

INTERVIEW WITH IDA BIARD

COMMISSIONED BY:

Radmila Iva Janković, curator of the MCA, Zagreb

Why the Tenants' Gallery?

Although the gallery, founded in 1972, operated in the public space for only four years, it is one of the first of the movements of resistance to new art forms having to comply with the market system and it had a very important role in the revolutionary time of changes in artistic means of representation. Since Ida Biard, who launched this unconventional gallery in public space, gathering together artists who were then young and as yet had no reputations (some of them were later to be real stars, like Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Goran Trbuljak, André Cadere, Alain Fleischer, Daniel Buren, Braco Dimitrijević, Sarkis...) lived in Paris, and the younger generation of curators and artists never had the chance to meet her directly and get first hand information, Amela's idea about mediation seemed first rate for that sort of thing. I myself would always have liked to get to know Ida Biard and talk with her about the Tenants' Gallery, about the context in which some of the works that are today crucial parts of the permanent display of the MCA were created and first exhibited. (Radmila Iva Janković)

The first commission, *Ethics of a Hero*, includes a conversation with Ida Biard, founder and manager of the Tenants' Gallery. In the space of the Extension the result of this commission was to be on show in the form of a spatial installation, in which the artist would combine the textual part of the correspondence with Ida Biard, the text and questions of Iva Janković with a video insert of a recording of the theatrical performance of *Horace* after the drama of the same name by the French classic writer Pierre Corneille, representative of the Grand Siècle.

Those taking part in the project were DeVe, Kontejner, Slobodne veze, WO collective, Irena Bekić, Marina Viculin, Radmila Iva Janković, Evelina Turković, Tihomir Milovac, Feđa Vukić, Kornel Šeper, URK, Dora Baras, Stefan Haus and Vesna Vuković.:

The opening was on Friday, April 29 at 7 pm.

TITLE OF THE WORK:

ETHICS OF THE HERO

From April 29 to May 13, 2011, Extension, Museum of Contemporary Art



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PHOTO: Amda Frankl

During meetings and talks about a commission, Radmila Iva Janković expressed the wish that for the Museum of Contemporary Art, as part of the *What I Bear* project, I should have an interview with Ida Biard, curator and founder of the Tenants' Gallery, who has for years lived in Paris. This was the first commission. Rada really wanted to commission something for the benefit of the Museum of Contemporary Art and I was very happy that with my work I would be able to make a contribution and refresh the collection of the museum. We both got down to the task with a lot of energy and motivation.

March 9, 2011

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Document: email

From: Amela Frankl

To: Radmila Iva Janković
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Dear Rada,

The *What I Bear* project has got some funding and now I / we are making a start with the production. I have resolved to start off with your commission for an interview with Ida Biard in Paris.

What kind of an interview would you like in concrete terms? Should I frame the questions for Ida Biard or will you prepare the topics for her? Would you like us to make up a list of questions together? Do you have any message for Ida Biard? Would you like it to be filmed, for us to screen the conversation, or do you want the interview to be in the form of text and photography (this will condition whether I have to buy a ticket for a cinematographer and I would also have to find a cameraperson who actually wants to go to Paris).

The commissioned interview with Ida Biard and everything you want me to do about it in Paris, and my work on the topic, will be the main substance of the event in the Museum of Contemporary Art. Any information about Ida Biard will be useful, and if you and the museum have any documentation about her work, could you please tell me about it.

On March 30 I am travelling to Paris and plan to stay there a dozen days. I think that between April 15 and April 20 we would be able to organise our micro-happening in the museum. I suggest that we meet as soon as possible and agree on everything.

Sincere greetings; I am looking forward to working with you.

Amela

PS If you have Ida Biard's address or any kind of contact info for her, please let me have it.

March 11, 2011

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Document: email
 From: Radmila Iva Janković
 To: Amela Frankl

Here's the number of Ida Biard in Paris.
 I believe that in the Museum of Contemporary Art there's extensive documentation about the Tenants' Gallery, which I can check on Monday, and arrange a visit for you with the documentalist, for her to get material ready. It would be best for the interview to be filmed and last about 30 min. I would be incorporated into the Educational Points in the Museum, and I believe that one day it will be used in other ways too, as, for example, part of some film about the beginnings of conceptual art in this country. I talked with Nada Beroš, who runs the educational programme, and she thinks it would be useful. We can talk on the phone about that. Then when I was in contact with you about this project, there was the euphoria of the move [of the museum], the opening... today I would probably commission something else.
 there you go, r
 number of ida biard in paris she is a Zagreb woman (if you didn't know)
 xxxxxxxxx

I called Ida Biard; she answered cordially. I briefly explained to her I was starting with the production of a project for the Museum of Contemporary Art and would like to talk to her about it. She dictated her email address to me and we agreed to communicate by mail. Soon after our telephone conversation I sent her an email with a description of the *What I Bear* project and the wish of Radmila Iva Janković for me to have an interview with her. A few days later came the answer in which Ida Biard very determinedly refused to give an interview. I didn't wait long and replied to her very cordially. Our communication consisted of just three emails. This was the only material, the only trace of our contact, which I could use for the making of the work.

