

**A DISCURSIVE,  
SPACE**

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WITH JEAN DAIVE

**TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH  
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**DP**

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**A DISCURSIVE,  
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**JEAN DAIVE:** What gives this impression of somnolence?

**ANNE-MARIE ALBIACH:** I think Beckett tried to suppress social and visible corporeity and above all to bind it to the object. There is a kind of will to simplify the body in the event it bears. In *First Love* this is expressed very distinctly. For example, he expresses his way ... you spoke of somnolence, and for him sleep is without doubt very important since he refuses to let the body arrive at a level of wakefulness and he protects himself from wakefulness by sleeping with his clothes on, or keeping his hat on. Clothes are in no way symbolic. They are simply objects, objects that consume the body. In fact there is a permanent refusal of any integration, whatever it be ... of the relation of the one with the other. Dialogue is impossible and if there is dialogue as in *First Love* it's a ridiculous dialogue. Besides ... the very title chosen for *First Love*, with all its tender implications, and the absolutely despairing text, may I say, of the non-relation of these two beings who meet gratuitously and live off prostitution, make Beckett take refuge in the greatest possible darkness ... whether from society or from excrement, what comes out of the body. He throws into question all the evidence surrounding us: systems, the construction of houses, furniture. When he arrives and begins to live with his lover in *First Love*, he hastens to remove the furniture from the bedroom and to lie down without actually undressing, to doze in a semi-sleep that fills his days. So there is a refusal to participate in active life and not only in active life but in the least motion. Communication takes place in waste.

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**A-M A:** *First Love* has two different sites, a bench and a house. Then the character leaves at the birth of his son. He leaves simply because his son "leps" and he doesn't "lep." (*Laughs.*) So his son is superfluous. He would even disrupt the order of things.

**JD:** But from the beginning of the book there is a father problem.

**A-M A:** Yes ... And there, something akin to tenderness must be noted. The father, that's still the Law. One law is accepted here, hierarchical. From his father he received permission to live ... in this permanent withdrawal. The father protects him from others. The father is complicit. And in death the father has become an object. And once the father dies, the other members of the household send him away. Against the orders of the father who had stipulated that the character keep his room and way of life. But once the father is dead, he is thrown out. And he finds himself in the town he will denounce.

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**A-M A:** *The Lost Ones* evokes a metamorphosis and instead of taking a character or two characters it embraces an entire situation. It calls up a whole sculptural construction of a cylinder that would enclose its characters within their destiny. The destiny of its characters - their life and death - is bound to very precise laws which are represented in the form of objects such as ladders. These objects are imperfect and cruel. The world is seen as an aggressive world, the world of objects. The ladders, for instance, do not really help someone who wants to go up to the top of the cylinder since there are always rungs missing, and the reader understands that someone who wants to go up is forced to come back down and will never reach the top. While those who stay below hope, he calls them "the sedentary," they have not moved. In a way, they are the winners, the ones who remain in that somnolence you spoke of. And the winners are losing their vision but have not been fooled and did not use a ladder to try to reach a fictive summit. Whatever has to do with birth or giving birth among the sedentary must be noted. The description, quite labored, of a woman and her child, a red-head whose hair falls across her face, who holds her child close, both of them in the state of wasting away "without noticing," emphasizes Beckett. And the sedentary around that woman and that child, who lift her hair off her face, indicating that there is still a kind of communication among the sedentary, half asleep and losing their vision. He goes so far as to specify that blue eyes, being more sensitive, lose their vision more quickly than the others. No detail escapes him in this elaboration of a metamorphosis.

**JD:** Is there a demolition of language that would occur from using two languages?

**A-M A:** Yes. There is a permanent counterpoint, that is, brightness-darkness. Day, night. While he passes indiscriminately from day to night, in his writing there is day and night. Which is additional ridicule, since it is to be understood at the second degree. Can I really believe he appreciates the scent of a garden? I think you have to read it at the second degree in his writing. In fact, his writing is open, while what he describes is closed.

