

Amitiés



Pont Marie, 17 June 2015; photo by Dianne Hunter

Part I: FRENCH FEMINISTS

Woody Allen's film *Midnight in Paris* represents perfectly, I think, the allure the City of Light has for American intellectuals. Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald were there in the day; later came what we called "French Theory" and "French Feminism" and its stars Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous. Because France was slower than England in translating Freud's works, it was not until Lacan, who read German and who began to lecture on Freud's early work in what was called the "return to Freud" in the 1960s and 1970s that psychoanalysis became lively in Paris. Although the various Parisian intellectuals saw themselves as diverse, the American perspective on them in academia grouped them in a fashion similar to the way that American tourists used to visit "Europe" before there was a European Common Market, an E.U., or self-defined "Europeans." There used to be a mock slogan for this: "If it's Tuesday, this must be Belgium!"

If one may say America is a European creation, one may also see Europe as an American creation in the sense that the European Union was meant to rival and end claims of the United States to world domination through the economic power of market command and free movement of goods and people over huge tracts of real estate. Similarly, "French Freud" and "French Feminism" were creations of English-speaking intellectuals in England and the United States who are known in France, to American amusement, as "Anglo" or "Anglo-Saxon." Having imagined Frenchified psychoanalysis and feminism, we "Anglos" wanted to study them.

After hearing Jacques Lacan's translator Anthony Wilden lecture at the State University of New York at Buffalo when I was a graduate student in the early 1970s, and seeing the crowd his presence assembled there, and hearing about how all Paris and even the Rolling Stones converged on the Panthéon to hear Lacan just as crowds had gathered at the Salpêtrière in the late-nineteenth century to hear Jean-Martin Charcot, I could hardly wait to get to France when I went on my first sabbatical in 1978. Thereafter I returned at every opportunity.

A turning point in my relation to psychoanalysis in France came in 1986, when my paper "Representations of Hysteria," accepted at the *Fondation du Champ Freudien* Convention in Paris, brought me into contact with some intellectuals living there who were interested in American feminism and in the popularity of certain Parisian intellectuals who were always being invited to lecture in the USA. Cross-cultural

narcissism, academic and publication envy, plus curiosity formed part of the way theorists on both sides of the Atlantic studied each other.

Two “French Feminists” befriended me in the 1980s. Both were born in Belgium, spoke French as their first language, and lived in Paris: Marie-Claire Boons-Grafé (1925-2019), a Lacanian analyst who taught a course on Hysteria at the University of Paris VIII, from where she received her doctorate in 1988; and her friend Françoise Collin (1928-2012), philosopher, essayist, novelist, and founder of the journal *Les cahiers du Grif*, who was in the 1980s focused on the work of Hannah Arendt. Françoise had heard of me from her American friend Melinda Guttman (1944-2010), who had performed a version of the case history of Josef Breuer's patient Anna O., the woman who gave birth to psychoanalysis. When I read about Melinda's play, I phoned her and told her about my upcoming Paris paper on representations of hysteria. Melinda phoned Françoise, who told Marie-Claire, who was intending to be at the Paris conference.

At the conference, during a break, a beautiful woman wearing a pink angora sweater approached me in the hot, crowded hall outside the auditorium where I had just delivered my paper. As she introduced herself, a spark of static electricity jumped from her pink sweater onto my black one. We laughed. This galvanic woman proved to be Marie-Claire, who gave me her card: pink with a gray wash, and gray letters that read “Marie-Claire Boons-Grafé, 11 Quai Bourbon, Paris 75004,” with her telephone number. The address didn't mean much to me then. The femininity of the pink and gray colors and the self-deprecating way Marie-Claire presented her card charmed me. I thought her name meant “blessed, clear gifts for writing.”

Marie-Claire invited me to come to her place for dinner. Insecure about carrying on a conversation in French over dinner with a stranger, I asked Marie-Claire whether I could bring my French-speaking American friend Margaret, a translator who was also attending this conference. Of course, said Marie-Claire, adding that Françoise would be coming to dinner as well.

