‘It is.’

‘Does Freud say writers and neurotics are the same? Does that make analysts akin to editors?’

‘Don’t play coy, Maríne. You’ve hinted at something the same before.’

She didn’t say anything, just raised her eyebrows and went back to the book.

‘Doesn’t Freud write about him?’ she said, pointing with her chin at the Dostoevsky. She began turning the Freud up and around, as if trying to shake out the words.

‘Yes, but that’s a different essay. It’s not that one.’

She rested the book on her lap.

‘Can you tell me about it?’

Suddenly I thought of Professor Moniz. *I wrote on Freud and the sexual life thirty years ago.*

‘Benjamin? Are you cold? Do you want me to shut the—’

‘No, no. You were telling me about... read on, read on.’

‘Benjamin, *you* were going to tell *me*...’

‘Was I?’ I sat back, closed my eyes for a moment. Then laughed sharply. ‘Although Freud has most things wrong on writers... Freud calls Dostoevsky the creative artist, the neurotic, the moralist, and the sinner. Freud has a very literary style. He’s talking about Dostoevsky but most artists exhibit some neuroses, often emotional, anxious. I think you’d agree, wouldn’t you, knowing who we do?’

‘Whoever could you mean,’ she said, and we both laughed.

‘But of course there are differences,’ I told her, resting back into my seat. ‘As you know there’s a relation, but writers, artists, find ways through their obstacles.’

She put back the Freud and picked up the Dostoevsky, turning it over in her hands.

‘I saw a monkey recently,’ she said slowly, or perhaps I only heard the words slowed down. ‘Almeida cut out a part of her brain. To fix her anxiety, he said, where the knots had been tangled up, like in António’s pictures. António thought it would help me understand his poetry better. Almeida took me to the basement. Poor things, kept down there. Can I tell you a dream I had?’

‘I need some water.’ I went over to the side cabinet where I kept a bottle. I poured two glasses and handed one to her. I sat there restlessly watching the clock as it ticked, ticked, ticked away.

‘Can I tell you a dream? That’s part of what you do, isn’t it?’

‘Of course,’ I said. I cleared my throat. ‘Yes. Go ahead.’

‘I was reading António’s poetry. Each poem was a different person that he’d done that thing to... Operate on their anxiety. You know...’ She picked up the Freud again and with the Dostoevsky weighed one against the other. ‘In my dream, each poem he’d written ended in the same way, with the poem’s anxious feeling cut away. Almeida told me what they were working would be suitable for neurotics, people with unruly emotions, socially difficult.’ She held up *The Crocodile*. ‘Would you say that definition fits most writers?’

She put both books down. She leant back and I saw the clock behind her, our time run over. It was in my stunned condition that Maríne conveyed an invite from Charlie to observe his manuscript put to print. And I thought suddenly of my Wall Street woman, Lillian, as we took one of our analytic walks, stopping to sit on a bench on Dover Street looking up at the Brooklyn Bridge, cowering, me holding her hand, feeling as if we were making great progress to have survived in the shadow of something so looming and awful.

Charlie Furlong, fresh from a stop at the Café du Dôme and smelling of Pernod and a flowery perfume, stood at the end of the press watching the printed pages roll out of the tympan and into the pan. They were pushing through at one every three seconds. Every now and then he leant too close to the press as it cranked and clattered.

‘*Imbécile*,’ said André the printer, who was waving a rag at him. André was bearded and barrel-chested and his non-existent English made him seem meaner than he was, even, said Maríne, after six years printing their books. Charlie backed up a step.

‘You’ll get the pages dirty,’ explained Maríne.

‘Watch it go!’ shouted Henry, with one hand gripping my arm and the other gripping Maríne’s for balance, pretending, remembering, illustrating what it was like with his foot pumping the pedal of their new machine at the Villa Seurat. ‘Watch it go!’ he shouted again, and I could imagine under his foot a half-grinding spin as the pages rolled out. He let go of our arms and put his foot down. ‘We’re a bona fide press now, Benjamin,’ he told me, but he was looking at Maríne.

‘It’s hard work on the arms,’ said Charlie, stooped over and turning the windlass.

‘So you’re going to publish your books yourself?’ I asked Henry. I’d not seen him or Anaïs since the Sun Club. They’d been out at Louveciennes, writing. His book was nearly finished.

‘I’ll still give it to this bitch first,’ Henry said, taking hold of Maríne’s shoulder. ‘You know I mean that affectionately, don’t you, Marie-Marie?’

She didn’t respond. She went and stood near the binding bench at the back of the attic and inspected the stack of pages, up to the roof beams as they angled into the corners. Two gas candles lighted the attic at the top of André’s studio, opposite the Cimetière du Montparnasse. The skylight opened onto clear black night.

‘I think I’ve upset her, Benno,’ laughed Henry. He was still pumping air with his foot. He had picked up his wine from the floor and was smiling at me over his glasses, which were falling off his nose. Around the edges of his right eye there was the fading yellow mush of a bruise.

‘I’ve learnt to stay out of his way when he is machining,’ shouted Maríne over the noise of the press. ‘Don’t break it,’ she shouted at Charlie. ‘You need to get the weight of the ink on the platen right.’ Then she leaned closer to whisper in my ear, but loud enough for Charlie and Henry to hear. ‘He only let Charlie have a turn because he’s too weak to break the spindle.’

I searched for accusation, amusement—I was not completely off my guard.

André moaned that Charlie was turning the windlass too fast, and hit him on the head with his rag. Charlie unclenched the handle and made a fuss, but stayed centre-stage. He stood with his hands on his hips, wide-eyed, watching each set of pages emerge printed on both sides. André shouted into Charlie’s ear and

pushed him off the windlass. Charlie looked slighted, then smiled, puffed out his cheeks and took the rag from André, wiped his hands, and came over and slapped Henry on the shoulder. Charlie's shirt was damp. His sweat mixed in the air with Chai-flavoured cigarettes, fresh paper and wet ink, a sensual marigold stench. The paper roll flushed out. Music from the small transistor radio on the binding bench swirled into the room, rising over the printed pages and prepared covers. Maríne came back over.

'Now we change the typeset,' said Maríne. 'Benjamin, do you want to?'

Maríne looked at André, who shook his head. I laughed, the poor man. Maríne pointed at me, then the typeset, told André that I was no reckless young author, and we moved away from the two boys smoking their cigarettes out of the skylight. Maríne instructed me how to extract the forme from the bed, and I carried it over to the setting bench. I tipped the type into the large metal sink used to wash away the ink and pushed it aside and then she opened the front of the case on the type box. Inside thousands of letters lined up in alphabetical order, hundreds of pairings, ab, th, ch, sp, ll, ing, ess, all dull silver and marked with a thousand pressings through the tympan.

'Are your hands clean?' she asked.

I held them out for her to inspect. She took them, looking closely at my fingernails, then turned them round and studied my palms. Her hands were warm, firm. The physical connection made me relax a little. She smiled, let go and bent down and opened the two drawers under the bench. In the left were the last pages of Charlie's book, while in the right drawer were the pages already printed, turned face down. It was a memory system. Long nights and obscure books had led to expensive mistakes. She took out the last pages and placed them on the sheet music holder André used to fix up the pages. I caught the occasional word: mellifluous, rondo, fleshy rose. I thought of them at his bedsit, her editing his book after their sex, felt a sweat come over me.

'Remember it needs to be reversed,' she said. 'I'll do the left-hand page. Begin here.' She pointed to the top right-hand corner of the left box in the forme. I pushed up my sleeves. Then our hands reaching over hands, diving into the alphabet. She checked my work as we went along. She rearranged my *mone* into *moon* and then *noom*. She reached over and pulled down a handful of s and ts and

gave them a toss in the air, like dice. They made a tinny clinking in the soft bowl of her palm. I pulled out an f, an a, an e, an sh.

‘Are you pleased he invited you?’

I pushed back my shoulders. ‘You wanted me to see the end of your episode?’

‘And is it proving useful?’

‘I don’t know yet,’ I said. ‘It depends on what happens.’

She shrugged her shoulders and dropped more letters into the forme. I focused on the type. Charlie invoked the saints and their blasphemies. We finished the pages and Maríne checked over the set one last time while I fiddled with the radio. Then she lifted the forme and placed it back onto its bed. Charlie and Henry came over to watch. The type was inked, and the paper fed between frisket and tympan. And these were folded and the paper rested flat on the inked type. She showed me, with André hovering with his rag, how the bed was rolled using the windlass and the impression made with a screw. Pressure travelled through the platen. The screw was reversed on the far side of the windlass’s circumference, and as it lifted the tympan it raised the frisket and the print rolled out. André turned out the final five hundred pages in half-an-hour. Maríne flicked across the last counter on an abacus. Muffled through his beard and by the lateness of things, André ordered us out.

‘He’s going to bind a hundred,’ said Maríne. ‘We’ll go and wait.’

We found an all-night tabac. A radio played. We took off our coats and sat at the bar. The bartender put four glasses on the bar and poured us all Pastis.

‘Well, here’s to luck,’ said Charlie, lifting his glass.

‘Will it take a while?’ I asked.

‘Maybe an hour or two,’ said Maríne.

Charlie threw an arm round Henry, and then we were all drinking.

‘My man,’ said Henry, waving his empty glass. ‘*Mon bon monsieur.*’

The tabac owner poured us more Pastis. We sat and drank, barely awake, except for Henry of course, who talked on and on about a woman he’d been sleeping with and how she’d fixed him up with some dead certs at the track that weekend, but he’d blown all his money and was unable to capitalise on the good fortune. And then André was calling us back. In the attic he handed each of us a bound copy. I placed a palm on the front cover. A texture like felt. Printed in bold

gold Garamond type: *The Ostrich Womb*. Ah! Under those words: *banned in England*. It would be if he tried to, Maríne insisted, in its unexpurgated form. I turned the book around and back over. A picture of a pregnant ostrich with a lion's mane and human hands cradling the belly. Inside on the frontispiece: *From the Obelisk Press*.

'You're going to make the world sick,' said Henry, standing with one hand on his hip, waving the book above his head, 'they're going to drop down dead when they read this boy!'

'*C'est bon?*' asked André.

'Yes, what do you think Charlie?' asked Maríne.

Charlie grasped the volume. Maríne leant forward and kissed André on the lips, who swore and batted her away with his rag. Although it was Henry who was making the noise, and Charlie who was the hero, I watched her closely. Bringing the book to life had demanded something of her, and she had given it. I turned my attentions to Charlie, who was being held around the waist by Henry and lifted up off the boards, shaking, smiling, and terrified.

A few days later Anaïs called and said I must join them in Louveciennes for the weekend. I saw it not as an invite but a request. Henry's book was nearly finished. Charlie would be there, and Alfred, one of Henry's collaborators, and Alfred's latest lover and sponsor, Simone. She didn't mention Maríne, but I knew better than to consider that silence unequivocal. Maríne was the Obelisk's representative, and would be Henry's first reader. I was wanted to conciliate any mess.

In our final analysis of the week, in which we sat for ten minutes watching the surprise of a bright summer rainstorm, shockingly swirling, the thunder filling the room, over as soon as it began, neither of us mentioned Louveciennes. I left the hospital at a run with my holdall, that I'd left in full view by my desk, straight to the Gare Saint-Lazare. Louveciennes was a half-hour from Paris. At Louveciennes I followed the few others who alighted into the main street. It was little more than a large village made of stone, deathly quiet. The houses along the road from the station were grey and covered in creeper and I walked slowly, breathing in their peasant smell. I was looking for a house towards the edge of town set behind cypresses and a slatted fence. Anaïs was standing at the door

wearing a white blouse and dark trousers. As I came closer she shaded her eyes and waved. She had heard the train. We kissed on both cheeks, smiled, laughed. Her eyes were like buttercups. She held me by my shoulders and looked me up and down and frowned. Then she let go. She wanted to show me the garden before it was dark. She took my bag and put it inside the veranda. It was a warm evening. A slight sunset breeze shook the trees and flower beds, and I could smell in the air the aftermath of the rain, stirring up the seeds of plants that Anaïs explained were Japanese anemone and golden Helenium. We walked around the sides of the house. A wisteria fanned over the back door and across the balcony of the main bedroom. The garden stretched away towards firs and thorn bushes. We came to a small pond. She picked a bulrush and began to brush the tips of the others within reach. She came here to swim. Of all the passions Henry had, nature was not one of them. He was a city boy. There was a pool as well. Hugh, her husband, had it put in because the pond wasn't big enough and a pool was for entertaining. He was seemingly always on business, or so she said, and left it at that, and I had not the heart to tell her how I pictured him alone in a New York hotel after another long day with the Sugar Board of America. We walked from the pond and around the edges of the garden. She squeezed my arm. She was inviting me to play tennis, but I couldn't help but drift away into the peace of the trees and sunset. A dozen swallows were swooping in and out of the eaves of the house. I watched them skim over the grass catching flies. Anaïs held us both at the door for a last look.

'It is not quite Paris, is it,' she said.

'Isn't that a good thing?'

'I meant it as a good thing.' She kissed me on the cheek. 'Now. Enjoy yourself. That's an order.'

I was given the room next to Charlie. There was no mention yet of Maríne. From the window I could see a square of the tennis court, and beyond that, an edge of the pool, both fading in the dark. I dressed and went downstairs and stood at the kitchen door and watched the bashing of pots and Pommery being poured by a man whose dark hair was slicked back from his face and whose moustache quivered over his lip like a bandit's song. He wore plus fours and socks up to his knees. It was Alfred, Henry's friend. A gramophone was playing Teddy someone or other. It was steaming up, and they had the windows open. Anaïs stood in the

doorway to the garden with a cigarette. There was Charlie, leaning over the sink scrubbing potatoes. A knot in the small of his back from Anaïs' apron. Alfred lurched around the kitchen table which could seat a dozen, filling people's glasses. Behind him a kitchen cabinet packed with jars of preserves and strange items: a model car, photographs of soldiers, driftwood. A woman in a sleeveless blouse, Alfred's wife, Simone, stood next to Henry holding a sharpening steel, while Henry, liver spots on his hands, examined a joint of beef as if it had the armoury to explode in his face. The kitchen smelt of oil and wood and anise. Simone looked like she'd had too much Pommery.

'Ah!' said Alfred as I entered. 'Here he is, my new tennis partner.'

Charles waved a welcome, turned back to his potatoes in a thrashing hissing of brush and mud.

'He means—oh, blast, who is it, don't you Alfie?' Simone, said lazily. 'What's the tennis match they play in London? Charles?'

Charles placed a potato on the draining board, and took another from the water.

'You mean Wimbledon?'

'Do you know it?' Simone asked me. 'Anaïs says you're from London originally. Have you been?'

I shook my head. 'Hello. No. Not to Wimbledon.'

'Some woman caused a scandal there, didn't she?' Simone carried on. 'Blast, what was her name?'

'Lili de Alvarez,' said Alfred. He'd sat down and was prying wicks from candles. 'Ah! Success!'

'Very improper,' said Simone. 'Wearing shorts.'

'Broke club rules,' said Alfred.

'Expecting them to play in dresses. What's wrong with trousers? Ignore him, Bill. Come.'

'Benjamin.'

'Yes, come in. Don't be a wallflower.'

'So,' Henry shouted. 'How'd you cook this, Benno? You a professor in the kitchen too?'

'Twenty minutes for a pound,' I said, 'plus an extra twenty. It depends how hot your oven is.'

Henry looked over. 'How hot's your oven, Anaïs?'

Anaïs stubbed out her cigarette on the outdoor wall. 'Why don't you start cooking?'

Henry laughed. 'What an idea! Yes, I'll start. Simone, get Benno some champagne. Charles, are those potatoes clean? Good God, my boy, you'd think you've got something against them.'

'Don't want mouthfuls of soil.'

Simone stepped over to Charles and put a hand on his shoulder. Charles wiped his hands on the apron, red-faced from his chores, turned and smiled uneasily at Simone.

'Get some champagne, darling,' Simone said to Alfred, waving her other hand.

Henry plunged a knife into the joint.

'Champagne! Yes. For all of us. And dinner! Let's not keep waiting, eh? Not a moment longer.'

It took at least two more hours, during which time we all became drunk and then sober again, with Alfred acting as sommelier, sending corks into the garden and refilling our drinks and then forgetting. The beef was pink through the middle. There was soil in the mash, but no one minded. Charlie and Henry debated the best cheeses, which salons they preferred, which cafés were hostile to writers down on their luck, which journals they were targeting with their letters, so high in importance did they consider their correspondence. They talked of Alfred's ambition to win the French Open, of Simone's house in Montpellier, and a visit to the south as soon as Henry had finished his manuscript.

'Or perhaps before I finish it, what do you think, Anaïs? Shall I have my cake and eat it?'

Anaïs went over to the sink and rinsed out her glass, slowly running a finger around the rim.

'So how's it going?' I asked Henry.

'He's not finished the manuscript,' said Simone, looking elsewhere. 'Have you Henry?'

Charles pushed his elbows onto the table, making an unnecessary racket. 'I have no hesitation about what to write anymore,' he said loudly. 'Or where. Corfu or Montpellier. It doesn't matter.'

‘You don’t want to come to Montpelier?’ asked Simone, not quite offended.

‘Oh, it’s not that,’ said Charles, glancing at Henry and pushing his chair back.

‘Yes it is, Charles,’ said Henry. ‘You can’t write *anywhere*.’

‘Well, I think I can. It’s a bit painful to begin with,’ Charles carried on, smiling at Simone. He drew his elbows back. ‘But now I’ve started I feel I can. Unless I’m pushed in another direction, you know, liked being forced—’

‘Who’s forcing you, my boy?’ Henry poked his nose across the table. ‘Who’s forcing you? Tell me and I’ll put them up on this table and I’ll, I know who it is, you know what I’ll do? I’ll disembowel them with—’ he pitched around for a knife.

Anaïs leant against the sink, shaking her head. Her blouse was spotted with splashes of water.

‘Not in the kitchen,’ she said.

‘—being forced,’ Charles continued, ‘yes, being forced...’ How mean he’d become, I thought, how brave to criticise her when she was not here. ‘To write what I have will estrange me dreadfully.’

‘Alfred, more wine!’ said Henry. ‘Anaïs, can you get this rag-picker to do his job properly?’

Alfred stood and waved a hand towards Anaïs, he would take care of it.

‘Are you talking about your travel books, Charlie?’ asked Simone.

Charles folded his arms.

‘I can’t write real books all the time,’ he said, like a child who had been caught being too happy.

Anaïs sat down. ‘Why not, Charlie? Why not write proper books all the time?’

‘It’s like an electric current,’ said Charles. ‘Increase the dose only very gradually.’

Henry jumped up as if the current was flowing from big toe to bald head.

‘The only thing, my boy, the *only* thing that truly nourishes—truly—is doing what one wants to do. I tell you, everything else is crap.’

Anaïs chided him for his agile feet, his limbering up at the table as if it were a sports field. She turned to Charles, put an arm on the back of his chair. ‘Why can’t you write real books all the time?’

‘What I want is this,’ began Charles. ‘Once every three years I shall try to produce the full score. The rest of the time I shall do a libretto. Essays, travel-books.’

Henry fell into his chair. ‘Hellfire, Charlie. Let the angels be your watermark. Not the market.’

‘But there are lots of things I want to write. And they’re not like this book at all.’

‘Then don’t write. Don’t write anything. Lie fallow. Hold it in. Let the stuff explode inside you.’

Charles picked up his napkin and tossed it across the table.

‘I am too young—’

‘Hah!’ laughed Henry, ‘I’ll give you my left arm for your youth.’

‘—not strong enough yet.’

‘You’re a bull, Charlie,’ Henry shouted. ‘You’re an ox! Look at you. Isn’t he?’

‘That carapace will come,’ said Charles.

‘Oh it will.’ Henry leant across the table. ‘And you’ll regret every bit of that hell when it does.’

The candles withered. The kitchen door opened, and Alfred came back in.

‘Out and in,’ said Henry, holding his empty wine glass mid-air. ‘We only borrow this wine.’

Alfred came round the table filling our glasses. Henry cleared his throat and leant on his elbows.

‘So, to answer your question, Benno. Yes. It’s nearly damn finished. I’ve broken it’s back. It’s nearly broken me too, but I’ll get it done. And then I’ll join my young lad here on the Champs-Élysées. Our first novels!’ He gasped and sat up. ‘The world won’t know what fucked it in the cunt!’

‘Henry!’ shouted Anaïs, but it was said in vain.

‘And talking of cunts, she’ll be here tomorrow.’ Henry laughed hard, knocking over his glass and spilling champagne in a foam across the table. ‘Hell! Oh she doesn’t mind, Anaïs. It’s affectionate. We’ve sorted our differences.’

‘In my house—’ Anaïs tried again. It was the first time I’d ever seen her angry with him.

‘Oh, fuck the house rules,’ said Henry, ‘but this food is fantastic. Let me speak to your chef! Ha. Okay, okay. But as for her,’ and he pointed at the door, and I turned, shocked, expecting Maríne to be standing there, ‘she can take it. She’s tougher than you. Tougher than any of us.’

I choked down whatever I was about to say. Charlie got there a second before me.

‘Who do you mean, Henry?’

‘Our miraculous Maríne. If she’s going to refuse my book, I want to see her do it to my face.’

‘You called her,’ said Anaïs, thinking of when he may have done that.

‘I called her,’ said Henry. ‘And you know what, she accepted.’

‘Henry, do you think that was wise?’ Anaïs asked. She glanced at me.

‘No, but who cares? It’s too damn sleepy in the country for me. It’ll be civil war!’ He laughed, banged the table. ‘But at least it’s not Spain, right? Get your head blown off in Spain right now.’

‘Where will she sleep?’ Anaïs was standing, clearing away the table. ‘We have only the—’

‘I’m telling you,’ Henry carried on, ‘the walls are like paper anyway, she can sleep where she likes and we’ll just keep track of which room she chooses, all these single men!’ I smiled at him, then away, but Henry was not ribbing me. Charlie liked it a lot less. ‘Ah, come on my lad, it’s good for the ego having someone creep into your room. Isn’t that right, Ben?’

‘I’m not sure what you mean.’

‘I want to know!’ he said, wobbling on his seat. ‘I want to see what the hell she makes of it. To my face. Whether it’s annihilating or praise. Ah, all praise annihilates anyway. Ain’t that the truth?’

Henry picked up a last morsel of bread and wiped his plate even as Anaïs was lifting it away in front of him. ‘Come on, how do you take it? Like a bullet in the gut, Benno? Or like a bull in the ring? You Charlie? It says a lot about a man how he deals with the annihilation of praise.’

‘When is she arriving?’ I asked, both hands on the table to steady myself against Henry’s words.

‘Tomorrow. So!’ He stood up. ‘To work! A wonderful dinner. My compliments to the chef!’

Henry went back to work and the others went into the lounge. I helped Anaïs clear up. We stood at the sink washing the dishes. She handed me plate after plate, and I dried, placing them on a sideboard.

‘You knew he would,’ I said. I tried to make it less accusing, and touched her on the arm, smiling. For a moment she stopped with her hands in the water, and then carried on, circling, wiping. ‘Invite her.’

‘Then thank you,’ she said, ‘for coming anyway.’

She handed me a plate, and I began drying.

‘Do you remember what I said when you first met her, Ben?’

‘No, what did you say?’

She stared at me, ran her tongue around the front of her teeth, thinking. She looked away. Then she smiled, and hunched up her shoulders. She leant into me.

‘Have you been enjoying your analysis?’

I stretched out my mouth in a circle.

‘I should warn her,’ I said.

‘Oh Ben, you cannot. No, that isn’t right.’

‘I meant about me being here. Not Henry.’

She looked at me, softened. ‘I need you here for this. She is trouble that I...’

I took the plate over to the dresser, put it down, saw it was unclean, wiped it again.

‘She’ll be the first to read Henry’s book. It really is nearly finished, Ben. She’ll get to decide if the Obelisk is going to publish it or not. And then who knows what will happen.’

‘If she says no?’

‘Even if she says yes. You’ve seen what they think of her. What they think she did to Charlie’s.’

‘Then why doesn’t he publish it himself?’ I stopped, slowed down. ‘That’s what he’s planning?’

‘We don’t have the money. It’s not a pamphlet.’ She wiped her nose with her sleeve, wrinkled it as if there was a terrible, exquisite itch she could not rid herself of. ‘I have some money... Henry has a deal with Jack. They’ll publish it. But what she makes Henry do to get there... She is too inflexible.’

She emptied out the water and we looked around the kitchen. The smells of dinner lingered, even with the candles burning, even with the garden door open. I

thought about the night spent printing Charlie's book. Marïne had been warm, teasing, but not vindictive, and not obdurate. She had made it happen. And Charlie had accepted that she'd improved his book.

'I feel no trepidation around her,' I stated. I'd chosen to forget what she had said about writers, about her baiting me with Moniz and his monkeys.

'Then I need you here even more,' said Anaïs, sighing. 'I am not as bold as you are.'

The next morning Anaïs brought in a set of tennis whites.

'Here,' she said. 'They're Hugh's. They might be a bit big for you, but there's a belt. The sun is out. Why don't you get into them and meet Alfred? Don't worry. I've given you trousers, not shorts.'

Alfred was practising his serve. Simone was lounging in a sun chair with a magazine, a scarf of red and blue diamonds wrapped round her hair. Charles came from the kitchen in whites, carrying a tray with brioches, fruits and coffee.

'A decent breakfast,' said Charles, smiling. He flicked his hair from his eyes. He put the tray down on the table. 'And how are you this morning?' He poured coffee from a pot.

'So, Ben,' shouted Alfred. 'Are you ready for a game?'

No, it was too soon. I'd not played for years. I could watch them. Charles tore from the brioche and picked up a racquet and went and stood opposite Alfred. Simone looked up.