March 15, 2011

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Document: email
 From: Amela Frankl
 To: Idea Biard Amrain

Dear Ms Biard,
 Just now I am starting off the production of my project *What I Bear*, which is why I am addressing you with this letter.
 My name is Amela Frankl, I am an artist and for a good many years now,

for personal reasons, I have been dividing my time between Zagreb and Paris, and will use this biographical circumstance in this work.

The project *What I Bear* consists of my journeys to Paris at the request of other persons who commission something from me from Paris or want me to do something in Paris. On my return to Zagreb, with the material brought back and in association with the client, I prepare in Zagreb's MCA a micro-event, a mini exhibition or action. Fourteen people in the arts world are taking part, curators and curatorial collectives, with whom on the basis of one simple rule I shall be able to have direct and personal contact and collaboration. The content of my project is neither the travelling nor the meeting, neither the relation of artist and curator, nor the issue of who is producing what.

In the process of the fulfilment of the order and of my work on executing the set task, fourteen times I create a new situation. The sense and content of this project lie in the affirmation of my freedom. Both in the set rule, in the situation in which with minimal means, I have rapidly and effectively to overcome restrictions, put myself to the test. To fulfil the task to the maximum, whatever it might be and at the same time avoid control and master the space of creation. How to establish my personality and where the limits are in this. To what limits I can follow my thought between the set theme and up to what limits I can intervene in it.

My first client Iva Radmila Janković, curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, commissioned from me from Paris a thirty-minute interview, filmed on camera, with you. My project is entirely to fulfil her order and to create a space of reaction and commentary, to impart to it a personal quality.

This is how I imagine this intervention of mine.

You and I are seated in a typical position for a TV interview in front of the camera, you with your face and I with my back to the camera.

I ask you some prepared questions, you reply to me. However, at the end of the interview the camera does not go off. The filming goes on. The set gradually changes. I come to sit by you and together we look at the footage of our interview, and some people close to you might spontaneously appear in the frame. The scene is intimate, personal, liberated. A moment of togetherness and individual feeling. The second thirty minutes is free space for all of us: silence, commentary, conversation together, movement...

I would present the sixty minutes of recorded material in the form of a big video project in the Museum of Contemporary Art at the end of April.

I would be extremely happy to produce this project with you and at the same time get to know you.

Amela Frankl

March 16, 2011

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 Document: email
 From: Ida Biard Amrain
 To: Amela Frankl

Dear Amela Frankl

I cannot say that first of all I was not touched in a kind of human vanity by your proposal, by the project *What I Bear* and by your conception of it, which you defined as the affirmation of “your freedom”. To attempt to get into the creative space and to make good one’s own freedoms while fulfilling the demands of a client seems to me today, at this moment of our confused civilised perversity, of the rule of the market over everything, including the world of culture and art, above all the system that devises it: a colossal illusion of the affirmation of personal freedom and what that might possibly mean, be worth – today. In any event the Tenants’ Gallery from 1976 when it proclaimed a strike against artists up to 1981 did not do this out of some of its own propaganda reasons, but because of the all too obvious realisation that the system and the market manipulate this particular area of free human activity as well. I send you these few sentences so that you would understand, if you can, that the freedom of the concept of activity of the Tenants’ Gallery is more important to me than some interview with Ida Biard in your rapid and effective interview commissioned for your project by Iva Radmila Janković of the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Sincerely,
 Ida Biard Amrain