We four had a delightful dinner chez Marie-Claire in her splendid *bel étage* apartment overlooking the Seine. Françoise Collin, who understood but avoided English, took charge of linguistic protocol by announcing that we would all speak our preferred language at dinner. Margaret and Marie-Claire spoke English and French. I spoke English. Margaret translated as needed.

Like me, Françoise had dark eyes and hair, a hurried manner, and a passion for feminism. She expressed skepticism about America and psychoanalysis. Marie-Claire, in contrast, exuded generosity and good will. My friend Margaret, a perceptive blue-

eyed blonde who had spent much of her life in Paris, was amused when she saw how smitten I was by Marie-Claire. Françoise on that occasion kept her intensity if not her disapprovals under control.

I was elated to have arrived in such glamorous surroundings and company. Margaret and Françoise were slender, stylish, poised women of a generation before mine. I was thrilled to have them as colleagues. Marie-Claire, softer and more overflowing than the rest of us, I wanted for a mentor. She was a tall, slim blonde with a welcoming manner and large blue eyes that looked directly into mine. I thought her beautiful, generous, intelligent, not difficult to love.

Their shared values and their Belgian origins brought Françoise and Marie-Claire together, but it was not an easy friendship. Françoise came from a relatively unprivileged social background. She was ferociously intelligent and independent, combative, impatient with conventions, easily bored and not reluctant to show it. Though she shared Françoise's contempt for conventions, and like Françoise, was financially independent, Marie-Claire had the opposite of Françoise's independence of mind. Marie-Claire worshiped her intellectual "*maîtres*" into her old age.

Very well-off financially, Marie-Claire would often behave as though she were poor. When she was planning a trip to New York, for example, where she could have afforded to stay at the Carlyle Hotel or the Sherry Netherland, she asked me to recommend a hotel in midtown. I recommended the Edison, where she in fact stayed. I do not know whether this was to see how the other half lives, to be in solidarity with us, or simply a rich-person's miserliness, or guilt over spending money on luxuries.

Whereas Marie-Claire was so rich she did not need to worry about money, Françoise identified with the working-class and often made jokes about Marie-Claire's wealth. Françoise lived in an ethnically-mixed, relatively down-at-heel part of Paris in the 11th arrondissement. Her philosophical orientation was staunchly materialist; her attitude was sardonic. Françoise was smarter and more accomplished as a writer than was Marie-Claire, but Françoise seemed to me to be less successful. Marie-Claire, an emotional magnet who behaved with regal benevolence, had made her way to a position at a center of French academia at Vincennes and of real estate on the Ile St. Louis. In solidarity with the working-class culture of her Paris neighborhood, Françoise, who had a narrow look about her, used to sneer at Marie-Claire's palatial digs in 75004. She would say that Marie-Claire could sell her apartment and live for the rest of her life in a posh hotel. Françoise evidently thought Marie-Claire over-privileged and mushy-minded.

Both these women were committed feminists, and I felt their intellectual combat as an intimate, European version of arguments I had heard in the United States between materialists and psychologists. Since materialists thought analyzing desire was beside the point of who owns what, and feminist psychologists thought relentless attention to class issues overlooked the way women and men internalize patriarchy, these two camps frowned on one another.

I found Françoise's materialist orientation grim. She expressed a low opinion of psychoanalysis, the English language, and America. She reminded me of Heidi Hartmann's comparison of the marriage of marxism and feminism to the husband and wife depicted in English common law: "marxism and feminism are one, and that one is marxism."

Françoise marveled that Marie-Claire attracted patients and acolytes. When I first met her, Marie-Claire was in her early 60s; I was in my early 40s. As a result of childhood polio Marie-Claire walked with a limp. I wanted to know how it felt to walk the way she did. Once when we three were crossing a wide avenue on the way to the *Musée de l'Homme* for a Jean-Luc Nancy lecture that Marie-Claire insisted we attend, Françoise noticed me walking a little behind Marie-Claire and imitating her gait. Françoise laughed and pointed this out to both of us.