'You might as well help yourself. It won't last long. He always gets hungry when playing.'

I sat down in the chair next to her.

'It's very dull in Paris in summer, don't you think? But they won't come to Montpellier.'

She flicked over a page of her magazine, then another one.

'Is it not too early for the south now?'

'Oh, but that's the point...' she said, and let it linger. 'Look at this—'

She opened the magazine for me, but took it back immediately.

'So are you working on anything?' I asked.

She looked up with enormous effort.

‘Don’t tell me you’re a writer too. I thought you were another analyst? Isn’t it how we’re all obsessed with sex?’ She took a strawberry from the bowl. ‘Look at these. If they play tennis, they must have strawberries.’ Charles won a point. ‘Bravo!’

‘He has a lot to say.’ I pointed at Charlie. ‘For a young man.’

‘You’ve read his book, have you?’ she carried on, faking disinterestedness. ‘Did you like it?’

I picked out a strawberry.

‘If you ask me...’ Simone hesitated. ‘Henry thinks Charlie is the new Hugo or something. Victor, of course, not...’ and she laughed and looked back at the house. Hugo was Anaïs’ nickname for her husband. ‘Well, what a thing to let slip. I believe *your* people have something to say about that?’

Some movement from the house made me look up. Maríne was there, standing at the kitchen door with Anaïs. She wore a summer dress and blue cardigan, and I thought she may have had a haircut. They came over.

‘Simone, you remember Maríne, from the Obelisk?’

Simone looked up, shading her eyes.

‘Oh, yes, Charlie’s *editor*,’ she said. ‘He’s told me all about you.’

Anaïs left us to get back to Henry. Maríne sat down at the table and helped herself to the brioche. I sucked in my cheeks and made a horrible smacking sound. I drank some coffee. It tasted like soil.

‘Maríne, hello.’ It was an invite for her to say how she felt. But I shouldn’t have worried.

‘Now for Alfred it’s all about Henry,’ Simone carried on. ‘He wants to give Henry our money. I’m a patron to the arts, but there’s a limit. You know Anaïs is writing too. Between them who knows what *slips* will come out.’

She closed the magazine and rested it on her lap. Alfred chased a ball into the net and tumbled over. He was red, sweating, laughing.

‘You hurt him, you know,’ Simone said.

I looked up. ‘Hurt who?’

‘Asking him if he’s finished it. Henry’s very sensitive. I’m sure you don’t believe that. You didn’t notice how much you upset him?’

‘Hasn’t he a thick skin?’ I said. ‘I thought Henry had a thick skin. And wasn’t it you who—’

‘Oh he *looks* confident,’ said Simone. ‘But he’s *such* a boy. You’d know more about that, Maríne?’

Maríne leant over the table and picked up a strawberry and twirled it by the stalk in her fingers.

‘Are you afraid no one will ever write about you, Simone?’

Simone stared at her, stared at the strawberry in her fingers, blooded and speckled. She considered it angrily and turned away, started flipping through her magazine page after page. Charles smashed a ball straight at Alfred, and Alfred got his racquet in front of his body, and returned the ball. Howls, then laughter.

‘I think I might go for a swim,’ said Simone, ‘before everyone descends on us.’

I asked, ‘aren’t they working?’

She stood up, gave Maríne a disgusted glance. ‘Stay for a month, and then tell me what they do in there is *work*.’

Simone walked off towards the house and left Maríne and I together.

‘Does it go too far?’ she said quietly. ‘Being here?’

‘We should keep our distances,’ I said, more sharply than I meant. ‘I mean...’

She considered it for a moment, as if I had confirmed something for her.

Alfred came over and pulled me up from the seat.

‘Come on, now you can’t hide forever. You will like it. Tennis is fun. *Fun!* I hope you are terrible. Much better for me. Charles, you show Ben how to play. I’ll hit it back to you.’

Charles came over and put the racquet in my hand.

‘Don’t try and hit with your wrist. You’ll break it.’ I felt weak and stupid and effete with Charlie teaching me. ‘Now, do you know how to serve?’

‘Of course!’

I walked off to the baseline and put the ball into the net. I laughed uncomfortably.

‘Try underarm,’ shouted Alfred. ‘We all start somewhere, don’t we?’

Serve like a woman? I got it over the net on the next try. Alfred hit it back.

‘That’s it! Get it!’

I hit the ball back over the net and watched it roll to the back of the court.

‘Now you’re ready. You competitive?’ asked Charlie.

‘No, not at all.’

‘We will play doubles at the Open,’ Alfred was shouting, ‘we’ll be famous.’

Maríne sat picking at the fruit. Charles drank coffee, offered encouragement. Simone came out of the house with a towel and a basket. She walked along the path to the swimming pool. Alfred waved at her but she didn’t look over. I was watching her when Alfred threw the ball in the air and smashed it over the net with a grunt. I cried out in pain and doubled over. Charles came running.

‘You’re not hurt are you?’

‘Charlie, you were meant to be a good teacher,’ shouted Maríne, far too amused at my expense.

‘I am, I am! Don’t hit it with your body, Ben. Don’t show me up.’

‘You’ve made Hugh’s whites dirty,’ I said to Alfred who was at the net.

‘She doesn’t care about things like that,’ said Charles, unable to stop himself from laughing.

‘Ah, Ben, my friend, I could not have aimed it there if I’d tried!’ Alfred said, also laughing. I turned away from them both. The pain had moved from my groin into my stomach, a long dull ache.

‘And remember your feet. Like this,’ said Charlie, and he did a shuffle. He shouted across the net to Alfred. ‘He’ll get you this time!’ He went and sat down next to Maríne. ‘Go on Benno,’ he shouted, smiling at Maríne. ‘Show us it didn’t hurt!’

An hour later I left Alfred and Charles on the tennis court and took the breakfast things back to the kitchen. Maríne had disappeared. I was worked up, out of breath. I poured myself water with lemon and walked through the house. Beyond the lounge was an annexe, the door half open. A typewriter ribbon biting between cotton and key. Henry’s soliloquy of reed, twang, lively amazement. Anaïs more conciliatory: shaping, deflecting. Henry wore his spectacles, sat at a desk littered with paper and in the middle a silver portable Continental Silenta. The room was lined with books. Anaïs sat on a small sofa with a blanket over her knees and her large leather journal on her lap. She was wearing a long dark dress like the women from Java in pictures on the walls of Marais restaurants. The gramophone had been lifted from the kitchen but it wasn’t wound up. The room smelt of paper and small fires, attempts to fend off damp. It smelt of Henry’s

aftershave, a five franc lilac vegetal. His eyes shone crystal blue. A coffee pot steamed on the table next to the typewriter.

Anaïs smiled. 'Did you play?'

'I'm terrible.'

'At least you tried,' said Henry. 'That's the thing, isn't it?'

'Your whites are dirty,' I said, and gingerly pointed to the cotton at my groin.

'If all you have to worry about is that,' she said, laughing. I bridled then gave in, laughed with her.

Henry was tapping a finger on the desk. 'Well take a seat, why don't you.'

I fell into the sofa. Anaïs put a hand on my knee, and let go again.

'What do you think of this, the cosy writer's den?' asked Henry. 'Makes me look like a rich old thing, doesn't it? But you know I ain't got a dime. No, don't believe it for a minute. But sit, do as you please. Do as you please—that's the only thing. It's got a kind of anguish, but it's a tolerable anguish. Ignore me. I'm up against the wall. You played with Alfred? You let him beat you? If you want to do me a favour then you keep Alfred happy. You keep playing tennis. But don't worry about Simone. Nothing keeps her happy.'

'I'd noticed.'

'I can't hit the damn thing ten feet. No strength.' He held up his wrists as if they were cuffed. 'But I give it from the guts. I said all this last night? Please yourself and trust in God.'

'And what if you don't believe in God?'

'Then just please yourself.' He swivelled on the chair. 'Too many ideas surging in my brain, but a little more dough, a little assistance, and I'd be another Balzac, so far as output goes. So keep Alfred happy, yes. Let's make him the patron of my universe! But you believe in something, Benno. Pleasure? The sun rising? The consumer death machine?'

'I believe in people,' I said.

'Oh, you two,' he said, shaking his head. 'You know what I believe in? Me. Insane as I am. I'll always be under or above par—not saner and sober. I hope you weren't after that. If I'm healthy I'll come to a full stop. Zero. Kaput. All over.'

'You are healthy,' said Anaïs. 'When you're working.'

‘Look at her. She gets it out. Have you ever seen anything so healthy? This is not a good thing, you understand? Do you know about her diary? On her lap. Come on, Anaïs, let Benno know your secrets.’

‘Ben already knows I cannot do without it,’ said Anaïs, with one hand on the journal. ‘Except if I am working. With clients. Of course, I cannot write everything they—’

‘I bet the hell you do. Those damn lucky crazies. She plays with their feelings on the couch.’

‘You’re just jealous,’ said Anaïs.

‘I don’t like it because it makes her want to go back to New York.’ He looked at me over his glasses. ‘And she loves New York more than she loves it here.’

Anaïs put a hand on Henry’s knee. ‘Let’s not talk about New York.’

‘Most fucking uptight place in the universe. Let me tell you. It nearly killed me. Throttled me for good. Why do you think you got so many clients there? That Rank *hugs* them, they’re just about to jump. Why do you think New York’s the home of skyscrapers?’

‘It’s fascinating,’ Anaïs said to me. ‘We live in such a moment. To have people share with us their inner lives, really for the first time. Without relying on literature, I mean. I feel very...’

Henry was pouring coffee.

‘You want some?’ he asked. ‘Anyway, she doesn’t hold a thing in. Not letting her thoughts harden, ever. Not letting them turn gem-like and twisted and poisonous. It robs you, you know? Don’t give me that look, Anaïs. It deprives you. I say to myself that a great deal of it has to do with this,’ and he grabbed his stomach, pulled and twisted, ‘with the holding it in your guts until it almost kills you. This is what I was telling Charlie. If you can’t write something that’s real, don’t write at all.’

‘Maybe this other persona of his is real,’ I said. ‘His travel voice.’

Henry stretched his legs out in front of him, slumped in his chair. He stared at me intently.

‘You sound like her. Our mysterious *Marine*. Wonderful name that—who trusts the ocean? It’ll kill you as soon as you step into it. You think she knows anything about what we do here?’

‘A fair bit,’ I said, and then more cautiously, ‘from what I’ve seen.’

‘Yes, but you *write*, Benno. You know what it’s like. It’s all erupting now. Yes, it’s crystallised.’ He threw a hand and tapped the typewriter. ‘How long do you think your patients gestate?’

‘I can’t talk about—’

‘Oh, shit, Benno, I’m not asking about *her*. Think big, man! Think universal!’

I shook my head quickly. ‘So this is it,’ I pointed at the papers on the desk, ‘your book?’

Henry put a hand inside the gap between his belt buckle and trouser.

‘She sets me back in one way, but advances me in another. Talks to me, *me*, about printing, sales. A bitch! Or what, she can’t be as bad as I make her out? Just because she’s young and fucked my friend Charlie and now—’

‘Henry,’ whispered Anaïs.

‘I thought you liked her?’ I carried on. ‘You couldn’t stop praising her at Charlie’s reading.’

‘Yes, but now she acts as if she might not take it,’ said Henry, ‘but it’s ok. I do a lot of thinking about the things I’m not writing. What else I’ve got in my guts that she’ll never get her hands on.’ He threw a thumb over his shoulder as if he was hitchhiking. ‘She’s coming for my book. Well, you know, it’s *real*. I’ll finish it. It’s almost finished me. You tell me she knows something about *that*? The way books can finish you off?’

I was about to speak but Anaïs put her hand on my leg and squeezed. Advice, she’d call it.

‘Perhaps you’d like to wash up before lunch,’ she said.

‘My ideas are hard as steel and as sharp,’ said Henry, looking up as I left. ‘But even I know words fool nobody. People see right through that, disguise yourself as you may. The disguise is inevitable. My aim is to rip it off more and more. Do you get me? Kapishe?’

I read until dinner. *Sleeveless Errand*. The heroine’s car had broken down and she was stuck for the night with a man in a hotel in Brighton. He was married; tried to seduce her; failed. She resented it, but then accepted it, laughed it off. What did it matter to her if this married man could get it up or not? She was going to kill herself as soon as her head gasket was fixed. She almost changed her

mind when the man, atoning for his actions, pleaded with her not to do it. But she went ahead and drove off the cliff. I sat for a while with the book open on the last page. Maríne had told me about its reasons for being censored, that one of the upper classes had a grudge against the author and was a friend of the Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, known as Hacker Hicks in the literary trade. But it was more that *Sleeveless Errand* had come too soon after that other one, *The Well of Loneliness*. I strained my way through the novel, looking for clues I knew were not there. She had not edited this one, after all, only been attracted by it. The clues, I thought to myself, are downstairs. So I washed up, shook the book's last image from my mind, and went to join the others for dinner.

Alfred and Simone were there with Maríne. Simone had been in the sun all day, and was a deep, lazy brown. Maríne was arranging a vase of zinnia from the garden. French folk songs played on the gramophone. Lamps and candles lit the room. The writers had not emerged. There was a different mood from the previous night. A séance. I didn't want to conjure the dead though, or images of the dead, their floating heads.

'Ah, Fred,' smiled Alfred. I assumed he meant Fred Perry. He fixed me a brandy and soda and complemented me on my tennis performance. The folk songs had finished. It was not the gramophone playing, but a radio. The presenter, Radiolo, was jabbering away in a grocer's bawl. Alfred bounced over and turned it up.

'Calm down, Alfred,' said Simone. 'How about wine? We're done with our aperitifs, everyone? There's no point waiting for *them*.'

She opened a bottle of Bugey and poured. Alfred shuffled his moustache from one side of his face to the other and pressed Maríne on Henry's book—what money did she have for it? Maríne cupped her chin in her hands, answering in non-committal tones. Simone handed out drinks and then sat disinterested at the other end of the table. She was the first to refill her glass from the cabinette.

'This one's finished,' she said. 'Alfred, why don't you go in and see when—'
'Go in there?' he shouted. 'You're crazy. Crazy.'

But there was no need. Henry and Charles and Anaïs came into the dining room together. Henry jumped from one person to the next, flashing hands, leaning on the shoulder, laughing and shouting into faces, his round glasses

bouncing off his nose. Alfred, Charles, a kiss for Anaïs, Simone and a bear hug for me, but nothing for Maríne.

‘It’s not every day we get what we want, is it?’ he said, laughing. ‘The planets must be lined up alright. Alfred, are you not getting me a drink? That’s it. That’s it. Well, a celebration with friends. Alfred, all we need now’s your money and we can do anything we want. Live on the moon. What do you say? Alfred Perles and Henry Miller, partners in the supremacy of the literary aegis?’

Alfred handed him a whiskey. Henry stood with a hand up his back, scratching. His cream shirt and linen trousers were slack, tied by a thin brown belt wrapped almost twice around his waist.

‘Well, why not a toast? This is a book for the initiated only—and how many are there at present in the world?’ He counted around the room. ‘Seven of us, and that could be it. But so what? That’s enough to begin. It’s real. It’s a surgical operation after all, a self-birth: the navel string is cut. Done. To the initiated! Us writers! We are imperfect through and through—thank heaven!’

We raised our glasses. I drank my wine in one go and felt suddenly bitter, quarrelsome, indifferent to Henry’s success. I looked around. Charles was talking to Maríne in what seemed like some sort of pre-emptive lecture. The others were laughing. Henry beamed, threw his arms out.

‘*Tropic of Cancer*. The first and greatest book of sex and death. And our new press for it. The first book of the Villa Seurat series, unless Anaïs has beaten me to—’

‘But the Obelisk is going to publish you?’ asked Alfred.

Henry waved his glass at Maríne. ‘She’ll keep it in her knickers for two years instead—’

‘Henry,’ said Anaïs softly, smiling an apology at Maríne. ‘You invited her...’

‘For sure, we’ll get it out then,’ said Alfred, ‘of course, of course.’

Henry finished his whiskey and grabbed a wine.

‘Many fine men had to print their first books themselves. Whitman peddled his from door to door! Rather that, than let them get their hands on it. Alfred, you and me with our cartload up and down the rue Saint-Michel.’

‘Us writers!’ said Alfred, throwing up his glass, his hand shaking.

‘You won’t peddle this,’ said Charles. ‘It’s a masterpiece, Henry. Art is going to be real art now.’

‘Well, thank you my lad. But you’ve got no money have you, Maríne? Or will? It’s just that mind-curing crap you’re printing?’

‘Charlie’s much better than that, Henry,’ said Maríne, an attempt at amusement.

‘He won’t have to, will he Maríne?’ said Charles, ignoring her slight.

‘I’ll look at it.’ She was pale, but assured. ‘As promised.’

‘You want to have your own press, is that right?’ Simone asked Henry, but looking at Alfred.

‘Absolutely,’ agreed Henry. ‘And then we can get things going.’

Alfred opened a bottle of wine, topping up everyone’s glass.

‘You see lots of us come through the Obelisk, Maríne. Are we worth a kicking? Are we worth anything at all? We drink, we eat, we breathe, we fuck. Don’t we?’

‘But that’s why you’re here, Maríne?’ asked Alfred. ‘You won’t have to peddle a cart, Henry. This will make you famous.’

‘I thought you were pleased with her,’ I repeated myself from the day before, ‘at Charlie’s event?’

‘Are you taking sides Benno?’ Henry asked, his good mood fading. I poked my chin out, refused to answer. ‘Ah! But she made him write new material. Fatten the book up. Is that your plan for me now Miss Pacific? Miss Atlantic? The fucking Obelisk! I’d rather we put it out ourselves.’

Alfred began rattling around in the cupboard for the next bottle of wine.

‘She’ll shit on you anyway, so have your say first,’ said Henry. ‘That’s my motto.’

Henry stood like the Sun King in the middle of the dining room, facing Maríne, with an empty glass in his hand turned downwards and dripping as if it were a torn-out heart. Maríne looked at me, her expression defiant but I knew what toll her exertions had taken. We looked at each other long enough for the others to register. She was waiting for me. What could I say? She *wanted* to take on Henry. I wavered, and then it was too late. She stiffened and retreated, unalloyed, and turned to face Henry alone. To her credit, or destruction, I am unsure which, Maríne faced him down.

It was turning light. I lay in bed listening to the house. They had given Marine Charlie's room, as he had not gone to bed. He and Anaïs were making copies of Henry's manuscript. It was something of a superstition of Henry's, one that surprised me. I put my ear to the wall but heard nothing. Quietly I got up, dressed and went downstairs. The sounds of a typewriter. Charles and Anaïs were still in the annexe. The lamps were on; they'd not registered the morning. Charles was at work on the Continental Silenta. Anaïs worked on a small portable on her lap. The room smelt of carbon dust and creaked with their cramps and aches.

'How are you getting on?' I asked. 'Where's Henry?'

Anaïs looked up. 'There's coffee in the kitchen,' she said. 'Morning, Ben. He's passed out.'

'Charles, how are you doing?'

'Coffee would be grand,' he said. His skin looked in need of a squeeze.

I brought them coffee and left them to their work and took a cup and sat for a while in the kitchen, and then wandered around the garden. It was warm already, a shimmer and a buzz over the grass, heat and insects, both invisible or nearly so, things I caught only in glances from the corner of my eye. I made my way along the path to the pool. There was a splash and a glide under water and a head breaking the surface. Marine was doing backstroke up and down in a blue swimming costume and a white, dimpled cap. Long, trim arms, and those editor's fingers of hers cut the water like the prow of a yacht. She caught sight of me, stopped at the end and smiled.

'You're not swimming?'

I shook my head. 'No, well, I hadn't planned... so early.'

She splashed water at me playfully. 'Looks like you're pretty wet already.'

Her legs drifted back, kicking at the water, her fingers curled around the edges of the pool.

'I want to...'

She cocked her head to one side.

'What is it, Ben?'

I sighed, then shook my head and sat down on the side of the pool, took my shoes and socks off and rolled up my trousers and put my feet in the water.

'Oh my God that's cold.'

She smiled. 'You get used to it.'

She kicked both feet out of the water behind her, stretched her long, slim legs, pointed her toes.

‘Or maybe you don’t. Look. I wanted to talk to you...’

‘Oh yes?’ She smiled. ‘About last night? It’s okay, I understand you were in a bit of a spot.’

‘A spot?’ It came out as a bit of a strangled cry. I cleared my throat. ‘Can you edit Henry’s book if he doesn’t trust you? Won’t that make it difficult?’

‘Trust isn’t necessary,’ she said after a pause. I would not let her make me feel guilty.

I leant towards her and the water. ‘What did you expect me to do, Maríne? You don’t want me to fix things for you, do you?’

Maríne looked at me and I felt it more keenly than a cut.

‘Anyway, I came to talk about Professor Moniz.’

‘Oh, really?’ She looked unconvinced. ‘António?’

‘Look, Maríne, I don’t think you should be publishing his poetry. I don’t think that’s wise.’

‘You needn’t worry. His book’s not dangerous.’

‘You’re so sure?’ I asked. ‘What about—’

‘That’s something else,’ she said, looking up and squinting into the sun. ‘That’s not his poetry.’

‘Yes, I am aware of that. Are you aware that we stopped him? That he’s had to abandon his plans?’

She wriggled her toes and turned around, with her head resting on the side. I ran a hand over my face, rubbed my chin, bristling under my fingers. Sunday, a day off. Something in the way the light fell on the water made me graver than I should have been. Maríne swam another length up and down the pool.

‘You should come in!’ She swam away, then returned and stopped, blew water off her top lip. ‘Why are you concerned, Ben?’

‘I don’t think it is wise to be involved with him. Not wise for the Obelisk.’

‘The Obelisk?’

I turned away.

‘António said it will stop overemotional behaviours. Maybe we should get him to see Henry.’

‘That’s not even...’

She slipped into the water. Her head went under and then emerged again.

‘You don’t know for sure if he’s right or wrong, do you?’ she asked. She blew on the surface of the water, rippling away. ‘Don’t tell me who I can and can’t edit, Ben. That’s not your place.’

I looked back at the house, could see only a corner of it, my bedroom window, the dark roof, the moss that still hung on to the gutters running around the lip of the roof. Above the house the sky was a perfect honest blue, cut only by the occasional swallow.

‘Well it’s just my opinion of course. I mean, not getting involved.’

She put both arms up on the side of the pool, half pulling herself out.

‘António’s going to buy most anyway, take them back to Portugal and post them off to his colleagues, I expect. Is there anything else you’d like to discuss with me?’

‘Too much,’ I said. I pulled my feet out, looked around for a towel.

She pushed off with a splash.

I marched inside, as fast as one can march barefooted. It would not have set the Hun fleeing. I avoided the kitchen and instead went into the lounge and sat on a sofa and began drying my feet with my socks, hurriedly rasping at my toes. I put my shoes on and looked around. The room was draped with hides of burnt gold and was lit with lamps that stood to the ceiling. The walls were covered with engravings and bird prints, storks and grassland ducks and herons, hunted or no longer seen, hung in wild, flocking arrangements. Behind the prints were more birds on wood panelling as dark as cinders, making the room feel dim, buried. Around the fireplace was a porcelain red-on-white toile de Jouey of oriental gardens and peacocks’ eyes. Above the mantelshelf was a portrait of Anaïs, naked.

‘Admiring the birds?’ asked Henry.

I jumped. He was sitting in a dark corner. I smiled grimly. Henry stared into the fireplace, grey and drawn but as triumphant as Napoleon, and there was something post-coital about his slumped, hazy expression. It took him an age to focus on me across the room.

‘So what do you think, Benno, are the stars lined up for me?’

‘I’d say they are, Henry.’

It was not yet mid-morning. I was just about to make my excuses and leave when Maríne came in. She smiled at both of us and then sat near the window with a towel around her shoulders. Then Anaïs came in with baguettes and jam and butter and a pile of berries in a bowl, and some pears loaded onto a large tray. She smiled and put the tray down on a small table between us.

‘Just in time to have breakfast,’ she said. She broke the bread and put scoops of jam on small plates and they all started eating. She offered me some but I refused. I found myself pitifully tight-stomached. Anaïs kissed Henry and poured everyone’s coffee and then went and sat on cushions next to the fireplace. She looked tired. I jumped straight in.

‘Maríne’s editing Professor Moniz’s work,’ I said. ‘It’s a guide to chopping up people’s emotions.’

Anaïs looked crossly at me.

‘Is anxiety the same as appendicitis? Cutting out parts of the brain... Isn’t that right, Maríne?’

She also looked fed up with me.

‘Can you believe this, Anaïs? Have you heard anything as crazy as this?’

‘Ben, what are you talking about?’ she asked. She cupped her coffee in both hands, leaning back on the wall, her legs pulled up beneath her, eyes shut.

‘We’re not here to talk about António’s book,’ said Maríne. ‘I’m here to read Henry’s.’

‘There’s other books?’ asked Henry, and barked a strange laugh.

‘Do you have it with you?’ asked Anaïs. Maríne nodded. ‘Is it a medical book? Can I see it?’

Maríne lightly jumped up and left the room. I watched her go.

‘Ben, are you ok?’ Anaïs asked, caring but tired. ‘You seem upset.’

‘Concerned. Fine.’

‘She is right you know.’ Anaïs put a hand on my knee. ‘She *is* here for Henry.’ She said it quietly. I took some bread and jam out of irritation rather than hunger. I chewed in silence until Maríne came back carrying two books. The one I recognised, Moniz’s poetry. And another, loosely bound with hastily made binding covers. She sat down again and pulled her cardigan around her shoulders.

‘What is *that*?’