**JD:** He has the good fortune to be manipulated by two languages.

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**PARIS, 23 NOVEMBER 1990**

**JD:** I would like to begin with the titles of two of your books, for instance the title of *État* with its first letter in italic which makes the title unpronounceable.

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** So the title is first of all visual.

**A-M A:** It is visual.

**JD:** And the other title, *Mezza Voce*, which is vocal, musical.

**A-M A:** Yes. *Mezza Voce* says it well. The title is significant because it is true that there are excesses and they are protected by the title: *mezza voce*, half aloud. But I believe that in all of the texts that make up this book nothing is uttered *mezza voce*. I remember too that in another book I use a phrase in relation to a dialogue, "He spoke *mezza voce*," words were flowing in Italian.

**JD:** So *État* presents itself as a score.

**A-M A:** Yes. And again, *Mezza Voce* has a musical sense.

**JD:** But flattened, that is, the event-things occur on a stage.

**A-M A:** It's theatrical. It comes ... and in *État* I even mention it, from Shakespeare, from my fascination with Shakespeare, and from *Macbeth* with the three witches. In *État* I speak of the female presences who utter the facts.

**JD:** How did you move from scoring (from what has to be made flat) to a theatrical stage, I mean where a play, something of a play, will take place? A play, and the characters, the subjects it requires.

**A-M A:** But there the subjects are, in short, Mallarmean. Fundamentally there is not that much difference between *État* and *Mezza Voce* if not for the fact that *État* appears to be much more abstract. But the characters are determined by their pronouns: *he*, *she*, *they* feminine, *they* masculine. And movement is indicated in the text. I have shifted from theatrical abstraction to theatrical production.

**JD:** How are you able to distinguish the characters in *Mezza Voce*, the ones who whisper?

**A-M A:** The characters are anonymous. These characters are anonymous and it's this status that makes them powerful as I understand it. Because when I say "he"... to me, that's an anonymous character. I don't know exactly who he is. Or "she." I do not know exactly who she is.

**JD:** What energizes your theater? Does this theater support denouement or projection or the erasure of the pronominal subjects? What makes this kind of gravitational force or grand metabolics occur on that stage?

**A-M A:** It's lyricism. Because a lyric movement always attracts and repels its characters - anonymous - in their disappearance as well as in their presence. And they can be named within the text, named subjectively, objectively, for these characters sometimes become real characters. For instance I wrote a text "... Where the forest is darker" when my father died. But I don't artic-

ulate any form of the word father and I never articulate the word mother, my mother who was so present at the death of my father. So in fact even in the most extreme situations, like death, like a theme of death, like the death theme, the character remains anonymous. There is, let me say, affectivity that causes the anonymity to come and screen an emotion or a transgression.

**JD:** It isn't named because you are looking for the origin of characters, or Being, to account for its androgynous force and its energy.

**A-MA:** I don't think there is any real androgyny in *Mezza Voce*. In *Flammigère*, in my first book, it was in question but - I think if I don't name it, it's to give it more power.

**JD:** The character?

**A-MA:** The character.

**JD:** What is androgyny ... or the dream of androgyny?

**A-MA:** It is writing. It is writing which is at once male and female. I have never, with respect to myself, thought while writing that I was a woman. This may have been a shock to many women - but I do not write as a woman, I write as a writer, insofar as I am able to write. Which means that for me there is no difference between a text written ... by a man or a text written by a woman. Contrary to what certain friends wanted to see, who thought they had to read *État* as a book written by a woman. When, for instance, I talk about the knife I think there has been an inappropriate analytic interpretation. If I mention a knife ... it is for the pleasure of it. It was in Malraux's *The Human Condition*, I have never forgotten the first scene of the murder with the knife, but it becomes something else from the moment the character plunges the knife into his victim's body. And for me that is the knife in *État*, and I refuse to let anyone say "it's a woman's writing."

**JD:** Meanwhile, in *Mezza Voce* there is a whole set of properties which could eventually accrete to a woman's role, the female role.



