

Correspondences

I'm looking but do I see? I'm leafing through a special issue of a magazine dedicated to Maurice Pialat's film work. Above a portrait of the filmmaker who is already old, his hair and beard turned quite white by now, his right elbow resting on the top of a table beneath which his other hand disappears, a citation highlighted in yellow is printed in large letters, 72 pts at least (his age?). It is taken from the first volume of his *Cahiers intimes*, a diary of sorts that Pialat kept at the beginning of the nineties in a series of school notebooks. They contain notes on his projects, recollections, impressions, and some general thoughts, often bitter, about the disastrous times he is living in. Notwithstanding the anger and the flow of words that seem to gush out at the speed of thought, his handwriting remains clear, steady, perfectly legible; the letters are written on the slanted pattern required in the days when school desks were equipped with an ink-pot hole in the upper right hand corner. The sequence of seven *Cahiers* is today bound in grey cloth. On the back, embossed in plain gold leaf letters on black, are the following matter-of-fact indications: "CAHIERS 1, 2, 3, 4," plus a date affixed to the last three, "CAHIER 5, 1990," "CAHIER 6, 1995," "CAHIER 7, 1996." The magazine presents a selection of passages, mainly bearing on the preparation of his film *Van Gogh* (1991). Pialat relates snippets of his biography, passes back through slices of past experience in the present as they rise to the surface of his consciousness. In the throbbing movement of the writing, experienced as an intoxicating event, an attempt, if not a temptation emerges ever more distinctly, that of an immersion into Van Gogh the subject. The filmmaker projects himself into the painter and ends up speaking in his place. It is as if we were witnessing a metamorphosis, possession or transference taking place. In the portrait that closes this issue devoted to one of the seminal filmmakers of the 1970s and 1980s, Pialat is shown holding a tiny camera in front of his right eye. His left eye is not shut. It is reduced under the lowered lid to a sliver, a black gleam, meant to give greater acuity to his sight, more steadiness to his shot. "SEEING is the source of art and truth," reads the citation on the upper left.

I'm looking but I'm not sure how well I see. In one of the 19 photographs that Ana Torfs presented at her "à...à...aaah!" exhibition held in "Het Kabinet" gallery in Ghent, a man is seen in three-quarters profile sitting on a chair, his back to the camera. He is holding a glass of champagne in his left hand. Instead of bringing it to his lips, he raises it away from his body in mid air, where it stands out sharply against a rectangle of light cast diagonally on the rear wall by the slide carousel in the left foreground. The photograph bears a title: *Toast*. This then is what the man in the photograph is doing. But whom or what is he toasting? A word is written on the white surface whose shape and size immediately bring to mind those of a screen: "Truth." If I had to choose a single picture in Ana Torfs body of work that most accurately conveys its unswerving course, it would probably be this one. It's all there: the picture, the word, the title, the film screen, and the search for truth, but with no naivety and nearly without hope, for the man is seen from behind and truth is a word projected onto a wall – might as well say a pipe dream.

In a text written about the exhibition, I introduced the opening line of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the incipit of the *Inferno*, "*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita* (Midway in our life's journey)" which I will pursue here by adding the verse that follows and that gives it all its meaning: "*Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ch  la diritta via era smarrita* (I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood)." The journey or vision related in the book that begins with these words is experienced in the name of humanity. But by an internal grammatical shift the "our" directly swings to the "I" of individual experience. For modern individuals, the world and our own lives have become a "dark wood." We have gone astray from the straight road. The feeling of having been cast onto the rough surface of the world without a leg to stand on, leaden sky above our heads weighing down all the more heavily upon us precisely because it is empty, was given to a young prostitute to express for the first time in literature with immense and cutting delicacy. It's a breach. Nothing will be the same thereafter. A different language will arise, tottering and sublime, fragmented, sputtering its scrapings. But for the time being, we are still in a bedroom. Danton, the hero of the play, is there and by his side is Marion, a grisette. She is the one who is talking: "Then the spring came; something was happening all round me, and I had no part in it. I got into an odd state. I felt... stifled, almost. I looked at my own limbs. Sometimes I felt as if I were two separate people, then the two melted into one again. About that time a young fellow used to come to our house. A good-looking lad; he used to say silly things about me. I didn't rightly know what he meant but I had to laugh. My mother invited him quite often. That suited us both very well. We were allowed to sit together. Finally we thought: why not swop our chairs