Part II: THREE CAKES, THE TENNESSEE WALTZ

In 1999, I went on a year-long sabbatical to study psychoanalysis in Paris. Marie-Claire rented me her studio, downstairs from her own fabulous apartment near the Pont Marie. Her large, well-appointed apartment was ten steps away, up a spiral staircase, from her studio, which she lent or rented from time to time to friends from Senegal, Brazil, or the United States.

Books abounded in her personal spaces, including her consulting-room library situated on the west, and her office bookshelves to the east of the large living room, plus above that a large, wrap-around balcony tier going up to a high ceiling. On her shelves were psychoanalytic, philosophical, literary, and linguistic publications Marie-Claire had collected since her arrival in Paris from Brussels in her twenties. She surrounded herself with people of all ages, some of whom were psychoanalysts, many of whom were easily excitable, even manic individuals, including present and former patients, plus a personal assistant, Sylvie.

Marie-Claire kept the key to her apartment under the mat at her front door, and let that be known to friends who were welcome to visit the place when Marie-Claire was away. Sylvie, who worked as an assistant clerk at the drugstore around the corner, on the Rue des Deux Ponts, was often on the scene at 11 Quai Bourbon. She looked to be in

her late 30s, seemed very attached to Marie-Claire and politely resentful of me as new in Marie-Claire's circle of friends.

In the summer of 1997, Marie-Claire had acquired a gray-and-white cat named Colline or Monsieur de Colline, found on a hill in the Pyrenees. With the cat, the books, the numerous colleagues, the address, and the wonderful *proprietaire*, the studio appeared to me the perfect place to write. I thought it the navel of the world.

In June 1999, having recently arrived in Paris, I planned to go to Urbino for a literary conference. I was going to leave on the evening train, overnight to Florence, from the Gare de Lyon. It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day. Judging from my map of Paris *par arrondissements*, I thought it would be fine to walk to the station from the Ile St. Louis.

Wheeling behind me a small valise and carrying on my back a dark brown leather Lands' End briefcase that had been modified into an oversized oblong version of what school children use nowadays to carry their books, I set out in late afternoon. My path crossed the Pont Sully at the end of the island. From there, my route took me along the Seine on the right bank, first along the Quai Henry IV, and then the Quai de la Rapée, from where I would turn left toward the station. I was in a very good mood, looking forward to seeing Italy again and meeting friends and colleagues in Urbino. I liked the paper I was to present, "Hamlet's Hysterical Form," and hoped it would be well received.

After I had walked for half an hour, the leather backpack, into which I had put my paper for the conference, my wallet, my money, my tickets for the train and the couchette, and my passport, as well as a few books and what would ordinarily be the contents of a medicine cabinet, started to feel heavy. I decided to rest my shoulders by attaching the briefcase to the rolling suitcase, which had a plastic clip-on sewn into webbing and brass-riveted to the valise under its top handle. This new arrangement made walking easier.

Soon I passed the point on the river where it seemed to me that I should have been parallel to the Gare de Lyon. I had crossed to the side of the road where there were buildings. There was a lot of traffic, making a lot of noise. I could not see the station, and I regretted exposure to the pollution and noise. The sun was going down. I began to think I might miss the train, and doubted that it had been a good idea to try to go all the way to the station on foot.

To my left, set back from the street, was a large apartment building with a little garden in front of it. I could see the *Pont D'Austerlitz*, source of major traffic, on the right side

of the route. The air was difficult to breathe. I turned into the little garden by opening a small gate in a low, black metal wire fence, and walked toward another small gate, which opened onto the main artery where traffic roared off the *Pont*. The noise got worse the closer I got to the bridge. Now in the midst of rush hour at the end of a workday, I felt lost, having apparently missed the left turn to the station.