**A-MA:** Yes, the ornaments, the jewelry ... chains and other things that really do issue from a desire for theater.

**JD:** In order to critique it, or to ...

**A-MA:** No, to glorify it ...

**JD:** ... inventory...

**A-MA:** No ... yes ... I am very affected by ornament, by jewelry, by chains. But chains, they cut both ways. They are both ornaments and ornaments that take prisoners. And the curtains come from my real attraction, since adolescence, to the theater. I read a lot of theater. And the perfume, yes, perfume, chains, jewelry.

**JD:** *Mezza Voce* is constructed around grand theatrical moments. Perhaps not visible but which are so many points of reference in order to move the book along.

**A-MA:** I don't know quite how to answer. How would you rephrase that question?

**JD:** I'll ask the question differently .... For instance there are words like voice, theater, display, vocal dazzling and "meanwhile," you write, "fiction has no more currency."

**A-MA:** Yes.

**JD:** So it did have currency?

**A-MA:** It had currency. But when I say "fiction has no more currency," it has its currency in saying "fiction has no more currency." This is the supreme fiction. When I articulate, when the writer articulates, "fiction has no more currency," it means that fiction is at its height.

**JD:** All right, I'll return to the previous question ... was *Mezza Voce* created from a certain number of limit points of this fiction which has no more currency?

**A-M A:** Of course, yes. *Mezza Voce*, first of all, was not written quickly, but with texts that were a few years old. There is a continuity and I think that fiction is always present, not only fiction but Bataille's influence, with a certain disguised cruelty. I don't think *Mezza Voce* is a tender book. I think it is quite a violent book. That's why I chose *Mezza Voce*, half aloud, that is, a counterpoint to the book's content. (*Long silence.*) I haven't reread *Mezza Voce* for a long time. I know there is a scene called "Theater." A completely Mallarmean passage.

**JD:** What is Mallarmean about it?

**A-M A:** What there is in all my writing and what strikes me is the descent of Igitur. Within limits, you must read *Mezza Voce* as a descent toward our ancestors to extinguish the candle.

**JD:** To blow out the candle.

**A-M A:** To blow out the candle. And Jouve, too, who marked me profoundly with his blasphemous side. I think that in *Mezza Voce* I have it too, there is this blasphemous side.

**JD:** You use theater to cover up, to erase speech, or rather there are two different parallel approaches, theater and speech...

**A-M A:** Two different approaches, theater and speech. I try to make them a single approach.

**JD:** When you write "in the reflection of speech several voices."

**A-M A:** It's still fiction. "In the reflection of speech several voices" is fiction. That is, there is a kind of multiplication of the one, of the he or the she who is silent and so a kind of chorus emerges.

**JD:** Choral element?

**A-M A:** Choral or ancient element.

**JD:** What do you mean by “ancestor”?

**A-M A:** “Ancestor” means root.

**JD:** Of what?

**A-M A:** It’s the root of writing. It’s the root of desire, of movement, of lyric, it is truly where I mine all possible forces. Once this descent is made, like a renascence, like a phoenix. (*Silence.*) A phoenix. And the more character increases and decreases, the more voice, song, graphic song seem important to me. I work them with white space. That is, the white space makes room for a decrease in voice. (*Silence.*) The suppression of theme is also this descent, suppression of a relationship to the real, of going beyond the real.

**JD:** Must there be knowledge in writing or in a written book?

**A-M A:** I don’t think so.

**JD:** Or it is already too late.

**A-M A:** I don’t know about “already too late.” There is knowledge in immediate desire. Knowledge is not thought, considered, willed. It comes, it is beneath what is being written, but it does not arrive as support for what is being written, and even if I cite names ... well known like Jouve, Bataille, Mallarmé, I do not write “after” their work but “after” the mark they have left in me.

**JD:** So *Mezza Voce* dates back to 1984.

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** Now it is 1990.

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** I can think of the formidable expanse of time ...

**A-M A:** ... yes, yes ...

**JD:** ... around you and ahead of you, that is basically a trove, a trove for reading, a trove of possibilities, or else ... is it the opposite, something closing before you?

