

ENTER THE RACCOON

B E A T R I Z H A U S N E R

ILLUSTRATED BY DEBORAH BARNETT

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*Perque tuit li fin aman
Sapchan qu'amors es fina benvolenza
Que nais del cor e dels huelh, ses duptar*

*Wheretofores let all pure lovers know that love is pure unselfishness
which is born undoubtedly from the heart and from the eyes.*

– Aimeric de Pegulhan (translated by H.J. Chaytor)

And, just now, into my study has walked a human-size raccoon. He greets me and seems kind, despite the threatening teeth. I welcome him, mostly because he will provide warmth for the next few hours. It remains to be seen how long he can stay seated in the uncomfortable wicker chair I have set in the corner, the one covered with the elegant Oaxaca weaving, meant to be worn as a skirt by women in the Mixtec region. His breathing is distracting, perhaps because, as he has just informed me, he is suffering from an uneven heartbeat, wrought, as it is, by the insertion of an extraneous valve into one of the chambers of his heart. I tell him that these procedures are quite common nowadays. He seems tired, worn out. Perhaps Raccoon is simply echoing my own state of mind. Perhaps not. It's hard to say.

TRAVELS WITH MY DOUBLE

I cheated myself, like I knew I would

– Amy Winehouse

Cindy, a colleague at the library stopped me in hall the other day and said, apologetically, that I looked like Amy Winehouse. I thought, internally, “this is the greatest compliment anyone has paid me at my place of work in several eternities.” I thanked her.

I am sitting on Raccoon, face to face. His cock is of pleasant proportion, though his mechanical finger is proving a hindrance to the energies that flow from the eyes he has put on for this occasion. The train we are riding in is full of tourists, escapees from a conference on the proper management of articulated limbs of animals that resemble humans, because of their height. Any further proximity to our species is purely coincidental. The train seems strangely overheated, as though the steam engine powering it along were working according to specifications rather closer to those of a car pulled by the hungry dogs of vengeance. Anger seems to gnaw at Raccoon's insides. It's his wife, he assures me, though I suspect transference is the real culprit in this exchange. I decide that it is too difficult to establish the parameters of his neurosis and resolve to concentrate, for now, on using my teeth to pluck at the thick hair that crowds his chest. My mouth touches his right nipple. "Perfect," I think to myself, as I begin to suck on it. In an instant I find myself lifted up by Raccoon's dexterous use of both natural and artificial hands, surprised at the strength that emanates from them, as they dig deep into my armpits. Our behaviour goes unnoticed by the other passengers in the train, even though Raccoon keeps telling me that his paranoid feelings about our affair are well founded.

WOMAN AND MACHINE

Man and woman are the universe and the machine is the metaphorical extension of both in the world. The relationship between woman and machine, outside of the many political considerations in vogue, is a subject that has preoccupied me for a long time. In observing the daily activities of women I can't but conclude that we are, by and large, accepting of machines. Machines help women clean, prepare food, mark time, fill in time, extend pleasure. The assistance of this loyal, non-feeling friend of woman is undeniable. Yet, I don't think women are that interested in the manner in which machines function, though I have heard of at least one woman known to have taken apart a vacuum cleaner, in order to see how it is wired. Still, the majority of women are content to relate to machines for their utilitarian purposes, rather than to agonize over their internal mechanisms and the meta-linguistic elements that make them work.

COLOPHON

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