She held it up for us to see. In the dim light I could just about read the front page, a dark cream cover, thicker than the pages behind it. I read it out loud.

“*The Leucotomy in Neurotic-Affectively Disordered Patients: a monograph by Professor António Egas Moniz*”.

I heard my pulse so loud I thought it was outside me. I wanted to jump up, take it from her.

‘It’s not taboo,’ I said. ‘It’s not literature. How can you even think of publishing this?’

She looked at the book, and what she could see through the book, past its pages.

‘You’re not going to publish it are you?’ I carried on. I didn’t know what I sounded like. ‘You’ve just got it to help with the poetry?’

She handed the poetry to Anaïs, keeping the monograph, and went and sat back down by the window. Anaïs opened the book, flicked through the poetry.

‘So he calls this a plastic art,’ she said, reading.

‘Oh that?’ said Henry, sitting up. ‘It’s the craze in the States. Actors having their noses fixed.’

Anaïs put a palm on the page. ‘Some of my clients in New York want so much to be like the pictures they see in magazines. They are obsessed with looking like the models. They ask me about it. Will it change who they are if they have their noses shaped?’

‘That’s not it,’ I said. ‘He’s operating on the brain. To fix people’s emotions. Not their faces.’

‘Ah!’ said Henry. ‘Sounds swell. You mean to make you happier?’

He was asking Maríne.

‘Yes. So they stop being neurotic and feel—’

‘I’ve never heard anything like it,’ I shouted. ‘I *know* there’s no proof for it.’

‘You said that before,’ Maríne almost whispered it to the window.

‘Can you imagine if the *courts* used this? People who make one mistake... Can you, Anaïs?’

‘Men need to diagnose,’ said Anaïs.

‘They’re in there somewhere,’ said Henry. ‘You don’t think feelings are still in the heart, Benno?’

‘This is serious, Henry.’ I looked at Maríne, but she was staring out of the room. ‘I know which patient he wanted to begin with. A young girl, too neurotic to even talk. Did she agree to it? If we hadn’t stopped him, would she have had any choice?’

‘Fucking crazy,’ said Henry.

‘Thank you,’ I said.

‘We could use it on Simone—’

‘Henry!’ shouted Anaïs, but she was laughing, and she went over to him and put a hand against his cheek. ‘Why don’t we hear what he has to say.’ She picked up the book of poetry and started reading. She looked up and laughed. ‘Oh, it’s not so good.’

‘No. Not so good *at all*.’

‘But it’s only poetry, Ben,’ said Henry, slumping back. ‘Ain’t it?’

‘*That* isn’t.’ I pointed at the manuscript Maríne was holding. ‘How long have you had that? And were you going to....’ I stopped myself just in time. ‘Are you really going to publish it?’

Anaïs read in silence. I watched Maríne. She was holding her coffee cup limply in one hand, tilted, nearly spilling it. She let her head fall back.

‘But what if he is right and your psychoanalysis is wrong?’ said Maríne. ‘If there are other ways of helping people get rid of their painful behaviours. And so quickly. Wouldn’t that be worth exploring?’

‘My God, you want to *get rid* of your emotions?’

‘Not get rid of them, Ben,’ and then quietly, ‘Or not the useful ones, anyway.’

I turned to Anaïs. ‘I thought you would be more affronted by this. Even with the idea of it. Have you ever heard of anything so...’

‘I’m sure you won’t let it happen, Ben.’

‘Well. Well, I’ve done what I could.’

‘Unless he’s already got proof,’ said Maríne. ‘Maybe there’s proof. Then why not?’

‘Aren’t you for putting everything back in?’ I asked her. ‘Rather than cutting out?’

She looked through me. And then she wrinkled up her face and turned away.

‘You going to butcher his book too,’ Henry said, but there was no malice in his voice.

‘It’s barbaric. Don’t you agree, Anaïs?’

‘I’m not so shocked.’

‘Nothing shocks you,’ said Henry.

‘Ben, why are you so angry?’ asked Anaïs. ‘Isn’t this what we do to each other every day?’

‘I don’t know what you mean.’ I put my plate down with a clatter.

‘Our clients—’ she stopped, glanced at Maríne, but went on anyway, ‘come to us because they’ve been disallowed their feelings. Isn’t that why we do what we do, to help them?’

‘I’m not sure if you’re saying we’re the curse or cure, Anaïs.’

She sat back, still holding my hand.

‘This is what we work with. People’s neuroses. Their stuck emotions. We don’t get rid of all their emotions, only the neuroses.’

‘But by cutting them out in surgery? With a *knife*?’

‘Or a tongue,’ said Anaïs, looking not at me, but at Maríne. ‘Is there so much difference?’

‘Well I can’t see anything wrong with it,’ said Maríne. I stared at her, and she stared back. ‘Perhaps psychoanalysis isn’t the right treatment for *everyone*.’

After a long silence in which we all picked in an unsatisfied way at the food, I went to my room and stayed there until I calmed down. I lay on the bed for an hour, listening to Simone and the sounds of angry packing and Alfred whistling distractedly. It was Sunday afternoon, I should get home too. I went downstairs again, prepared to leave, and found Maríne in the kitchen. Charles was there too, looking exhausted, standing at the kitchen counter. The kettle was boiling.

‘Hello, Ben,’ he said, waving a hand around. ‘Need more coffee. Is everyone swimming?’

‘We were,’ said Maríne. She was still wearing her costume.

‘God I’m tired. Well, you’ve waited months.’ He was pointing to a bundle of papers wrapped in string on the kitchen table. The kettle started whistling and he took it off the flame. She reached over and pulled the manuscript towards her.

‘Is that all of it?’ I asked.

‘The first copy. You know Henry.’

He put both hands on the draining board and dropped his head.

‘Are you alright, Charles?’ I asked.

He whipped round to face Maríne. ‘Do you know what this is?’

I’d walked in halfway through a confrontation. I sat down and kept quiet.

‘Henry’s written things nobody has dared to,’ Charlie carried on. ‘You’d be tearing the string off, Ben, if you’d been waiting for something this important, wouldn’t you? Maríne, I thought you cared about books.’

‘They sometimes don’t care for me,’ she answered, and it twisted my gut.

‘It’s brutal, obsessive, cruel, devastating, and appalling. I’m bewildered still. Totally stumped.’

‘Is that the book, or my attitude?’

‘Look. My soul is shaky just now.’ As if to prove it, he held out his hands, which were shaking too. He pointed at the manuscript. ‘Be careful with it. It really is something... something...’

‘Boundary crossing?’ I asked him. Charlie looked at me unpleasantly. He sniffed, wiped his nose, and turned away. He picked up the coffee pot and walked out of the kitchen. Maríne stood up.

‘Maríne, I need to—’ I began.

‘Oh, you heard what he said.’ She pushed her chair into the table. She was almost smiling, but it wasn’t pleasant. She took the manuscript. ‘I’d better read this before the ink dries.’

She left the kitchen. I went to my room but was too restless, so went back to the kitchen and made myself a coffee in an old Turkish pot. It looked as if it would never boil, and then bubbled over and made a mess. I poured the coffee and waited for the stove to cool and cleaned up the grits. I took my coffee into the garden. The clouds lightened, the rain moved off. I heard a train pass into the station. Turning round to the house I looked up at the windows. There—Maríne’s room. And there—Henry’s book. And Moniz’s poetry? His monograph? I strolled about, feeling as if every direction were the wrong one. If all our painful thoughts were nothing but knotted fibres, then what did that make us? What did it make of Henry’s book? What was madness for Moniz but a contusion in the mind? Love, a knot with some play. Jealousy, that knot tightened over.

I walked to the tennis court. It was empty but held the sounds and movements of playfulness, of fun, Alfred had promised. I opened the gates and went in, trespassing on memories. I drank the last of my coffee. Feeling where the ball struck me. I stopped, listened. I heard the kitchen door open and shut.

There was Maríne, wearing her costume and cardigan and reading Henry's book, its pages tucked untidily into each other. The string swaying down to her knees. She didn't look up, but walked with a steady, dreamlike step. She passed by the gates to the tennis court and carried on towards the swimming pool. She passed without noticing me, and I pretended not to notice her.

I took a while to switch on. When I did, I swept through the gates and put down my coffee and ran along the path towards the pool, and a gentle splashing. When I reached the pool I was only a few steps away but it could have been the other side of the world. I stood and watched as she took handfuls of Henry's manuscript and dropped them into the water. They fell onto the surface and floated, saturated, ink running like veins of indigo blue. I stood and watched as she scattered every last page. Then I watched her spill forward in a faint into the pool.

8

I had her halfway out when Alfred got to us. He'd been standing at their bedroom window avoiding Simone's complaining. Unable to square the commotion with what he should have been seeing, he came at a run. Together we pulled her out and sat her on the ground, pages of the manuscript floating on the pool like lilies. Alfred and I stood over her, all three of us soaked. I knocked her on the back with the heel of my palm and she coughed up water. Alfred suggested the kiss of life. I suggested he could go ahead. Simone roused Charlie and Henry, and with Anaïs the whole house was with us, Henry shouting and bawling, he and Charlie stripped off to their underpants and in the water to salvage what they could, although they knew it was useless. Anaïs and I took Marine into the house and undressed her. That small welt under her breast had scabbed over. I got her into bed and we let her sleep it off. Outside the men hung the pages to dry on the washing line between the house and a small apple tree, clipped and yellow and dripping. They had typed out two copies and so the damage was not terminal, but the force of it felt unaccountable. We sat drinking coffee in the kitchen. No one spoke much, except Simone, stating blatant facts as scandalous judgements, and Henry, who hopped between the kitchen and garden, his hands on his hips or wiping his forehead. His tirade was illogical but clear enough. I did my best to avoid eye contact.

She woke at around four and was packed by half-past and stood at the kitchen door. A train left at five. Anaïs was reluctant to say anything. I had the insincere monotone of Simone and the invective of Henry ringing in my ears, so it wasn't much of a sacrifice to see her home. We sat without talking on the train from Louveciennes to the Gare Saint-Lazare, where we caught a taxi. I asked her where she wanted to go. She didn't reply. I couldn't leave her at her lodgings. She fell asleep on my sofa within a minute of arriving. I put a blanket over her and sat down at the table and for the second time in only a month I watched her sleep off the traumas of her plunge. I walked lightly to my dresser and brought

back the sketchbook and opened it out. I made quiet observations. Her sabotage felt like a curtain coming down on a final act. I had to remind myself it was the *beginning* of the process for her. Drinking Chambord and sitting in my bathrobe, I felt the stirrings of something, an inescapable satisfaction. And yet that night a migraine arrived, not debilitating, but one that kept me awake in the dark. I stood at the window and pressed my forehead against the glass. It was a compact with the world outside, a little of the city feeling its way into my thoughts. Soon I closed the curtains, and went to bed. At some point Maríne woke, wrote a note—not a note of thanks, and just one word—and left. I didn't hear her go, but before I opened my eyes I could feel the space she left behind her.

At the Necker the next day, a Monday, and without my report on Moniz to keep me occupied, I could barely concentrate and spent the day in restless anticipation. It was only five minutes before her arrival time that I managed to manoeuvre myself into a peaceable frame of mind, breathe deeply, and wait. But she did not arrive. I remembered how it had been after Charlie's. A golden period of defiance and energy, which slipped away once the adrenaline wore off into a miserable slump. I spent the hour staring at the pages of the *Journal of Psychoanalysis* and thinking of what I would say to Maríne to engage her, bring her back.

The next day as I arrived at my office the phone rang. It was Anaïs. She was still at Louveciennes. All hell had broken loose for a while—or at least a writer's hell, I thought, which is a little dissatisfaction blown up like one of Moniz's angiographs. Henry and Charlie stayed one more day shouting and screaming wild accusations, and then calmed and left for Paris. The intention was to whip up a whirlwind in their search for publishers, poets, in the end anyone with a bank account and a will to bankroll publication through the Villa Seurat. She expected them to have a bad time. She didn't ask after Maríne, and I had no information to give, but I was glad to hear her voice. When she phoned again the next day she had been proven correct in her presumptions. Henry's attempts were failing. Edward Titus at The Black Manikin had enough money but no will; he was depressed about his marriage and hadn't put out a book for two years, and anyway, was a friend of Jack and wouldn't scoop an author. The Black Sun Press was flushed out; fingers burnt in the student protests in February. Henry's contacts were mostly gone back to the States, or insane, or had the clap, or

sanatorium bills or bar tabs to pay. Others were out of Paris for the summer or had been pinched by Henry for credit already.

‘Is it so urgent?’ I asked. ‘Maybe September, when people return...’

She went quiet. Then she laughed lightly, with some trepidation. Henry, wait? I listened to her breathing, an almost delicious discomfort. In the long pause I could hear her soul floating along the line to beguile me. They needed a rapprochement.

‘I’m not sure that—’ I stopped. I closed my eyes and saw Maríne in a corona of blue light, underwater, shimmering and moving farther and farther away from me, and I could not reach her.

‘Can you arrange things, Ben?’

The next day I found her at her lodgings. Her landlady was not going to let me in until I explained I was her doctor and went up. She was lying in bed, awake but stilled. A days-old breakfast tray put to one side. Her hair seemed longer, or perhaps just unkempt. Her skin was poor, her eyes watery and the sclera yellow. She barely said a word, the epitome of Jung’s introvert. She could not open Henry’s manuscript even if she still had it. She looked at me as I entered and then not again. I rubbed her arm through the blankets.

‘Maríne, you know it is good to resist. I’ve told you before. To resist analysis, and what society would have you do. There’s nothing wrong with that.’

I swept her hair back from her face and pinched her cheek. She grabbed my arm and pulled me towards her. She looked up at me confused. I understood: she had read his book and had responded. Of course she was going to publish it. I smiled.

‘They still want you to edit Henry’s book, Maríne,’ I said quietly. ‘If you’re willing to meet again and show him you can be... but you have to meet with him. Do you understand? You need to *emerge*.’

She closed her eyes and nodded.

That evening I re-read Joan Riviere on pre-Oedipal psychology. She was still a Freudian, but her theory on basic faults in the individual mentioned an inability to find expression in words. A person characterised by a basic fault was beset by the sense that something within her is wrong and needs to be mended. Although such an individual may appear to be intact, the right mix of precipitating factors may reveal a sudden irregularity in the overall structure of her ego. In normal

circumstance, that irregularity might lie hidden... but what were *normal circumstances*? I put the Riviere away. There was no basic fault with Maríne. The basic fault was everywhere else. She was like Henry—ripping off the mask. I put the sketchbook down. I had drawn a number of masks around the edges of my notes, all pretty disguises for polite balls in black tuxedos and white ties. I knew what she was doing, what she was facing. The thought frightened me, and I closed the book quickly, and went to bed.

‘Is he *still* angry?’ Maríne asked.

She was walking around my apartment. She walked to the window, smoking a cigarette and hanging its end in the air. She blew smoke at the chandelier, too fragile to fill with lights. She inspected the fireplace. She was thin and a little pale, but she had regained much of her strength. She poked her nose into the miniature pines in pots and candlesticks and studied the photograph of the Brooklyn Bridge.

‘Is that New York?’

‘Yes, part of it.’

‘Everything’s greased and rusted, don’t you think?’

I grunted, walked away. She sat down. I had a wireless on in the corner turned down. I poured two sodas from a siphon and she took the drink and sat opposite. I checked the time. Henry was already half-an-hour late.

‘Do you want to talk about it before they get here?’ I asked her carefully. ‘Your plunge.’

She laughed. ‘My *plunge*.’ She shook her head. *Not now? Not ever?* ‘Tell me about it. New York.’

‘New York?’

‘Are you married?’

I stared at her.

‘Yes. I am.’

She nodded.

‘To your Wall Street woman?’

‘No!’ I shifted around in my seat. Thought of telling her about Faith. But no, there was no point opening that Pandora’s Box. ‘Lillian... My Wall Street woman, as you call her. Lillian’s was a complicated case.’

She raised her eyebrows.

‘Otto—Otto Rank, I’ve mentioned him before—sent me her. She was one of his patients, but he was busy. She came with a specific problem.’

‘Oh, like me.’

I coughed, cleared my throat. ‘Well. Perhaps.’

‘So what was it? Her problem?’

‘You know, she didn’t want me to fix her either. She was one of the very few women in the industry. She was in the cross-bank team that saw in the new pillars of legislation to make sure there would be no repeat.’

‘Repeat?’

‘Yes. Of the Crash.’

‘That must have been hard for her.’

‘An intensely pressured job for a... woman. You understand, I...’

She smiled, shrugged it away.

‘Yes, well. I should know better.’

‘What did she look like?’ she asked.

‘Tall. Thin but not unhealthy. Rather always on the move. She often came to my office straight from Macy’s with a bag of cosmetics. She always dressed smartly. She went to Vassar and onto Yale. Her father was an alumnus there.’

‘She sounds very smart.’

‘She was.’

‘So what was her problem?’

‘She was afraid of flying things. Planes, airships, the sudden shadow of a cloud across the sun. But this was the conscious distortion of course. What she was afraid of was being spotted. She was unfaithful to her husband, Max.’

Nothing was said for a moment. We looked at each other, and I felt her challenge in that stare.

‘Unfaithful...’ she began.

‘So I took her out. We went on walks.’

She sat very still. Her eyes flickered, remembering something. I cleared my throat again.

‘Otto was beginning to experiment with physical dynamics. So we did exercises together to challenge her phobia, such as walks around the block. We would sit and watch the construction of the new tunnel to Queens, talked about

how she might feel travelling through it. The fact it was not yet real made it somehow a fantasy that she could safely incorporate into her own. We were able to approach her fear of being found out because of this intimacy.'

'Intimacy?'

'All analysis is an intimacy, Maríne. This sharing of space. It is a dynamic, as all life experiences are. The dynamic of analysis releases more traumatic dynamics. At least that's what we believe.'

'Is ours? Intimate?'

I sat forward, angry. 'Look. If things had been disastrous, perhaps I would have helped. With you.' I sat back, breathed in. 'But that was not the case.'

She looked at me for a while.

'Ours has intimacy, yes,' I said, recovered. 'And things are improving for you?'

'And how did your wife feel about this intimacy?'

I pushed myself up by the seat arms. 'She's an analyst, too. She understands the need for—'

Maríne laughed, the first time for a while. When she stopped, she asked:

'Is she happy with you being here in Paris?'

'Well... We're busy people. She's a successful analyst, did I say that? Her book is doing—'

I felt a sharp pain in my stomach, one that did not bypass Maríne. She nodded. I eased myself back down into my seat, and wondered what was taking Henry and Charlie so long to get here.

They were tight when they arrived. I could smell red wine and sweet cigarettes, the cheap type. From the colour of the tissue Henry used to mop his head I guessed they had been at the Dôme. Henry came in pulling his pants up. He was sunburnt from sitting on terraces without a hat.

'Well this is a palace,' said Henry, standing by the cabinette. He threw open the doors and without asking took out a bottle of Plymouth and poured two gins for himself and Charlie. Charlie carried the satchel with Henry's manuscript in it, the other copy. He looked drawn and sallow. He didn't return my smile. He thought it insincere, I supposed. Henry pulled out a chair and sat leaning forward.

‘I’m glad to see you, Maríne. Yep. You don’t feel embarrassed do you? I’d hate that.’

She took a look at Charlie, sat at the table a safe distance away.

‘Embarrassed about what?’ asked Maríne.

Henry mopped his head.

‘Let me tell you, I don’t want you to get your hands on this book one little bit, do you hear? I know what you made Charlie do to his—fatten it up with all the gristle that chokes his creativity.’

‘His writing’s not as free as yours, Henry.’

Charlie tried very hard not to sink into his seat.

‘You’ll take my book and you’ll slam it up against the wall and kill every live atom in it.’

‘Don’t be frightened,’ said Maríne. ‘I’ll be gentle.’

‘Ha!’ Henry sat up, put an arm out on the back of the chair and studied her like a nude.

‘Weren’t you pleased, Henry? Wasn’t it what you hoped for?’

‘Don’t be ridiculous, Maríne,’ Charlie shouted from the table.

‘Isn’t that what you wanted?’ she carried on. ‘For the book to be that—’

‘But that’s *writing it*, Maríne,’ said Charlie, standing up. ‘It’s not sitting down to read the damn things. My God, you sound like you’re living in the seventeenth century.’

I watched from outside as if it were a scene from a Caravaggio, Judith beheading Holofernes, and had the unpleasant feeling that I was the old waiting-woman in the shadow ready to clean up the blood. Henry’s eyes widened to saucers. Then he laughed.

‘Dear God,’ Charlie carried on, ‘I can’t believe you’re that *silly* to believe—’

‘Hold on boy,’ said Henry, smiling. ‘You know this bitch is right.’

‘Henry!’ I said, standing up.

‘She’s right after all. Yes, you knew that all along, didn’t you, you little bitch? She’s got it. I knew she would. Just like with you Benno, fainting like a broad, and for you Charlie, all that getting her whipped. She’s really got it—whatever it is we want them to have. You think I wanted my first reader to put it back on the table and *sigh*?’

There was a pause when no one said anything, when all I could hear was traffic from the Quai below and the four tempos of breathing of four separate beings. I sat down again.

‘But you know that already, don’t you,’ Henry was saying to Maríne.

‘So why are you here, Henry, if you don’t want Maríne to touch it?’

‘Oh, I want her to publish it.’ He blew away a drop of sweat on his top lip. ‘I want her to *publish* it alright. I just don’t want her to destroy it—*again!*’

‘So what about the Villa Seurat?’ I asked. ‘What about keeping control yourself?’

‘Ah! The fates are set against me, isn’t that right, Charlie? Not a cunt in this city left with a cent of money. No balls either for my book. Seems the fates don’t like anyone who admires me too much, either, so no use you going at them for me, Maríne. It’s all yours or nothing.’

‘But didn’t you say you wanted to print it yourself?’

‘True, who knew it could be such a thrill?’ he said. ‘Printing the damn things is as much fun as writing them. More, I’d say. It’s like driving a word machine with twenty horsepower. Phew.’ Henry stuck out a leg and reached for his drink. ‘But we’ve run dry. Ink, paper, cash. So, we need to talk business. You know this is going to change the world. You almost drowned for it.’

I couldn’t help but snort.

‘But unexpurgated, remember?’ said Charlie. ‘Could you do that?’

‘Oh, Charlie,’ she said softly. ‘If only you understood what I was asking you to do.’

I had to squeeze my lips together not to laugh.

Henry butted in. ‘I can trust you with it now, girl? It moves you just once, right?’

‘Oh yes, that’s the formula,’ said Maríne.

‘The flow of writing is outwards towards life,’ said Charlie, glaring at her, his elbows up on the table, ‘not what you hint at... You’re in the wrong camp, Maríne. You need to think about that. Which camp.’ He was jabbing a finger at her. ‘It’ll do you no good in the long run. Your neuroses are writing themselves out like hot wax. That’s all they are. *Neuroses*. If Ben can’t help you out with that—’

‘Yes? Go on, Charles,’ I said, far too angrily.

Charlie sat back, sullen and checked.

‘Oh,’ he said dismissively, ‘if she weren’t just... you know...’

‘Was I acting, Charlie?’ asked Maríne. ‘You think I was trying to get someone’s *attention*?’

Charlie looked at his feet.

‘Calm down, boy,’ Henry told him. ‘She got yours out, and you’ll be grateful for it in the end. Great! We’ve cleared the air? What do you say, Maríne? You’re going to look after this one alright?’

Maríne smiled and nodded. Henry waved at Charlie, who refused to move, then quickly picked up the bag and dropped it on the table as if it were too hot to hold. Henry jumped up and pulled Maríne with him and went over and took out the final copy of his book.

‘You’re an ugly one, Maríne,’ Henry was spitting at her, not less than six inches from her face, sweat gathered on his bald head. ‘Cruel. Too cruel. But you’re all I’ve got.’

They left soon after, without Henry’s manuscript or much happiness, if you were to read Charlie’s posture, pulling his head into his shoulders. Maríne had encouraged Henry; she would be in touch within a fortnight, and had, even before I let them out, picked up the book and started reading it for the second time. Stuck for what might happen next—would it really affect her only once?—I left her to read. And then when I’d relaxed, and realised she was not going to jump off my balcony, and in fact was not going to leave, I fetched some of my own work. We carried on like that for the rest of the evening, negotiating a tacit understanding that felt comfortable, even satisfying. Before she left we stood and smoked a cigarette together. Then she put Henry’s manuscript in her bag, touched me on the shoulder, and left.

At four o’clock that Monday she arrived, lively and carefully made-up. And those next few weeks editing Henry’s book were some of the most productive of our analysis. It was an uninterrupted time in which I was able to focus on her case, and I made headway with this new chapter based on her for my book. *My book!* How abandoned it had been! At the end of that session I stood up as she left and gave her a hug. Afterwards I phoned Anaïs in a humour of smart congeniality and asked her how Henry felt it had gone, wanting to hear, I

suppose, an external voice validate my success in not one but two rapprochements.

Following her plunge and due to never having spoken to François about Maríne's now daily visits to the Necker, I switched her analysis from the hospital to my apartment. The neutrality of the venue worked well for Henry's rapprochement. With the change I also suggested another amendment, and we began at six o'clock each day Monday to Friday. At our next session, one of the first at my apartment, she came in, and I let her settle before I explained to her a new theory that I felt could help us in the analysis.

'Aphanisis. Aphanisis.'