**A-M A:** It is something open. To the point where I refuse to know what I have written. I don't know anything by heart. I don't know. I don't even know what's in the books. (*Silence.*) I refuse to know. In fact, I hate knowledge. Passion is what I have for the authors cited.

**JD:** But what must no longer be known in order to attempt to stand naked before that opening, before writing's absence of desire? What is it you want to forget?

**A-M A:** I want to forget the oblivion remaining deep within me as trace, as scar, what I have written, as scar. I think there is a drive. I can speak of drive rather than knowledge. Drive and ....

**JD:** But at what moment? At the moment of writing?

**A-M A:** At the moment of writing first it's the drive, then excessively reworking.

**JD:** ... yes....

**A-M A:** ... cold.

**JD:** I am thinking of the opening, the waiting. What do you place there, in that opening?

**A-M A:** The opening? There is a kind of antinomy between distance and

opening. Distance leads one to believe that everything is far away and that the opening is a leap into the present. No - the opening is the implementation of lyric. Because I insist on keeping a cold lyricism, that is a lyricism ...

**JD:** ... controlled?

**A-M A:** ... controlled, in quotes, in italics, with blanks. Thus it bypasses a certain rationality.

**JD:** It's what's in the book. I would like to go back to this waiting, from 1984 ...

**A-M A:** Ah!

**JD:** ... to 1990 where you appear to be doing nothing.

**A-M A:** No, I didn't appear to be doing anything.

**JD:** Would you talk to me about that semblance? What do you enter into that apparent not-working? I suppose there is no drive and there is no desire.

**A-MA:** Anxiety. In fact, in order to write I must have pleasure. And it happens that for years I did not experience enough pleasure to force me to write. Because even if what I write is hard or violent I think it always derives from pleasure and desire. And it happens that for years I haven't experienced any more of that pleasure. I am waiting for it. (*Laughs.*)

**JD:** Then how did the pleasure occur for writing *Travail vertical et blanc*?

**A-M A:** I work a lot on demand. And it happened that I was asked to write *Travail vertical et blanc*. I'll use the example of "Chemin de l'ermitage." I don't exactly know how, I found a photograph of a carnival in a small town and I began to experience great pleasure from this photograph and that pleasure permitted the text. (*Silence.*) But since then, I haven't found a single object of pleasure. So I think I can overcome the anxiety that keeps me from writing, but for the time being I haven't the means. I haven't found what stimulates me ...

**JD:** ... what neutralizes the anxiety ...

**A-M A:** ... what neutralizes the anxiety.

**JD:** That is, you let the anxiety ...

**A-M A:** ... take over, yes. I have to, I have to feel completely free in order to write.

**JD:** It's a kind of protection ...

**A-M A:** ... yes ...

**JD:** ... the anxiety ...

**A-M A:** ... no, really the anxiety is the stopping. The anxiety is unbearable. It is lived every day. It is lived every night. And, for the moment, not ...

**JD:** No ...

**A-M A:** Yes ...

**JD:** As I know you, I can also imagine your playing with your anxiety.

**A-M A:** I play with anxiety, true, but not to the point of writing ... I don't get there. Yes. (*Silence.*)

**JD:** A form of work basically ...

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** Play.

**A-M A:** Yes. A kind of work. Now this makes several years of anxiety. (*Silence.*) But I play and it wins, it wins.

**JD:** Even so, throughout all the years of anxiety you have allowed yourself to attempt new themes. *État*, the score, *Mezza Voce*, the stage. What would be next? Tomorrow ...

**A-MA:** Oh! Next, I think it would be .... I am leaning toward a text more scattered on the page, more overtly lyrical. I saw it in *Travail vertical et blanc*. The more years that pass, the more writing seems to open up. Because *État* is very dense, very compact, *Mezza Voce* is already more open, in *Travail vertical et blanc* there are blocks of prose. And in what I imagine being able to write, I imagine writing always using white space, blocks of prose. I am getting closer to a prose, to a writing that breathes differently.

