



The Thought House of Philippa

Suzanne Leblanc

Translated by
Oana Avasilichioaei &
Ingrid Pam Dick

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for Luc

Chorale I

It was a house of which I knew nothing but the plans and several images. It had been constructed at the beginning of my century, the twentieth, in a city, Vienna, which proved decisive. This was well before I was born, by way of a philosopher whom I read at length, much later. His work had convinced me. I admired his life. The house was simple and austere, and I was rigorous and frank.

Pantry

Ground floor

Chorale II

This house drawn from the philosopher's existence called up another in my own. I had reflected on the first while of the second I had forgotten everything. I linked an intellectual image to an emotive one. The connection was arbitrary. The philosopher's work had convinced me, and I admired his life. The connection was singular. It contained a question and the discipline to traverse it.

East servant's bedroom
Third floor

Chorale III

The house was a method. It was exact and simple. It was austere and obsessive. It issued from a life consecrated to the life of the mind. I cherished a neglected house. It was a house of the mind in which my method lived. I sought its coherence alongside that of the philosopher. His work was convincing, his life admirable. I sought, in the hallways of his house, my method, my mind.

Servant's bedroom
Ground floor

Chorale IV

It was a singular house, and I sought a singular mind. Our encounter was arbitrary and yet coincident. In a sense I was its initiator, and it originated within the limits of my existence. In another sense the philosopher had originated a convincing work and had lived an admirable life. This encounter was at the foundation and at the conclusion of itself. Its artifact was primitive, emergent.

South servant's bedroom
Second floor

Foundation I

One day, a very young child experienced indifference toward her parents and wanted to leave her family. Being obliged to sojourn there, she developed liminal, perilous and, frankly, psychologically acrobatic postures, in order to occupy the singular position that circumstances had forced on her.

The singularity extended beyond the family: it sufficed to be lodged there for one to feel this. Like a summit on which one had stood or a fold into which one had slid, making it possible to see what was not visible from anywhere else, her position demonstrated to P. the extent to which the familial structure was accepted by its inhabitants, how this sketch of human organization also traced a limit whose infraction was only tolerated at the price of disgrace, bitterness, discredit—an unequivocal condemnation at best, a devouring feeling of

culpability at worst. It seemed that the thought of this infraction, the idea of a life beyond this limit, was arduous: it sufficed to imagine a situation in which neither father nor mother were identified for one to recognize immediately the unavailability of missing them. Against this background, hypotheses of afamilial socialist models, novel collectivist structures, radically alternative nourishing sketches were received with repulsion, as if it had been a question of dehumanized states come from a future in which some exponential machination had outmanoeuvred her progenitors. So, no family at all, no humanity at all. From the summit, from the fold of her position, P. contemplated the full extent of her indifference.

Her vision outside the limits thus had to cohabitate with a life between walls. Yet it was equally necessary that she survive in the social territory, one region of which was constituted by her family—a different problem from the first, more formidable because more evasive. At the very least, this was the place where her mind was

given back to herself, though within the family enclosure it had constantly been commandeered by the relationship of brute force inherent in all guardianship, albeit for her own good. In other words, neither father nor mother nor any master existed for her any longer, other than formally—none that P. hadn't chosen and before whom she hadn't considered herself, by the same token, an autodidact. It didn't follow from this that the game had been played nor that, prior to this, her hand had been good and her bets, competent. It was even likely that this social game into which her family had transitively propelled her would prove all the more difficult, since she wasn't certain she understood her role, or even whether she had one.

Additional impediments, therefore, these obligatory games where the best bets, those that are strategic and graceful, seem to proceed from real conviction, a consented-to immersion. Consequently, P. imagined a more general game than the one being played out immediately, a more natural role, more profound, of a

cosmological scope, which earned her assent and from which she drew the impetus for her movements, actions, postures and even the feints in these human games in which she simultaneously found herself caught.

Entrance hall

Ground floor

Oana Avasilichioaei has translated several Romanian and Quebecois French writers, including Nichita Stănescu, Louise Cotnoir, Bertrand Laverdure and Daniel Canty; her most recent book of poetry *Limbial* (2015) includes translations of Paul Celan. **Ingrid Pam Dick** (aka Gregoire Pam Dick, Mina Pam Dick et al.) is the author of *Metaphysical Licks* (2014) and *Delinquent* (2009); she has an MA in philosophy and an MFA in painting.

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