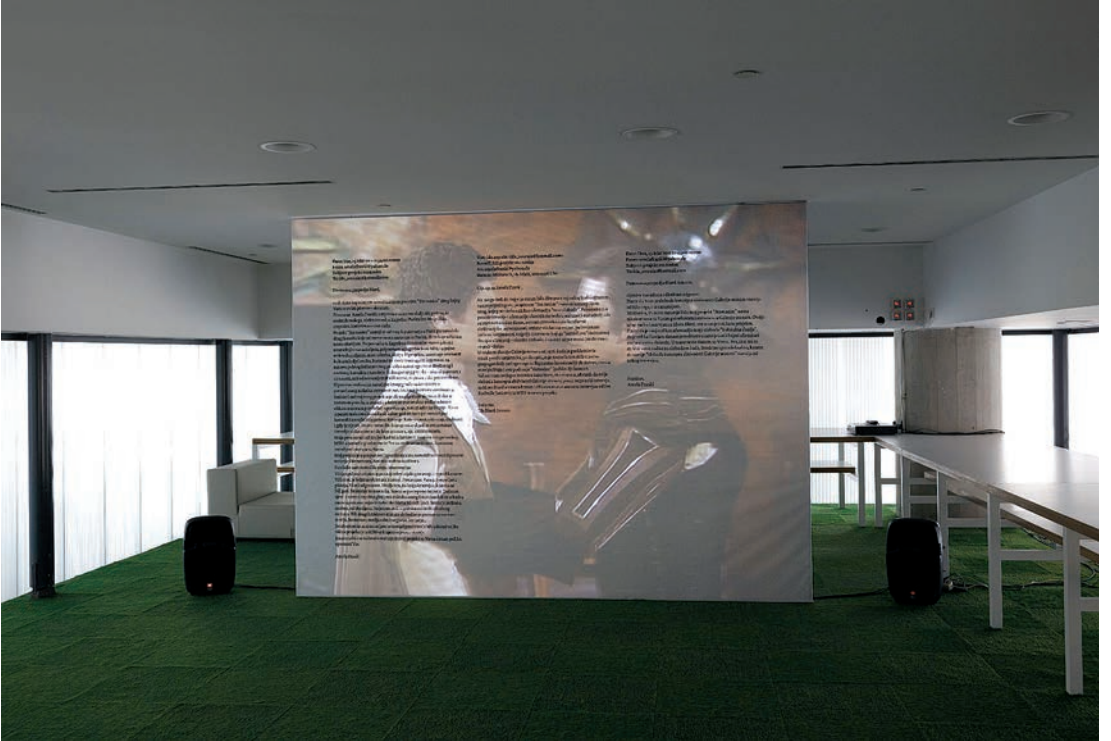
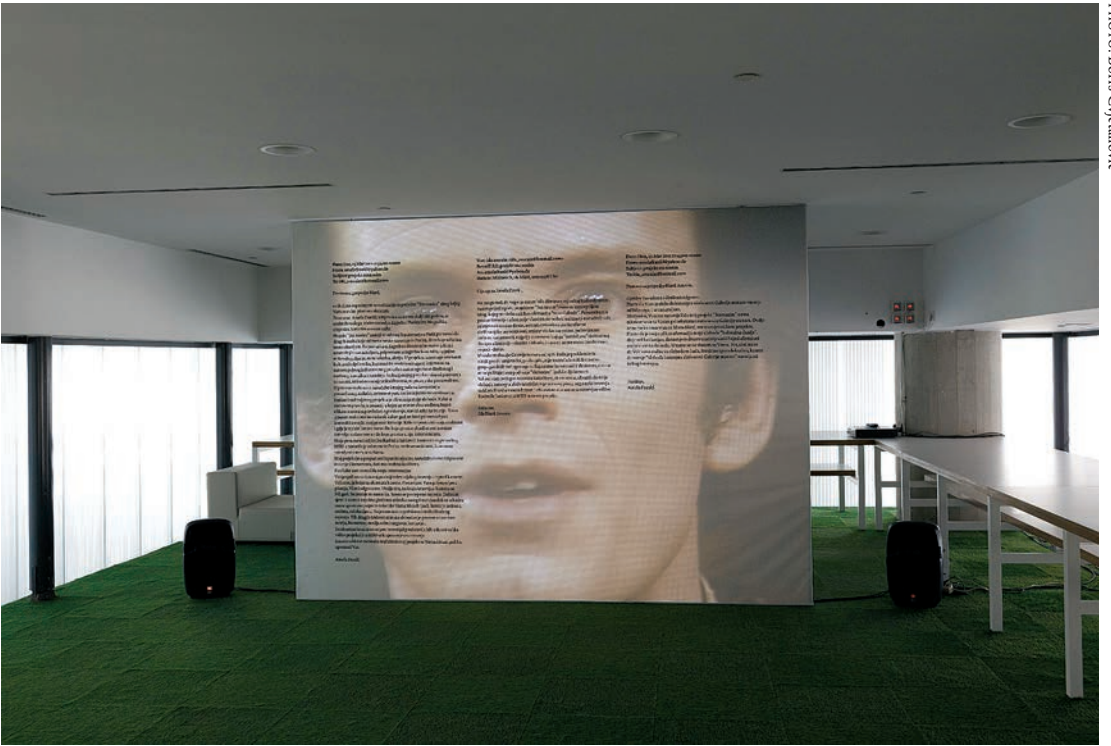
I was surprised by this mail, but I was enthusiastic about her spontaneous and uncompromising answer, by her clear stance without any attempt to negotiate conditions or adjust to my project. I thought that few people would today answer so feelingly and unhesitatingly and downright refuse to give an interview. I was also impressed by her proud stance. I felt in myself a challenge. I wondered how to react appropriately, to serve the project, and in spite of it to make an artwork. I was excited. A tension arose within me. I determined to respond with pride to pride.