**JD:** You are making a distinction between verse and a block of prose ...

**A-MA:** No, not really, no. But I always need fiction. It is indispensable to me. I play, as you said. I play a game that perhaps will be articulated more violently. Even while seeming more gentle. Because in *Travail vertical et blanc*, there is always the threat that I do not forget, "*you are there / dark.*" And it really is a threat. And this threat has stalked me for years, since I am no longer able to write.

**JD:** Is it physical, this threat, or is it metaphysical?

**A-MA:** (*Laughs.*) It isn't physical. It isn't physical.

**JD:** Can you give an example of fiction, a model of fiction?

**A-MA:** A model of fiction. In *Anawratha* there's a whole passage on the very brief encounter I had with someone who overwhelmed me with words I didn't understand and I made a whole text from it. That's a fiction. (*Noises.*) Do you find that the fiction in *Anawratha* is a good one?

**JD:** A barque is burning at the ... ?

**A-MA:**... ???...

**JD:** I really love that: “A barque is on fire at the embankment in the port.”

**A-M A:** Oh yes! That is pain.

**JD:** “She was unaware that she would never again know that.”

**A-M A:** Yes, that’s literal. It seems to be a fiction but it’s literal.

**JD:** Pain as fiction.

**A-M A:** Yes. It is literal. I really saw ... a barque on fire at the embankment in the port and it is absolutely accurate, my existence was never the same afterwards. It is a cut in my life. But it is presented as pure fiction, while it is more than painful.

**JD:** So it would be in... *Anawratha*...

**A-M A:** Yes... (*Reading from Vocative Figure*) “The words he spoke mezza voce in a surge of incestuous sheets he fled made her hear him as though paralyzed in an enchantment. From the gaze, above all from the gaze, from the mouth, and hands, the hair, above all the gaze, an imperfect labiality surrounded him, she witness, flowers woven into necklaces of the night. His name is to be repeated; and an image, given to him, itself in pursuit inside her. Their place?” ... Wait, that’s wrong! Oh yes, “Their tie fortuitous but swiftly shattered by the laws of chance.”

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**PARIS, DECEMBER 8, 1990**

**A-M A:** Well I just finished *Mezza Voce*.

**JD:** Yes. What did you think?



**A-M A:** ...

**JD:** What are your critical comments concerning *Mezza Voce*?

**A-M A:** My cri ...

**JD:** Or, how was this rereading for you?

**A-M A:** I was astonished by what I could write. (*Laughter.*) And I asked myself, "Did I write this?"

**JD:** And what still astonishes you in this book?

**A-M A:** I noticed themes that keep reappearing.

**JD:** What?

**A-M A:** Song, hair, the body ....

**JD:** What astonished me was the presence of memory.

**A-M A:** Memory, yes.

**JD:** Memory, the memorial thing, remembering, remembrance .... So I wonder if there isn't a kind of construction, a geometricizing starting from memory as though rigorously setting up a grid.

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** On which you play out a game of terror.

**A-M A:** I do not play, but I speak of memory as part of the body because it is vastly a question of the body. It is very corporeal.

**JD:** The body is present.

**A-M A:** The body is very present With wounds, ornaments, breath. Breath. Song that returns. There are, and this can be annoying, repeating themes, returning song, terror, terror in the tragic that I can call black, in the body *mis en abîme*. And there is a certain *jouissance* that allows the writing. (*Silence*.)

**JD:** Don't you think that verse only appears in a gap in the staging, in the absence of memory, or absence of ... that it intervenes in moments of lack?

**A-M A:** Oh!

**JD:** How does it intervene? What are its means of appearing?

**A-M A:** The word?

**JD:** No, verse.

**A-M A:** Verse? Oh, verse! It's logic, it's structure. Without the whole works of parentheses, quotation marks, white space, verse ... shredded ... I think it would only be a false ... because the ...

**JD:** What?

**A-M A:** Verse permits the breath, permits ... verse permits ...

**JD:** Suffocation as well ...

**A-M A:** Yes.... No, no, I don't think so.

**JD:** There are, however, knots on the page. Knots of meaning, terrorized, knots of terror.

**A-M A:** Yes, but ...

**JD:** Where the verse blends, contracts...

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** No?

