

Stigmata
Escaping texts

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She comes to get me so I will open the French doors of her church for her. I open, I who do not believe, I open for her who believes, for I bow down before faith.

She goes toward the lattice. What has come one time just might come a second time. All the faith that's not in me is in her. Holy little mistress of humility.

Penitent, I follow Thea on to the balcony, my head bowed: another human sin.

It's evening.

Now I am very tired, many tears have flowed under the bridge of time. I would like to write down that terrible thing that came to pass among us this morning, a shipwreck in my head, lumps of paving stone rattling around in my head, but I see that almost everything that we went through has been carried away by time. What came to pass has gone away, I've forgotten it all.

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12 Stigmata, or Job the dog

Translated by Eric Prenowitz

It all begins with a *Felix Culpa*. A happy fault, a blessed wound. Blessèd. This is what St Augustine tells us in his *Confessions*. The remarkable fortunes of this thematics of the wound are well known in the work of the other Augustine, James Joyce, but maybe less perceptible or explicit in other notable texts. In Proust it is buried, one must exhume it. For Genet the wound is the founding secret of all major creation.

You will remember that I said, above, that my dearest friends took refuge, I was sure of it, wholly in a secret wound. Now I wrote soon after '... in a very secret domain, perhaps irreducible ...' [...]

It is possible that his immense grief – the death of Saskia – turned Rembrandt away from all the daily joys and that he filled his mourning with the metamorphosis of gold chains, feathered hats, swords, into values, or rather, into pictorial feasts. I do not know if he cried, [...] but toward '42 he will experience his baptism of fire, and bit by bit it will transform itself, his prime nature, vain and bold. [...]

From the death of Saskia on – I wonder if he didn't kill her, in one manner or another, if he didn't rejoice in her death – at last his eye and his hand are free. From this moment on he undertakes a sort of licentiousness in painting: Saskia dead, the world and social judgements have little weight. One must imagine it, Saskia dying and he in his studio, perched on ladders, dislocating the order of *The Night Watch*. [...]

It goes without saying that all I have just said only has a bit of importance if one accepts that it was all pretty much false. The work of art, if it is finished, does not permit, based on itself, insights, intellectual games. It even seems to muddle intelligence, or bind it hand and foot. [. . .]

And it goes without saying that all the oeuvre of Rembrandt only makes sense – at least for me – if I know that what I have just written was false.¹

I was young and inexperienced the first time I saw this theme appear as I was working on Joyce, it struck me as foreign, very 'Catholic' or very masculine. It recently emerged in some of Derrida's latest works. As it became visible in 'Circonfession', it wasn't Catholic. This text is about circumcision, a wound inflicted on someone who is not present at the scene of his own mutilation. With Derrida the wound is concrete, it is a violent event that took place in reality; Joyce's story of the rape of Shakespeare by his own wife, is a more or less distant metaphor.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* can be read as a portrait of the artist as an old dog:

Belief in himself has been untimely killed. He was overborne in a cornfield first (ryefield, I should say) and he will never be a victor in his own eyes after nor play victoriously the game of laugh and lie down. [. . .] The tusk of the boar has wounded him there where love lies ableeding. [. . .] There is, I feel in the words, some goad of the flesh driving him into a new passion, a darker shadow of the first, darkening even his own understanding of himself. [. . .]

– The soul has been before stricken mortally, a poison poured in the porch of a sleeping ear. [. . .] Ravisher and ravished, what he would but would not, go with him from Lucrece's bluecircled ivory globes to Imogen's breast, bare, with its mole cinquespotted. He goes back, weary of the creation he has piled up to hide him from himself, an old dog licking an old sore. [. . .]

– You are a delusion, said roundly John Eglington to Stephen. [. . .] Do you believe your own theory?

– No, Stephen said promptly.²

Is the fertile wound, I wondered, part of the masculine phantasmal makeup? and is there anything analogous in women's texts? What about my own relation to the inscription on the body of psychomythical events? I wrote a text called *Stigmata*, or *Job the dog*. Or else *The Origin of my Philosophy*. Or else *First Symptoms of Writing*. Or *The Opening of the Mouth*.