for a pair of sheets? I enjoyed that more than listening to his chat. We did it on the sly, but I didn't see why I should be allowed the small pleasure and denied the big one. And so it went on. But I was a sea, and the depths of me had been stirred; I swallowed up everything. For me every partner was the same; all men merged into a single body. Well, it's the way God made me; nobody can get out of that. In the end the boy noticed. One morning he came and kissed me as if he were going to throttle me. He wound his arms round my neck; I was petrified. Then he let me go and laughed and said he had almost done something stupid. He said, 'Keep your poor rags of flesh; they're all you've got. Put them to work. They'll soon wear out anyway.' He said he wouldn't spoil my fun prematurely. Then he went away. I didn't know what he meant. That evening I was sitting at my window; I was just sort of floating away on the waves of the sunset [...] Then a crowd came down the street, with children running in front and women gaping out of windows. I looked down and it was him. They carried him past in a laundry basket. The moon shone on his pale forehead, and his hair was wet. He had drowned himself. I couldn't help crying. That was the one big gap in my life. Other people have Sundays and weekdays, they work six days, and they pray on the seventh. Every year they look forward to their birthday, and to the New Year, and they feel sentimental. I don't understand all that. I know nothing about divisions or changes. I'm all of a piece, just one big longing and clinging. I'm a fire, a river." Georg Büchner wrote his historical play, *Danton's Death*, in a period of five weeks in 1835, while working on anatomy for his medical studies. He died in 1837 at the age of twenty-four. What Marion lost when she went astray in the dark wood was childhood, full and buried, a state of accomplished perception of the world and the self, an attentiveness that artists are continually seeking over and over again. The dark wood is a forest of signs, often impenetrable. And deciphering is the very gist of Ana Torfs approach and work.

"I don't understand all that," says Marion, uttering a principle of universal uncertainty. The world is opaque, filled with holes, undulating and multifarious. So are people. So are faces. No matter how closely you examine and probe them, something always eludes you. In *Zyklus von Kleinigkeiten* (Cycle of Trifles, 1998), it's Beethoven's face and his voice, even though the "conversation books" he began using in 1818 when his deafness had worsened show that he continued to respond verbally to visitors when they wrote down their questions, flattering comments, concerns or gastronomic remarks on his small notebooks. In *Du Mentir-faux* (About Lying Falsehood, 2000), it's the answers of Joan of Arc, harassed by the cunning reasoning of the religious authorities who interrogate and condemn her (simply picturing their

grotesque faces in Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 *The Passion of Joan of Arc* is enough to trigger terror and trembling). In *Elective Affinities /The Truth of Masks & Tables of Affinities* (2002), it may be the very substance of History, expressed in the unending catalogue of misfortunes that all human beings endure under History's iron rule: the ones it torments and humiliates, flings onto the road to wander from country to country, across oceans and continents; the ones it catches up with and kills; the ones it slaughters, exterminates and buries by bulldozer. All the questioning, the calling and the searching revolve aimlessly around an absent and meaningless core: truth is but a word projected onto a wall, an illusion traced by finger on the fogged-up surface of a mirror, which a single breath can erase. The only thing left that matters then is the storytelling, the "narration" to borrow the term Ana Torfs uses in the title of one of her photographs: *La Narration (une histoire extraordinaire)* (2000). In it, we see an assembly of five women and a child grouped around a book that one of the women (who looks exactly in her middle-age, *nel mezzo del cammin di sua vita*) is reading to her "sisters." Those who aspire to reach this hidden point, those who undertake what Kafka called "a journey to truth," those who still want to be storytellers are wanderers in the night. Homer (often referred to as "old Homer" but who should actually be called the youngest since he fathered all those who came after him) – was blind as was Borges in the end, and the old poet in Wim Wenders' film *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wings of Desire, 1987) who wanders from room to angel-haunted room in Berlin's immense library. Oedipus seeks the truth, finds it and loses his sight as a result, Tiresias has an eye too many, and Freud in Torfs' 2003 photograph, aptly entitled *Trompe-l'œil*, literally "deception of the eye," is a blindfolded old man, arms outstretched to avoid the annoyance of colliding brutally into the other or knocking against the silent chorus of things. He is the man who knows and who reels from knowing but who, despite all his knowing, is nonetheless destined, as we all are, to die.