**A-M A:** Yes, but it's always ludic in some way. Even the terror is ludic. Yes.

**JD:** What other notes have you taken?

**A-M A:** I made them before reading *Mezza Voce*. (*She reads*.) "Biography tripled by fiction. Fiction and its ambiguous relationship with desire. Stripped bare of desire in the abyss, it springs forth anew in the lyric line. Ternary: double biography, desire and fiction. Consequence: addition of theater. Theater that multiplies or divides. Theater that divides, at once lyric, ornamental and cruel in the development of its discourse." There is also at times a certain cruelty. Existence of the terrible, there is the sense of the cruel." One comes to the discursive which seems to dominate, a discursive sliced by space" ....

**JD:** ... mmmm

**A-M A:** ... "a discursive sliced by space where breath appears." That's very important. Basically I can believe I am suffocating. But another breath comes ...

**JD:** Yes.

**A-M A:** ... revives. Silence appears. So there is silence. "In this silence, instruction plays keeping up a parallel discourse, thus double, and which leaves room for the multiple while reuniting with the initial discourse. It's the negation of the fragment, supported by fragmentation." Yes, because what appear to be fragments are not. You know that. "Theatrical direction of body, wounds, and ornaments." And the bodies of others, I might add. "Ambiguous ornament, the corporeal in a temporality that plays on the body." That's all.

**JD:** One thing caught my attention: double biography.

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** What's that?

**A-M A:** That's not at the first level. I don't want to reveal it. But I know what I'm referring to. I'm referring to my father. I'm referring to.... There are biographical references which are sublimated by fiction.

**J D:** By fiction?

**A-M A:** By fiction.

**J D:** By theatricality, you mean?

**A-M A:** Yes, by a fiction. By a fiction.

**J D:** Those notes were written before your reading?

**A-M A:** Before.

**J D:** And afterwards?

**A-M A:** I read this morning. And took no notes after.

**J D:** None....

**A-M A:** I only noticed that there are also repetitions in the text, too. Repetitions in the same text. And I noticed that song was very important. Song. In my life, too. That's why I can speak of biography ... song had a great impact, too. I listened a lot to sopranos, altos.

**J D:** So, the voice.

**A-M A:** The voice.

**J D:** The theme of the voice is a permanent one.

**A-M A:** The voice is a permanent theme.

**J D:** Which reveals...

**A-M A:** ... lyric.

**JD:** I'll return to the question of verse. I wonder whether the poem doesn't take shape from verse in the light of sacrifice.

**A-M A:** There is sacrifice, yes.

**JD:** I wonder whether verse is not an element of blindness.

**A-M A:** I don't think so. I think it's the opposite. Verse is an element of light. And then verse brings the sacrifice theme into play, I mean the ... mystical aspect. There is a mystical aspect that is not obvious. But when I say in a text "I could not see him" I am thinking of Christ. I think of Christ.

**JD:** And what moves in the direction of sacrifice? The poem, the subject ... the book moves toward sacrifice?

**A-M A:** No, no, no. It's not sacrifice. It is the sacrificial. There is no sacrifice. There is the sacrificial. And, basically, I make my body and the bodies of others sacrificial elements.

**JD:** I'll return to the question of verse. It seems to me that verse is a little like speech made up of non-speech, or of abstract speech.

**A-M A:** Yes, yes, yes. But sometimes verse provides all the lyricism. The white space provides the sacrificial.

**JD:** Why did you reread *Mezza Voce*, for example, and not *Figure vocative* or *Travail vertical et blanc*?

**A-M A:** Because *Travail vertical et blanc* I'm afraid, I am afraid it will be my last book. That makes me afraid. But it interests me because the writing is somewhat different.