It is an autobiographical narrative, which does not mean very much, because an autobiographical narrative is at the same time a creation.

The scene is Algeria where I was born and where I lived as a child, in a neighborhood in the city of Algiers which had a glorious name: the 'Clos Salembier.' The tale must be understood in a socio-political context. The neighborhoods of Algiers often had 'Arab' names, some famous, like Babeloued. It happens that this neighborhood with such a French name, Clos Salembier, was located on the heights overlooking Algiers and that it was 'Arab.' (*Arab* is what one said at the time, though it was in no way the appropriate word, no one said Algerian, but rather Arab without any distinction. The Arabs. The word Arab belonged to French colonization.) In this neighborhood 50,000 people lived in slums, in the most abject misery. The slums were one hundred meters from our house. My father was a physician, a politically conscious 'humanitarian,' and a poor man; for all these reasons he chose a house and a life not in one of the 'French' neighborhoods (that is also colonial vocabulary) of Algiers, but in this destitute neighborhood. We had hardly moved there, after the war, when my father died; whereupon my tale begins. It was as if our house was at the joint, at the articulation of Algeria. Down the hill you would go into the city and enter the French world, while up here the future Algeria was smoldering. We lived at an utterly unworkable junction. For the Arabs, and in spite of my family's commitment to the Arabs' cause, we were French. This was an absolute misreading: on the one hand we had only just re-become French: indeed as Jews during the war we were thrown out of French nationality, we became nothing. Besides, although French since 1867, my family was originally Spanish on my father's side, and German on my mother's side. But the history of nationalities had made us in turn French, de-French and re-French, and we were Jewish. Yet we did not identify with any nationality. For the Arabs this jewfrenchness was a double original sin. So long as my father was alive, because he was a doctor, we lived in peace, we were tolerated by the world of misery. As soon as he died, the depths of the rage surfaced.

This story ends as a tragedy. We were doomed by disjunctions and anachronisms, as if the partners who should have been partners in love were constantly separated by a chronological discrepancy. There was not enough time. (If there had been time between the Arabs and ourselves, which is what is happening now, the two destinal durations would have found themselves in concordance at a certain moment.) Discord orders the tale of Job the Dog. There was no time.

At present when I return to the age of the Clos Salembier, to which I have not come back for forty years and I will never come back, where conserved in the blue amber air of the immemorial past, the house awaits me in the garden where still each year rows of flowers and vegetables that my father had planted grow, of all the animated beings that pursue their immortal life in the enclosed dwelling of my childhood, the one that remains the most alive, the most intensely vibratile, powerful, agitated, the one that also takes the most space in the garden that contains my meticulous memory, yes, I see the one that is incomparably the biggest, an effect of perspective naturally, the one that comes before me like an arrow, when having made the corner of the boulevard Laurent-Pichat at the pace of a dream I devour the dozen meters that lead to the portal, the portal with rusted bars from the first day, the one that awaits me the first and that I find standing at the entrance and immediately everywhere, is neither the phantom of my German-grandmother who stays in the back-ground, nor any of the inhabitants, who were nonetheless strong, of that era kept like an ancient century, all are there but a bit faded by the light of the times, a bit slowed in the immobile air of memory,

the only one of the strong animated beings that still inhabit Bd. Laurent-Pichat, and among whom I am myself, the only one that is not affected and weakened by the great distances is Fips the dog. The most miserable of the gods and the most divine of the miserable.

To see him burst forth yelping like the spirit of survival, not like one of the slightly effaced phantoms that we ourselves are, but like a unique case of triumph of life over all the conditions and customs of gradual lessening of the things that were, I marvel, my heart is loaded with a bitter joy and with shame, and I admire this dog, with the humility that in the past I was never able to feel, because a sacred terror prevented me. I admit, Fips you are unforgettable, you have attained the rank that was always denied you while you lived, you are the most living of the departed. The manifestation of Fips is the proof that there is no universal or absolute law of effacement. At this very moment he is piercing the frail but solid cloud that separates our now from before, and I see him as if I saw him right here in reality, as if he saw me, as he looks at me, cast up more than standing, violently addressed, as if he could throw his eyes at my eyes, in the superhuman effort that thrust him almost to the point of killing him, well beyond his dog's border. Just revenge, I say to myself, just reward. Fips, you wanted so much to cross, all your forms outstretched every day to try to pass through, to shatter the walls, you wanted to break the prisons, lacerate the skins, your soul called for deliverance, never have I seen a being in such furious rebellion against the ancient fates that fix our bounds right from birth, the polices, the