Blindness is a recurrent motif in Torfs' work. Witness the way in which the faces are sometimes masked by a book cover (as in the *Écrans* series) and film images or slide pictures vanish to white or to light. I open the Pléiade edition of Rimbaud's complete works (1972). I skip over the letter that Rimbaud wrote from Charleville to his secondary school professor, Georges Izambard, on May 13, 1871 – the overly quoted so-called "*lettre du voyant*," or "seer letter," that figures on page 248. I leap forward in time, overlooking the early poems, bohemian Paris, Verlaine, "Les Assis," the sonnet of the "Voyelles," "Le Bateau ivre," *Une saison en enfer*, *Les Illuminations*. I turn the pages, travel across time, across borders. Sunday, November 17, 1878, Rimbaud is in Gênes. He has just made it over the Gothard pass and is

writing to his family to tell them about his initiating ordeal. “The road, which is never wider than six meters, is filled the whole way with nearly two meters of fallen snow, which, at any moment, might collapse, covering you with a meter-thick blanket you have to hack through during a hailstorm. And then: no more shadows above, below, or beside, despite being surrounded by these massive things; no more road, or precipices, or gorges or sky: just whiteness to think, to touch, to see or not to see, since it’s impossible to look away from the white annoyance you assume is the middle of the road. Impossible to lift your head with the biting wind, eyelashes and mustaches becoming stalactites, ears torn, necks swollen. Without the shadow that is oneself, and without the telegraph poles to mark what must be the road, you would be as flustered as a sparrow in an oven.” The intermittence and irradiance of the vanishing to white that paces the projection of portraits in the *Elective Affinities* installation in the basement of the Brussels Royal Library are made of the very same substance that Rimbaud describes: “just whiteness to think, to touch, to see or not to see.”

Portraits of a man and a woman (always the same, the selfsame couple) are projected on huge rectangular screens (roughly 3 by 2 meters and, if I’m not mistaken, covering the height of the room from floor to ceiling). The surfaces are set at a skew on two non-parallel planes from the front to the rear of the room. The closer screen seems to invite the eye to look at the screen farther away which seems in turn to throw it in a ricochet effect in the direction of a more distant place or object but there is nothing in the rear of the room save a dark gap into which the gaze sinks inescapably. There is no way out of the rhetoric of vanishing and flight that the exhibit layout sets up and that, as I will show, perfectly matches the texts of the 14 unfolded sheets displayed on high-perched tables in the central part of the installation. The photographs are in black and white with sharp contrasts and almost no grey tones. The models are seen in a frontal posture from waist up; their hands are not visible. Only the outfits change from one portrait to another. Some are worn indifferently by either the woman or the man. Straightaway, the question of identity arises, formulated not in psychological terms of “Who is she?” or “Who is he?” but once again on a narrative plane. Which means vis-à-vis History, the stormy, barbarous History of the 20th century and its tales of blood, exile, turpitude, daring, degradation and grandeur. Some signs are identifiable, of course, and each viewer will recognize his or her own references. What emerges then in the craniums and in the blind spaces of “whiteness to think,” are journeys, setbacks, gulfs, tremors, “kilometers of tumbling” (Rimbaud), or “mountainous, uncomfortable days, up which one takes an infinite time to pass” (Proust), curves, orthogonals, or “witches lines” (Deleuze). These may converge at some point or another, cross paths, and even travel a way together, but they remain