March 17, 2011

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 Document: email
 From: Amela Frankl
 To: Idea Biard Amrain

Dear Ms Biard Amrain,

I appreciate your sincere and straightforward answer. You write that the freedom of the concept of the activity of the Tenants’ Gallery is more important than anything to you, and I understand this.



But perhaps you did not understand that my “What I Bear” project has no connection whatever with your priority and with the activity of the Tenants’ Gallery. This is not about an interview with Ida Biard, it is, in fact, an art project.

You write that my work as affirmation of my freedom is a colossal illusion, that it is a great illusion in today’s society to demand or want to affirm one’s own liberty. In this, I cannot agree with you. But it seems to me that you yourself desire freedom when, ironically and paradoxically, you say that the “freedom of the concept of the activity of the Tenants’ Gallery” is more important to you than any interview.

Best wishes

Amela Frankl

I did not immediately inform Rada about the refusal of Ida Biard to be interviewed. I wanted to have enough time in which to think how to address this situation: beginning of the project, first commission, and impossibility of carrying out the task. I wondered if the first commission was going to set the tone for the whole project. I had to count on there being situations like this. I waited for Rada’s text of the commission and the list of questions for the interview.

March 31, 2011

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Document: email

From: Radmila Iva Janković

To: Amela Frankl
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OK, Amela.

Only this morning did I pull myself together, somehow there’s too much of everything. Big apologies, but things sometimes pile up on each other, and you have to choose. here are the issues and my first text for a guide through the museum, which nada later on simplified a bit.

for the next mail I shall try to put together a short motivational text...

it would be super if a some preliminary talk with ida biard could be published, test out a bit where it would be most interesting to fasten on so that it shouldn’t be too terse, and doesn’t stick strictly to questions, but run the conversation intuitively...

well, just think of these questions as a kind of skeleton...

cheers, r.

Tenants’ Gallery

The Tenants’ Gallery or in French *La galerie des locataires* is the name for an informal manner of exhibiting that took place between 1972 to 1976 in various places, mostly in Paris and in Zagreb, wanting to show that the problem of exhibiting and

the problem of art did not have necessarily to run along the stereotyped track. This unconventional gallery, outside the White Cube was launched by art historian Ida Biard, promoting most often young artists who had not yet made a name for themselves. With art interventions in street display cases, flats, trains, the underground and cinemas, the intention was to set up direct communication with the passers-by, so as to circumvent the art market, the traditional protocols of institutional mediation in the reception of the artwork. In Zagreb, for instance, the artists showed their works in the display window of the Upper Town Tourist Board in Tomičeva ulica and in the Balkan Cinema (today the Europe Cinema) during the commercials before the film was screened.

With what was called an ethical contract, the artists guaranteed to analyse the relationship of the place at which they exhibited and their work and to explain the purposes of their work. The works thus came into being as the result of the physical or psychological context, the setting or situation in which the artists found themselves and to which they were reacting. Calling into question the language of art, which they endeavoured to de-mystify, seeking new elements of syntax to oppose its glorification, the artists protested against the commercialisation of the work of art. When, in time, after all giving up on their utopian ideas, they started to get involved in the market and elite art system, Ida Biard announced a strike, and stopped the operations of the Tenants' Gallery in which numerous conceptual artists, famous today, exhibited: Goran Trbuljak, Pierre Hubert, Daniel Buren, Cadere, Anette Messenger, Radomir Damjanović Damnjan, Jan Dibbets, Christian Boltanski, Balint Szombaty, Braco Dimitrijević and so on.

RIJ

How did it come about you had the idea to devise the Tenants Gallery and perhaps you can at once explain the title of this action.

What lay behind the choice of places for the action?

Can you compare the reactions to the artistic projects in public space in Paris and Zagreb, or, how did Parisians react, how did Zagrebians react?

Did you announce the actions of the artists?

Were there any actions that caused any particularly marked reactions on the part of the public, in the sense of bans or polemics, or in association with the artist did you attempt to participate in public space discreetly?

How did you choose the artists? Then they were young people without much of a name...it might be said that you had a good

intuition, for many of them are among the most important names in contemporary art.

As well as in the streets of the two cities, in the displays and the underground, some actions were performed in the train. Can you describe a bit the course of these mobile actions and the motives for their production?

The artists made use of some contemporary methods of mediating their works, inserting them like a virus into some media space, replacing the adverts and trailers for films in cinemas with their own works. Can you say something about this? Did the actions in Zagreb and Paris result in the linkage of the Croatian and the French scene?