stupidity, *les bêtises* that have debasing powers over every creature who goes beyond. The eyes almost torn from their orbits, the soul darted as an arrow, the entire being in a flash, the ultimate groan with naked teeth, the nose soft imploring, he stands up to the attacking worlds.

Behold a being that would not be tamed living and dead for a very long time he resists every attempt of nothingness.

Today when I return home to 54 Bd. Laurent-Pichat, the one who comes out to meet me, the one who calls just as I turn the corner, fawn-threats on me, the one who reminds me of myself and who turns out to be the character the most secretly necessary and marking of the flesh of my soul, I see him, it is he. I am the result of his visit. Indelible are the traces of his cruel stay in my flesh and my soul. It is to him that I owe my scars. He is the innocent author of the signatures that inaugurated my book on my feet and my hands.

I have his teeth and his rage, painted on my left foot and on my hands, I never think about it, because the little mute lips of the wounds have traveled, what remains of them on my feet and my hands is only an insensible embossment, the marks of the cries are lodged on the sensitive very sensitive membranes of my brain. I have that dog in my skull, like an unrecognizable twin.

You who know my bursts of rage, the sudden moments when the door of my calm opens to give way to a very ancient furor, you do not know that then I am Fips, I leap out of myself called by his gallop that hoped to pass in a prodigious bound over the spikes of the portal, barking I follow his hope I am his extravagance, he invented invisible wings for himself; it was miracle to see him fly over the obstacle, belying the envelope that made him small and dog. But as for me when without thinking I wanted to escape I failed, I fell back on to the spiked portal and I impaled my obstinately human thigh. He was god and I was realistic.

All that I manage to think today, the awful complexities that make love twisted bloody and criminal up to the belated hour of softness, I learned from him without knowing that I was and would be his disciple while we lived tempestuously together;

At the time, the suffering that came to us from the suffering that we inflicted on ourselves each one by the other was so great that in the great obscure silence into which one descends to dream of evil, in our last times I was able to desire that he should die. But I could not say it to myself. But I remember having felt the obscure and impossible desire-without-words. And this desire opened other very nasty wounds behind my heart.

We never had the joys, only the hope of joys always haunted us and united us to deceive us.

At the bottom of the bottom of all my ignorances, I must have had a prescience inaccessible to myself, that this mydog was something else, that he *was*, much more than I, and that I do not know what a dog is nor what being a dog is.

Essential, urgent, that he was, expectantly desperately unexpectedly. A dog guards the entrance. If he barks so loud it's so you won't see he's the lamb. Sir Lamb barks in vain. But we begrudge him for having instituted the reign of love that costs us so dearly. Because as a lamb the dog is born to give his life for us. Which entails that in return we be ready to give our life for him. But we did not want to give our life to the dog. We wanted the ideal dog, the all powerful, the assistance, the idea of dog in the heavens. This is how his misfortune began even-before he appeared preceded by our desire. As for me, I am ready to give my life for my cat but it was necessary that Fips should first have given his life for me.

For our inevitable misfortune, I the child-of-man, I considered him in the beginning as a dog of man, and *bêtement* ineluctably like every child-of-man I spoke to him as we do inadvertently with foreign visitors up to the day I stopped addressing him forever.

He was the hero of misfortunes and contretemps.