She said the word slowly. She pronounced it Isis as in the Egyptian goddess, not as in pieces. She tumbled it around in her mouth, tasting its fatness and snakery. The sun was on the other side of the hospital and my office had grown dark. A few days before I'd attended the Paris Psychoanalytic Society's annual lecture, given by the Englishman Ernest Jones, one of Freud's inner circle. Even so, I went and slid in at the back of a grand dining room facing a small raised stage with a lectern placed upon it and Ernest Jones just about to speak. The room was full, the air alive with particles of evening light. Jones stood confidently, his hair combed to the right with a single long wave along the front, his eyes serious, bags underneath them. His talk was on the subject of this Aphanisis, what he called a syndrome of psychic blankness, or pseudo-depression. It was the loss of desire of the object that produced a fear more universal and profound than the fear of Freud's castration and its complexes. Gradually, then in a rush, I wrote down what I could. Wasn't Aphanisis the description of Maríne's loss of feeling? Where did it go, that charge from off the page? The talk turned to the possibilities of thinking psychical blankness as a response to the illuminations of the city. Take the overwhelming Champs-Élysées for example, he said, the excesses of shopping and of capitalism on our primitive brains. His pomp and pleasure were too much for me in the end, and I slipped out. And yet at home my fingers twirled around my pencil. I transcribed thoughts into the sketchbook. Finally, something with an x in it, so to speak. She tugged her ear for a moment. She looked at me curiously before something passed over her face as if she had come to a decision.

‘So, we’re coming to the end.’

I shook my head.

‘Finding a diagnosis, even if that’s what we’ve done, does not simply magic away the symptoms.’

‘Oh, and what does?’

I gave her my best weary look, and said nothing.

‘Tell me again what it says I am.’

‘It is a fear, mainly. That you are afraid that your capacity for sexual enjoyment is, or can be, lost. For women it is a type of psychic blankness. It is the foundation of all neuroses, according to Jones.’

‘But I enjoy sex,’ she said, and folded her arms. ‘You know, you’ve never asked me about it.’

‘That’s not quite the point,’ and folded mine too. ‘It is the *fear* of the loss that renders the blankness and depression, not the actual loss. You may enjoy sex—’

‘I do.’

‘—but in your unconscious you may fear losing the capacity to enjoy it. Remember, I am not trying to fix you.’ She didn’t respond. ‘Ah, but to recognise... and what drives your episodes. It is basic, for all of us. Sexual life is at the centre of what you are editing, isn’t it? Most of the taboos *are* sexual?’ She didn’t respond. ‘Yes. Yes. Have you ever considered your... plunges as sexual, *Maríne*?’

My term for her episodes sounded so obviously artificial alongside her chosen name as to render it absurd. I breathed deeply, trying not to sigh or give anything away. I stretched my jaw, looked at the clock, tick tock, somehow time was travelling much slower than I warranted it could.

‘Sex has never been excluded,’ she said. ‘What would make me fear it? Why can’t I just enjoy it?’

‘The fear is primal. Or more precisely, phylogenic. We *all* fear the loss of enjoyment of sex. Because if we no longer desire sex, are we still human? If it is lost, we cease to function. See?’

‘Do you?’

‘Do I what?’ I felt myself redden under my collar. ‘Oh, you mean *fear its loss*? I, well, the point is we all have to pass through a stage where we confront

this fear. As with all processes of growth from our base and primal instincts. And some people, as with other theories...' and I grasped around in my mind, 'such as the oceanic feeling...'

'Oceanic?'

I nodded, and then shook my head. Even more absurd.

'Never mind. What I'm saying is... Perhaps you have become stuck in a development phase. Because the books you edit are *so* sexually... different, perhaps they...or not stuck, but regressing...'

'And so how do you know I'm stuck? I mean, apart from the plunges?'

I thought of what worlds she preferred to inhabit, who with. Henry, Charlie, others. I wondered how many of her authors she had slept with, and whether that counted as prostitution or some radical new form of professionalism.

'You've been rather...'

She sat forward.

'You haven't just gone to a conference and based your diagnosis on the first thing you've heard?'

I shot up, unfolded my arms and grabbed the sidearm of the seat.

'What a thing! No, Maríne! No. It's not a diagnosis. It's a *dialogue*.'

She laughed sharply.

'I did *not* go to this lecture simply to hear about a new theory that I could somehow *apply*.'

'And you think this Aphanisis is what's wrong with me?'

I scratched my head, looked around.

'So you *do* think I'm neurotic after all?' she asked, almost happily.

'Not neurotic. No. But in Jones' theory I feel there is something familiar...'

'Have we been?' she interrupted, amused. 'Familiar?'

I glared at her.

'What would you think if I said I went to the lecture, Maríne, to gather support against Moniz? He is—'

'Don't interfere with my work,' she said. It was pointed, a threat.

'I am not interfering, I hope, only—'

'It's only poetry, Benjamin. It's not going to harm anyone.'

Except you, I thought suddenly.

'It's not even that good is it?'

I looked into her eyes, black in the fading light.

‘Do you remember, Benjamin, when I asked you for advice about the mind-curiers? That I did not want to edit work that I could not believe in?’

I nodded. She was quiet for a moment. I glanced at the clock.

‘So why don’t you ask me if I believe in *his* work?’

She sat quite still, waiting for my answer.

‘Why haven’t I asked you whether you can believe it or not?’ I repeated her question. ‘Because you *cannot* believe it,’ I said, and put my hands in my lap. ‘*That’s* why I’ve not asked.’

I was satisfied, I supposed, sitting there for a full ten minutes after she had left, that nothing had been damaged in our relationship by that barb. His poetry was impotent, and the Obelisk would never publish the monograph. Yet as she stood and took her stuff to leave she looked at me as if I had made a grave mistake. Her words fluttered around my head like butterflies, and I understood fleetingly the desire to put pins through them. Footsteps along the corridor startled me, and I got up quickly, gathered my things, and left.

Two weeks into a bone dry August our sessions began to overrun. I was arriving back later and later, being kept back at the Necker by a glut of cases handed over for summer ‘caretaking’ while the rest of the psychology department took their municipal holidays. I gave Maríne a key to let herself in, and we began at six fifteen, six thirty. She could make herself a drink, get comfortable. Without the firm marker of the hour coming to a close, we seemed to drift on for a while longer, and our time together became something else. One session finished and I went off to the toilet and left her to smoke a final cigarette. When I came back she had pulled out Henry’s manuscript and sat at my table working. She asked me over, wanted to know what I thought of a particular passage. I read of Henry running along rue Lafayette with a Negress, peeling her cloying memory from his skin when he is done with her. Henry’s narrative was like nothing I had read before. It pulled me in, with everything felt on the page. Henry leaving the woman’s bedsit and pulling into the Dôme at midnight. Then Henry on the hop, with the clap, in the rain, falling in with an English Rose who takes his money, ‘con trick and conned cock’. The author ‘at the gates of inhumanity’. The flow of it was all life, all new. I flinched at his language but kept reading. Maríne flicked back and forward across pages and I read

fragments, felt the flow of type into the gutter. Watching her with Charlie's book that time before had been insightful. Yet now Charlie seemed like a middleweight at best, punching above his classification. Henry was a proper heavyweight and his book was muscular, rippling. I did not trust to the 'formula' that it would only move her once. So I suggested she bring the manuscript again and work here under observation. She began to stay longer into the evening. She would sit at my table and read, strike through, or make notes, and I would sit on the sofa with my own journal, scribbling. We looked at many passages of Henry's book together. Where Henry wrote about Matisse was the only point in the book she didn't accept. It made too much sense. It was too straightforward, too much like other books on artists. Because it was decent and sensible, she wanted to cut it out. But then, and I watched something akin to relief wash over her, Henry discarded Matisse because he was too clean living, too honourable, loyal to his wife. I felt unsteady. I nodded at something she said, and sat back down, and stared at the photograph of Brooklyn, which Faith had taken from the window of our apartment the summer we moved in, until I regained my sense of where I was.

Maríne moved on, suggesting enlargements as Henry met the sculptor Krogen, partying together to begin with, sleeping on floorboards, a bottle of Madeira for a pillow. But this Krogen sold out to the city's patrons. Henry calls him a good-for-nothing; a less-than-nothing. Measured against the inhuman. The nothing. The no-thing. I looked over her shoulder as she made notes. *Is that it, Henry? You're a Shakespearean? Woman's sex. Her genitalia. Nothing will come of nothing, Lear says of his daughters.* I watched her take each leaf by leaf and let the pages marble and age under her fingers. *Henry wanders throughout Paris, he's John the Baptist, not yet head over heels for Salome. How easy, Henry, women falling for the kooky wandering disciple American. But for all your flows you still write like a statue, like John the Baptist. Go on, Henry, lean into the wind, hand out, preaching. Lean forward until your neck is stretched enough for me to hack it.*

I sat for a long while after she left, not writing or thinking.

I found I liked Henry's writing. It was often dreamy. Humorous. Yet it was not so much the words that pulled Maríne into fantasy. It was rather the form of the book, its structure and tone, the way in which it said these new things. It was

undoubtedly a novel, with a novelistic structure. But it was also a record of a journal, Henry's actual life and imagined death. More than anything, the book was a portrait. It was Henry, his flesh, he had done everything he could to put his own face, not a mask, on paper. His method for ripping it off—*kapishe?* As Maríne had told me once, a mixing up of fact and fiction—aren't all lives inseparably truth and story? I scanned the thick lettering of Henry's typewriter. Imagined Charlie and Anaïs and their fingers on its keys. And then Maríne's making emplacements, noting each suggested change, her notebooks black with graphite and ink, barely any page left. I watched her intently. The script edges sticking to her fingers. Her grasp of the flow. I let my mind wander to other thoughts. Of the fluids that had been spent on the making of this book. *Lava blood words sentences*. Freed from the censor, the inner critic, the flow running, as Charlie had rightly said, outwards towards life.

Then one evening after analysis Maríne sat at my dining table and closed the manuscript and spent perhaps a quarter of an hour writing tiny instructions on the cover. She sat facing the window, listening to traffic along the Quai, the rush of the Seine, perhaps other voices instructing her what to do next. Moonlight slanted into the room. In that dimness she turned to me, and I could make out a quiet astonishment on her face. She smiled. We both saw it: she had suffered almost nothing of her post-plunge numbness. Analysis each day and careful observation through the editing process had been enough. Jones' theory of Aphanisis was rubbish! All she needed was *recognition!* I went and placed a hand on her shoulder.

'So, you've finished his book?'

She put her hand on mine, smiled.

Yes, it will work for the Obelisk.'

'It's good enough?'

'Oh, there's conviction. Buckets of it, Henry's drowning in it. Conviction is Jack's word. His little joke, bearing in mind...' She smiled, looked away. Then she frowned. We were still clasping hands. 'But it will have to share the shelves with invoices, marketing straps. Can it survive that?'

'I'm sure it will sell well, Maríne.'

With her free hand she reached out and began turning pages, looking for a passage. She began to read out sentences. 'He'll be deported for this page alone.'

“*Cum sputum spittle... A human being in the stratosphere of ideas... In the grip of delirium.*” Are we all hysterics, Benjamin?’

Two thoughts, two conflicts fled through me.

“*Erect a world on the basis of the omphalos.*” He’s talking about the hysteric—the woman Ginette, her womb in direct communication with the gods. That’s what Henry is saying of the hysteric. A clitoris as radio antennae for every feeling.’

‘It is only his thoughts, Maríne. Only his ideas. It is his fantasy—’

Maríne was staring into the distance, her mouth moving to silent words. Then she began speaking.

‘I let the words through. Words like cum sickness words sentences. I love everything that flows.’

‘Maríne?’ I didn’t know if she was quoting or making it up.

‘He calls us *cunts.*’

‘Maríne!’

‘I want to be called one. To be called cunt as if it were nothing. To see what the word feels like. What would be so wrong with that? It’s what he’s written. It is real life, Benjamin.’

I wanted to move her away so we could sit opposite each other, talk, not stand in this position with me above her only six inches apart. But there was nothing I could do. She rested her head on my belly and spoke into my shirt. I felt her heat, the bounce of her hair.

‘Think, of all the words I have put back into all the books I’ve edited. How I wear them.’

‘Are they not Henry’s? *His* imagination, not yours?’

She stiffened. But she did not pull away.

‘Things which nobody has dared. Nobody.’

She sat up promptly and dropped my hand. She began tidying the pages of the manuscript.

‘Thank you.’

I frowned, turned around, sat down, felt restless beyond comfort, shifting around my seat crossing one leg over the other and then swapping, felt a rash crawl up my back. I tingled, it was electric, but nothing that felt good.

‘Maríne, if you believe you are “cured”, may I remind you that you will not be able to have analytic observation for every book you edit after this.’

She had thought of it, of course. She picked up her bag and put Henry’s manuscript and her notes into it, and then turned to me with the bag on her lap, her feet together, defensive. More imploring than aggressive. Then she stood up and came over and took my hand.

‘Always?’ she asked. ‘I can never escape?’

‘That is not—’

‘Will you tell me,’ she asked, ‘what it is you’ve been thinking about me all these months?’

I blinked at her four or five times, felt the warmth of her hand.

‘Not until I’ve written up my notes fully. Worked out all the kinks.’

She laughed, dropped my hand. ‘You do have a way with words, Benjamin.’

She stared for a long while, searching me out as I reddened then cooled. I tidied around her as she prepared to leave. I felt lightheaded, a pressure building up inside. I dropped the ashtray on the dining table and it hammered a ringing, sore sound. A field of ashes scattered among the things there. She had lit one last cigarette and stood smoking at the balcony. I watched her light up, breathe in, felt as if it were in my own lungs, fingers around my throat. My head swirled. My skin goosed. I turned away, brushed the ash. She came and stood behind me. I carried on rearranging things that had no need to be touched, pushing them into their neat squares, reaching for the ashtray a second time. Then she put a hand on my back and leant into my ear.

‘Did you like it, Benjamin? Henry’s book?’

Something clicked. I stood up, but didn’t turn to face her.

‘You’ve wanted to see if it would move *me*.’

‘It wasn’t ready,’ she said. ‘It wasn’t finished.’

‘You thought I couldn’t handle his book in the raw.’

The room was spinning.

‘Do you not think I’m used to—’

‘Oh, yes. You get used to it, don’t you? You get used to it.’

Later that night I awoke from a terrible dream. The balcony door was open and let in a breeze that I could feel across my clammy skin. In my mouth a metallic taste. The taste of cigarettes? No, it was blood. I must have bit my

tongue. I looked up—it was the ashtray, the spilt ashes, I could smell. I tried to move but I was stiff. I looked around. On the table, a square of paper propped up against a vase and held in place against the breeze with a book. When had she left it? I reached out a hand, then stopped. No need or want to read it. I knew what would be written there.

9

The Obelisk published *Tropic of Cancer* on the first of September, hardly six weeks from the moment Maríne threw it into Anaïs' swimming pool, followed by herself. There was no party for its launch. It was all done quickly. André ran off a batch of five hundred copies in his cramped attic studio, and Maríne distributed by bicycle around the usual sellers. Henry and Charlie and whoever else they could persuade (although not Alfred, under lock-and-key in Montpellier) took large flasks of *vin de table* and their hats to keep off the sun and, like Whitman, began peddling the book around the city. Henry had been given a round fifty, and touted them along the boulevard Saint-Michel and deep into the alleys of the Latin Quarter, on the steps of Lycée Fénelon, the school for young women, until the professors caught wind of that, the Nozière scandal being still too fresh. They wound their way up and down the city using the Seine as their plumb line, although they did not quite have to carry the books in a barrow. It was enough for Henry that it be printed, although, as Anaïs said later, he almost threw his cache into the Seine when he saw the finished product. The cover was a watercolour of an evil looking crab holding in its pincers the black silhouette of a naked woman, limp and dripping as if she were made of oil. Maurice, Jack's son, had drawn it. It looked like a pulp science fiction and not the breakthrough of a new way of saying things, an unpublishable book. What did that mean now—to be unpublishable? At least Maríne was no longer the target of Henry's invective. Whatever she had done to his book I heard no complaint. Along the bottom of the cover it read: '*Not to be imported into Great Britain or U.S.A.*' And inside, Anaïs had contributed its preface: '*Here is a book which, if such a thing were possible, might restore our appetite for the fundamental realities. The predominant note will seem one of bitterness, and bitterness there is, to the full. But there is also a wild extravagance, a mad gaiety, a verve, a gusto, at times almost a delirium.*' Layers and secrets opened, everything about human life concealed by everything '*put back to life*', as Fitzgerald had written in *The*

Beautiful and Damned. But if a purpose in life can be communicated so simply as to be just one word, it speaks of careful distillation, paring back the phrases of oneself until only the essence is left. But that did not describe *Tropic*. Henry did not pare back. He exploded. He blazed the pavements of Paris, touting the book outside L'Opéra and taking painfully slow métro journeys out to Vaugirard to the labourers and railwaymen, and to Bellevue, where the Jews had settled. Henry prowled the city with his books, disgusted by how they looked but amazed with what he carried in his hands. It was the crystallization of all he'd held within his guts until it burst from him, the blood and sex and horror and pleasure; and that he had found the formula for putting into words.

But the book was too concentrated a vice. *Tropic* did not whet the appetite; it scorched it. For weeks, then months, many months into 1935, the book sold so slowly as to be stagnant. Whether it was because of the cover, or that the pages literally came apart and disintegrated in the hand during reading, so quickly had it been published and so poor had been the stock of paper, or that this was a deviation from the Obelisk's model of publishing books already banned and with newspaper column inches and obscenity trials doing the publicity, who could tell? By mid-1935 *Tropic* had made less than ten thousand francs. And the financial failure of Henry's book immediately after publication added an extra strain on our analysis, as Maríne's role at the Obelisk came under greater threat. It manifested as a flatness in her responses, and my attempts to draw her back out of the blankness into which she was falling did not have much effect. We carried on that way for the rest of the summer until September, when my caseload returned to normal, and the rest of the physicians returned from their holidays. In that first week of September I waited one day for Maríne to arrive for analysis, and at six o'clock she came on time and took off her coat. She was wearing a cardigan over her blouse held together with a brooch. Charlie had given it to her, a small coral adornment, pale pink and white, shaped like the roots of a strange tree that had once grown in the Mediterranean. It was a gift when they first met, from a far-flung island in the Aegean where he'd visited (with his wife, I hoped not on his honeymoon). A few minutes into the analysis she took off her cardigan along with the brooch and left it on the coffee table. She put it next to the books. I'd brought them home too, and added four more: *Sleeveless Errand*, Henry's *Tropic*, Charlie's *The Ostrich Womb* and the pamphlet from the Pelman event where we

first met, *Mind and Memory*. Way-pointers of relation and analysis. She picked up Charlie's novel.

'Have you heard from him recently?'

She sat looking into the book as if she were trying to find what she had invested in its pages. She was quiet. *A breakthrough into reality*, as Otto and I agreed, does not come without pain.

'He's writing his next book. For Faber. Although no doubt they'll reject him, and he'll come back to us. His wife is happy, at least, he tells me. She's expecting him back in London soon.'

'Do you hope he sends his next book to you?'

She shrugged. Then she put the book down. I heard a light crack. She held out her cardigan and small pieces of the brooch fell to the floor. She unpicked the clasp from the cardigan.

'That's a shame,' she said. I looked at the pieces, and then the book. She got up and dropped the broken bits into the waste basket. With another patient I'd propose it as an unconscious 'binning' or 'breaking' with the shame that accompanied her pseudo-depression. But it was too affected.

'Is that all you have to say?' I pressed.

'It wasn't love,' she said, cutting me short. 'I have a soul for editing. Not *intimacy*.'

'Who told you that? Because it's quite rubbish—'

Maríne turned away, and I was left with a thousand questions and no tongue to ask them.

'And you know what's more terrible?' Maríne asked me the next evening. We'd left the apartment on a walk. She had arrived at six o'clock with a strange restlessness, and I could see she was struggling to be cheerful, to push back against the blankness. We walked along Quai Malaquais, past the Bibliothèque Mazarine and onto Île de la Cité, still part of the analysis, this finding of methods to unblock her creativity, to offer recognition.

'It is somehow *worse* for them to be published with us, for Charlie and Henry—of course, you saw it with Henry—even though I give them what they want. Their work published...' she hesitated, but not out of uncertainty, 'untouched. It's worse for them because it is a man like Jack and a woman like me who will give them what they hope for. After all they have been through, this

to deal with: they were hoping for an important publisher, a glamorous editor. Charlie was at least a little different—I tried to give him what he wanted. But it didn't work.'

'Why didn't it work?'

'Didn't you see the pain on his face at the end?'

I allowed Maríne to lead us to the place Vendôme, busy with picnickers, families and lovers, a penny quartet playing Bach under the arches. The grass was dry and hard as we walked. After a hot summer the plane trees that lined the square were like kindling. We stopped and sat on a bench and bought two iced waters from a cart. And then Maríne seemed to flick a switch, as if there was a circuit of electricity along which her energy could now flow. She was telling me what it had meant to be whipped and for that whipping to draw blood; it was an essential experience of enacting a scene from one fantasy world to shape in another. I listened with ears as pricked as a fox. Remembering each word, each description as if it were a scent. That whipping was not merely acting out, she said, but slipping into another layer of life, made possible in the willingness to believe that *this* world could be the fantasy. She pre-empted my question: it was not neurotic, she said, to think that everything we knew to be true was fantasy. Didn't we weave around us narratives of personal truth? Weren't all memories already fiction? For example, this tree we passed, this flower, this evening? Wouldn't it become memory, a story with at least two versions, hers and mine? She shaped a book with more than her mind, put everything back in, including something of herself. We stood and walked. This was the reason why Charlie and Henry wrote the way they did. This was why she invented her new way of editing. To keep up with how things were changing. *To be faithful to what she knew*. I knew those words of course, but as we walked I could not place them. So far, she said, our intellectual minds had kept up with the changes in morality in modern life, but our emotions, our bodies, were still far behind, primitive and unable to cope.

We walked along the boulevard Saint-Michel to the Latin Quarter. And I must have been listening too hard to notice that we were not going back to my apartment. On rue Dante she took us into a café and led us through a crowd to where two men were sitting at the nearest table. There was Charlie. He looked as if he'd just woken up, but was not startled to see us.

‘Hello Maríne. I didn’t know if you were going to make it. Hello, Benjamin. This is Chapman.’

I controlled myself, raised my eyebrows. *Make what?* She didn’t respond. Charlie’s companion wiped a greasy hand on the tablecloth and we shook hands. Chapman had a large face and a salesman’s suit. The garçon came over and they ordered a carafe of white and two more glasses. They were just finishing off steak sandwiches. The carafe arrived and the garçon poured wine for all of us. The wine was sharp and cold and I knew it wasn’t going to mix well with the bile in the back of my throat.

‘It’s swing tonight,’ said Chapman. He spoke fast, with a soft lisp. ‘Very new stuff. You’ve heard of Benny Goodman, I bet. You look like you’ve heard of Benny Goodman.’

He started rapping out a tune on his leg.

‘Chapman’s their manager,’ said Charlie. ‘How many pieces? Sixteen was it—’

‘Eighteen piece,’ said Chapman.

‘Eighteen piece band,’ Charlie repeated.

‘Great,’ said Chapman, banging the table. ‘You’re going to love this.’

I picked up my wine and sank back into the seat. Chapman did most of the talking. It was a gig at the Delacroix house around the corner. Chapman’s band was playing in the garden courtyard. It would be for an hour and then everyone was heading to the Café de Paris for a second set. I drank my wine, wiped my face with my hands, pulling flesh from bone. Every now and then I glanced at Maríne. I let Chapman believe I would write up a favourable review for some of the little magazines he kept mentioning and I did not deny I wrote for. When I glanced at Charlie he seemed anxious or perhaps keeping his distance.

The garden at the Delacroix house was filled with the type that went to La Coupole or the Dôme, raucous and punk. Chapman led us to the front where there was a roped off corner, a dozen or so well-dressed men and women drinking and smoking, violently happy and cheerfully burly.

‘What are they called?’ I asked.

‘Swing Valse,’ said Chapman. ‘They’re going to blast the Café de Paris. Come down later too.’

‘Steady there,’ said Charlie to a tall gent who fell into him. ‘Oh, hello Eric.’

Maríne introduced Eric Silversmith, dressed in tweed, a pocket watch looping out of his waistcoat, large brown eyes, in his mid-forties. He was a former mounted infantryman in the Dragoons who had fought in the Colonies. Maríne edited his books too, she said, war adventures across Southern Europe and North Africa, tense and redemptive, full of tropical sex and jungle fevers and violated mores in Tunis, Cairo, and Bamako. We fell into the crowd, barely room to hold up our drinks.

‘Eric’s been my best author for three years,’ said Maríne. Charlie smiled grimly. Eric’s books had never moved her—this “best” meant financially. She was safe with him. We squeezed together into the corner. Maríne had hold of my arm; with the other she was finishing off a glass of champagne. The band began their set. She let go and took Eric’s hand and started dancing in the cramped space. Chapman was buzzing in my ear the whole time. I began to itch, felt cramped, moved off, found Charlie. He had a miserable smile on his face, as if he was waiting for some terrible event that, as it turned out, wasn’t the publication of his book after all.

‘Ignore her,’ I shouted over the music. ‘I’m sure your book’s a fine thing. It will sell.’

‘I’ve been told it is,’ he shouted back. ‘You know, but it doesn’t really seem to matter now.’

I stepped back, took a long look at him.

‘I’ve got my orders through. Back to the wife now the summer’s gone. My duty in London. That was it. My shot at the true writer’s life. So how’s yours?’ he asked over the music.

‘My *wife*?’

‘Your book. Has she got her fingers on it yet?’

‘I’m not sure—’

‘You’re writing a book though? Your observations?’

‘Yes, but you’ve got it wrong—’

‘Oh.’ He thought about what he might have got wrong.

Maríne and the tall Eric danced over to us.

‘He says it’s all futile now, don’t you, Charlie?’ she said. He flicked his chin away. ‘Just travel books now. It took him eighteen months to write *Ostrich*. He

wrote four times what we needed. Closer to the truth of the soul, wasn't that what you wanted?'