How did French artists react to the Croatian milieu?

Did any Croatian artists take part in the Parisian actions?

What is an Ethical Contract?

All of a sudden, the Gallery closed down, what actually happened? After that there was nevertheless a small revival...

Why did you rethink your decision to stop working with the artists who in spite of their views began to accede to market postulates, which took for granted fitting into the stereotype on which the Western gallery system worked?

Did you see the set-up of the Tenants' Gallery in the Museum of Contemporary Art and were you satisfied with the manner in which the works of the artists were presented?

April 4, 2011

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Document: email
From: Amela Frankl
To: Radmila Iva Janković
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Dear Rada,
thank you for the questions and texts you sent. They are very important and will be an integral part of this work.

Ida Biard refused to be interviewed. Her answer will be integrated into the work itself. Forty years later, the view of Ida Biard is coherent and consistent.

There, then, these are the bases on which I shall improvise. The theme will be the ethics of heroism.

I have agreed on a presentation on April 29, or May 3 at the latest, with Tihomir Milovac, who is the curator of the whole project. I will be back in Zagreb about April 15, to prepare the whole material in a technical sense in the Extension venue.

I shall get in touch when I come back, if you have time, we could talk.

Cheers,
Amela.

I was in touch with Rada. She was quite sorry that Ida Biard refused to be interviewed. She was interested in how I would be able to make a work out of this situation and this material.

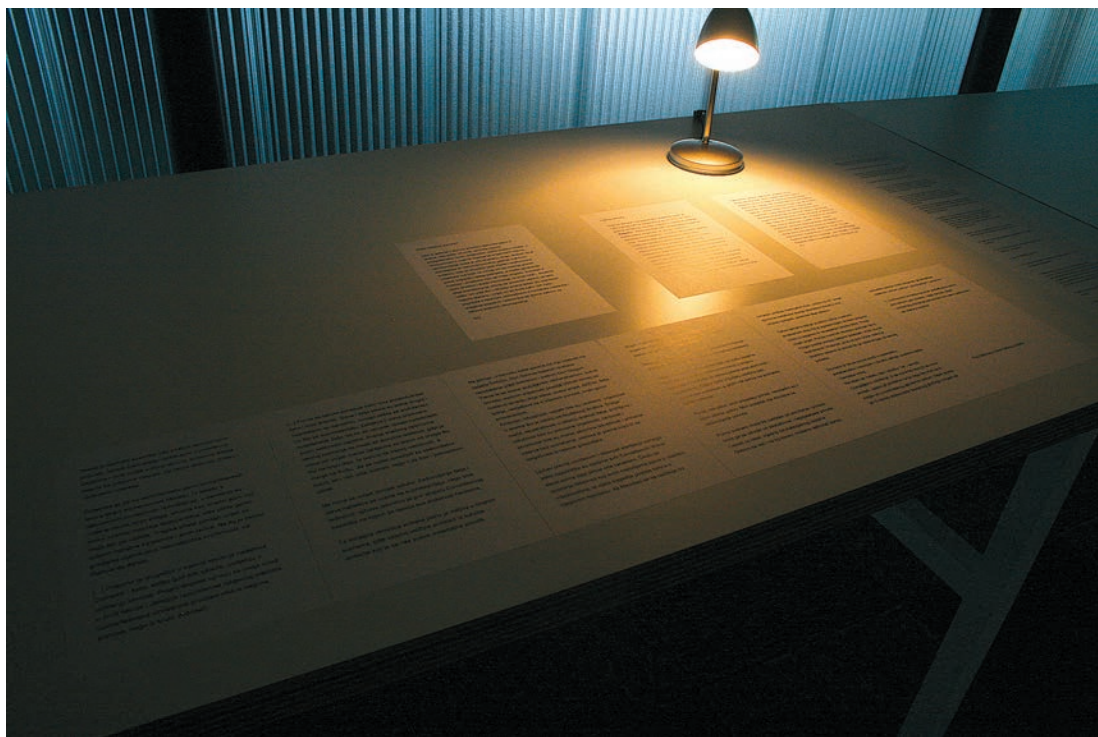
I analysed our short correspondence. It was clear that Ida Biard put value in first place, not any value, but the forgotten and noble values, the most important to her: art, freedom and honour, opposing inveterate and simple social values, as she writes in the answer: “our confused civilised perversity, the rule of the market.” Ida demands ideas, and puts them before herself.

I conclude, her answer is full of pride and vanity. In this uncompromising tone I felt the loneliness of someone who had eternally and hopelessly fought against the system. Yes, I recognised her heroic stance.