intrinsically individual, peculiar to each viewer. Christian Petzold and Harun Farocki's beautiful 2000 film *Die innere Sicherheit* – oddly entitled *Contrôle d'identité* (Identity Check) in French – follows a couple condemned because of their former terrorist activities in the Red Army Faction to a life on the run, fleeing across Europe with no place to settle, nowhere to lay down their gear, their fatigue and their chosen mistakes. Their way of life – but is fear a way of life? – deprives their young teenage daughter of relationships and contacts. Few words are pronounced, many things are said, many questions raised. The twin portraits in *Elective Affinities/The Truth of Masks & Tables of Affinities* convoke us to a similar type of questioning. But instead of asking, “Who are you? Which one of our faces could be yours?” “Which one corresponds to your representation, your harshness, your gentleness, your employment, your function, your role?” the summons they issue is otherwise more imperious: “What do you know of the History and the world in which you are plunged?” In a word, an identity check, but that is hardly concerned with the subsidiary and annex identity of the being and the self. That one was given a definitive answer by Walter Benjamin, who knew a thing or two about *lignes de fuite* (“vanishing lines”, literally “lines of flight”): “For who can say more of his own existence than that it has passed through the lives of two or three others as gently and closely as the color of the sky.” And again by Kaspar Hauser, the wild child of Nuremberg, when he had learnt a few rudiments of grammar and managed to write short “compositions” in a German stammering with innocence: “Many weeks ago I sowed my name in garden cress and it turned out wonderful it made me so happy I cannot say and someone came to the garden was carrying many pears he stepped on my name that made me cry than the professor said I should make it again, I made it and the other morning the cats stepped all over it again.” Identity – one's name, the correspondence of the self to the self – is a sprout that can be trampled by a man collecting pears or a cat. It is as shifting and changing as the color of the sky.

At the beginning of the long text that forms the central body of *Elective Affinities*, its raw core and something of its memory, Ana Torfs writes: “There is no such thing as coincidence. Of this I am increasingly convinced.” Which I understand to the letter as meaning: “There is nothing other than coincidences. Of this I am utterly convinced.” The two propositions are exactly reversed but they nonetheless express the same thing and Torfs says as much on the opening page of her “work in progress” (her book in the making) where names are connected by a network of lines forming such a dense mesh that apparently none is left out. I remark some connections: Ulrike Meinhof - Rosa Luxemburg – Hannah Arendt –

Erika Mann – Walter Benjamin – Sebastian Haffner; Stig Dagerman – W.G. Sebald – Stendhal; Victor Hugo – Gustave Courbet – Gustave Flaubert. A roughly sketched map of Europe figures on the two-page spread after the title page with dots indicating the cities and lines connecting them to one another in a way that calls to mind some unknown railway system or the flight plans of an international airline. But most of these itineraries were undertaken in circumstances dire and oblique, under the cover of anonymity and the night. In the margins on either side of the map, vertical sequences list a catalogue of geographic destinations. Doubled spacing, a “vanishing to white,” separates the sequences. Each one is a life, a journey, a story. I recognize Brecht’s (Augsburg, Munich, Berlin, Zurich, London, Moscow, New York, Paris, Svendborg, Stockholm, Helsinki, Moscow, Vladivostok, San Pedro, Santa Monica, New York, Zurich, East Berlin), Benjamin’s (Berlin, Freiburg, Breslau, Berlin, Munich, Bern, Frankfurt, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Denmark, Paris, Nevers, Port-Bou), Trotsky’s and Hugo’s. With some, I am unfamiliar; others are still at the guesswork stage, as yet unresolved. Take for instance, Hanns Eisler whose score for *Auf der Flucht* (In Flight), the song composed in exile to a poem by Brecht, bears the following handwritten note in volume 16 of his *Gesammelte Werke*: “I also had to leave my edition of Brahms behind in Berlin in 1933” (like Schwitters, his *merzbaum* when forced to leave Germany and go into exile in Norway in 1937, and others their works, their libraries, their piano, and yet others their home, their family and their friends). This interplay of coincidences and correspondences – *Tables of Affinities* as Ana Torfs calls them, using an expression that refers to the graphic representation of kinship by marriage – is effective throughout, in space but also in time.

Imaginary conversations lend themselves to disengaging enlightening crossovers that lead to unnoticed relationships, undetected agreements, and novel stories. I open the third volume of Gustave Flaubert’s indispensable correspondence in the 1991 Pléiade edition. On January 4, 1867, Flaubert answers a young writer René de Maricourt who had solicited his support: “However there is one illusion which I must deprive you of, the one concerning the possibility of earning a few pence. The more conscientiously you go about your work, the less you will make from it. I would stand by this little axiom even with my head on the block. We are producers of luxury goods; but nobody is rich enough to pay our wages. If you want to make money with your pen, you ought to go in for journalism, pulp fiction or the theatre. *Bovary* made me... 300 francs, which I PAID OUT and I shall never receive a penny for it. At the moment I manage to cover the costs of the paper I use, but not the errands, the traveling and the books that my work makes necessary; and basically I am happy with this (or I pretend to be so) because I can not see the connection between a five-franc piece and an