The music stopped, the crowd whooping and clapping.

'But you made him put that extra material in, didn't you?' I asked her.

Charlie shook his head. 'I feel a fraud really, I don't know why.'

'Oh don't be ridiculous,' said Maríne.

But Charlie was feeling invigorated by his misery.

'You know I've started a new one—a novel, and I've,' he glanced at Maríne, 'it's called *Starboard*. No strain, no worry, just humour and quietness.'

'Sounds awful,' said Maríne, still dancing on the spot.

'Good for you, Charlie,' said Eric. 'Writing you don't need to worry over!'

Charlie looked around, unsure how to take that.

'I need to become more and more myself, in life and on paper.' He sniffed, wiped the back of his hand across his face and lips. 'That will alter the writing radically but very naturally. I feel I make too tremendous an effort, always. Not in a bad sense—but, yes, goddam it, wrongly.'

'You'll fuck it up if you try too hard,' said Maríne. 'Is that what Henry's telling you?'

'But this is a new me, an independent person,' said Charlie desperately. The colour drained from his face. 'But not in London...'

'Don't ask me to weep for you,' said Maríne, turning away.

'Two minutes!' shouted Chapman, his soft lisp running on. Charlie was sweating.

'I put it all back in,' said Maríne. 'That's why you came to us, remember?'

He shook his head. 'You know, I barely do.'

The music started up, and Eric and Maríne danced off. I took Charlie's arm and steered him to the drinks. A breeze blew in from the Quai de Conti. We stood looking out onto the street. It was sick, salty, dark and fast, the night that had fallen. We watched rag-pickers rummaging the bins for scraps.

'You know what it is?' he said. 'It's all too much drama, isn't it? Taking place in the neurones somewhere. Inside my head it's like the corner of rue de la Gâité at twelve midnight. Full stink ahead. I thought writing would quieten it down. But it just fuels the fire.'

Misery leached out of his hot skin. The band finished with a crash as one of the trombonists dropped his instrument onto the drummer. The crowd laughed and applauded and then everyone was pushing outside, waving down taxis, half-tucked in shirttails, nearly-finished drinks. Maríne came over and I grabbed her and pulled her towards us.

‘How is Charlie’s book doing, Maríne?’

She leant into me, a little drunk, laughed.

‘Please, no talking about it,’ Charlie said. Then he knitted his brows, as if some hope had shown itself. ‘Why, are there plans, Maríne? You’ve got a—’ Maríne pulled her cardigan around her shoulders, the blue of magpie feathers. He glared then shrugged. ‘Forget it.’

‘But maybe now is a good time,’ I said, tugging on Maríne’s arm, perhaps too tightly.

Maríne pulled back, a look on her face I’d not seen. She turned to him, her eyes still on me.

‘Yours wasn’t taboo enough for *our* work, I’m afraid,’ she said to Charlie, then stood on her toes and kissed me on the cheek. ‘For our sessions. You’re not breaking any—’

‘Oh too much,’ he interrupted her, and flicked his hair away. He glared at me as if I was in on her joke. ‘You know what it is with you? It’s... it’s... all drama or nothing.’

He flagged down a taxi and opened the door and got in.

‘Rue de la Gâité,’ he told the driver. He leant out the window and glared at us. ‘Full stink ahead!’

We watched him go. The taxi turned the corner. I could feel the wetness of her lips on my face.

‘That was unkind of you,’ I said.

The crowd had all but left by then. Eric was trying hard not to appear as if he was waiting for her.

‘You must not...’ I began, but stopped.

‘Oh, what, Benjamin, a little peck on the cheek? A little truth? But we’ve made so much *progress*.’

‘Tell me. Do you remember why you came to *me*? For analysis?’

She closed her eyes and turned her face up. A car roared past, another taxi, almost on the kerb. She leant into my ear and whispered, ‘You know, I barely do.’

It was as if my gut were in between her fingers like a butcher with mince, unable to tell flesh from flesh. I could smell cigarettes on her breath, the bubbles from the champagne. I went and stood by the gate to the gardens and leant on them for a moment, regaining my breath.

Marine did not arrive the next day. Nor the day after. I felt slighted, affronted. Was it hers to end? By the third day I was ready to call at the Obelisk, phone Jack in his sickbed, and tell him that I could help her no more, and leave her to face the consequences. But then on the third evening I arrived back at my apartment at around quarter to six, and she was already waiting. She was sitting on the sofa propped forward, her knees together. Immediately I knew something was wrong.

‘Marine?’ I dropped my bag and took a step into the room.

‘Hello Benjamin.’ She cleared her throat. ‘I’m afraid there’s been some rather bad news.’

Showing at La Comédie-Italienne on rue de la Gaité was a little known play, ‘*Arlequin Valet de Deux Maîtres*’, a dramatic comedy written by the Italian playwright Goldoni. Pantaloon, a Venetian bourgeois, has promised his daughter to the gentleman Federigo Rasponi. Rasponi is killed in a duel with Florindo, the lover of his sister Béatrice. Pantaloon, disabused of his first choice of husband for his daughter, gives in to her wish to marry Silvio, whom she has loved since a child. Meanwhile Florindo takes refuge in the back alleys of that marvellous floating sonata of a city. But then a friend of Rasponi arrives with his servant, Harlequin, to regain the honour of his dead comrade. And from that set up in the home of the Doges, all in Act One, things become hilariously complicated.

All of which, Chapman later told Marine, Charlie missed, as he did not sit down at the back of the small theatre, only half-full, until Act Two. The story must have been both farcical and impenetrable, made all the more claustrophobic by the low ceiling and high wigs of the actors. Charlie sat through to the end, restless but determined to figure out the moral of the play, which, he told Chapman, he thought something to do with ghosts or the *doppelgänger*.

Rue de la Gâté is a narrow, lively chamber in the court of Montparnasse, with a dozen theatres running along its length, and a dozen more small cafés, all with multi-coloured chairs spilling out onto the street. People are forced to walk in zigzags both ways, a wondrous festival atmosphere each night as the curtain falls. Through that crowd Charlie made his way out to meet Chapman and others at Les Deux Magots. He was carrying a copy of *The Ostrich Womb* and insisted on reading. The crowd encouraged it at first but grew bored. The other café goers began to shoot them funny looks. Normally these disapprovals didn't bother Chapman and his set, but Charlie was insistent, and rather than take the shouts to quieten down with good humour and a joke, became moody. Finally Chapman took the book from Charlie and he fell into his seat and they ordered another bottle of 300. They carried on drinking until Chapman noticed Charlie had gone, along with his book.

A review of *Swing Valse* at the Café de Paris appeared in *The Tribune* the next day. He had it clipped and pressed in his pocket when he visited Maríne at the Obelisk that evening. She apologised for not calling to cancel our analysis. I looked away in irritation. It took Charlie some time to settle, and he paced the room, wiping a finger along the top of the books on the grand bookshelf, looking for new titles. There was only one: *Tropic*. He picked it up, screwed his eyes into balls at the crab on the cover. He almost wailed. He asked Maríne how his book was faring and would it ever sell? She evaded the question. There had been one or two reviews in the little magazines. She had asked Eric Silversmith to review it kindly for *transition*, and he had done so, but too kindly, and the editor Eugene Jolas cut it down to just two lines. Another review had appeared in *The Anvil*. For Charlie, any news would have been felt keenly. He winced at each new piece of information. It is not unlike a migraine—the cause too much overstimulation, and it does not matter if it is pleasurable or painful. He lingered; there was a question he wanted to ask, but he didn't. 'I won't write again,' he said. Maríne eyed him carefully. He had nothing to say about his book, so it was strange that the same evening Chapman found him on the Pont de Bercy reading to one of the gargoyles.

'Why didn't you call and tell me?' I asked Maríne.

She narrowed her eyes, held her hands together between her knees.

'He wasn't your patient.'

I could barely understand the coldness in her answer. I shook my head, and she carried on. Taking his book with him, and a copy of Henry's *Tropic*, he returned to his bedsit via the Gare de Lyon where he purchased a ticket for Montpellier for the morning. Off to see Alfred and Simone, I asked? Maríne shook her head. The next morning he stood on the platform with his duffel bag. It finally became clear. That was it, over and done with. He boarded his train at 6.04am. The suburbs slipped by. Orange houses and evergreens. He passed through Avignon at breakfast time, where he sat in the restaurant car and had eggs and toast and coffee, the PLM-line catering well for young Englishmen, who were often, at least in the happier 1920s, some of its most adventurous patrons. He looked around for *Tropic of Cancer*. Bitterness, Anaís had written in her forward. Could he get through the bitterness to the gusto, verve, appetite, delirium? He put it down on the seat next to him. Opposite may have been an older woman, her hair in a scarf embroidered with horses. Or businessmen reading their morning papers, French and English, on their way to pharmaceutical fares, back from steel expositions, the clink of cufflink on china, a continental breakfast, the blandishments of travel. Outside more houses, more trees, the landlock of France bearing to him at passing latitudes things that he was no longer longing to see.

When he arrived at the Gare Saint-Roch he walked down to the area of Port Marianne, where the River Lez empties into the Mediterranean, near the stop of Perols Etang de l'Or. It was warmer in Montpellier, and he took off his jacket. It was found hung over a bench on the long grey concreted walkway of the port, with a wallet that contained a picture of his wife and also the clipping of the review of his book in *transition* and the ticket stub from La Comédie-Italienne. It was not a busy morning, being a Saturday. So when Charlie found a rowing boat he could easily un-tether, he climbed in, dropped his duffel bag in the prow, and began to row himself out into the Mediterranean. The bright sun was rising and the sea glimmering.

'But there's been nothing found? No report?' I asked.

Maríne shook his head. 'Not according to his friends.'

'So this was when, a few days ago? So it's not confirmed that... he could be somewhere?'

‘Considering you accused *me* of being dramatic...’ Maríne began, but she stopped as I glared. ‘Oh it’s pretty certain. He left a letter. He’d tucked it in a copy of his book before he left and posted it to the Deux Magots. Really, can you... Chapman gave it me. Thought that, well...’

I was stunned by her coldness. But I shouldn’t have been. How else would she cope with guilt? She reached into her bag and pulled out a small envelope, folded once down the middle. She unfolded it and opened the slip and took out the letter. It was not written in blood, nor was it addressed to her. She took in a breath to begin, but then stopped, and almost on queue her face began to crumple into tears, and she leant over the letter and started heaving. I caved; I jumped forward and put my arm round her shoulders. She leant into my ear and tried to whisper something. The words were insensible. I could feel a migraine coming on, but I held it off—I can do that if the reason is sharp enough. I held her while she cried and took the letter from her grasp and read it myself. Yes, he’d certainly intended it. We wouldn’t find him playing tennis with Alfred. I felt a terrible grief for the young man, washing around with a modicum of some other feeling. I put down the letter and held Maríne as she cried herself out.

For the Anglophones, it was the only bookshop in Paris worth patronising. Shakespeare and Company was our Bloomsbury coffee house and Greenwich Village speakeasy. The store was as much a lending library and club for writers as it was a bookstore. I doubted Sylvia Beach, its owner, made much money, though she had beaten the Obelisk to Joyce, Maríne said, something that her publisher Jack had never forgiven Sylvia for. I liked its scattered tables and recesses and raised window benches. The bookshelves had no order to them whatsoever, the crowd who were gathered for Charlie’s memorial even less. I felt uncomfortable myself, and reeled with the rush of accents, felt seasick as if I were back on the Atlantic below decks. I fell into an armchair that held the just-left presence and furred smell of Hemingway, the bookshop’s ginger cat. I stretched for a novella from an island of new editions. The fog of the store and the crowd and their waiting horned away in a far harbour. A couple walked past like a yacht through another boat’s wake, discussing colours for their nursery. I opened up and started reading.

‘Is that any good?’

It was Anaïs. She sat on the arm of the chair. She smelled of lavender and was wearing wide dark grey trousers and a fine cashmere jumper, a large aquamarine stone on her middle finger.

‘It’s Fitzgerald. Divorce, tragedy, that sort of thing.’

‘The usual,’ she smiled. ‘He can’t write. I heard his editor corrects every line. Although the technique to write and having something to say are not always so well married, are they?’

We hugged.

‘How strange to think it was only a few weeks ago. At Louveciennes. Playing tennis.’

‘It was Charlie,’ I said. ‘He taught me how. I pretended it was Alfred to keep Henry happy.’

The smile left her face. We could not undo things.

‘Henry is devastated,’ she said softly. ‘I have never seen him like it.’

‘I’m sorry. Maríne is too.’

Her face went cold, her eyebrows stiff and straight.

‘Devastated, or sorry?’

‘You’ve not forgiven her?’

She began to say something, stopped. ‘Jack doesn’t trust her any longer, either.’

‘How do you know?’

‘Oh, they’ve been talking. Did you know Henry is a celebrity? He received a letter from T.S. Eliot, and Cendrars reviewed *Tropic* in *Orbes* and loved it. All this,’ she laughed without any conviction, ‘and it has only sold one hundred thirty copies. Still, he wants to work on a second edition. So he has been to see Jack. Henry had some ideas. I am worried what he will do, though, if Jack asks for edits. Do you think the book did not sell because of the tone, Ben?’

‘I thought you were publishing your own books now?’

‘But the money...’ she stopped, changed tack. ‘Jack has no feel for editing. He will do so many awful things to Henry’s book.’

‘And what about Maríne?’

She looked away.

‘Have you cut her out?’

‘No, Benjamin. Look where we are today. What we are *doing* today.’ She caught her breath. Attempted to smile. Then Anaïs put a hand on my arm. ‘We must stop. Grief makes us afraid of friendship.’ She smiled, breathed deeply. ‘Come. Are you going to come and hear Henry read?’

I put the Fitzgerald back on the table slightly askew. She pulled me out of my seat and put her arms around my shoulders and pulled me close. She pulled away and studied my face. She touched my cheek, smiled, and led us away from the crowd, the whip of word-lovers collected there, through a door at the back of the shop.

Maríne was there with the tall, gregarious Arthur who had arranged Charlie’s event at the milliner’s, and their friend Valarie, wearing a long silvery dress from a salon along rue du 4 Septembre, she told us, made from *crêpe de Chine*. There was Eric Silversmith looking as if he’d tumbled out of the jungle and Chapman, the band manager with his brown trousers pulled up in the high style, who was coordinating the evening’s entertainments. There were three or four more, friends of Charlie’s I assumed, looking vaguely tragic and sweating. And there was Henry, lithe and red and wiry, standing with a copy of Charlie’s novel. I thought of the ostrich-actor at Charlie’s reading, pushing me into the marquee. I was surprised how upset that made me feel. There was one other woman in the room. Anaïs told me it was Helba. She was a dancer, a friend. I watched Helba pull out one scrap after another from a huge trunk of materials in the middle of the floor. She was performing at Le Paradis Latin but had arranged the night off to dance for Charlie. She was a small woman with a limp and hunched shoulders, and she moved awkwardly. She drained the life out of people, said Anaïs, like beggars after your pennies. But as a dancer she was fiery and satanic; she would be perfect for interpreting Charlie’s words.

‘She borrowed my Moorish gown, Ben, the one that’s all oranges and umbers, and died it black. No matter what she’s given, she always turns it into a rag,’ Anaïs whispered in my ear.

‘But my dance needs rags,’ said Helba, looking up. She was barely thirty but her looks had faded. She pulled out beads for pearls, some spangles and red thread, making up some sort of costume. Anaïs excused herself and stood by Henry with a hand on his back. I went over and joined Maríne.

‘How about *Paris-Soir*?’ Valarie was saying to Maríne. ‘Will you get it in there?’

‘That rag’s below us,’ said Arthur, twirling a cigarette.

‘Hello Benjamin,’ said Maríne. She was business-like in her black skirt and white blouse.

I put a hand on her arm. ‘How are you feeling?’

She pulled away and began a conversation with Chapman, who was pacing around the office reciting his lines. And then Henry was talking over everyone, and we all became silent, and he held court on Charlie and how the world had changed. That’s why he’d set off to sea and drowned himself. Everyone looked at the floor. All odysseys were set to fail since Homer, but particularly since Joyce’s *Ulysses*. It was the first time I’d heard Henry talk about another writer’s book overshadowing his own. There was a crack in his voice. A man can fall down, he cried, a man will undo himself, go haywire—but he ought not to deliberately incarnate a lesser self, a ghost, a substitute; he needed to *stick around!* Henry wiped a tear from his face, hawked and spat on the floor, a grimace of grief. The whole thing was a question of responsibility; of a willingness to accept one’s fate, one’s punishment, as well as one’s reward. That was what he’d bring out of a reading of Charlie’s work. The others looked uneasy with how their ideas for the memorial were being ripped up.

‘So what are you going to read, Henry?’ Maríne asked him coolly. ‘Which passage?’

Henry waved Charlie’s book over his head.

‘He’d be proud of what he’s done. *That’s* in your favour, goddam it, at least.’ He stomped around the room, the others backing into corners. ‘One can’t be alone and be with the herd too. He thought he couldn’t write good books all the time. But you know the bad books break you more? You know what the toll is? Disintegration. For goddam’s sake...’ He turned sharply on Maríne. ‘You ruined him, you bitch. With all your damn stuffing the fat back in. You god-fucking-damn went and ruined him.’

In the bookshop Chapman introduced the evening and the crowd settled, awaiting Henry. I found a place with Anaïs and let the words rush over me and hoped that I wouldn’t faint. Henry’s reading was vigorous, passionate. It was full of different voices and tears and shouts of support. Once he’d finished we

watched Helba dance out a scene from the book accompanied by a Spanish guitar. Anaïs withdrew in horror at some parts, ashamed of recommending her. She exaggerated her movements to express physical pain but did so without any subtlety. I could see why the bigger dance troupes would not take her on. I kept one eye on the show and one on Maríne. She sat with Eric and Chapman, watching but not fully present, her mind captive elsewhere, behind some barred gate.

Afterwards Anaïs and I went for dinner on the terrace at Chez Lena. Summer had settled into a warm September, with only the faint chill of autumn at our necks. The others had gone on to one of the cafés where Charlie used to drink. Maríne had disappeared, while Henry had worn himself out and gone back to the Villa Seurat.

‘Henry’s always busy. He lives a very communal life. He shares everything—his writing, his food, his bed,’ said Anaïs over a bouillabaisse, twisting the spoon around between finger and thumb. ‘He is not gifted at the personal relationship. But that doesn’t matter. He has his work, and it is important.’

We talked about his reading, about Helba’s dancing.

‘It was monstrous,’ she closed her eyes, grimaced. ‘Did you see her hands?’

I nodded. We’d watched Helba portray one of Charlie’s characters with pleurisy as a god eaten by ravens, each hand diving down into the middle of his chest and plucking out the diseased lungs.

‘She dances with too much inwardness. Don’t you recognise her insanity, Ben? She is ill. She has transposed her gift for the theatre into a gift for dramatizing illness so that it always feels as if death is hanging over her. And over her lover. It doesn’t give him a moment’s rest, Gonzalo. This threat is constantly over him. He only forgets when he is drunk. To see these gestures border on the insane... It appals me. If it weren’t—but I must expose them, so...’

She spoke quickly, stumbling. It was not like her. I wondered what this Gonzalo meant to her.

‘I would not simply speak to... to anyone, about what I thought of... without them...’

‘What are you saying,’ I interrupted. ‘I don’t understand.’

She sniffed, cleared her throat, looked at me with wet eyes, padded at them with her cuffs.

‘What looks to be the seeking of suffering may be one’s spiritual salvation,’ she said. ‘We forget the seeking of the soul’s salvation could be below the surface of the masochistic relation—. I’m not...’

I must have looked nonplussed. She dropped her spoon and reached over and took my hand.

‘I dearly, dearly hope it *is* her soul’s salvation that you are seeking, Ben.’

We parted that evening with brushing kisses and without an invite to meet again.

I looked forward to our next analysis. A line was drawn under Charlie, of sorts, and I had Henry’s attack as a launching off point to discuss her feelings. Marine was almost half-an-hour late. When she arrived her cheeks were flush; she looked as if she had gotten over her feelings of guilt completely. A broad smile filled her face. It was perhaps the happiest I’d seen her. I could smell her body odour as if she’d been to one of those public exercise clubs that had caught on. But no, she’d been working. Working! The hot core of her life. Smuggling, in fact. Her skin was soft, red and strangely innocent.

‘Smuggling?’

‘Books,’ she explained.

‘But during the day? Was it safe?’

She fell into the seat, shaking her head at me.

‘It was worth it.’

‘Because you were feeling...’

Her look shut me up. I crossed my legs, irritated. Smuggling. Yes, smuggling her emotions away so I could not access them. I waved her on.

She had taken a busy métro to the Latin Quarter and place Saint-André des Arts with a box of books. She was heading for rue de la Parcheminerie. She stopped at a door patterned with ironwork like a sprinkle of sugar peel. She rang the bell and a tall blonde man opened the door in a robe of dark green silk, embroidered on the breast with a Chinese ideogram. It was Julian Radway, Jack’s contact, an American with Swedish roots. Her box contained four books:

Charlie's novel, that young boy Brownrigg's, Henry's newly printed tome, and another one with a bright pink cover. She pulled it out of her bag to show me.

'*Bright Pink Youth*. Jack's last.'

I looked at the book. 'It's by Cecil Barr.'

'Otherwise known as our merry, dying Jack. Under his pseudonym. He can still write.'

'Is he still dying?'

'It's Cecil Barr that often sells the best,' she said, as if reading from an advertisement. 'A whiff of chlorine, the wind turning, some lovely French farm lady to shelter the good soldier... and there you are, the perfect *formula*. They've been banned in England. But that's good for us, of course.'

Maríne handed it to me.

'You might enjoy it.'

'So this Radway will take your books to America? Smuggle them out?'

She nodded. I looked at the book, opening to a random page.

'And what else, I wonder.'

No movement. She was not going to take the bait.

'I wonder what else you are smuggling away, Maríne.'

'He's not such a bad man,' she sidestepped the question. 'He's useful.'

I closed the book. 'He's trustworthy?'

'As much as anyone is.'

'Ha!' I laughed, unable to help myself. An ugly sound, immediately shameful. I held up my gift and thanked her for it. It was light as well as bright, and I did not look forward to reading it.

It was during a still point in analysis the following Monday that Maríne took out of her bag another book, one I *did* recognise. Small, red leather binding and gold leaf trim around the edges. Moniz's poetry. She explained how the week before they'd sat at her desk and discussed its imminent publication; the order of the poems and the placing of the Portuguese and English translation on opposite pages. Paper stock. Samples laid out for Moniz to feel their bond, their ribbon and mesh. I imagined his hands holding the paper between thumb and forefinger, shaking as it pained his joints, each grip battling the coral beneath the skin. The sample had good texture: thick, almost ceramic, the white of mayonnaise. He would feel his words on the page, their black typed ink. But she plucked it from

him. It was too thick for such a small book. She took another paper, pushed it towards him. He pinched at it. Thin as a communion wafer. He tried his words out on its whiteness and rejected it simply. So she took it back and offered him another; another rejection, it was an émigré paper. Finally they agreed on a medium stock, something that could hold words and icon; they agreed the translations and the illustrations would take precedence. The Portuguese verse could be collected in an appendix at the back in smaller type. Moniz hoped the book would find its way to the gatekeepers of poetic morals and ethics across the English-speaking world. I made an ugly sound, half way to a laugh.

‘The gatekeepers of the morals and ethics of poetry will not be interested in his work,’ I said.

‘But that does not mean it has no value.’

‘You think it has?’

She shrugged. ‘He’s practically self-publishing. He’s paying for the illustrations, but far too much.’

‘Of course he is,’ I said. ‘He wants you to be in his *debt*.’

‘He wants his book published,’ she replied smartly.

I got up, stood at the balcony, looking out over the river so I had my back to her.

‘And has his monograph helped you?’

‘Some. It was difficult to follow.’

‘But it’s not taboo.’ I was rocking on my toes. ‘It’s not literature.’

‘Are you talking about his poetry?’

I whipped round and thumped my hands on the table and felt steadier. She was amused by my lack of composure, scared by it too.

‘*Of course* I’m talking about his poetry. What else would I be talking about?’

She sat and stared at me. I felt my temper loosen its red laces into my cheeks.

‘There are many more relationships at work in the mind than expressed in his vulgar work,’ I said.

‘Really?’ she raised an eyebrow. ‘I suppose so.’ She remembered something. ‘But hasn’t the study of gunshot wounds to the brains of soldiers broadened understanding of the frontal lobes?’

I glared at her: from his monograph, new ‘research’. I had not read that in any of his articles.

‘His arguments are contradictory and inane. You should read my report. He’s making capital out of a disastrous war he himself had his hands all over. Good God, Maríne... It will take cold blood to go ahead.’ I looked long and hard at her. I was chewing on something, perhaps my own cheek. ‘His theories are hunches. Cold blooded and blind ambition, that’s what you have there, nothing more.’

She shrugged.

‘I do not see what you would get out of it,’ I added. ‘It surely won’t make any money.’

She sat up straight, as if she were thinking something new.

‘It is not uncommon,’ I continued, ‘for a doctor at the end of his career to take unaccountable risks. That is what he is doing, Maríne. Taking a wild, uncalculated, arrogant risk. And *that*,’ I pointed at the poetry, ‘will just feed his egotism.’

In a moment I was walking over to her and tried to take the book. She held onto it and I was thrown back into my chair. I wiped my hands over my face. I sat and stared at her, and then thrust out my legs.

‘Even you talk about thoughts being tangled,’ she said.

‘But it’s a *metaphor*!’