On the one hand he came too early: we the children were not ready, we were far from having the animal height and even from imagining that it existed, which is the trait of human immaturity. It is only for having gone through his resurrection which took place dozens of years after his death, that I made the unexpected discovery of those heights so near and so denied. And even his resurrection I nearly missed it, because it took place so accidentally, it could have not taken place, and it was accomplished in an oblique form, as if in order to happen it was obliged to deceive my old vigilances, take the most cunning detour. For dozens of years his death was well guarded. Mixed with the past earth to which we will never return, his rot buried in the flower bed to the right on entering where there were dahlias with voluminous red nudes, we had left him behind us, abandoned soul representing thoughts we would never again come to visit. Not forgotten, but seized by a manner of fatal repudiation. The guilty feeling we keep closed in a cage concerning beings of our own blood who, their body closed in the tomb, cannot follow us on our distant exportations – and so as to snuff out the flame, we murmur quickly that they cannot feel it since they are dead and we feign to believe that we believe in the extinction of the dead and we feign to be convinced materialists, an elevated but unsteady lie that is, and we live all our life – with those dead that we have not been able to avoid condemning; under the red earth they voice soft mews so light that we do not hear them.

Thus my father and Fips, their death kept very far behind me.

Admittedly my father found in me the force to cross stone and earth and to return several times a year to see me in dream as an attached parent and we never spoke of that bad thing, i.e. his completely deserted funerary residence, we said nothing about it, I infringe, with his consent I hope, the silent laws of the family, I do not go to see my father, it is he who comes. But Fips never. I never even persuaded myself that Fips had any mortal remains. I assigned him the terrible role of holocaust. So it was, and in the notebooks where I consigned the surprises, almost all cruel, that life reserves for us as it unfolds, I noted down the case of F next to that of Michael Kohlhaas: in life things are so tortuous, it can happen that the most innocent of beings finishes as a quartered criminal and we can do nothing about it; and it can happen that we betray father and son compulsorily.

And suddenly, the resurrection. Of which I had never thought. It happened one morning, and it had the features of a cat. Consequently I did not pay attention, at first. Two years, my dreams had to repeat the same message for two years for me to finally wake up from my deafness after so many absent-minded years and for me all of a sudden to hear my former and first animal yapping. My cat came from my dog, which explains the singular power of my cat over my heart, an absolute power that makes of this young and childish beast my daily prophet, like the small subjectile creature in which the Tibetan oracle recognizes the successive reincarnation of the Buddha. And that is why my cat still barely larger than a mouse reigned already. A minuscule imperceptible never-awaited messiah who would have thought?

We who had always waited in vain for a third child my brother and I were transported with fervor when, the world-war over, my father announced the impending arrival of a babydog. This is how he completed the era of regrowing and blossoming: my father needed to plant trees with his hands, a supreme attempt to hold life back by the roots. After the plantation came the hour of the garden's inhabitants. And it was a dog. During the wait which was long we kept busy. The cradle occupied all our thoughts. We chose a shoe box. For the mattress we sewed two small pieces of cloth, which we then filled with bougainvillea petals. This filled us with excited satisfactions. We could already see the little one sleeping beneath our zealous eyes, answering all our wishes. None of the cradles of the children we engendered later on ever filled us in its emptiness with such pressing emotions. Crouched before the box we brooded.

The sex did not interest us. What we wanted was the child.

Fips did not let himself be laid in the bed of all our cares. We fought for several hours or several days. We caught the little one we laid him

out, we flattened him, we ironed him, we held him in place while we covered him with the sheet, and immediately in a start he overcame the box. Our advances were not understood and we did not understand that they were not understood. This caused tension. Not for a minute did he sleep under our tender eyes. The dethroned cradle. We lost our sublime parents' heads. Fallen from the window of a high dream, we looked like dolls broken on the rock. And no one had warned us of the danger. The donkey and the ox chased off with a blow of his paw.

So it was a dog. Yet on the other side, us. So he was not born to us, and he did not even conceive of our bond. There was not even a rupture. We were sent off to a distant planet of penitence, we who had already loved him so much even before his birth. And he had no idea of what he inspired in us. The twinge of loss of this thing we had never had and for which there was no consolation. We were very small and we were the place of inordinately large feelings. We suffered enormously, but from what. Those feelings in fusion that no name comes yet to contain – it is an inundation. We unloved him a bit and we did not approve of this retreat, we found ourselves less beautiful, less radiant, he careless leaping, he was a little piece of furry light, but there was cloudiness in us, a closed gate, a bit of sediment. And this decrease in clarity, our fault. Our fault weighed heavy. It must have weighed a kilogram, we felt its inert and inaccessible body lying like a stone on our heart. And it was his fault. But since he suspected nothing it was even worse our fault. The poison we secrete on the occasion of the innocence of a being who has done nothing to us – we lay it to his face. In spite of ourselves and without our knowing we were becoming a little bit mean.

