



## THE WHITE ROOM

‘Tout être humain est donc éternel dans chacune des secondes de son existence.’

Auguste Blanqui, quoted in Walter Benjamin,  
*Das Passagen-Werk*

‘If I could start over... there’s so many stones to be deciphered.’

‘I could have bigger breasts. Catch a bigger fish.’

‘Not so. Even if it’s only “could have”...’

‘You chose dull work because you’re dull. You

must accept.'

The animals – they bite, they scratch. In cases extreme, they eat. It's all they know of intimacy.

'I won't leave this house,' he says.

'It's my house,' she says. 'Legally, you're crap. Go study old civilisations. You're related to them.'

It's just.

That's the justice you look for, and live in. The best you can have. Look at toads – they mate, hundreds of them, with one specimen, quite overwhelmed. Stags, with their harem. Not to speak of sultans, with theirs.

'Stay with me,' says Mimmo.

'Wow, great,' he says. 'I knew it would be easy, being fixed up.'

'Tomorrow, you'll find somewhere else,' Mimmo says. 'Now, the market.'

The stalls, wandering round, it's like a stomach. 'Oh no,' he says. 'Those poor animals, not all quite dead.'

'Don't try to save them,' Mimmo says. 'Think "sacrifice".'

'These books...' he says, going in amongst them. He sniffs deep – French tobacco, old Soviet glue. 'I don't read,' he says. 'Everything outside, around – it's too bulky to get inside,' he tells the girl who'd sell one to him. 'You're so neat,' he tells her. 'Uncut,

narrow, smelling so new, almost tacky still...'

'Come on,' Mimmo says. 'This is how you ended in the garbage. Being yourself.'

'My job, classifying stuff. I should tell them I'm giving up,' he says.

'What's the point?' asks Mimmo. 'You're not there. The way to handle it, if you can't manage what's around you, is to be radical. Accept reality, project another one upon it.'

'You make me sound apart,' he says. 'I'm more in control than you are, Mimmo. I just cancel traces better. They want us to have relationships. Lots of them, all sorts, for tolerance. Then they go round so fast, like horses on a roundabout... Learn to eat gherkins from a jar, learn to be Buddha. There's no end to being normal.'

'Well,' says Mimmo. 'The normalisers got it wrong. You're not.'

Animals, when they play or let it out – they don't shriek, attract the predators – they just roll upon the ground, look up at you, and wink. Us animals – we can't do that.

'Where are you?' Mimmo asks.

'Oh, I'm rooted here,' he says. 'There's the Bir-Hakeim bridge, the trains; beneath – Kabylia. My people, some of them. Others in the deserts, in the mines. All over. Dispersed throughout the world.'



‘You must go further,’ Mimmo says.

‘It’s not you want me out your room?’ he asks.

‘People, chased from their land, hassled by the cops, it’s everywhere, we all have part of that. Justice comes through war – you’ll have heard that, Mimmo. It’s not false. When the gods die, it goes on, all of it – not hope. It’s physics.’

‘Don’t take off!’ says Mimmo. ‘No flights of hot air, no balloons. If you leave your wife, your mother, if they throw you out – it’s quite normal. It’s what the forces of our destinies want us to do, to be. We’re ants, we’re everywhere. Underground and in the trees. The universal species, we’ll become – we’ll take – the lot. Then sit and wait.’

‘Well,’ he says, unappeased. ‘What if a solitary wolf comes knocking at your armoured door?’

‘I’ll shoot him through the keyhole,’ Mimmo says. ‘Straight through his yellow eye.’

Gay Paree. How the words shift their shapes, their partners. Friends.