‘What if it’s *literal*? It’s just a different way of treating the issue, then, isn’t it?’

‘Oh, issues, issues! Yes, your “*specific issue*”.’

‘He says he can identify the tangled knots. It would all be over in an hour.’

‘Well why don’t you just go and do that,’ I said angrily. We had plenty of time left, but even so when she readied herself to leave I did not stop her.

Every day that she didn’t return I thought of Maríne editing that monograph. After three days I began to worry. And then on the fourth evening I could not stand waiting for her, and got up and put on my coat and took out my impatience on the pavements. I walked along the river past the métro Saint-Michel and all the way to the Jardin des Plantes, which was closing. I turned around on myself and headed into the heart of the Fifth, striking out at a fast pace, not turning to look into the restaurants or cafés, having lost my appetite for their pleasures. I wandered along rue Monge. I found myself on the small rue Thouin. It was not where people came to be seen. I stepped into the Café Indiana and had three Pastis and then returned to my apartment and poured a Chambord and sat on the

sofa and passed out. I woke. Someone was moving around my apartment. I kept my eyes shut. Rattling around in the kitchen drawer. I opened one eye, lying perfectly still. Then in silhouette against the lights coming from the Quai I saw stumbling towards me the outline of the only person it could be.

‘I know you’re not asleep,’ she said. ‘Fuck.’ The scratch of thin metal, then the squealing turning core, and the pop of a cork. She stood swaying above me. She tried to whistle then slid onto the floor with an arm falling on my belly. ‘Come on, have a drink. You’ve had a drink tonight. I can spell it. Smell it. Was it with one of your patients? One of your “*vieilles sorcières*”?’

She nudged me with her elbow.

‘Where have you been?’ I asked. ‘Why are you here now?’

She managed to pull herself up, carrying the bottle of wine. I heard her fumble with the key and unlock the balcony, push the doors open. The cold air rushed in past her.

‘Come and have a drink.’ She took a swig from the bottle. ‘Oh what a thing, the truth! Same for all of us, Benny? We all frightful and fragile? But we stick to it, night after night, don’t we...’

‘Stick to what, Maríne? What are you talking about?’

‘Oh let it out, let it flow...’ she began singing a song I did not know.

I stood up, unsteady on my legs.

‘There!’ she shouted. I looked around. She was standing with her back to the balcony now. ‘Can I touch it? But where did it go? Not on the page.’

I walked towards her, stopped by the dining table.

‘Touch what?’

‘Oh, the truth,’ she slurred. ‘That centaur, what was its name? Half-word, half-feeling. Oh, but they pluck it out. Pluck, pluck! Those idiots at Grant Richards. Turn terrible books into romances. Pluck!’ She was plucking at her cardigan, pulling out the material. ‘Might as well sell Charlie’s travel books.’ She came stumbling towards me and fell into my arms. I thought she was going to be sick. ‘Flesh found in foreign tents,’ she slurred.

‘You’re drunk,’ I said, angrily, holding her up. She laughed, fell into me.

‘Get the magazines to review us. Not *Vogue*.’ She began laughing. ‘Others. Next time you buy a magazine, Benny, we’ll be in it. Are you listening? You never listen. I know you’re awake.’

She was humming a tune as she fell to the floor. She sat with her back resting against my legs. A thump, another one. Kicking off her shoes, singing. She cleared a space and unpeeled her tights. She slumped back. I pushed her away. She fell over. I stopped the bottle spilling. I took the wine to the kitchen and I shut the balcony doors and went and sat on the sofa and traced the outline of Marine in the dark, snoring like a vagabond in a shop doorway.

10

I woke earlier than usual with the punishment of a hangover. I knew she was gone. I spent the day at the Necker catching up with neglected cases and reading—in truth, little more than staring at—articles in the *Journal of Psychoanalysis*. In an afternoon break from my caseload I drew my manuscript across the desk. I wiped a finger across the top, checking for dust. I stood up and went over to the small mirror by the side of the door and pulled down the under-lids of my eyes and examined them for paleness. It felt as if I'd caught a cold. I was tired and my fingers did not want to rub anything back to life. Every inch of me felt bloated like a flat fish that had swallowed a rock. I sat down and stopped feeling sorry for myself and picked up the *Parisian Circular* that went out to all of the city's hospitals and skimmed across the headlines, all in French, and saw there on page five a story I translated of the forthcoming symposium on psychosurgery to be held at the Institute of Neurology by Professor António Egas Moniz. I went to see Renaud straight away.

'Read these,' he said, pointing to the newspapers open on his desk. I doubted he was talking about the Lindbergh case. Upside down I could make out something of the headlines. The Communist-Socialist general strike in Spain. Hitler orders new planes for the air arm, in contravention of Versailles. I grunted, then threw down the *Parisian Circular* on his desk. Renaud sighed. He leaned back, linked fingers over his belly.

'And what about *here*?' I asked. 'Will he be allowed to perform *here*?'

Renaud looked at me with the fixed stare of a man without an answer.

'That girl?' I pressed.

'Ah, she has recovered,' he said, smiling at last. 'She was discharged, Benjamin. She had passed her eighteenth birthday, and...' he began to stumble... 'back to her family...'

'You mean no one was paying for her?'

He frowned, leant forward.

‘We do not turn patients out onto the street.’

My shoulders dropped. I shook my head.

‘That might be preferable.’

He nodded.

‘Moniz replied to the board. They have seen him progressing, with great acclaim, I may add, at the Institute. You can understand institutional rivalry, I suppose?’

The tone was terse. He began rustling the pages of his papers, the greater worries on his mind. Yet I thought of how far-reaching Moniz’s proposals could be. All the mendacity and cool arrogance in his letters came back to me as a draught under a closed door.

I was home that evening for six o’clock but again she did not arrive. I waited until seven and then went out and wandered into the twilight and the dark. A fog was falling. I walked through it not caring where I went. I was startled as the clock of Les Invalides tolled. I could hear people through the fog, others out walking, and then at a rank, taxis waiting and their yellow lights glowing like emblems of a netherworld and a carriage one-way, each for a soul to take on their irreversible journey. In the fog I bumped into an old man in dirty overalls who cursed and laughed in French and pushed his face into mine. He had sour breath that stank of meat. When he was gone I stood and listened to the noises of the street. Pigeons on the roof, behind me traffic steaming and smoking and circulating the endless purpose of the city.

I returned to my apartment and had a small dinner of bread and wine and stood at my balcony looking along the street for her even though it was then nearly ten o’clock. A roaring approach caught my attention, and I watched four motorbikes pull up at the kerb, jump off, look up, and begin banging on the door. In a moment the concierge let them in. I heard them coming up the stairs. Then I heard the slam at my door. I jumped, drank the rest of the wine, threw my cigarette out into the street, let them slam once again, and opened the door.

‘You are the doctor that lives here?’ asked the furthest forward. He was short and clean-shaven and had lapels with a single yellow stripe that marked him out as the ranked officer, a Sous-Lieutenant of the Paris Gendarmerie. He pointed at me with his chin. ‘Benjamin Hayes?’

He pronounced my name 'Higs'. I could see the concierge peering through the balusters, his flattened nose a dark purple and his eyes hidden under the peak and cockade of his hat. I nodded. The Sous-Lieutenant looked pleased. The three other policemen behind him were breathing heavily.

'You have frequented an obscene press with the woman Maríne Cizeau.'

My neck shrunk back, but at the same time my stomach released, relieved.

'She is a patient of mine,' I explained clearly. 'I am a psychoanalyst.'

'Yes, yes, one of these mind-fixers,' said the Sous-Lieutenant. He put a thumb inside his belt. He held up a hand and motioned to the apartment. 'Inside, please.'

The Sous-Lieutenant gave orders to his men to move into each of the rooms, the kitchen, office, bedroom. He spoke in a guttural and fast French I couldn't understand—not in words anyway. I stood inside the door listening to the men search my apartment. I was too angry to think of what they might find, and was still gleefully relieved of my fear of what might have happened to her, when the Sous-Lieutenant took a few steps forward before turning around and smiling.

'You have nothing to hide?' he asked, lifting an eyebrow. From the other rooms I heard cupboard doors opening and closing, their insides being pulled out onto tops and floors.

I shook my head again.

'Then what are these?' In one hand he held Henry's *Tropic* and in the other Charlie's *Ostrich*, as if they were items of soiled underwear.

'As you can see, they are not hidden.'

'These are obscene materials.' He counted the books. I couldn't help but break into a grim smile, thinking of Freud contaminated by the proximity.

'They are aids in my *medical* practice. She is my *patient*. I am a practitioner and I work at the—'

He came closer and scrutinised my face. He sneered, and then whipped around and called out for Patrice, and a gendarme came from my bedroom. The Sous-Lieutenant gave some quick orders and Patrice took a folded black bag out of a deep trouser pocket. He scooped up all the books from the coffee table. Then the Sous-Lieutenant shouted more orders, and the search continued. They pulled out the cushions on the seats, emptied the last of the cupboards and took my

picture of Brooklyn off the wall and threw it in the bag. The Sous-Lieutenant stood next to me.

‘We won’t arrest you.’

‘You have nothing to arrest me for.’

‘But English is too much problem. Not as a doctor,’ he added. ‘It is too much craziness, *non?*’

I folded my arms. ‘You see, you aren’t such an ignorant man.’

When they had left I began to put the apartment back together but my indignation soon dissolved in the ruined silence and I sat on the sofa shaking, wrapped in a blanket. They had taken my personal notebooks. Notes for my cases—still at the Necker—would they go there? No, no. In my bedroom my dream diary was no longer next to my bed. But because of where it was hidden, hidden because in the middle of the very first page I’d written her name in large block type, they had missed the sketchbook. Still wrapped in my blanket, I returned to the dining room and found a pen on the floor and began to write. I fell asleep on the sofa under the blanket.

A banging at the door woke me. I froze again. But there was no order to open up. It was Henry, wired, drunk and speaking in tongues. I sat him on the sofa and made coffee. When I came back he was staring hard at the floor and scouring his face with his cuff. He slumped into the cushions and passed out. I lifted his feet up and rested his head back, put a blanket over him and took off his glasses and wiped the sweat from his head. I went into the kitchen and from among the chaos found the kettle and Chinese tea and made myself a pot, quietly not thinking. I listened to Henry snoring. I went back into the lounge and picked up an old copy of *The Tribune*. Teachers’ wages cut to \$40 and Joe DiMaggio in trouble for playing in the Negro league. It took another forty-five minutes for him to stir. He woke as he tried to roll over. He held his head. I didn’t ask him anything. He looked around, confused, troubled, and then whatever it was came back to him. He sat up, wide-eyed.

‘Hello Benno,’ he croaked.

‘What are you doing here, Henry?’

‘Anaïs sent me.’ They’d raided the Villa Seurat. ‘Not that anything’s worth taking in that flea-pit.’

‘Is Anaïs okay?’

'Oh, she's fine. She's fine. She's out at the mansion with Hugh. Damn prick of a husband. She's fine, Ben. She sent me to look for you.'

'Why didn't they arrest you?'

He looked around. 'You too?'

He told me the rest. The Obelisk, the printer André's, even Charlie's old bedsit. They had taken all the copies of his book Henry still had.

'And Maríne?' I asked.

'That bitch? Oh, she cut the words out alright, didn't she? She don't protect. She don't bare it like we do. All that shit about putting the words back in. Even the cruel ones. Especially the cruel ones. Was anything I wrote this brutal?'

He sat up, banging the flat of his palm against the top of his head as if trying to shake out the sense. His *brutal, obsessive, cruel, devastating, appalling* words. I pulled the blanket tightly around me. I felt for the sketchbook and pushed it under the sofa with my heel.

'Maríne?' I asked again.

'What? Anaïs said she'll give you... Take you in, you know—'

'I don't need to hide.'

He fidgeted in his seat. But he'd not lost everything, only a fantasy.

'—she can help, that's all. Hugh doesn't mind *you* heading out there.'

'But what about Maríne?' I asked, more gently.

'They had that little bitch with them when they came to ours. It's nothing compared—'

'Henry, we don't need to fight. I'm only her analyst. I've not done anything wrong to you.'

He searched around for his glasses, found them on the table, put them on.

'She's in the clink. The Palais de Justice. Fuck all to do with justice.'

'How do you know?'

'They raided her rooms, poor little bitch.' He walked around and kicked the sofa and fell down again. I studied the grey cotton of his suit. His trousers stained. A friend was waiting for him, he said, at a hotel he had checked into for the night. 'Don't worry, Benno, I didn't come to crash your bed.'

I told him to come back if he needed. I saw him out and watched from the window as he moved along Quai Malaquais. I blinked away the idea that I was

outside the window and looking in. I picked up the phone to call Anaïs and thank her, but it was too late. Whatever time it was, it was too late.

As soon as I awoke the next morning I walked quickly to rue Saint-Honoré, where the door to the Obelisk was open. I let myself in and up the flight of stairs. Tables and chairs were thrown about. A Louis Quinze I remembered admiring was smashed to pieces. The coat stand looked like the Eiffel Tower toppled over. Shards of glass littered the floor like roughly sketched mountains. Drawers emptied, waste bins kicked over and a grey ash covered the place. A calendar ripped up and scattered, a confetti of appointments and parties. I saw Jack at the far end, standing by his broken desk.

‘We’re closed,’ he said, coughed, and began pulling at the desk. He looked over. Scrutinizing my face. ‘Oh, it’s you.’ He stood straight, his hands on his back. He looked better—riled and alive. ‘Here, come and help me with this, Doc. Just need to get it away from the wall. Ready? Pull.’

The desk, made of oak, had taken more than a human hand to break. It moved less than an inch.

‘Again,’ he coughed.

Another few pulls and there was a foot or so of space from the wall. I held out a hand to shake.

‘What book are you?’ he asked, poking at me. He smelt of the sticky stuff on flypaper, still that medical smell in his bedroom that had made me gag.

‘I’m not one of your authors, Jack. I offered advice, remember?’

He put his hands on his hips and furrowed his brow. Then he reached and grabbed my hand, shook it with a firmness that belied his appearance and pushed back the tip of his hat with the other hand.

‘That’s right, that’s right. Well I hope you’re more inconspicuous than that idiot Radway.’

He dropped my hand and sniffed and then walked off. I listened to the traffic outside and then the distant sound of Jack sweeping glass away from kitchen surfaces, the banging of cupboard doors, a shout, and then a bark, hard coughing. He came back with two unmatched glasses and a bottle of gin.

‘Bloody idiot. But he’s not the only one. They couldn’t do the job properly if I’d been here to direct them.’ He sniffed, vindicated by the wreckage. He wiped his nose on the arm of his suit. He poured us out two drinks.

‘No ice. Like savages.’

‘That’s fine. I like it straight.’

‘Good man,’ he grinned. ‘Not as bad as it could’ve been, hey?’

‘So what happened?’

He began laughing, waved around the room with his glass.

‘You think they’ve ever read a book? Apart from the Bible, of course.’

Jack sniffed. The great bookcase was swept empty but standing. The Chinese vase with the jade dragon dancing around its bowl and its tall white irises was untouched.

‘The flowers,’ said Jack. ‘Bloody superstitious lot, the French.’ He gave me a wink through his glasses. A little mystery unfolded in that wink. I looked at the desk we’d moved a foot away from the wall, and the Chinese vase and its irises that were, as he said, still in place. Jack put down his gin and began rummaging around inside the broken desk.

‘Secret compartment,’ he said, and then looked at me. ‘I suppose you’re not a spy?’

‘They came to mine too.’

He fingered around the edges of the desk. I heard a click, then Jack let out a satisfied ‘ah’ and he took out a small key. He went over to the wall and searched with his fingers and smoothed away a small square of wallpaper covering a keyhole. I looked more closely—the outline of a door. It opened onto a musty stockroom. From the black emerged a rack of shelves on both sides, full of books.

‘Why bother if they don’t ruin me properly,’ said Jack. ‘I’ll tell you why. It’s not about the books. It’s about power. The more they lose it, and they are, the more they grab at it. But what threat am I, tell me that, am I on the streets throwing bombs at them—what’s your name again, Doc?’

‘Benjamin.’

‘So what threat am I to their Republic?’

Jack picked up his gin. Must from the stockroom mingled with the smells of the office: the ink, the ash, the cut paper. And other things: dogs, black boots, the rough glycerine of uniformed men.

‘Shall I open a window?’ I asked.

Jack topped up his gin from the bottle, looked at me for a moment with a business-like expression, and then at the room. ‘Well, now you’re here,’ he said, smiling and filling up my glass.

I helped move scattered things into piles. Repacking drawers, filling boxes, gathering pens and pencils and notebooks like leaves from a yard swept together. I picked up books. Jack was right: the gendarmes were not thorough. They’d left the Packard with the rakish green cover that young man Brownrigg commented upon; some by Eric Silversmith, his war stories set in Africa with exotic covers; a number of poetry books; travelogues; a single copy of *Princess* by Nadja de Branca, the woman I’d met at Moniz’s Portugal Day celebration. I handed that to Jack and he slid it into the top drawer of his desk. The lock was smashed, but he put it there anyway.

Maríne’s desk had been emptied, its contents tossed about. I cleared up the papers. I picked up the boxes in which she kept notes and correspondence, and slowly put each memo and letter back into some order, by day or date. I picked up an ink pen and put it back in its stand. The nib was silvery and sharp. The inkpot was empty, although there were some small indigo stains speckled on the desk, like pebbles on a beach. Her desk lamp had been turned over, but when I righted it and tried the switch the light came on. It gave me a deep and unwarranted satisfaction. I stood back. Despite my efforts there were still plenty of upturned boxes around the desk, papers and packages scattered on the floor. I did not find what I was looking for: some scrap of paper with my name on it. Something that may have led the police to my apartment.

‘Won’t she want to do this herself?’ I shouted over at Jack.

He stood with a piece of paper in each hand, weighing them—they looked like accounts. He picked up a ledger and put the torn sheets back into the book and then looked up.

‘Hmm? I think she’s made enough problems for me, don’t you?’

He must have heard me frowning.

‘My place’s been done over,’ he said. ‘Didn’t have any stock there anyway. Wife won’t allow it. Maríne’s they turned all up. Her landlady’s sent her packing now.’

‘But this wasn’t her fault, was it?’

He looked at me, coughed, scowled. I bent down and lifted a desk drawer that had been upended on the floor. Underneath, like woodlice under a stone, were a dozen copper plates. Each just smaller than a page. I ran my fingers along ridges. Somehow I knew them: plates to illustrate Moniz's book of poetry. Where was it—confiscated too? I shuffled them together, a sound like the clatter of letterboxes. I righted the drawer and found a piece of cotton and wrapped the plates up and put them back in and slid the drawer into the desk.

'Well at least they got something right,' said Jack. I looked up. He was holding a telephone that had been smashed apart. 'Hate these bloody things. Never know who's talking to you. Or listening in.'

He started laughing. It turned into a cough, loud and wolfish. He spat into his handkerchief and wiped his eyes. Jack whistled as he breathed out. He lit a cigarette, sat with the smoke in his lungs until he couldn't hold it any longer. Then he blew out the smoke in great relief.

'That was a mistake,' he began coughing.

'So where is Maríne?'

Jack wiped his glasses with a cloth, checking for dust and smudges, holding them up to the light.

'Where she belongs.' But his yellow skin reddened a shade as he said it.

An hour later I was standing outside Moniz's townhouse. Moniz opened the door. He was in his bed gown, a long dark velvet bathrobe with vellum lapels. The house felt empty, and I knew there was no little José carrying his boat. There was no Elvira. He had sent them back to Lisbon.

'Doctor Hayes,' he welcomed me stiffly.

'You're busy?'

He lifted up his hands to explain.

'I use my time productively. Come in.'

He led me to his office. He sat behind his desk, leant back and rearranged his robe. A maid was at the door. Moniz ordered her to bring coffee and some fruit loaf. I sat in the other chair.

'I know why you have come this morning,' he began. 'To protest against my symposium.'

I crossed my legs, looked around the room, remembering the time before.

'Your symposium?'

‘At the Institute.’ He waited, and then peered forward. ‘So, I see this is not the reason.’

‘I’m not here about your symposium,’ and hoped he heard the intent. ‘There’s something you will want to know.’ He raised a curious eyebrow. ‘And something you can help with, I hope.’

I told him what had happened. I watched it register that his book was sitting in a black sack with all the horrors of the Obelisk collected, to be catalogued and burnt. He rang a bell and the maid came, she apologised, here was the coffee. When she left he turned to me. He leant forward, holding his lapels. He wanted to ask what my involvement was. He cleared his throat, straightened his back. He forced a smile, reached over to pour the coffee. His civility made me tighten.

‘It might be worth a call to someone. If you want your book back.’

‘Mademoiselle Cizeau must be—’

I told him exactly where Miss Cizeau ‘must be’ right at that moment.

He took in the news, sipping on his coffee, looking down.

‘What do you think, Professor?’ I couldn’t stop myself. ‘Poets write about nothing but scandal for thousands of years, but now the censors are involved. For writing about—’ I glanced at his hands. ‘But perhaps the censors will not be so discriminating.’

Moniz sat stiff-backed in his chair. He picked up his coffee again, could not hide the shaking. He put it down and rang the bell. The maid returned and Moniz began talking in Portuguese. She went out. I almost felt sorry for these obstacles in his path.

‘You were right to call on me, Doctor Hayes,’ said Moniz. ‘I will see what can be done for your—’

‘It’s not me you’re doing the favour,’ I said.

The message trickled down to place Louis-Lépine by the evening. One of the messenger boys brought a note to my office, and at six o’clock I was in a taxi on my way to the Préfecture. I asked the driver to wait, keep his meter running. Within the half-hour I let him go, and found a seat on the terrace of a small café on the opposite corner with a view of the entrance. Around seven o’clock Marine came out, pulling her coat to her. I threw twenty francs on the table and leapt up. She was pale, hadn’t slept. Her mascara was thick around the bottom of her eyes and smudged into her cheeks.

‘He went down the Congo,’ she said.

‘What? Who are you talking about?’

‘Francis is having a party at La Rotonde after his show. I tried to sell him on a coffee table book.’

I’d seen it many times now, her withdrawal into fantasy, but this was the most shocking, the most upsetting. As white as the moon. Worse than when she walked past me reading Henry’s manuscript on the way to the pool. I waved over a taxi. I climbed in and left the door open, but she didn’t follow.

‘They can’t keep him for long?’ she said. ‘I could do with a bath. Couldn’t you do with a bath?’

‘Marine, get in.’

‘You take this one.’ She began to shake. ‘I’ll get the next. We’re going to the—’

I pulled her into the taxi, slammed the door and the taxi drove off.

The apartment was so quiet I was sure she’d left. I could not hear through the spare bedroom door any sound or movement. By my sofa was a holdall with all her belongings, those not with the stock of the Obelisk, which the *patronne* of the Hôtel des Voyageurs thrust at me when I went to see what I could collect, and which marked her eviction from her lodgings.

I went out and got the papers and some pastries. When I returned she was sitting at the table in the lounge, dressed in the same clothes as she had been the day before, pale and mute. I went and made coffee. Over breakfast I read to her a report of the raid that had made it into the papers. I hesitated but decided not to edit the details. Of the despicable Obelisk Press, and the life of its publisher Jack, diseased and dying, and of its editor Marine Cizeau, hiding such disgusting objects in her room. A pile of pornography kept under a stained white muslin sheet next to her bed. Books found there from the American Henry Miller and the Englishmen Charles Furlong and Gawen Brownrigg, writers who lived wickedly and, in the case of Furlong (her expression did not change) disappeared mysteriously. Links were made to the students and the Radical-Socialists and the unions after one of their books, *The Ostrich Womb*, was found in a dirty cesspit on rue Mabillon where rioting youth bedded down; and another, a copy of *Tropic of Cancer*, found at La Ruche in the Fifteenth, the insurgents against democracy

posing as artists to escape prosecution. I thought of the Sous-Lieutenant apologising to the *patronne* of Maríne's hotel if his men had damaged either the room or the hotel's reputation (a crowd gathering on rue Prie-Dieu to see Maríne thrown—the imagined force of it made me shrink—into the back of a van). The details were salacious, the pages of *Le Petit Parisien* dripping with willing witnesses to the wrongdoings going on under their noses, including the claim that Maríne Cizeau, not the real name of this English harlot, was running a peep show from her balcony. Yes, that is how it happened, they agreed. Maríne listened with a blank face, and I thought of that reaction after her plunge into the swimming pool. Aphanisis. The lack of sensitivity, a pseudo-depression. Maybe Jones was right after all.

They drove her to place Louis-Lépine and processed her as a trader in obscene books and left her in a cell with sixteen or eighteen men and women picked up that night. Because it wasn't just the Obelisk they'd raided, nor was it to root out her d-bs. An editorial in *Le Monde* confirmed it. President Lebrun was exhibiting a show of force, a crackdown following the municipal vote where the parties of the Left had a strong showing, threatening his alliance and the relative peace in the city since the riots. Less than a week later the government resigned anyway. But that didn't do Maríne any good in her cell, a different purpose to those others behind bars, wrapped in her coat to block out the cacophony of the prison and its cries of injustice and shame, neither of which I felt for helping Maríne.

At some point I stopped reading and stood up and went and retrieved Maríne's holdall, which smelled of candle wax and soap and her citrus perfume, and passed it to her. I led her into the bedroom where she had slept. She put the holdall on the bed and glanced at me. I nodded, and she began unpacking. A nightdress and a white kimono-like bathrobe; a pair of flat shoes and a pair of near-black tights. Her toilette bag, a crumpled blouse and a blue cardigan, the one she wore over the swimsuit at Louveciennes, two dresses, one black and one white summer dress, a pink lace scarf bought at the Galeries. She emptied out the rest of her belongings and put the bag under the bed. Maríne's home life—how normal, if sparse, it all was. I turned away, unsure if it was disappointment or excitement that stirred me. As I went to leave she put on her coat. She pulled the

zip and tightened the buckles, looking suddenly as if she was about to depart after a session.