I understood that from the few sentences I had in front of me I could construct a portrait of Ida Biard. I was touched by her sincere answer and wanted to make a magnificent portrait. I recalled the tragic drama *Horace*, a masterpiece of the French writer of the Grand Siècle Pierre Corneille. Horace is a hero who stops at nothing. He is chosen to duel against Curiace, he has to defend Rome from the attacks of the inhabitants of the city of Alba... Horatius agrees to the duel, a mark of his fate and the defence of his honour, of family love; a sister's love, the peace of home or the duty of protector of the family, in spite of all the reasons of common sense.

Fate that expands the lists of honour, does
 Brave matter to our constancy propose:
 He has combin'd his mischief to make one,
 May with our valour hold proportion,
 And as he sees no common men we are;
 So he no common fortune does prepare.
 To fight an enemy for the publick good,
 And with a stranger hazard blood for blood;
 The poor effect of a mean vertue is,
 Thousands have don't, and thousands may do this
 For a man's Country 'tis so brave to die,
 Who would not court so bright a Destiny?
 But to the publick when we sacrifice
 The thing we most do love, we most do prize;
 To fight with a man's second self, his Friend,
 And strive to kill him that would us defend,
 A Wifes dear Brother, and a Sisters Love,
 All ties, and all relations to remove,
 And in our Country's Cause t' encounter him,
 Whose blood we would with our own lives redeem:

P. Corneille, *Horace*, Act II scene iii (tr. Sir William
 Lower, 17th century)



I found a text by literary theorist Paul Bénichou about the theatre of the Grand Siècle, a study of morality and heroism, concepts that are foreign to the contemporary viewer.

Un théâtre sans ressorts affectifs puissants est chose difficile à concevoir. En fait, les passions occupent tout le théâtre Cornélien. Elles forment la trame première, mais toujours apparente, de ce tissu compliqué, qui s'effiloche si l'ambition, l'amour, les intérêts de famille n'en unissent toutes les parties.

Il est vrai que les mouvements de l'affectivité tels qu'ils se présentent chez les personnages de Corneille sont de nature à dépayser les lecteurs modernes. Aujourd'hui, en vertu d'une habitude d'esprit naturaliste, le sens commun voit avant tout dans la passion un entraînement violent, étranger à tout sentiment de dignité, et plus enclin à faire abdiquer le moi qu'à l'exalter. Le tragique des passions ne va pas sans catastrophes morales, sans désastres du moi. Toute la littérature naturaliste, depuis Racine jusqu'à nous, a vécu sur cette conception.

[...] Mais, dans la tradition dont il s'inspire, il en est tout autrement : les désirs, si impétueux qu'ils soient, sont liés à l'exaltation de l'orgueil. Et c'est précisément par là que l'idée du bien s'introduit dans la vie des grands, et corrige le dérèglement de l'instinct. C'est moins dans la rigueur du devoir que dans les mouvements d'une nature orgueilleuse que prend naissance le sublime cornélien.

[...] L'orgueil s'affirme comme tel avec autant d'ingénuité que d'insolence. La gloire et les appétits voisinent et se mêlent sans cesse, se soutenant bien plus souvent qu'ils ne se contredisent. Si la gloire exige une concession préalable des désirs, cette concession est largement compensée par l'éclat du succès [...]. On ne saurait trop insister sur l'optimisme profond de cette conception, où la vertu coûte toujours moins au moi qu'elle ne finit par lui donner, où elle se fonde moins sur l'effort que sur une disposition permanente à préférer les satisfactions de la gloire à celles de la jouissance pure et simple, quand par malheur il faut choisir.

Le choix est loin d'être toujours nécessaire. Le plus souvent la satisfaction des désirs et la gloire, loin de s'exclure, ne font qu'un ; leur unité est la donnée première du théâtre cornélien, sur laquelle se bâtissent ensuite les développements compliqués de l'héroïsme.

Cette charpente primitive du système est bien visible dans les scènes, si nombreuses, où le sentiment du grand naît de la rivalité d'ambition, à nos yeux toute matérielle: ainsi Dom Gormas exhalant sa colère de se voir écarté d'une charge importante, devant Don Diègue qui l'a obtenue et s'en félicite. Pareille scène semblait grande à sa manière ; un conflit d'intérêt y paraît dès l'abord avec tout l'éclat d'une rivalité de gloire ; toute passion, haine, désir, dépit, s'y résout en mouvements d'orgueil, tout discours en défi [...].

Dans ce qui subsistait alors de la société féodale, les valeurs suprêmes étaient l'ambition, l'audace, le succès. Le poids de l'épée, la hardiesse des appétits et du verbe faisaient le mérite ; le mal résidait dans la faiblesse ou la timidité, dans le fait de désirer peu, d'oser petitement, de subir une blessure sans la rendre : on s'excluait par là du rang des maîtres pour rentrer dans le commun troupeau.