On the main artery a solitary man was walking toward the bridge. When I hailed him for directions to the station, he shouted for me to go straight on for about 700 meters, and then to look left, where I would see the clock. I hurried on for about 500 meters and then, looking back to check my luggage, I noticed that the briefcase was missing from the suitcase. I could hardly believe my eyes. Without that briefcase, I had no passport, no wallet, no money of any kind, no paper to read at the conference, no train ticket, and not even the key to get back into the studio. I looked toward the bridge. The man was no longer there. I said, "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" and thought, crazily, "That man must have taken it!" I turned around and started back. At every step, I said, "Oh, my God," retracing my path until I had arrived back at the point where I had seen the man.

I then looked toward the garden through which I had taken the shortcut to the main route issuing from the Austerlitz Bridge. There, caught on the little gate, was my briefcase, evidently having gotten detached as I passed out of the garden. It was upside-down, but still zipped closed, and all my belongings were intact inside. I picked it up with relief and gratitude. I walked the rest of the distance to the station, ate a wonderful dinner at *Le Train Bleu* restaurant there, found my couchette in plenty of time, and slept my way to Florence.

When I returned from Italy and a cheerful reception of my paper, I wanted to report my change of fortune and give something to the person through whom many good things seemed to be flowing. Before I came to Paris in 1999, I had gone through decades feeling like Miss Havisham, as if my life had stopped. In the 1980s, a colleague asked me why I had written "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis and Feminism: The Case of Anna O." My response was "fame and fortune." I now thought Anna O. had changed my fortune.

The previous summer, I had read Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* novels, and found poignant an allusion in one of them to the moment in Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra* when Antony realizes that his life is over as the music that had always accompanied him sounds the retreat of his gods. I reflected that I, too, had been abandoned by my gods. After the incident of the lost and found briefcase, I felt my gods returning and attributed this to what I took to be Marie-Claire's clearly-blessed

writing gifts and her apartment in what I took to be a paradise. I felt so elated by this that I could hardly wait to tell her about it.

At her request, I had agreed to pay the studio rent in cash. When I had the money ready, I phoned her. She answered the phone in a voice full of irritation.

I asked, "Is this a good time to call?"

She responded, "No, not really. I am going out."

I said, "I have 1000 francs for you. I can bring it to your door." She said, "Very well."

I went up to her door and rang the bell. Receiving no response, I sat down on the steps and waited. Then, feeling ignored, I stomped back down to the studio. Once inside, I immediately heard Marie-Claire outside, evidently in a rush.

Opening the door, I said, "You are a difficult woman to give money to, Marie-Claire."

She stared at me. I handed her an envelope, which she opened to count its contents, to my mild, unstated annoyance.

I said, "Don't spend it all in one place." She laughed.

"Don't lose it," I added, "and don't forget I gave it to you either." She said, "I won't forget."

Then she said, "You're dressed all in white!"

I responded, "Yes, like the walls of the studio, and like a sheet of paper." She laughed.

I said, "Marie-Claire, the most marvelous thing happened to me on my way to Italy."

She frowned, "Come along," she said, "and tell me. I'm on my way to an appointment for a pedicure. *Je suis pressée!*"

I followed her down the narrow staircase, trying to recount in my halting French the story of the lost and found briefcase. She showed no interest, but proceeded to tell me what a wonderful podiatrist she was going to see. When we arrived at the sidewalk in front of the building, she spotted an empty parking space close to the door.

She said, "*Tu tombes bien!* Wait here and keep this place for me. I go to Belgium tomorrow and have to load my car in the morning."

I stood there in my white deck-hand outfit while Marie-Claire went down the street to get her car, which was not far away on the same street. Feeling like a fool, I waved away the few cars that came along the Quai Bourbon. Their drivers were remarkably responsive to my indications that the space had already been claimed. Perhaps my identification with Douglas MacArthur served Marie-Claire well. She seemed quite pleased as she emerged from her re-parked car. She looked splendid in stone-colored chinos, a white V-neck top, and golden sandals.

She said, "You must try my podiatrist. *Il est dans le quartier. J'y vais à pied!*". Her feet, with their red-painted toenails, looked perfect as she hurried away.