‘Where are you going?’

‘To work,’ she replied, but her voice was hoarse.

‘Maríne, you are in no fit state.’

I was just in time to catch her. I held her under the arms and sat her down on the bed and undid the buckle of her belt and unzipped her and pulled it off, and lay her down. Her eyes were elsewhere. I watched her for a while, sitting in the armchair in the corner of the room, hoping I might see her off into sleep, that her days and nights in the prison would have worn her out. She lay there with her eyes open and breathed regularly, light but steady. I looked at my watch; I had my own appointments to keep. I drew the curtains and darkened the room, although they were not thick and the room was then a chancel lit by rare and tranquil candles. I left her fully-clothed and wondered as I walked to the Necker if she would be there when I returned.

She was—in the same position that I had left her that morning, as if she had not even closed her eyes. For the next week she woke each morning as if she’d not slept, but at least she was no longer immobile. She became comfortable in my apartment, making tea or coffee, sitting at my table and editing, rolling a cigarette, yet she walked with glass steps. Had she always moved like that? Each morning she would be up before me, dressed and prepared for work. She got a little further each time, and once to the Quai itself before I saw her waver or fall. Each time I brought her back into the apartment, sat her down, made her tea. Put her back to bed.

‘Will you see him for me?’ she asked. She was half-lying on my sofa one evening at the end of that first week. I was sitting at the dining table working on her case study. I hurried on with my chapter, reading through my notes incessantly. I put down my pen. Much of her colour had returned, although as with that first plunge I witnessed—the very first, following the kiss—she still could not work. She had not touched a book, not in front of me. She spent the evenings in her room or lying on the sofa. Unable to read, her mind broken with the effort of the fantasies she had constructed. She pulled her nightgown around her, put her knees together.

‘Will you see if he’s had enough of me? Or if he’ll have me back?’

I frowned. I turned and faced her, a hand on the table, resting on my chapter.

‘Of course he’ll have you back,’ although I was not sure at all.

The next morning I found Jack at the Obelisk in a circle of organised action. He’d tidied up enough to make a passage for getting in and out. Outside of that was still mostly in a state of chaos. Behind him he’d righted the shelf and filled it with the same books they’d taken away. He invited me in. I sat in a chair by his desk, which was propped up on a pile of books.

‘Don’t you worry about her, just a short lesson. Give her no trouble to cause. Then we’ll see.’

Jack shrugged his shoulders and held out his hands as if to ask wasn’t that fair.

‘But the raid wasn’t her fault.’

‘You telling me, Doc, she didn’t go too far with the ostrich boy? Letting that Miller have fifty copies to peddle up and down rue Caulaincourt in broad daylight?’

But she is the Obelisk, I thought.

‘Too much attention,’ he said, and coughed, and told me to wait while he finished working through his accounts. I watched him furrow his brow over the numbers. There was the tang of medication and other tones. Something like a cock fight, a bar room floor, gin and aftershave. He looked up and announced the Press was healthy. Enough to see out the hard luck. He’d survived 1929, hadn’t he? He’d survive now. But no more surprises.

‘And one thing Maríne has always been good at,’ he said, and coughed, ‘is surprises.’

He rolled a cigarette, his rake-like fingers working nimbly. He was half in shadow. It was bright outside, but the chaos seemed to fracture the light across the room in upset triangles.

‘Know who I hate? Those intellectuals in Bloomsbury. Their dinners for the Peace Pledge. All playing to the Germans. You can see it in their bloody essays. Self-righteous they are. They censor out the freedom. We here—’ he slapped the side of his chair, and cleared his throat. ‘*I’m* doing honest business, ain’t that right? Marcelle thinks I should be at home in bed. That’d kill me faster.’

‘Maybe you should get into the country.’

‘What’s that?’

‘Take your family away?’

‘You’re a travel agent, are you? No, no. Nothing shifts a cough like honest work. My old man used to say. Nothing coughing’s good for but—’ Jack laughed. ‘It’s the country that gives you the grippe. Ironic, I suppose it is,’ a smile fought its way to the centre of his face, ‘is Maríne’s way of saying it. Says we breathe the life back in.’ He took a long drag on his cigarette, and hacked it out. ‘Ye—es. Breathe the life back in.’

‘What if she’s back by Monday?’ I asked him. ‘After the weekend?’

He dragged on his cigarette, asked me to get up and led me to the window. Traffic filled the street in its careering madness. The pavements filled with men in suits off to the Ministries, others meeting for coffee to discuss war, money and whatever other games were on the agenda for today.

‘Send her in. After the weekend. But if she’s not ready to work...’

I arrived at the Necker to find a large package wrapped in brown paper on my desk. I sat down and untied the string. Inside were my journals and notes on Maríne, taken by the Sous-Lieutenant and his men. There was a small note. A signature that was also a statement: *Egas Moniz*. I took them out. Underneath were the contraband from the coffee table, including Henry’s *Tropic* and Charlie’s *Ostrich*. I brought them all home and in a mania that felt strangely comfortable I rearranged the coffee table as it had been. Even the Pelman leaflet. It left me feeling both satisfied and sullied, and when I heard Maríne come from her room I made every effort not to look at the table. If she’d noticed the books, she didn’t mention them.

‘Did you see him?’ Her face was tight and her eyes wide, waiting.

I nodded. ‘He’ll have you back after the weekend.’

She came and hugged me. She rested her head on my shoulder and I put my arms around her and felt a light and hopeful peace enter. *A breakthrough!* Then she stepped away.

‘Perhaps we’d better start again,’ she said. ‘Maybe it will help before I go back.’

We conducted analysis that evening and both the Saturday and Sunday to help her prepare. We talked in depth about her plunges, about what cycles of action, flow, paralysis and inaction she was habitually caught in, and ways to break through without losing her ability—without losing *all* of her ability—to

edit in the way she believed was right. We found touch a useful catalyst during those sessions. Sometimes it was holding the books I'd put on the coffee table. Sometimes it was holding hands. As she explained her fears of *not* feeling her books I stroked the back of her hand. The bond between us became strong and taut, skin stripped back to the muscle. She would come and sit by me and if there was a topic through which she struggled I would put an arm around her. She would talk about her authors, how she was helping develop an appreciation for form; she even talked about striking out and setting up her own publishing house. She spoke about her fears that she would never quite achieve what she had written down that day at the Pelman event, that one word on the scrap of paper, what it meant to let everything in. We could not expunge touch and feeling from that work.

It was on the Sunday evening that she returned to the subject of Moniz. It was near the end of the session, although what came to constitute a session had lost its definition. She must have noticed me stiffen, because she reached over and took my hand and gave it a squeeze. I had not thought of him, wilfully, since my ridiculous suggestion for her to seek him out for treatment. She was leaning back on the sofa with her knees up, which were covered by her white dress, a faraway summer taste of grass and daisies.

'I wonder if I'm still invited,' she said casually. 'It was meant to happen this week.'

'What's that?'

'Moniz's book launch. His poetry. It was only a small launch, even before the raids. A reading. Nothing scandalous.'

I laughed, not sweetly. I could see it. A party, his famed Portuguese hospitality, to a select crowd. And paired with his rearranged symposium it would form a celebration to place Professor Moniz at the centre of the cultural and medical worlds.

'It was printed before the raids,' she explained. 'I imagine it was nice and safe in the storeroom.'

'And do you want to go?'

There was something in her eyes not dark enough to worry me then.

'It *is* one of my books.'

I stood, walked off, then turned, leaning against the frame.

‘You should go and see Moniz first, then. He made the call to help get you out of there.’

She looked at me for a while, making sense of why I had not told her that before.

‘You see, Benjamin,’ she smiled. ‘He’s not such a monster.’

I grunted. ‘He was worried about his book.’

‘So sceptical...’

I glared at her. Her face gave away nothing. I returned and stood over her, wanting to admonish her for retaining the connection. But before I could speak she grabbed both of my hands and pulled them to her chest, and pressed them down on her clavicle. My hands fixed there, as if she wanted me to restrict her. She pulled me towards her, I could not break away.

‘Is there anything obscene in his poetry?’ she asked.

‘How would I know?’

‘Must it always be obscene to say something new?’ Our noses were almost touching. ‘Perhaps António has found something new to say after all. Do you want me to talk about his poetry? How I worked through the ideas in *his* book? You haven’t asked me if it moved me.’

An urgent need to scratch the unreachable part of my back. Still she held my hands to her neck.

‘What moved you then?’

But she didn’t say. She shrugged, let go, looked out of the window.

I stood up and went to the kitchen and paced around. After a while I calmed. I went back into the lounge. She had disappeared into her room. I knocked and went in. She was sitting up on the bed, her hair spread out across the pillows. She was reading a magazine.

‘Are you going to bed?’ I asked her. ‘What about our session? Are we finished?’

‘Look at this.’ She pointed to a page. ‘Am I drinking the wrong Vermouth?’

She took back the magazine and flicked a page. She showed me another page.

‘Do you think we should see this film? Did you see it already?’

‘Maríne. What are you doing?’

‘I can’t remember the last time I went to the cinema, Benjamin. Can you?’

She stretched, lifting her arms up. I could hear her muscles snap.

‘How about some dinner?’ she said.

I turned around angrily and shut the door. I went to the kitchen. I cut some bread and found some butter and whetted it against the side of a plate. I found lettuce and artichokes. I cut brie de Meaux and salers, yellow and salty, and then stood at the counter looking at the food, feeling disgusted. I left it for her and went to the balcony, the sun long ago drained into the Seine, already too cold to sit outside. I went back into the kitchen and boiled the kettle. I put some grounds in a pot. I picked up the knife again to cut some more bread but I was careless and slipped the knife through my finger. My cry drew her out of the bedroom. She stood at the doorway as I ran my finger under the cold tap. There was blood over the kitchen top and over the bread. I took the finger out from under the running water, only for it to begin bleeding again. She came and inspected it, holding the finger up to the light.

‘Have you got a bandage or something?’

‘In the bathroom,’ I waved. She came back with the first aid box. The pain was travelling up my arm as I watched her cut some gauze into a long strip. She put the scissors and gauze down and searched for some medical tape and a small safety pin, then reached over to the table for a towel.

‘Okay, let’s dry you off,’ she said. She took hold of my wrist and pulled my hand from the running water, and dried the hand down, padding at the cut. It hadn’t stopped bleeding. She wiped the blood away as it seeped out. She put a corner of the tea towel over the top of a bottle of iodine and tipped it up. Then she pressed the saturated corner onto the cut. Like sand strafing the skin on a windswept beach. I knew I’d cut down to the bone, just above the knuckle of my left index finger. She stood closer, keeping me upright like a cane to support a sapling. She dabbed away the blood and then wrapped the gauze around the finger, held it tight, and secured it with tape. Then put my index and middle fingers together and wrapped the bandage around both. I winced as she tightened the bandage. Then she cut the end and secured it with the safety pin. She gave my hand a final rub with the tea towel, my hand between her two, and then mopped up the spills of blood, throwing the ruined bread in the bin. I stood watching her, feeling the pain lessen. The sun was streaming into the kitchen. I

was elevating the injury, my arm bent at the elbow and hand in the air. Then Marine reached for and lifted up my other hand and stretched out the fingers.

‘And this one,’ she said, ‘is it injured?’

I didn’t understand what she meant. With my right hand throbbing she pushed the index and middle finger of my left hand into her mouth. I felt her sucking on their unclean and salty skin, repairing some unseen wound with her saliva, until she withdrew and let my hand drop to my side.

By the time I opened my eyes she’d left the kitchen.

I went back into the lounge and sat at the table. I picked up my pen. I pulled over some paper and began writing. Marine’s small suckle was no more than a caring bitch would do for an ill or injured puppy. My suckled fingers gripped the pen more easily for having been nurtured. I wrote it down—she was simply mirroring the treatment, our amended form of psychoanalysis first proposed by Ferenczi and Jung and put into practice by Rank, and now myself. Physical dynamics, new breakthroughs! Did analysis not need to grow as well, develop as society developed, *respond?*

We must seek connection and break through this bearable life rather than break with it, I wrote. She wants no other entrance or exit except to rip off the masks that culture places upon us. But such a break means pain, always psychological and sometimes physical. Society’s rules are mostly bearable, of course, this is how they persist, until one fully recognises the cost they extract. It begins with listening to the patient’s stories. The analyst must always be alive to what is said and unsaid in the analysand. But where we have taken further steps in method is to understand that we must also remain alive to both what is touched upon and not touched. Employment of Rank’s physical dynamics theory is required. Attention is never just verbal. At the heart of every analytic relation is feeling. And sometimes words are not known for what is shared. Sometimes the words have not been invented.

I put the pen down, flexed my free, writing hand. That was it. I’d finished the chapter. I waited for her to come out of her room to show her, but she did not. I slept well that night, a formless sleep.

I made sure I was back from the Necker early that Monday to hear her news, of how Jack had reacted after the raid. Marine returned at around half past five.

At the sound of her key in the lock I hurried to the kitchen and busied myself, wanting to let her settle first, wanting to lengthen the moment of anticipation. I found her on the sofa. I sat down next to her ready to listen.

He cut her. Not from his employ, but deep enough. He stripped Maríne of her editing. Took away the new manuscript of Eric Silversmith and barred talk of Henry Miller and the second edition of *Tropic* and a new project, a book he was calling *Black Spring*. He robbed her of responsibility for the writers she'd ingested and held in her stomach, strong enough that they nearly killed her. Jack knew it was her blood on the pages, her skin on their covers. To take them from her was an erasure. She sat among the broken mess of the Obelisk and he'd poured her a gin as he had me and told her she was on secretarial duties. He would edit. She told me this with a passionless face, something breaking in her. How could it not? It would affect her more than Charlie's disappearance. If she were not the editor of banned books, then what was she? He took everything, even the Pelman Compendium of mind-cure courses. Fear and compassion twisted into a grim smile. I tried to hide my emotions.

'And what about Moniz?' I asked. 'What about his launch?'

She looked at me from the corner of her eye. 'I'm still allowed to go,' she said.

Those next few days she did not get out of bed and we did not conduct analysis. I tried to coax her out, to persuade her that showing up for secretarial duties would do her good and she'd win his trust back easily, but she only looked at me to say it was pointless. On the third day she came into the lounge in the evening and began to cry. I put an arm around her but she stiffened as I did so. I lifted her roughly from the sofa and made her stand and found a tissue for her eyes and told her to go back to bed. Her face was red and bloated.

The next day I came home to find Maríne gone. I paced around the apartment, smoking, picking up the phone and putting it down again. An hour later she returned and I nearly fainted. She had a dozen copies of Moniz's book, *The Gates*. She showed one to me. I took it reluctantly. They were smartly produced; at least his financial investment had not gone to waste. The plates printed up well. I could see more of what Moniz had tried to describe in his verse—tried and yet failed. She left to hand-deliver *The Gates* to some recipients Moniz had invited to the launch the next evening: the gatekeepers of the morals

and ethics of poetry, I snorted. I watched her disappear along the Quai from the balcony, smoking a cigarette. Even so, I added his book to the coffee table, strangely reassured to have it there along with *Tropic* and *The Ostrich Womb* and Brownrigg's book and the Pelman leaflets.

I ran myself a bath, as hot as I could stand. Slowly I became accustomed to the temperature. A red ring of heat circled my belly. Suddenly I began to cry as I had not for a long time. I tasted the salt as it ran down my cheeks and into my mouth. I could barely catch a breath. After fifteen minutes the heaving stopped and I leant back and closed my eyes. I did not know what the tears meant, except that I wrote down after that the salt of relief should taste more exquisite than the salt of guilt, but mingled together any person would find it difficult to make out one from the other. I relished its bitter blend on my tongue. It had been published without moving her. I hadn't known I feared it so much until I was rid of the dread, washed down the plughole with the grime from my skin. Then I shouted, whooped with an intense joy I hadn't felt for too long. I slapped the water, sent it all over the floor, laughed, shook my head, laughed again, and blew out my cheeks. It had not got inside her. And I believed then his ideas did not, could not and never would.

Moniz's poetry was distributed at the beginning of October with a box for Paris and the rest heading to Lisbon. It sold for 850 francs, ridiculously prohibitive, but this was after all Professor António Egas Moniz, great statesman, polymath, Nobel nominee. It was printed on medium-stock paper with a cover of red and black. Underneath the title it read in smaller type: *Confiscated in France during an Attack on Freedom of Speech*. A puff; his book was never under much threat during the raids. Some sort of vanguard for liberality and sovereignty—*sovereignty!* The whole idea made me flush with indignation. It was officially released the day of Moniz's symposium at the Institute. They arranged the launch for the same evening, in front of the gathered greats of neurological science. I was in equal parts tempted and repulsed by what I would see if I went—if I was allowed through the doors. All that day stressed welled up behind my eyes, a finger on the trigger of a new migraine. I left the Necker early and walked home and waited for Marine to come back.

She returned around nine o'clock. I'd busied myself with dinner. She'd been drinking. She went to the bathroom, then her own room, and came out a few

minutes later changed into a looser skirt and jumper. She sat down. She was holding a book.

‘I’ve had an idea,’ she said. ‘Jack doesn’t know I’ve got this. But if I edit this without a problem...’

She showed it to me. I had seen it before, but it was now in a more sturdy binding. *The Leucotomy in Neurotic-Affective Patients, a monograph by Professor António Egas Moniz.* I was not worried. It was not literature, after all. It was not *unpublishable*.

‘But Maríne, it’s medical. It’s a monograph. It’s completely different from your taboo books.’

I didn’t need to tell her she was clutching at straws. There was enough desperation on her face already. She put the book on her lap and began to cry, slipping back into her blankness.

‘Is your new method working yet, Benjamin?’ she asked me through tears.

‘Maríne,’ I said, and I sat forward, irritated. I could imagine how Moniz had attacked me during his symposium and reading, what words she would have ingested. An idea seized me. I went to my bedroom and took out the pile of papers tied together inside the sketchbook. I came back and dropped them on the table. The expression on her face should have told me much about what I looked like.

‘You can read it now,’ I said. ‘What I’ve made of your case.’

She regarded me blankly. I picked up the papers and thrust them at her. I went and sat down and bunched both hands into fists and pushed them down the sides of the chair.

‘You’ll see. Our methods are the ones that work,’ I said, a wave of happiness washing over me. A light and delicious feeling. I stared at her for a long time, still happy, stupid like a puppy, until she stood up and went into her room, and came out a few minutes later wearing her coat and cloche. She stopped briefly and looked at me with eyes full of misfortune, and left.

I sat dumbly in the dark for I do not know how long. Mindlessly I began to unwind the bandage off my fingers. They were yellow and water-pucked. The cut had healed into a scar thinner than a hairline. I flexed my fingers, pulling blood back into them. Their colour reminded me of the skin I’d watched Lima

pull back from the skull of that cadaver. I could smell the decay, the rusted blood and puss collected and dried out on the gauze that lay in my lap.

I made myself a drink and sat down in the lounge and waited for Maríne to return. I gave a little start and hit my teeth on the whiskey glass. Moniz's monograph was on the dining room table. I stood and picked it up and started to open it, and then stopped. I dropped it on the table. I picked it up again. I dashed into the bathroom and put the book into the bath and began running the water. Slowly the water began to turn a light blue as the book absorbed the flow, as it turned swollen and uneven.

I went and made myself another drink. I lifted the lid of the ice bucket and took with the tongs two blocks and dropped them in my Vermouth. I shut the balcony and went into the bathroom and opened the book. The pages were ruined, some twists of ink that looked as if they were words once but were now a pitching, lurching, plunging facsimile. This was what I had been trying to do all along, I thought, and smiled to myself.

There was no point trying to pretend. I would leave it for her to find. I went into my room and lay down and fell asleep. I woke up, and after fighting to remember my dream stood up, feeling ragged and sore, searching for something to do. It was midnight perhaps, but I wouldn't sleep again for a while. I wiped down the kitchen and worked up a sweat. That morning I'd collected the washing from the young girl who came to each of the apartments and took our sheets and towels and brought them back fresh and folded. With a pile of laundry I opened the door to Maríne's room and walked in. There in front of me stood Maríne, packing her holdall with all her possessions. She was dressed in her kimono.

'You went out,' I stumbled. 'I didn't hear—' I looked at her holdall, half-packed. 'Maríne, what are you doing?'

She looked at me but didn't reply. I put the towels down on the bed.

'You shouldn't leave.'

'It's ended,' she said, and carried on packing. I could not see her face.

'Maríne, stop.' I reached over to grab her hands. She pushed me away. We began to tussle over her blue cardigan, pulling on both ends like a rope in a tug-of-war. 'Look—Maríne—I apologise for—let go, please!—what I did—'

'You had to,' she said, and pulled hard, and I stumbled forward and fell onto the bed, and she fell as well, and we lay there on top of her holdall, all her

belongings, close enough to feel each other's breath. I could see the speckle of her irises, see the thin veins cracked across the whites. We were both still holding our ends of her cardigan. Then she let go, and reached down and with a small smile undid the belt of her robe. I watched as she sat up and pushed it off her shoulders, let it drop to the bed. Her small breasts and that scar. The tautness of her skin was as tight as the narrowness of her lips. She stood up and stepped over the belongings, scattered on the floor, facing me an arm's length away. I began to say something, but she put her finger to her lips. She reached out a hand and pulled me up from the bed. She was completely naked. She took my hands in hers. She lifted them up between us and inspected them as she had when I sliced open my finger. She ran the tip of a finger over the line of the scar. She sniffed at them as if they were flowers. She enclosed my hands and with her other hand she closed my eyes. Then she put my palms on her body. I rested them there, just below her neck. She moved my hands down her body until I was holding her waist.

'Shall I tell you what I feel?' she whispered.

I was shaking. I did and didn't want to know. I nodded.

'His poems take in the world, but they do not hold to it. It poisons the mind. Do you see?'

'Yes,' I said, almost not breathing.

She moved my hands down the sides of her thighs.

'Shall I tell you what else I feel?'

I nodded again. It was the only motion I could make.

'I hold my body in place between the frisket and the tympan. It lies on top of me. I push it in and push it out. Folded in half and rested flat. We have made a book together.'

My lips and my arms moved but only because she was moving me.

'The unbearable part. We rip off the mask. We cut it away. Shall I tell you what else I feel?'

I felt her hands hesitate.

'Shall I show you, Benjamin?'

The sound of my name woke me, but I didn't dare open my eyes.

She moved my hands round to her lower belly.

'Feel. Feel inside with your hands.'

And for a moment my fingers were at the opening of her vagina, and I felt its hard heat pushing out, her flesh and her wetness. And I felt miraculously calm. It wasn't sexual—I knew it wasn't that. It was something deeper and more intimate. With no x in it. And I knew what I had to do even as the images of Lillian and Faith both flashed through my mind. I pulled my hands away, opened my eyes. She was still holding my wrists, not letting go. I saw the struggle on her face as I pulled away, the look that said she was unable to make sense of what I was doing, why I was resisting her. Her eyes widened, and her mouth hardened, and she began to shake as I pulled one hand away, and then the other, and fought her until I was holding her wrists, and held them up, and I could smell her on my fingers, that deep, sour must of her final plea. She struggled as I held her, as I moved her back to the bed and pushed her down onto the mattress and her belongings. And then she stopped struggling and the determination left her face. But the hardness did not. Her cheeks were cold, white, and her breath was as compliant as a concubine's. I let go of her hands and backed away. She rested her hands in her lap, covering over the hair of her quim. For a moment she looked no more and no less than innocent, level with the world, as if she could start all over again.

Then she looked up at me.

'I knew you wouldn't,' she said. It was quiet, but not soft.

I felt the silence of the room push into me as hard as gravity.

'Maríne, how could I?'

'I knew you *couldn't*.'

I could feel her wetness drying on my fingers, cracking over my skin.

'It would be a betrayal,' I explained. 'It would mean the end.'

She turned her face up to me, and I suddenly knew that I had never known her real name, never understood why she hid herself from the world, why she needed the story to enter her. And why I had not. All I could think about was what I had written about her, and I felt utterly destroyed by its emptiness, its complete failure. That any analysis or diagnosis I could offer would do her no good. That she was beyond me. She pulled at her kimono, tugged it from under her and threw it around her shoulders.

'And this,' she said, tying the kimono around her waist. She had started shaking. 'This isn't?'

11

I intended for everything to remain orderly. The next morning I set out to maintain our routine. I walked to the Necker for my regular appointments with my caseload, thinking of nothing more than the day, then dinner, my walk home, and in the evening analysis, reading, and a *long*, slow walk home. I listened for her. Every now and then a movement in her room, a slow, careless pacing. I hesitated before entering the bathroom, and then found Moniz's ruined monograph was gone from the tub. I took a long shower and changed out of my clothes and threw them into the washing basket. I dressed and went into the lounge and stood in the dark and listened.

'Maríne?' I knocked. No reply. 'Maríne? I'm going for dinner at the restaurant on the corner.'

I slipped out of the apartment wildly relieved, able to breathe, and went to the little Italian restaurant at the junction of Quai Malaquais and rue Bonaparte. The place was nearly empty. I took a table near the back, ordered pasta of some kind and a carafe and sat listening to my heartbeat and the gramophone playing traditional Italian folksongs. As my main dish was served Maríne came into the restaurant. I stopped eating. She was carrying her black holdall. Something stole all the air from my chest. She waved at the waiter and pointed at me and came over. The waiter followed as she sat down and re-laid the place he'd cleared away.

'Do you have a cigarette?' she asked the waiter.