L'amour empathique des grandeurs et le penchant à se célébrer soi-même marquent à peu près indistinctement tous les caractères de Corneille: à tous la gloire imprime le même air de famille. On cite Nicomède qui chante sa propre valeur sur tous les tons en faisant d'une tragédie entière un hymne du Héros à lui-même ; mais Nicomède ne diffère pas essentiellement des autres. Rodrigue s'il souffre davantage, ne s'estime pas moins. Horace mis en accusation devant le roi après le meurtre de sa soeur, n'oublie pas ce qu'il vaut :

“Je ne vanterai point les exploits de mon bras ;
 Votre majesté, Sir, a vu mes trois combats ;
 Il est bien malaisé qu'un autre les seconde ;
 Si bien que pour laisser une illustre mémoire ;
 La mort seule aujourd'hui peut conserver ma gloire.”

Pour être complet, ce serait tous les héros de Corneille qu'il faudrait faire comparaître. Douter de soi serait, pour n'importe lequel d'entre eux, sortir du caractère héroïque.

La religion de l'orgueil ne saurait s'en tenir à l'exaltation du succès. Une nécessité intérieure la pousse à se développer dans un sens idéal. Cette nécessité dérive de l'inquiétude même du moi devant le fait inévitable du malheur et de l'échec. Toute religion de la grandeur humaine souffre de l'obsession du destin, contre lequel l'orgueil de l'homme n'a point de recours matériel. La défaite, la privation, la mort sont inscrits dans la nature, et leur inéluctabilité frappe le moi d'une blessure si sensible qu'on ne saurait, sans désespérer l'orgueil, le faire résider uniquement dans la puissance de vaincre.

Il faut, pour se mettre d'avance, et quoiqu'il advienne, à l'abris de l'humiliation, que l'orgueil se désolidarise de l'univers ennemi, qu'il s'attache à des victoires idéales plus précieuses que le succès matériel. C'est si vrai qu'on pourrait presque définir par cette démarche la nature même de l'orgueil. La substitution, comme valeur suprême, d'une puissance morale hors d'atteinte à la puissance physique menacée, de l'attitude du défi à celle du succès, sert en tout cas de point de départ à toute la métaphysique spiritualiste de l'orgueil.

On conçoit aisément l'importance d'une pareille substitution pour une classe sociale dont la condition tout entière est dominée par les vicissitudes des armes. Dans ce domaine, le désastre menace toujours, et l'orgueil doit être assez sûr de lui pour se savoir capable d'y survivre, voire de l'affronter : la vaillance, la première des vertus, est si immédiatement impliquée dans l'orgueil, qu'il s'en trouve ennobli dès le principe [...].

Il suffit que l'orgueil rencontre sur son chemin le danger, l'oppression, l'infortune, pour qu'il se change, s'il persévère, en vertu rare et héroïque. Le „non“ Stoïque sur lequel repose si souvent le sublime cornélien, résulte d'une semblable métamorphose. Il faut être héros, ou cesser d'être ; le moi, pour ne pas „se démentir“, et avant même d'y avoir songé, touche au sublime. La résistance à la force ou aux événements prend ainsi la forme éminemment féodale d'un défi qui met le vaincu, par la seule vertu, tout idéale, de la parole et du dédain, au-dessus de ce qui l'écrase.

Camille défie Horace vainqueur, Emilie défie Auguste tout puissant.

[...] Loin de résulter de la soumission du moi à une discipline quelconque, la vertu cornélienne réside dans une nouvelle exaltation de ce moi, par laquelle il s'assure lui-même contre les injures du destin.

— Paul Bénichou: Morales du grand siècle

It is hard to imagine a theatre without powerful emotional impulses. The passions occupy the whole of Corneille's theatre and always make visible the basis of the complex fabric that would disintegrate were it not for ambition, love and family interests.

It is true that the movements of emotions as they appear in the characters of Corneille are likely to disorient modern readers. Today, by virtue of the habit of naturalism, common sense sees passion above all as a violent urge, foreign to any feeling of dignity, and more inclined to result in the abdication than the exaltation of the self. The tragedy of passions does not go without moral catastrophes, without disasters of the ego. All naturalist literature, from Racine on, has lived on this conception.

But, in the tradition by which he is inspired, it is quite different: desires, however impetuous they are, are linked to the exaltation of pride. And it is precisely through this that the idea of good enters the lives of adults, and corrects the disorder of instinct. It is less in the rigour of duty than in the movements of a proud nature that the Corneillean sublime is born.

Pride asserts itself as such with as much ingenuity as insolence. Fame and appetites are constantly mingling and combining, supporting each other far more often than they contradict each other. If glory requires the prior concession of desires, this concession is largely outweighed by the brilliance of success [...]. We cannot overemphasize the profound optimism of this conception, where virtue always costs the ego less than it ends up giving it, where it is based less on effort than on a permanent disposition to prefer the satisfactions of glory to those of pure and simple enjoyment, when by misfortune it is necessary to choose.