Not having gotten to tell Marie-Claire the tale of the lost and found briefcase, I decided to write it up in French. For this purpose, I went to her apartment while she was away, planning to type it into her laptop, which, unlike my mine, was attached to a printer. While I was composing, the doorbell rang. I opened the door and found Sylvie, who looked disappointed. "You are working," she said, and went away. I was glad to remain alone surrounded by so much space and so many books. I looked up at the shelves of books in a balcony accessible from the east study and wished to contain them as if by magical Krell earphones that would funnel their marvels 40 feet down into my brain.

During the summer of 1986, Marie-Claire and I had travelled together to a conference organized by GRIF (*Groupe de Recherche et d'Information Feministe*) at the University of Liège, Belgium, where I gave a slide presentation of the research I had been doing on the Salpêtrière hysterics. When the lights went down as the slide projector was turned on, it was so dark I could not read my paper, "*Les jeux séduisants de l'hystérique*," which was in French and which I had not memorized. I solved this problem by striding to one of the floor-to-ceiling windows and pulling back its curtain. Françoise, head honcho of GRIF, remarked, "*Voilà, la grande technologie americaine!*" Françoise sat with her arms folded during my presentation, giving me the impression she was about to look at her watch.

Marie-Claire subsequently visited New York, and came to stay at my house for a few days in the early 1990s, visiting one of my classes, where she lectured on Lacan and Freud. She was as barely comprehensible in English as I had probably been in French at the Liège conference. My students found her views wrong-headed. When she concluded that Freud was a Lacanian, I had to agree with my students and not with Marie-Claire in this regard.

During this visit to the States, I found Marie-Claire more-or-less impossible. She slept on a mattress on the floor of my guest room, where, she pointed out to me, my two cats had taken up an affectionate pose sleeping together on her bed. When we went out for lunch she insisted that we not wait for a good table at the restaurant but eat quickly standing up at the bar. After several days of exasperating emotions, I sent her back to New York a day early, where she found that the Hotel Edison was fully booked and had not expected her arrival. The manager however took pity on Marie-Claire and found her a room, exemplifying, I thought, the knack hysterics have for getting other people to do things for them. I had thought my trips to Paris would deepen my understanding of hysteria, and now had a case in point.

When I first met Marie-Claire, she had been glowing. By 1999, after treatment for breast cancer, she was thinner and more sadly resplendent. I don't know whether the attraction I felt toward Marie-Claire began with her electric pink angora or when I saw her fabulous *bel étage* apartment and with its tall windows overlooking moving pools of light sparkling from the Seine. In the heyday of linguistic feminism and *Franglais* during the 1980s, our convergences had radiated past language barriers. She represented Paris to me as well as Lacanian psychoanalysis.

When I arrived at her newly-painted and newly-plumbed studio in 1999, I found a bowl of cherries and a bottle of chilled champagne in the tiny fridge. There was a French terrycloth bathrobe in the bathroom that I wore to answer the door one day when Marie-Claire knocked. She laughed when she saw me wearing it, saying I reminded her of her dear friend Birane from Senegal. At the time, I imagined Birane to be an elderly doctor; later, I found out that Birane was an automobile worker thirty years younger than Marie-Claire, and her lover, as his father had been before him.

A week later, Marie-Claire invited me to a party chez Françoise, which I left early without having been informed that this was a welcoming party given on my behalf. On the metro going home alone from the *11th arrondissement* in dressy clothes, I had a mugging scare that sent me scurrying as I changed trains. Marie-Claire, who had driven us to the party in her car, stayed on after I left and told me the next day that I had offended our host by leaving early.

A few weeks later, I went to Spain for a Shakespeare-on-Film conference. When I returned, it was apparent to me that Marie-Claire expected me to have brought back souvenir gifts for her from my trip. This had not occurred to me. She then invited me

to go to Brittany to stay with her at a Thallassotherapy spa. I declined, a decision I came to regret.