He took a pack from a pocket and struck a match for her. She took three goes to hold the cigarette steady enough to light up. She asked for another wine glass, and the waiter went off. She sucked in the smoke as if she was trying to suck back in the world. She became itchy and started scratching her face. I put down my fork and spoon and watched her. She was dressed in her skirt and blouse, kohl

and eyeliner, her coat unbuckled. She put the holdall down to the side. We both stared at it.

‘It’s nice in here,’ she said, looking around.

The waiter brought a second wine glass. She ordered bruschetta. She sat playing with the saucer and upturned coffee cup. Spinning, floating. A memory of dragging her out of the pool at Louveciennes, thumping her on the back to get the water out of her lungs. She pulled her collar up and shivered. I felt the waiter watching us, the bruschetta in his hand, uncertain of our situation. Our type of scene was worse, much worse than the old, loud cocottes. He brought over her bread and tomatoes and asked if we wanted to settle up now, the kitchen was closing. I nodded, and he left us. I put my hand flat on the table, my fingers splayed out between us almost as a provocation.

‘I’m sorry about Moniz’s book,’ I began. ‘That was... reckless of me.’

She shook her head.

‘I understand,’ she replied. ‘I understand why you needed to do that. It was only a copy.’

I pushed my plate out of the way and leant across the table.

‘You needed to break with the old methods,’ I whispered. ‘I understand that. But why...’

‘You know why.’ Watery eyes. ‘You wanted *your* practice to be taboo. Don’t say you didn’t.’

I looked away, kicked out a leg.

‘Not taboo, Maríne, intimacy does not have to—’

‘All I was doing—’ she began, leaning forward. Her shoulders dropped and she sighed, sat back.

‘But we cannot let things in from the outside so... so...’ I stumbled. ‘To have *no* defences...’

‘No mask?’ she asked, suddenly sharp.

I paused, and then nodded.

‘There’s no background inside,’ she said. ‘When you look through the mask, it is pretty on the outside but blank on the inside. How can I live with that? If there was nothing—’

She looked up and for a moment we locked eyes. Then it slipped away.

We both jumped as outside a clap of thunder ran along the Seine. We sat and waited; there was no rain. Perhaps it has been a car. Maríne slumped in her seat.

‘Maríne, sit up,’ I whispered harshly.

‘Will you get me a taxi?’ She was hoarse, defeated.

I shook my head. I managed to pay the waiter and carry her and her holdall all at the same time. I walked Maríne home and put her to bed. I did not undress her but left her fully clothed, even with her hat on, on the bed. I closed the door and went to my own room and sat on the side of the bed looking out of the window. At some point I fell asleep. In the morning I left as early as I could. When I returned from the Necker the next day her room was empty. She left a note for me on the centre of the coffee table, in a small square she made in between the books. On the left Henry, above Charlie, Moniz’s poetry on the right, and below, Dostoevsky.

For a few days I did not think. I maintained my routines, except that in the evening there was an empty space that I filled with Faith’s letter in front of me and my dozen, two-dozen, attempts at a reply. I finished my work at the Necker, and the intellectual work to think through my caseload and their current conditions took all of my energy. In the evenings I was unable to sit and write, so I found myself walking the streets, often following the river, sometimes disappearing into one *arrondissement* after another, unaware of which direction I was going or where I would end up. And then one evening I stopped outside Café Ladurée and came to my senses and realised where I was. It was rue Saint-Honoré, and I was outside the door to the Obelisk. I reached out a hand, drew back. Reached again. It was locked. When I rang the bell, no one answered.

I walked along rue Saint-Honoré, walked madly, found myself on the north side of the Quai and the highborn city over the river. I found myself at place de la Concorde. An old man selling roast chestnuts from a cart tried to catch my arm. Their burnt shells stoked my nose. A grand limousine pulled up outside the Hôtel de Crillon, the driver putting his fist through the horn. I blocked it out and stood in front of the Obélisque in the central square. This was her symbol. It was on the spine of the novels: *Sleeveless Errand* and *Bright Pink Youth* and *The Ostrich Womb* and *Tropic of Cancer*. The symbol of the Obelisk Press, this ancient Egyptian icon standing on a plinth in the shape of a book, chosen not for its phallic qualities but because Jack wanted his offices to be on this square,

alongside Chanel and the diamond dealers. His was a grandiloquent dream for a smutty reality. It was not *her* dream. I looked all the way along the basalt, up to the end of my gaze and the golden tip where it struck the sky. The Obélisque de Louxor was covered in hieroglyphs of ducks, bulls, shields, faces. Of ramparts and wolves and crows. Sacrifices at the crowning of Ramses the Second. It was a gift. She told me once that her method was *obélisque*. To be *obélisque* was to cut to a fine sharp point. It was to let flow through that point the breakthrough that her authors' made in their banned books. It was to acknowledge that the unacceptable part of living was found written on the hard surface of life, not buried in its imagined depths. It was to develop a method of feeling the flow *in* life, *through* language. To be *obélisque* was to be both the cutting implement *and* the tablet of stone. I stared, feeling the crowds grow around me, the flow of a city its people, alive and finding ways to live that were uniquely theirs. A clock tower rang. It was six o'clock. Not wanting to stray across place de la Concorde any longer and too soon to go home I walked across the river and back to the Necker. I slammed my fists on the desk and sat there until it was dark and only reluctantly turned on the lamp. I pushed papers around and opened the window to let the draught do its work better than I could. There, under the mess, my manuscript. My book. I held it for a while, its pages as limp as a sack of drowned kittens. All those months and I'd made so little progress except on one chapter, one that changed every other, a theory and diagnosis that was lost to me now. I sat in the dark and swollen emptiness, thinking of Maríne. When that grew too painful, of Moniz. I never could think of him as anything other than a golem, even with my "training" as he called it. Recalling his face, his hushed breathing. His gout and the certainty in his eyes. Rushing to the editors of their journals an announcement of a new discovery. With that cane in his hand, pointing to the tight knots of a mind. Yet we suffered the same blindness. I sat there in the dark, rasping rather than breathing, unsure if the monster performing the unspeakable act was Moniz or myself. To aid their suffering. And what good was that now?

In an attempt to snap out of my mood I called Anaïs at her townhouse. She was writing.

'I'm inspired at the moment,' she laughed. It was infectious. 'Come, Benjamin, help me. I need a new character for my book.'

'What?'

‘I want you to help me with it.’

‘Oh, not now.’

‘Then I must go!’ She did not sound irritated, but said it lightly. ‘Ben, it’s fun.’

‘No, Anaïs.’ I was becoming flustered. ‘I’m not very good at this.’

‘Working with your imagination?’ said Anaïs. I imagined her wrinkling her nose at my agitation.

‘Maríne has... gone. We’re not in analysis anymore.’

Anaïs waited, the rasp of the line filling my ears.

‘Did something happen?’

‘She... she was staying with me, since the raid.’

‘Benjamin, you know that is...’ she paused. What could I tell her? Nothing, nothing that would make any sense.

‘Surely I’m not the first? She had nowhere to go, Anaïs. What was I to do?’

‘She told you she had nowhere to go?’

Where else would she go?

I rubbed my face vigorously, smoothed my hair down flat, shook my head.

‘Anaïs, I must go,’ I said quickly. ‘Sorry.’

I hung up and stood in my emptying office, saw her sitting in that chair where we had conducted much of our work together. I grabbed my coat off the back of the door and left the hospital. I rushed through the cemetery towards Avenue du Maine. In my chapter on her case I’d written that the touches we shared in analysis meant she was no longer unrecognised for who she was, what she was trying to do. That literally we had *touched upon her purpose*, and in doing so, she had become cared for. I’d fallen in love with my own metaphor. And I knew I was not the only one.

I reached the Institute of Neurology when it was already dark. I caught my breath as I demanded the concierge bring him down, it did not matter what time it was, what he was doing. The concierge had no truck with my type, moved slowly. An unusual time, an unusual request, my heavy breathing made my French difficult to hear.

‘Just call Moniz, damn you.’

The concierge picked up the phone. I could hear it's ringing. And that ringing grew into a great crashing and it was the last thing I heard as I slumped over the front of the concierge's desk and collapsed on the floor and passed out.

I opened my eyes and focused. In front of me was a man in his mid-forties with clean skin and black hair. Behind him was a slowly turning fan against darker panelling with a brass base and a long dangling gold chain that seemed to be holding against gravity. Or I was lying down. I blinked a few more times. The man looked intently at me, checking one eye then the other. Then he smiled and stood straight and all my angles disassembled for an instant in the fan's circumference. The man was dressed in a three-piece with a white collar and black tie. He was looking away and talking to someone, although I couldn't hear the words. I looked across. It was Moniz, sitting at his desk. Then my hearing returned, sharper. The back of my head was sore. I pulled myself up. Both men stopped to watch me struggle. The one standing helped me into a sitting position. My suit was twisted to the side. I pulled at it two or three times, short sharp tugs, and flattened it out. My tie was on the table next to the sofa on which they had laid me down.

'Doctor Hayes,' said the man. He spoke English with a soft French accent. 'How do you feel?'

'Fine,' I said, looking up, blinking. 'Yes, fine. It was nothing.'

The man looked across at Moniz.

'His heart seems regular.'

Moniz stood and came round his desk.

'It is not a serious condition, Doctor Hayes?' asked Moniz.

I shook my head.

'No. Just a faint. It happens, I'm afraid. I'm sorry if I—'

Both men waved it away.

'I am assuming you were here to see me,' said Moniz. 'The concierge said you were insistent.'

I tried to remember. The two men looked at each other and the other one walked to the door.

'I will be around for another hour,' he said, letting in the light from the corridor, and then left.

The silence in the room grew hot as we stared at each other. Then Moniz turned and sat behind his desk. I let my eyes wander to the wall, shelves on each side filled with jars. The brains of animals, the rhesus monkey, the ape, the man even, the mouse. Pictures as well, photographs of patients. I stared at one with the top leaf of her scalp defoliated so that all I could see from that distance was the white-grey creases of the cerebellum. He saw my eyes wander, glanced over his shoulder.

‘All action and life comes from this,’ he said, motioning to the samples. ‘One must devote oneself to its study. The face is generally considered as the mirror of the soul, would you say, Doctor Hayes? In our art. But there isn’t a muscle in the body that does not show us the inner variation of feelings, in our fellow humans and ourselves. Too many of our colleagues forget that the brain itself is a muscle.’

My mind was still sandbagged. I continued to look, to stare, unable quite yet to talk.

Moniz stood up again. ‘Would a drink help?’

From a cabinet he poured two drinks and brought one over.

‘*Salut*,’ offered Moniz.

We clinked glasses. He drank his Pernod in small, melodious swallows.

‘So, I understand why you have come.’

‘Of course you do,’ I said. The aniseed sharpened my thoughts. I took another sniff, then a sip.

‘It has affected you deeply.’

I grunted, turned away.

‘You are still strongly opposed. To the point of collapse.’

‘That has—’ but I was not any longer even sure of that.

‘Do you think it is no sacrifice to enact the dissolution of the hysteria, to be the one who cuts?’

I snorted, and he stopped for a moment. He shook his head, tapped his desk impatiently.

‘We both understand sacrifice.’ He was waiting for me to agree.

‘A sacrifice to scoop out their emotions? What do you risk?’

‘This will be the end of my career if it goes badly. Does that not account?’

And then as a corrective he added, ‘But it will not.’

‘What do you want? What is it you actually want, Moniz?’

He moved to answer, then stopped.

‘Would you like another Pernod, Doctor Hayes?’

I looked down at my glass. He came and took it and refilled it and gave it back to me, and then he returned to the desk. As I settled it swam into focus: there, on his desk, resting on two wooden blocks like an ancient and ceremonial sword of the Japanese, was what looked like an oversized fountain pen or a cigar holder. He saw me staring.

‘What’s it called?’ I asked.

He took in a deep breath.

‘I have called it the leucotome.’

He leant forward and picked it up, passed it to me. It was heavy and cold. Nine inches long, circular, thicker than a pen but not as thick as a Monte Cristo. The end for incision was pointed, but not sharp. I pressed my finger against it. Although heavy, it was hollow. I held it up. Through the middle ran a thin but strong wire. I pushed at the top and extended it outwards, through the hollow end, to form a cutting loop shaped like a droplet of water. I rotated the cutting loop in both directions. I retracted the wire. I imagined Lima in his white mask, shaping these movements behind her eyes. Cutting what had become fixed. I could see the join where the circular barrel could be separated and the insides cleaned. I saw how the cutting loop could be sharpened. The tool used, and used again. I tried out its sound for the first and last time. The curling squealing cutting loop in the silent chambers of the mind.

‘Like coring an apple,’ I said, gasped and covered my mouth.

His expression did not change. I passed it back. He took it and rested it back on the block.

‘To cut the white matter,’ he explained. ‘The leucotomy. From the Greek. You will see. Tomorrow, you will reason. This will be best. Your talking does no—’

‘You are going to butcher people. What will they—’

He picked up a blue folder and handed it to me. I held it for a moment. I drank half the Pernod and put the glass down and opened the folder. I started, but it was not a shock seeing my own writing, only perhaps a surprise that I had not noticed it was missing.

‘It will begin here,’ said Moniz. ‘Medicine will change with the dissolution of the hysterical brain. And you, too, Doctor Hayes, will benefit from the success it brings. Is this not what we became doctors for?’

Here, read this. Read what I have written of you.

I stopped staring at my chapter, looked up at him.

‘We do not want the same prize, Moniz. Not to cure. Not to fix.’

‘Then what?’

I paused. ‘To accept. To recognise.’

He looked at me curiously, not understanding. He got up and walked about the office, swirling his glass.

‘To enter the mind of another person. That will leave its trace on you. You feel it in your work, I grant you this, but you, doctor, you feel it only through words. The talking cure, that is correct? But in surgery, Doctor Hayes! To *hear* the person in the murmurs of blood. To *touch* the harmonious line of their thoughts. To *see* emotion’s form. Anxiety’s place in relation to love. We will see all these things soon enough. To be confronted with these things in the body. You cannot comprehend this because of your training, I understand. But science will understand. The world will prize it as greatly as a gift from the gods. The end of the hysterical brain.’

It was a poem, I thought. Moniz living in as much of a fantasy world as *Marine* ever had. He spoke only in lines of bad poetry. He pointed at the folder with his glass.

‘It was interesting reading, Benjamin. May I? A sophisticated explanation of affective disorder. Your diagnosis is perfect for our operation. I could see the relationship, this new treatment for an unstable condition...’ he coughed, ‘of her fantasies. Yes, I am sure when we perform the leucotomy we will find between her frontal lobes this tangle. The white matter will be knotted.’

‘Are you going to perform an angiograph first?’

He considered me again, and then drank his drink.

‘All I have to do is tell the hospital I did not approve of this.’ I held up the folder. ‘That I did not give this to you. That she *stole* it from me. That is all I would have to do.’

He shook his head. He looked away, shrugged. I knew he was right. A delay, and nothing more. What would the Institute of Neurology want to hear from a discredited psychoanalyst?

‘You don’t even believe in psychoanalysis,’ I said sharply. He didn’t reply. I closed the folder and a world closed with it.

‘Can I see her?’

He breathed out sharply, only half in contempt.

‘She came to me.’

‘I understand that. Can I see her?’

He put his glass down on the table and began to rub the fingers of one hand with the other, working out some stiffness.

‘She has begun preparations,’ Moniz said, and I knew my answer. ‘Some initial anaesthetics. By tomorrow she will not suffer any further neurosis. She will be able to conduct her life fully without these plunges into blankness.’

I looked up at Moniz. ‘You do not have to do this.’

He stood up. ‘Miss Cizeau was lucky enough to make this decision for herself. Others will lie in hospital beds for years unless we take this chance. The knotted fibres of the mind are—’

‘You can’t promise her that. Can you?’

Moniz’s face was like iron in the furnace.

‘All will be fixed. Nothing will be lost, everything gained. The mind is plastic. We can change it.’

‘But change it to what?’ I cried. I stood up. And I very nearly laughed. ‘What did you promise, Moniz? That you’ll be written about. “Heralded in the medical journals”. Is that what you promised?’

‘Perhaps that is enough,’ said Moniz.

I closed my eyes. And I opened them again and saw him smile.

‘Please,’ he said to me, ‘understand where you are, Doctor Hayes. She has signed the papers. Understand what we are to do. By tomorrow Miss Cizeau will have no more confusion. No more interstitial neurosis, as you call it. Science must take these leaps.’ He looked at me, and then at the door, and said in a quieter voice, ‘She came to me.’

Everything was silent. I bit my lip, thought hard. A hot flush up my neck. Moniz motioning me towards the door. The burning still there, unable to think,

unable to take a step. Could I find her. Get past the concierge? Then what? A small knife digging into my stomach. *Then what?*

I fell back into the chair and rested my head back. In a few moments my cheek was wet, and I wiped it away, and I was done. Moniz stood over me.

‘Doctor Hayes, you are fit to walk home? Shall I call you a car?’

I shook my head. ‘You need not worry about me any more.’

12

Faith was neither surprised nor impressed when, on a bluff January day in New York at the beginning of 1935, I hand-delivered my reply, ten months after she sent her letter to Paris. We sat at the dining table in our East Side apartment, although I'd spent perhaps a quarter of an hour just walking around, touching things, holding the mantelpiece, resting my head against the window that looks over the East River into Brooklyn. I'd not yet moved back in. That would come later. I lived for a few weeks in the New Yorker on Eighth Avenue, although its style, supposedly Art Deco, grated on my nerves, reminding me too much of Montparnasse and the cafés. I dined with Otto, who was beginning his new project, something he'd given the working title *Beyond Psychology*. But after those first few evenings I avoided him and instead put down on paper what I could, for Faith. Those ten months were a blank in our relationship that—while not fatal, thank God— I needed to explain.

Faith—

When I think back to the decisions I made last year they run through me like a newsreel where I have missed the titles and never reach the end. Pictures jump one to the next before I can make out the shapes. Great multitudes falling like bodies in the inferno, and over all of them the voice of a man, godlike and woeful in tone, the scene full of unknown faces and frightened eyes. It was as if I had been controlled by some other drive. Blind to what was happening. Blind to what I was doing. And yet powerless to stop. It was what we would both diagnose as a situational neurosis. The middle life crisis? The fear of finishing my book? Or my response to the new dynamics of practice? I know it doesn't really matter what the reasons were. What I took was wrong of me. I forced too many of my fantasies outward. Onto her. I failed to limit my impulses. Resistant to my own practice! And in this case I can say nothing about resistance being a good thing. Bringing touch into the

analysis is a two-way process, like all transferences. I see that now. If the patient happens to be a stronger character than the analyst, whose energy is focused on the character neurosis of the analysand, and not on his own behaviour... Supervision remains critical to avoid the spiral.

Nothing I wrote or said could explain it.

'I suppose my behaviour reminded me of that time at Louveciennes, when she threw herself and Henry's manuscript in the pool,' I wrote to Anaïs, hoping I could explain things to her first to help me work things out with Faith, the distance from Paris giving me some courage to raise issues.

'Is the plunge part of your practice now too, Ben?' Anaïs wrote back, half-joking, consoling but also not quite forgiving. *'Or have you put it aside?'* I'd told her everything, for better or worse. She would not trust me wholly again on professional matters, but it was not part of Anaïs' personality to abandon friendships. I was glad for that.

In February Faith let me back into our apartment, and back into the bedroom by the end of the month. It was a long time after that until we imagined adventures and alien abductions again. In April I set up my own clinical practice in a small, suitable office off West 72nd and Columbus. I'd not been able to return to the New York Psychoanalytic Society, of course. I joined instead the International Psychoanalytic Association, but kept myself at arm's length. My reputation and some kind referrals from old friends kept me busy and financially independent. Not Lillian. I referred her on to a friend. The publication of my book with W. Norton & Company gave my future career a direction. *The Artist and her Neurosis*. One that asked questions of intimacy in analysis, of responsibility and bodily feeling. My chapter on Maríne remains... well, it remains. Perhaps, and I allow myself only a momentary smile, *unpublishable*.

Then in July Anaïs sent me another letter. She had seen Maríne, close cropped hair not even in a bob, which scandalised a number of the men in attendance at the launch of a new literary revue, commanded by the surrealists André Breton and Georges Bataille, at a gallery on rue des Bernardins. Anaïs wrote in her letter,

'Maríne looked something of her old self. You know what I mean. Henry said her energy was antsy. While these writers were blowing their icy words

over me, I looked for warmth in her. I didn't find it, but that does not mean that she was devoid of all life. She was gliding around the room, needing distraction, not fully engaging, but still, I thought, having fun and finding some joy. I saw her with a man I didn't know, dark skinned, he reminded me of those Tahitian dancers I so loved and had them come to my house, their energy raw and flowering in dark, sensual Paris. I didn't get a good sleep that night—too much rum, too much talk of violence and war. Still I wake up too often... temperature, eating too late, spiky energy, and other extremes. I wanted to talk to Maríne, but in the end chose not to. Will you forgive me?

'She is not at the Obelisk. Did you know? I get this from Henry. If our books will be edited at all—Jack is uninterested in their finished quality—we will have to do that for ourselves. But then Henry and I have been doing this for each other for a long time now, perhaps we are the only editors who can stomach each other's work. Without poisoning each other, that is. I did not see her leave that night. I asked after her but no one seemed to know what she was doing. Perhaps that is for the best.'

She stayed at the Institute of Neurology for a month, well into that cold November. I visited each Monday and Thursday. I'd left the Necker by then, and was spending my days at the apartment, having almost run out of money, reaching the evening without knowing how I filled the hours and with my stomach grumbling for its mistreatment over those months. My replies to Faith piled up around me, and I began to live in a snow house, so white with scrunched up paper was the floor. I would sometimes have coffee or lunch with David Foret, the doctor who had attended to me when I collapsed on the marble floor of the Institute's reception, and who was overseeing her recovery.

'Why he rushed ahead without...' Foret said one afternoon as we sat in a small café on boulevard Saint-Michel, warming our hands around our cups. The walls were covered with black and white photographs. I was staring at one of a couple dancing, the woman's back to the camera, plainly dressed, looking over her shoulder. 'Why he acted without the angiograph, only your article...'

I smiled, drank my coffee. Each time I imagined the operation I had to close my eyes and hold together the parts of me that were splitting. The first time I was not sure it would pass. But it did. Foret grew used to me shaking for a few moments, spilling my coffee. He was a good man. He offered Moniz a carefully

plotted exit so as not to cause scandal. His return to Lisbon was blamed, as had been his exit from the Necker, on ill health, his gout.

‘I will take her home,’ I told him one day. ‘When you think she is ready.’

He watched me carefully. I hid my hands under the table too late. He shook his head.

She was conscious by then, she could even smile, and she asked for concrete things. The windows to be shut, flowers to be brought. On the first of December I stayed with her one last night. Near midnight she woke up, opened her eyes. I searched those eyes for such a long time. Foret could give me no guidance. Who could? Even though he had been halted during the procedure, even though only one incision had been made. Nothing like it had ever been done before. No one could know what was still intact.

My last memory of Maríne was sitting over her in the dark, watching her lips begin to part, feeling as if the entire world was also tearing apart. She said something but I couldn’t hear it. What we were to do together, to feel, had been done, felt. I held her hand once or twice, when she was asleep, but that was all. She tried to speak again, to tell me something.

‘Again, Maríne,’ I asked her, leaning in. I had my eyes closed, waiting. I leant in closer, let her breathe into my ear. I listened. And then I heard her.

Anaïs told me in her next letter, six months later, as reported in *Le Figaro*, that on November 12th 1935, Professor Egas Moniz performed the first successful leucotomy at a hospital in Lisbon. Over the next six weeks he performed eleven more. The first seven operations were performed with alcohol. It was only with the eighth that the procedure turned to the leucotome. His eleven patients were all long-term neurotics at various hospitals and clinics around Lisbon and Coimbra. They suffered from a range of disorders; of the eleven, those with affective neuroses gave Moniz the best results, he claimed, rather than those who suffered psychotic conditions. In fact, according to the medical journals I sought out, all seven of the patients with affective disorders were considered cured. However, one reviewer noted, in the seven cured cases, follow-up observation ended after eleven days. What happened after that? And what of the other four? I found one mention: an elderly man had lost his sense of money and time. And of another, ‘she still cried,’ Moniz was quoted as saying, ‘but with less of the previous

intensity.’ On March 3rd 1936 he returned to Paris to present his results to the board of the Necker and other invited professors. Because of its similarity to coring an apple, the invasive part of the procedure was called the core operation—I flinched with something more violent than shame at that. I searched the *Bulletin de l’Académie nationale de Médecine* and other journals but never found the name of Maríne Cizeau associated with his work. I had no desire to change that.

‘I was always dominated by the desire to accomplish something new in the scientific world,’ Moniz wrote in the forward to his monograph, published just a few months later. I acquired a copy through the Library of America. ‘Persistence, which depends more on willpower than intelligence, can overcome difficulties which seem at first unconquerable.’

With the results of the first twenty cases presented, the leucotomy is being performed in over half a dozen countries, including here in America. Its popularity grows by the month. Of course the Americans need their stamp on it. Here it is called the lobotomy, championed by a man called Freeman, as egotistic and pompous as Moniz ever was. The procedure has inspired hundreds of surgeons around the world, although many still oppose it. The Spanish neurologist Ramón y Cajal, whom I remember Moniz referenced in his papers as providing evidence to support the leucotomy, in an article in the *International Tribune* criticised the procedure and drew different conclusions from the eleven operations. And now the story fades from the newspapers, and is replaced by news of German aggression and the Nuremburg laws. And I think of what is perhaps being done already elsewhere, in institutions in Berlin and the Black Forest, and close my eyes.

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