The choice is far from always necessary. Most often the satisfaction of desires and glory, far from being mutually exclusive, are one and the same; their unity is the primary datum of Cornelian theatre, on which the complicated developments of heroism are subsequently built.

This primitive framework of the system is clearly visible in the scenes, so numerous, where the feeling of the great arises from the rivalry of ambition, in our eyes quite material: thus Dom Gormas exhaling his anger at seeing himself removed from an important charge, in front of Don Diègue who obtained it and is happy about it. Such a scene seemed grand in its own way; a conflict of interest appears there from the outset with all the brilliance of a rivalry for glory; all passion, hatred, desire, spite, are resolved there in movements of pride, all discourse in defiance [...].

In what then remained of feudal society, the supreme values were ambition, daring, and success. The weight of the sword, the boldness of the appetites and of the word created merit; evil lay in weakness or timidity, in the fact of desiring little, of daring little, of undergoing a wound without returning it: one thereby excluded oneself from the rank of masters in order to join the common herd.

The empathetic love of grandeur and the penchant for celebrating oneself mark almost indiscriminately all the characters of Corneille: fame imprints the same family likeness on all. We quote Nicomede who sings his own value in all tones, turning an entire tragedy into a hymn of the Hero to himself; but Nicomede does not differ essentially from the others. Rodrigue, if he suffers more, does not esteem himself less. Horace, indicted before the king, after the murder of his sister, do not forget what he is worth:

I will not vaunt the exploits of my arm;
 Your Majesty, Sire, has witnessed combats three;
 It would be most hard for someone else to match them;
 So that to leave an illustrious memory;
 Death alone today can keep my glory.

For completeness sake, all the heroes of Corneille would have to be brought forward. Doubt in the self would, for any of them, to be out of the heroic character.

The religion of pride cannot limit itself to the exaltation of success. An inner necessity pushes it to develop in an ideal direction. This necessity derives from the ego's very anxiety in the face of the inevitable fact of unhappiness and failure. Every religion of human greatness suffers from an obsession with fate, against which the pride of man has no material recourse. Defeat, privation, death are inscribed in nature, and their inevitability strikes the ego with a wound so



PHOTO: ANCHA FRANKL

sensitive that one could not, without despairing pride, make it reside solely in the power to conquer.

To put oneself in advance, and whatever happens, to be sheltered from humiliation, pride must dissociate itself from the enemy universe, attach itself to ideal victories more precious than material success. It is so true that one could almost define by this approach the very nature of pride. The substitution, as supreme value, of a moral power beyond the reach of threatened physical power, from the attitude of defiance to that of success, in any case serves as a starting point for the whole spiritualist metaphysics of pride. .

It is easy to see the importance of such a substitution for a social class whose entire condition is dominated by the vicissitudes of arms. In this area, disaster always threatens, and pride must be self-confident enough to know that it is capable of surviving it, or even facing it: valour, the first of the virtues, is so immediately involved in pride. , that it is ennobled from the beginning [...].

It is enough that pride meets danger, oppression, misfortune on its way, for it to change, if it perseveres, into a rare and heroic virtue. The Stoic “no” on which the Corneillean sublime so often rests, results from a similar metamorphosis. You have to be a hero, or stop being; the ego, so as not to “contradict itself”, and even before having thought of it, touches the sublime. Resistance to force or to events thus takes the eminently feudal form of a challenge which puts the vanquished, by the only virtue, quite ideal, of speech and disdain, above what crushes him

Camille challenges the victorious Horace, Emilie challenges the almighty Augustus.

[...] Far from resulting from the submission of the ego to any discipline, Corneillean virtue resides in a new exaltation of this ego, by which it insures itself against the insults of fate.

— Paul Bénichou: *Morales du grand siècle*

On a large white canvas I printed the short correspondence with Ida Biard, our short dialogue, onto which a scene from the theatrical performance done in Paris in 1971 in which Horace addresses his heroic words to his opponent, Curiace, is projected.

The work displayed excited criticisms and reactions because I had employed the Ida Biard correspondence for the making of the work. I experienced the reactions and the commentaries as a misunderstanding. To give up, or to refrain from making use of the unique opportunity provided me at this moment to portray a heroine like Ida Biard would have been a sign of my creative blindness. I was able to render the beauty and rare quality of this kind of personality in the very best manner possible.

April 28, 2011

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Document: email

From: Radmila Iva Janković

To: Amela Frankl
.....

sorry I shan't be able to take part and I hope that everything goes off tip-top. let's meet for a coffee some time, and I hope I shall have the chance to see your work.

x, r.