(And now I understand that all we did not understand was not taken from us but on the contrary entrusted to us to keep in the shelter of a non-understanding that conserved future treasures frozen until our spiritual coming of age. All that remained painful closed, foreign, is in truth our dowry. A lode of torments, we think, mistaken. There comes the day when these sleeping clots wake into revelations.)

The dog was there and it wasn't right. I wanted him to love me like *this* and not like that. (I would have liked him to obey me like a dog. But if they had told me I wanted a slave I would have responded indignantly that I only wanted the pure ideal dog I had heard of.) He loved me as an animal and far from my ideal. It was a creature of small size intoxicated with life and in that way much larger than itself. And who would never have been able to squeeze into a box.

It was my father who was his father without images and without ideas. He cared for his health. It was a natural obligation and my father the doctor fulfilled it in a movement that he performed equally for all his

fellow creatures. He put drops in his eyes. Of Fips and my father, in their contact, there was born a point of resemblance. Both were carried inwardly by the breath of a song. Fips was happy to be. They both had those feverish eyes.

Suddenly our father died, I did not think then what this must have meant for the dog.

The family that rose trembling from the ruins of the deceased family was entirely different. Commanded by my German Jewish mother commanded by my German Jewish grandmother. I did not think about it. By an ancient unwritten but all the more solid tradition it was understood in the maternal generations that to have feelings for an animal 'is not recommended.' The maternal millennia naturally treated animals like mere animals. The interpretation of the tradition went without commentary because it was confused in the distance with the white sun of the evident. A dog is fed. Dogfood. Feddog. Instantly our dog withered but the tradition did not see it.

It was then that from outside the garden the hunt was unleashed against us. Our Arab neighbors encircled us in a daily siege.

So the hunt was unleashed. The acrid war that had been held back until then in the face of my father the doctor swoops down on the family. We live besieged as diminutive soldiers inwardly undermined by a just and bitter sympathy for our Arab assailants. We defend ourselves like inhabitants who are forbidden by everything to attack the enemy. They called my father 'my brother.' Dead with him was this privilege, this love. Now we were Jews. Now we were French. Now we were Jewfrench, the worst in their eyes. Now we were insulted and I often bit the dust mad with rage. At least *we* did battle. My brother and I. But the dog was hostage. And we did not let him fight. It would have been a carnage. It was a tragedy.

Here begins the agony. How remote the time when implacable-I wanted him enclosed with love in his box and I begrudged him for not giving me any of his freedom. At present he suffered our enclosed fate. Ten times a day there rained on the family a hail of stones. In no time, the volleys that wounded our spirit made Fips into a mad dog. By a horrible turn of wars, he was punished because of the misfortune he suffered to be us. He did not have the time to come back to himself between two offensives the froth never dried, besides it was for us the besieged together that he groaned, I too foamed and he ran for me howling toward the gate where the rose rosebushes and the hostile packs climbed. The dog began to suffer in me from these lapidations. It was

the dog in me that suffered. If only they had shot at us with bullets. But the choice of the assassination, they threw stones at us and we were three severely wounded beings who ran bristling in the garden transformed by the assault into obligatory box. The sun of war rose and set in the garden. Ancient and hoarse tribe. The dog no longer slept skin taut fur sticky throat full of knots one morning he had an effusion of hate eyes drowned in the black juice brain inundated by the flood that unhinges, life became nocturnal and nightmare the sun is for nothing, and the postman who opened the portal was the messenger of the apocalypse. Like one in ecstasies who throws himself into the furnace Fips enthused with terror fell on the postman his teeth in flames and the error was fateful.

We put the dog on a leash and tied the leash to a wire and the wire to an iron post so he would not kill, we ourselves chained up our own incarnation, we ourselves put my father's heir in irons.