**JD:** A writing of opening.

**A-M A:** Yes. We were talking about that the other day.

**JD:** With jubilation and not with fear.

**A-M A:** No. But that book silences me, my books frighten me.

**JD:** Why? Are there shadows around them, in them?

**A-M A:** Well, here I return to the biographical, for the sake of the lived. That no one perceives. Only I can know. But the lived is truly sublimated. Because there is a text for Claude Royet-Journoud which comes out of an almost ... mystical experience.

**JD:** Meaning?

**A-M A:** Meaning that ... it is a little sensitive, I have to say.

**JD:** ... mmmm ...

**A-M A:** I'll tell you.

**JD:** Yes.

**A-M A:** I was in the country and there were a lot of religious objects. There was a Christ with huge eyes. And I'm not sure how exactly, but I began to think I had been poisoned. I started to ... I called a doctor. I started have trouble seeing, to have visual problems and I kept seeing the gaze of this Christ ... and thought I was dying and my legs were stiff - my legs were stiff. The doctor said to me "Oh no!" and that woke me. Because my legs were stiff.

**JD:** A kind of numbness in the image of Christ.

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** ...

**A-MA:** No, no. Death, death.

**JD:** Beginning with an image.

**A-MA:** Beginning with an image.

**JD:** What did you make of it?

**A-MA:** Made nothing. Or nothing but a page that came out of a mystical or an hysterical experience.

**JD:** Beginning with an image.

**A-MA:** I really had the symptoms of someone who was going to die. That is ... the tiles, I was seeing them double, and my legs got completely stiff. And afterwards, I wrote that text. But in fact I play, I play with ... terror and I write only in its pleasure. (*Sigh.*)

**JD:** So what is there in that terror?

**A-MA:** And that terror, it often comes back in my text, terror. A very powerful word. It is made of attention ... from a difficulty with attention, and then don't forget that there was a threat. There is a permanent threat all along ...

**JD:** ...

**A-MA:** When I speak in another text of a "chain," it's a chain that isn't decoration, I am trying to give the body magical power. (*More quietly.*) Those ornaments are magic.

**JD:** And they protect from what?

**A-MA:** They are protection from terror. I must say that I am very attracted to equations, number, geometry, it seems to me that verse coheres there, the verse you spoke of. And then, with that geometry and those equations a counterpoint appears made in relation to a very painful lyricism that I can't deny.

**JD:** But who is asking you to deny it?

**A-M A:** No one! But Jean, if I don't have a geometrical, mathematical base, lyric would take the upper hand, and I don't want that. I deeply mistrust that. My initial outpouring is lyric. The sources I write from come out of desire. And there is always a kind of .... I am also talking about flagellation.

**JD:** ...

**A-M A:** I say pretty cruel words. There is, undeniably, a kind of cruelty in these texts. And also ... geometry and numbers count for a lot in this cruelty.

**JD:** And how do you reconcile ... flagellation and geometry? How do they come to punctuate the cruelty?

**A-M A:** Throughout the discourse. Throughout the discourse. Again, I noted themes which return incessantly throughout *Mezza Voce*: the body,... the breath, above all the body, the body, the body. A head of hair, a head of hair. I don't know whether to tell the story but my family was always ... shamed by my hair.

**JD:** ...

**A-M A:** Very long and very thick hair, and my father refused to see me before he died because I went to see him at Curie with long hair. And there I take pleasure in speaking of a head of hair as ornament - but at the same time it's painful because I was rejected for this hair.

**JD:** And which was forbidden?

**A-M A:** The missing distinction. Now I only wear a chignon. Because the hair, for me, is provocative, and in spite of the condemnation of this hair I love to put it into my texts.

**JD:** I'm going to show you the photographs. They are quite astonishing.



**A-M A:** Yes. The little girl? Yes, it's me. I was very young.

**JD:** And the German shepherd, your household pet.

**A-M A:** Yes, that was our dog ...

**JD:** ... your pet .... And this one which I love so much.

**A-M A:** Oh yes! Me too.

**JD:** I've said to you that what you're combing there is already verse!

**A-M A:** Yes.

**JD:** With both hands.

**A-M A:** It was a lot of energy.

**JD:** In your wrists.

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