While she was gone, I noticed in a bookstore window an announcement of a conference to be held in November at Eichstatt, Germany on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Françoise Collin was listed in the program. When I brought this to Marie-Claire's attention, she said she wanted to go, so we three arranged to fly to Munich together, though Françoise seemed annoyed by this development, bickering the whole time with Marie-Claire in what I took to be old-persons' or maybe just old-friends' crankiness, or maybe just French argumentativeness.

Marie-Claire and Françoise had grown up together in Belgium and arrived in Paris at around the same time. Marie-Claire's father bought her the 11 Quai Bourbon apartment when she married. Trained as a Lacanian analyst and appointed to teach in the Psychoanalytic Program at the University of Paris VIII, Marie-Claire continued to attend the lectures of her former lover, the Maoist *soixante-huitard* philosopher Alain Badiou. Françoise once asked me in exasperation, "*Quest-ce qu'elle peut apprendre à son age?*" Now at the age Marie-Claire was then, I am even more annoyed by this dismissal.

My American friend Margaret also thought Marie-Claire juvenile for the way she kept attending classes. I went to one of Professor Badiou's lectures at Paris VIII with Marie-Claire, and stayed with her as she waited to see him afterwards. He brushed by us with a group of followers and barely a nod to Marie-Claire. I had the impression she went to these lectures for the pleasure of seeing Alain, whose jeans she had hanging in a closet in her consulting room at home. I noticed that she had titled his lecture notes with the Greek letter Phi, and asked her if that stood for "phallus." She said, "Philosophy!" I wondered if these were the same for her.

Françoise had had a rocky career as an academic in Belgium, where her University gave her to understand that she should speak less in Philosophy Department meetings. She never received an academic appointment in Paris. She started *GRIF* with students who were otherwise bereft of feminist instruction. Marie-Claire helped to fund the organization.

On the plane to the Beauvoir conference in Munich, I did not want to sit between the old friends in a row of three seats, and managed to find a seat nearby that had more free space, less tension around it. When we landed in Munich, Marie-Claire and Françoise, still quarrelling, got on the pedestrian conveyor-belt at the airport, while I strode alongside it, doing my best to keep up with their progress and sustain an illusion of

endless youthful cheerfulness, though I increasingly felt closer to 60 than 50 years old. I am not sure whether I wanted to stay young to hold Marie-Claire's regard or whether I was rejecting the idea of being like the two grumpy women who had ceased in my mind to be glamorous.

At breakfast in Eichstatt, Françoise seemed nervous and irritated, rattling on about how much she did not like Simone de Beauvoir, who, declared Françoise, was not a feminist, but a pimp for Sartre. Marie-Claire was delighted when I asked Françoise whether she had lost her mind. Françoise looked sallow and blank, and exuded an aura of vinegar. I looked forward to seeing less of her.

At the conference, I soon grew impatient with listening to papers in French and German, and sloped out before Françoise's panel began, having heard more than enough of her at breakfast. I went to the train station and found my way to Ingolstadt, a place I wanted to visit because it is a setting in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. On the train I met an elderly woman who explained to me her complex visual disorder and who may have had some sort of mental disorder. We had lunch in Ingolstadt, I toured the medical museum there, and we returned together to Eichstatt, where I went to her house for dinner. She lived alone in a small apartment and slept in a single bed in a room painted dark blue, with a mural of an angelic Virgin Mary painted at the head of the bed. It was all very strange, but I enjoyed it because we spoke English the whole time.

After the conference, Françoise, Marie-Claire, and I travelled together back to Munich, where we stayed overnight, planning to fly back to Paris the next day. I asked them whether they wanted to attend a performance of *Fidelio* at the State opera house. After hemming and hawing, they agreed, and I set out to get tickets. When I got to the theatre, I discovered that the performance was sold out. There were several people outside the building holding up signs asking for tickets as crowds dressed in Tyrol finery were entering the historic opera house. When one man succeeded in obtaining a ticket, I asked him for his sign. I held it up. Someone came along and sold me a ticket. I attended *Fidelio* alone, bemused by its faux lesbian plot in the service of liberating *Fidelio's* husband. I thought of my own (ex)husband.