Fips descended into hell like those that a just cause led to blood. There is no more law. We beat the innocent. I am so alone thought the one in chains. And the only one to be repelled on both sides. No doubt he understood the enemy better than the friend. This world is upside down and the dog is betrayed. I should have spoken to him, I should have, if I had been able to understand him but I thought him perhaps incapable of understanding for I was not then capable of understanding the profound animal humanity, if I had not said to myself as we precipitately lie to ourselves, that a dog does not understand our bad complications and that he is a dog. I stopped thinking. I stopped feeling. After all I could not take on to my back this chained-up cross that waited for me in the garden, his feverish eyes that searched for my fleeing eyes as soon as I set foot on the earth of the garden. I did not speak to him. Am I Jewish? he thought. But what does that mean Jewish, he suffered from not knowing. And me neither. And I did not make light in his obscurity, I did not murmur to him the words that all animals understand.

But the obligation to love the prisoner has the taste of bitter herbs, it was Easter and we were in the square desert, forbidden not to love the prisoner, I loved Fips by force, according to the laws of captivity. But it was a love on this side of breath, never did I exclaim: my love. I did not tell him that injustice hate cruelty had all the rights and that the wars devoured the living by breaking their bones and their souls interminably, only until the day when all of a sudden it stopped, I did not tell him that to live was to survive in chains until the day you know not why they fall, and if you are still living. I did not tell him that the massacres exhaust themselves. He knew only horror without hope. I did not put drops in

his eyes. Moreover he had ticks. I did not speak to him, I forgot to speak to him. Moreover we were all in the process of becoming mean dogs each one for the others, as it happens when the war raging outside begins to gnaw at the hearts to better propagate itself inside. Then one bites one's brother and one bites oneself. Oneself the barbed proboscis attached to the warmblooded vertebrates. The excitation of fear, rancor, acid indignation up to the smooth foliage of the banana trees. The great baleful glass of persecution: all is deformed. We were fuming. Our movements brusque, our ears pulled back in waiting.

Someone rang. I was twelve. I was way in the back of a book reading. The bell of the portal was it the knell, no one hears it, no one hears anyone any more in this house, it is always I who must open. I emerged from my cave and I brought my dreamy foot down on the ground before the kitchen.

As it is told that at the corner of a street a Mercedes rolling heavy and mad cuts down with an enormous and heavy scythe the unfortunate passing woman nose to nose with death that she had not seen coming, what I had not foreseen happened. I did not see my dog coming. I did not see my dog see me jump wild-eyed with feet together on the bruised ground. I did not see my dog see me come on to his tumefied body with the brutal stroke of the alien executioner. No doubt I drove him mad. It seemed to him that it was hate. It seemed to him that now I too. And that there was no crime nor any betrayal that his own family was foreign to. In his extreme abandonment. And you too. Et tu quoque. It seemed to him that I was not his sister and I was his assassin. And in a great hoarse shiver as if he were breathing his last he leapt on the foot that I lifted close to him. It seemed to me that from that bite I would die because it no longer released me, it sank in, it was penetrating it planted all its teeth in my heart.

The teeth lingered. We entered sobbleeding the mad eternity. The dog could let me go no more. Hideous attachment, an ecstasy held us him-to-me under the yoke. We moved no more harnessed to pain, aghast. The Earth turned over.

What could have separated us?

From the laundry basin boiling in the courtyard Aïcha took a sheet that she twisted into a hard damp cord and fell full force on the back of the beast, her arms so round, very strong, she brings the flail down ten times on the backbone.

The washerwoman cried to the sky climbed the incense mixed with cries tears groans. Where was I, in a gaping elsewhere, expelled from myself and held back by the fangs. No hate sadder than that of furious

love. I understood that there is no worse enemy than the small brother enemy, I cannot want to kill you who are my own raving twin, the bearer of bitterness.

At the thirteenth stroke the muzzle cracked, I removed my frightening foot from the jaws. I saw the meat we are. We came out of the mortal spasms broken lame and delirious. Unrecognizable.