idea.” Seventy years later, in 1937, Walter Benjamin is living in exile in Paris. He spends his days in the Bibliothèque Nationale working on his major unfinished opus, the scattered fragments of which were recently collected and published as *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin had translated Proust and written at length on Baudelaire. He lives in the 14th *arrondissement* in Paris, 23 Rue Bénard, at the corner of Rue Hippolyte Maindron where Giacometti had his studio (But did the two men’s paths ever meet? And what did they know of each other?). Stephan Lackner is a young man of twenty-seven from a highly cosmopolitan German-Jewish family of the upper middle class. He too has just immigrated to Paris. In 1933, before leaving Germany, Lackner acquired his first painting by Max Beckmann in a rash enthusiastic act of defiance against an infamous event: that year, the Nazis had banned a major retrospective of Beckmann’s work at Erfurt. During the long night of war, when the painter sought refuge in the lion’s mouth in Amsterdam, Lackner never ceased to provide him with financial support. In Paris in 1937, Benjamin is living in appalling conditions. On March 13, he writes to Lackner: “I’m not doing well at all and I’m feeling unhappy. For too long I’d been postponing that dreaded moment when I’d have to replace my spectacles damaged years ago. The time had come when I could go on like this no longer without risk. Now I can see but I don’t venture out anymore, afraid that I might incur an expense that would diminish the measly amount that I still have left. I’m writing you this with high hopes that you might, dare I say, for old friendship’s sake, help me out in this matter to some extent.” I read. I translate. I feel shattered. All of a sudden Benjamin’s death is summed up in the image of a pair of eyeglasses brought down in the collapse of a wayworn body (“Every limb as tired as a man,” wrote Kafka on one of his *Conversation Slips*.) One of the lenses has broken; it rolls a short distance from a lifeless body on the flank of a mountain whose other side could have rhymed with freedom and soaring. Benjamin’s room at number 23 on Rue Bénard is filled with wads of paper, books, and journals, and hanging on the wall is Paul Klee’s bewitching watercolor *Angelus Novus*, his most prized possession. A time would come when the philosopher would try to sell it to finance his flight to the United States, but in vain, and, as we know, his journey came to an end in Port-Bou on the Spanish border. Walter Benjamin committed suicide on September 26, 1940 at around 10 o’clock at night following a misunderstanding. We are just atoms hurled into the void, easy sways to the slightest *clinamen*. In September 2002, on the occasion of an exhibition devoted to the collector and patron-of-the-arts Stephan Lackner in the small room of the Goethe Institut in Paris, Rue de Vaugirard, I saw, side by side in the same display, Walter Benjamin’s careful studios handwriting, with its tiny regular characters attesting perhaps to his fear of wasting precious paper, and Sigmund Freud’s imposing script

displaying superb majesty and confidence. The psychoanalyst with an eye too many and the shortsighted *flâneur*.

Nikolaus Lenau is perhaps the last figure of German Romanticism. He intuited a poetry without an œuvre, in which words would be untouched blocks of meaning, evincing the experience of identity between the spirit and the world. If, as I have suggested, our modernity is a wound opened under Georg Büchner's scalpel in Marion's bed or in the vicinity of the Ban de la Roche at Waldersbach in the Vosges on that January 20 when "Lenz left for the mountain," foreshadowing an otherwise more fatal January 20 in the year 1942 when the Nazi authorities at the Wannsee conference decreed the implementation of the "final solution" – the January 20, 1942 that is the elusive blind spot of Paul Celan's poetry –, then Lenau is no doubt a precursor and forerunner. In a letter to a friend in 1832, three years before *Danton's Death*, he writes: "I was thinking of the mysterious rules of art and the great many poetic genres that can still be invented. What does my dear friend think of the following idea? Features of nature, as they appear to us, without versification and without detailed composition, simply flung one after another, arranged, so to speak, in a poetic situation. For example: 'Dusk; green meadow; scattered willows; frogs croaking in the marsh, grey skies, no wind, growing darkness; a lost friend'." What does Ana Torfs think of the preceding idea? Of such a mad rigorous search for what could be called a prospect of assuagement, glimpsed in a teardrop glistening down the curve of a face (*Du Mentir-faux*), in a butterfly chase over a flowering meadow, in the expert fatigue of two old hands cutting a fish or in the skillfully well-proportioned pattern of a springtime sky between azure and clouds (*Zyklus von Kleinigkeiten*). It's all there, I believe, even the lost friend, Dominique Licoppe, the actress or model who lends her beautiful face to the portraits of Joan of Arc in *Du Mentir-faux*. In the book that retains a trace of the exhibition, Ana Torfs describes her exemplary rectitude and painstaking struggle step by step against sickness and death. Dominique Licoppe could readily be put forward as the third unforgettable embodiment of Joan of Arc on the screen, after Renée Falconetti in Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), and Florence Delay in Bresson's *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 1962. But who, in the wake of Godard in *Vivre sa vie*, (1962) making Anna Karina cry in front of Dreyer's images, will film his or her heroine in tears in the museum gallery in front of the portraits of Joan put to the question, magnificently photographed by Torfs?