The next day, Marie-Claire pronounced this behavior "*extraordinaire*." I was not unhappy to have seen the Bavarian *haute-bourgeoisie* audience in its finery, heard Beethoven's operatic representation of release from confinement sung in a way that was Greek to me, and left the two quarrelling French-speaking feminists at the hotel.

We three shared a taxi from the airport when we got back to Paris. Françoise was dropped off first at her place. When Marie-Claire and I arrived home, as she got out of the cab, the driver, who had been taking in the fractious social scene and catching my eye in his mirror, turned to me and said, "*N'inquietez vous pas, Madame, vous vous échapperez bientôt.*"

A nuisance arose a few weeks later when Marie-Claire was scheduled to give a case presentation to her psychoanalytic colleagues on the same day that I had intended to go with a friend to Fontainebleau Chateau. Marie-Claire gave me to understand that she had been counting on my support, so I turned down the Fontainebleau excursion for the lecture, resenting every minute of it. It was a beautiful fall day in Paris, as I discovered when I at last slipped out to walk home. I decided to go to London to spend Christmas with the friend with whom I had planned to visit Fontainebleau.

After Marie-Claire had met this friend, who is Japanese and as serene as an empress, she commented, "*Elle fait la poupée.*" This reminded me of the time Marie-Claire, upon running into me on the street when I was wearing a light-blue Levi's Trucker jacket and a baseball cap, said, "*Elle fait le vrai Americain*" and I said, "*Je fais pas, je suis--*".

A few days later, I gave her the jacket as a birthday present. She demurred, but trying it on, changed her mind when she saw how good it looked on her and how it brought out the blue of her eyes. At the time I was pleased by the embrace implied in her wearing my jacket, but years later, I tried to think of a way to get that jacket back.

One morning at the beginning of February 2000, I went to pay my rent. Marie-Claire appeared as her charming self, but during this transaction, it dawned on me that our conversation was fake. Part of this was my halting French, combined with the artificiality of speaking in a second language per se, which involves role-playing; but language was not the whole problem. The core of the difficulty, it appeared to me, was that I had been pretending to be in love with Marie-Claire while knowing it was out of the question to do anything about it. I think our game was that I was pretending to love her; what I wanted was the appearance of being in love; I think what she wanted was the drama of being admired. In the 1920s, the surrealists Louis Breton and André Aragon defined hysteria as a mental state founded on the need for reciprocal seduction, a state that probably describes both of us. I could say that I had fallen out of love, but I don't think it was that simple. I still love her as much as ever.

Marie-Claire had asked me to store my suitcase in one of her spare bedrooms, but I had managed to stow it in a panel behind a wall in the studio. As I was packing up to leave

in March 2000, Marie-Claire, who could not believe I was leaving without speaking about what had apparently arrived as a sudden decision, came to the door to ask for her edition of Shakespeare, which I had borrowed. When I handed it back to her, it landed with a thump in her arms, and as it found home on her left breast, a stricken look passed over her face.

I reported this departure via email to my American friend Margaret, who told me she thought Marie-Claire a gorgeous woman who needed everyone to regard her as Lady Bountiful. My relationship with Margaret is somewhat analogous to the one I have with Marie-Claire. Margaret and I sometimes carry on as if we are courting, but I have no intention of making love to her. She once asked me why. I said it is because she has a husband and three children. This explanation is probably on a par with my halting French.

After 2000, Margaret, who visits Paris every April, stayed a few times at 11 Quai Bourbon, either in Marie-Claire's studio or in an apartment above it owned by Marie-Claire's psychoanalyst friend from Brazil, Marie-Ida. In 2012, I read online that Françoise Collin had died. When I told this to Margaret, who had recently visited Marie-Claire in Paris, Margaret was surprised to hear it, and said Marie-Claire had not mentioned it. When Margaret was in Paris last, she stayed at Marie-Ida's and had dinner with Marie-Claire, who had developed Parkinson's disease. Margaret told me Marie-Claire had asked for news of me, and given Margaret a copy of her last book to deliver to me in the States.