Because it could not be me. Because it could not be him.

As always in these apocalyptic moments, the sky was extremely blue. The geraniums brightly red.

We let out sacred howls: supernatural terror on both sides.

When at last we were separated the one from the other, it was too late. The root had been reached. On the inside of my brain the very slight bleeding of a small lack of forgetting, a minuscule wound would not close its eyes. The five scars on my foot like a clumsy star had closed. I even saw it as an ornament. But in the depths of my thoughts in the shadow and the silence, with the secret heart of an evildoer I hid myself and I said to him: no. It was a no so sad and so secret, it was shameful and never did I avow it. There was nothing to be proud of. It was laziness. It was not vengeance. It was a lack of strength. I should have taken Fips in my arms and rocked the innocent. Why I did not do it. And I will never have children I thought. Until suddenly later I wanted just the opposite.

Subsequently I knew the lowest form of family life with him: silence under the same roof. The poison is not hate it is weak love. We were poisoned. I poisoned him. My good will did not turn itself toward him. I passed before him with at my sides the high severe silhouettes that guarded me at my right Terror at my left Pity. Between us the days were nights with separate bedrooms. We acted as if there were two moons. But he had ticks big as chickpeas. This gave him saintliness.

Job was that dog I am sure. The scourges were sent to him, god was well hidden, the father dead, the house ruined and now the plagues and the ulcers. And without being conscious of it I did not love the leper like myself. With terror I tore off the monsters that devoured him and not with joy. The suffering of the beast made me suffer for myself. I did not stretch out my hands to bless the tortured victim. I was not his knight at arms, he hurt me on the wrong side and I did not rush into the flames to save my child my dog which today I do, I was powerless to do it I felt the bitter pain of those who are denied the all-powerful saint-hood of love. I was the non-keeper of my dog, I crossed the garden suppurating, trying to go by the body eaten with ulcers and grief without stopping.

They ate him alive, those blood drinking inventions created to kill a

victim entirely lacking in possibilities to escape them, those proofs of the existence of the devil soft vampires that laugh at the dog's lack of hands, they suckle it to death, Fips feels his life flow into their tribe of stomachs and without the chance of a combat. The agonizer perished living. I succumbed myself amongst them. It was every day as a pulling of teeth swollen with the mush of his blood. A nightmare demography, the same night I saw them reproduce themselves they were on the bars of the gates, on the door frames they were born from everywhere and out of nowhere and they descended in slow frenzies to sit on his ears on his neck on his flanks and they introduced their jaws of stomachs into the necrosed purple of his veins.

All the DDT in the world for nothing, the muzzle full of powder and the blood on top of it all. I succumbed myself beneath the purplish thoughts and I did not save him.

It was the end. I received the dispatch: we were condemned. All constructions destroyed, works suppressed, research burned. The bad news kept coming; the expiration was announced.

We were on the bridge of the boat, the enemy's breath blew at our back. We barely escaped, when at the moment of landing I saw Fips before my eyes disarticulated, it was a dislocated spine, between the open legs the soft and white stomach stretched the body in a cross, the tender fright seized me, I saw the danger, an inexpert hand could break my beast. What had to be found in the foreign land was the being called veterinarian. Quick, I cried to my brother, get on the motorcycle, I straddled the machine, there was only the handlebar, the motor had stayed behind on the bridge. Between my arms the animal as between life and death I cried: the motorcycle! go look for the motorcycle but I did not believe it. Surely they robbed us up there, and I did not know where to go to prevent death from arriving. I dreamt this dream and it remained without end.

I did not accompany him. A foul fear of seeing the one I did not love strong enough die, and as I would not give my life for him I could no longer share his death.

When at last what was left of him departed watched over by my brother I was not there. Moreover never, by chance or will, was I present at the departure neither of my father nor of my son nor of my grandmother nor of any being of my flesh. The mouths sewn shut on my foot.

And even so I loved Fips but not then, not there in the garden of war, not yet, but later.

Notes

- 1 Jean Genet, 'Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt . . .,' *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard), pp. 24–8.
- 2 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Bodley Head, 1960 [1934]), pp. 251–74.

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