I live in a small train station built in the late 19th century on the Paris-Bordeaux line. I note the color of the sky, the ever so young perfume of the trees, the elegant precautions of a doe, the singing of birds, and the irruption of silence toward evening with a suddenness that seems for the space of a moment to steal something from this discreet harmony and fill it with a sense of anxiety and alarm contrary to reason. I note the blooming flowers, the biting frost, the slanting hours, “the everyday catastrophe of light.” I note the cliff of time collapsing and me capering on the “enamel of the world.” This morning, a huge stubbornly incessant fleet of clouds is plodding from west to east, as if to add to the consolation of the place. A Chekhovian grey in sum, a melancholy divided between the twin flight of tracks: to Moscow, perhaps, on one side and, on the other, chasing the sun to the sea (“It has been found again / What? Eternity” – Rimbaud). A stone-throw away to the south, on the other bank of the Loir, stands the village of Couture. Pierre de Ronsard was born there in 1524, in the “La Possonnière” manor, the first trace of Italian Renaissance influence in France, a well-proportioned architecture that seems to have opportunely recalled Protagoras’ lessons and how “man is the measure of all things.” I’ve retained a few verses from a volume of the poet’s *Œuvres*: “Puis ennuyé du livre, je regardais les fleurs, / Feuilles tiges, rampants, espèces et couleurs, / Et l’entrecouplement de leurs formes diverses, / Peintes de cent façons, jaunes, rouges et perses, / Ni ne pouvant saouler, ainsi qu’en un tableau, / D’admirer la Nature, et ce qu’elle a de beau. Then bored with the book, I gazed at the flowers, / Leaves, stems, creepers, species and colors, / the crisscrossing display of their many arrays, / painted yellow, red and blue, in all different ways / so wrapt in admiration, my eyes would not cease / from drinking Nature’s beauty, as in a masterpiece.” The slow motion of rivers, the beauty of flowers, the growth of trees, the extravagances of grass demonstrate a superb indifference to human destinies. Blindly, unwittingly, they flow and they grow, “unseen, yet crecive.” Seeing the grand ballet of costumes donned successively by the two models photographed by Torfs in *Elective Affinities / The Truth of Masks & Tables of Affinities*, I thought of the beautiful botanic plates painted in the early 18th century by Daniel Pfister, a German minister who also sketched peddlers, seed and dishware vendors, vagrants, beggars, bear tamers, jugglers, maidservants, discharged soldiers, dishonorable men, Jews and Gypsies. Pfister began his work *anno 1716 deen 14 aprilis als in einem späthen Jahgang*, at an already advanced age. I recall two verses on a reproduction that I don’t have anymore (and I’ve forgotten what plant they went with – a peony, an iris, an orchid?). *Ein Mensch kann sich im Kleid eines anderen ziehen / Das thun die Blumen nicht, was sie zieren ist eigen*. A man can dress in another’s clothing / which Flowers do not, the garb they wear is their own.

I'm reading. I'm looking. But does that mean I see? I heard Danton raging against the impossibility of embracing the beauty of people and things completely. In a caress, Marion, Büchner's young prostitute, bestowed upon him these comforting words: *Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen*. Your lips have eyes. Someone knows exactly what I mean. I will die. Nothing could be clearer. I'm living. Nothing could be sweeter.

Jean Torrent

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(Translated from the French by Gila Walker)