When I received the book, *Le Pas aveugle*, I was moved to see it inscribed by hand: "*Une femme, l'amour, la psychanalyse'... chère, Dianne. Je t'embrasse.*" My eyes lit up when I read as part of Marie-Claire's self-analysis, "*je me sentais plus désireuse d'être une enfant aimée qu'une mère aimante*" (318). Never having considered becoming a mother myself, I share her preference for being a beloved child. So, thought I, we were probably looking for a loving mother in each other, and were foiled by how similar we are. Instead of reciprocal desire, we had the same desire.

When I told Margaret about my confusion over the faux pas of leaving Françoise's party as I remembered it from 1999, when I could not afterwards figure out whose idea the party had been, whether Marie-Claire had not told me it was to be in my honor or whether she had but I had not registered it, Margaret said that she understood completely because once Marie-Claire had insisted that she attend a dinner planned for Margaret chez Birane, Marie-Claire's Senegalese friend and former tenant. When Margaret and Marie-Claire arrived, Birane proved to be drunk and later in the evening, asked Margaret how things were in Geneva, inadvertently revealing that he had mixed

her up with another Margaret. Margaret, who had just gotten into Paris that morning and was tired, had to sit through an evening listening to Marie-Claire and Birane's current girlfriend discuss him as a lover.

During a trip to Paris in 2015, I wrote Marie-Claire a letter and delivered it by hand to her mailbox, managing to get the building's front-door code from one of her neighbors. I received no reply. I considered phoning her, but remaining ambivalent, never carried out this intention.

Sixteen years almost to the day I arrived in Paris to stay in Marie-Claire's studio, I dreamed of three cakes and of a building I have previously dreamt of as chez Marie-Claire, though the building looks very different in these dreams from the actual 11 Quai Bourbon. In the dreams, her building is near docks and warehouses in what looks like a seascape at the edge of the city; I am always walking there in hope of finding Marie-Claire at home.

In my most recent dream about Marie-Claire, she is living at the back of the third floor of this building—the part that overlooks the sea. Margaret has been staying in a front room. A long hallway leads from Marie-Claire's apartment to Margaret's room, which is curtained off. I am visiting Margaret, who is packing to leave. I have brought three cakes, pushed together on the same plate. Marie-Claire drops in to say goodbye to Margaret. I am very pleased when Marie-Claire takes some of the cake I have brought. She barely notices me.

I emailed Margaret from Paris, reporting the dream of the three cakes. When she asked me what I thought the dream meant, I replied:

"I was dancing with my darling
To the Tennessee Waltz
When an old friend I happened to see.
I introduced her to my loved one
And while they were dancing
My friend stole my sweetheart from me."

A month later, back in the States, I got an email from Margaret, who had received a short note from Marie-Claire saying she was not well but holding on to life. Margaret wrote, "I think she momentarily got us confused because she apologized for not having responded while I was in Paris, but in fact she and I had dinner together and another visit. So I think she was thinking about you. She said she had just had a treatment in

the hospital and was feeling very bad. Thought you would want to know why you didn't hear from her."

Margaret adds, "Marie-Ida's studio has apparently been sold to another Brazilian."

I reply, "I think this confirms my dream of the three cakes."

A few days later, I got a letter, dated 20 June 2015, opened and belatedly forwarded from my Paris hotel. It is from Sylvie, Marie-Claire's assistant, whom I remember as a young person in the 1999 entourage chez Marie-Claire. Sylvie says Marie-Claire asked her to write to me because Marie-Claire no longer can, having been extremely fragile for several weeks. She no longer walks, and no longer writes; the least effort tires her. That is why she has asked Sylvie to tell me she cannot "*vous recevoir dans les conditions physiques actuelles.*" Sylvie adds, "*Elle vous souhaite un bon séjour en France et vous envoie des amitiés.*"

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