

Tuumba 6

## MAGRITTE SERIES

*by Kathleen Fraser*



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## MAGRITTE SERIES

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"There is the realm of the half-conscious, the area was almost  
lost, almost forgotten, almost lost. Like O'Connell, he was there,  
in with these delicate, half-conscious states of reality during which  
with the subject is a kind of 'blurred'."

"This evolution is MacRae's work of pre-consciousness, space  
in which movement is frustrated and the depth uncertain, space  
up to him the possibility of invention, play with imaginary  
space."

A. H. Hammer MacRae

For Ian, feet in the stream

"Even in the realm of the half-conscious, his urge was toward control, consciousness, exactitude. Like Ouspensky, he was familiar with those delicate, brittle states of lucidity during sleep in which the sleeper is conscious of himself."

"This evolution in Magritte's work of pre-Renaissance space, in which movement is frustrated and the depth uncertain, opens up to him the possibility of inventive play with imaginary spaces."

A. M. Hammacher, **Magritte**

## LA VIE SECRETE

Suddenly there were bruises  
at various places  
along his left thigh  
and just below the knee-cap  
he could see the freckles  
holding their bits of brown  
as the purple flesh  
turned to yellow,  
but mostly he knew  
when the bruised parts of him  
came into contact  
with other firm objects  
and a light but definite  
sense of pain  
surprised him  
and he stopped to  
locate it,  
to understand the source  
and recapture some set of moments  
in which his flesh  
had received blows  
distinct enough  
in precisely those spots  
he understood now  
as tender.  
All his body was tender.  
But most of it did not know.

12/27/74



## L'ASSASSIN MENACE

For M. P.

She noticed how  
he used blue  
and green  
to bring his life  
into focus or  
sometimes red,  
never a simple crayon box red  
but a tinge of the bizarre to it,  
a leaning towards blue  
which would be plum  
or suggestive of certain wines  
after the war  
or even blood, just freshly there  
so that the air took its effect.  
She knew if  
she went to visit him—  
if she were invited, or  
if she crawled through the window  
as he was going  
out the door  
that blue  
would be seeping from beneath  
the pillow in the bedroom.  
She could not be sure  
about the bathtub.  
This made-up quality of his life  
intrigued her.  
She felt it to be impersonal  
in the way that she'd tended  
to identify certain male traits

in other men  
and yet even  
in the basket  
where his discarded socks lay  
with their vaguely uncomfortable  
holes  
she noticed a green sock  
beginning to unravel  
and under it,  
spreading imperceptibly,  
the red.

12/28/74

## LA BAIGNEUSE DU CLAIR AU SOMBRE

I am floating,  
like being in a tub of water  
moving toward the lights.

He is floating in the water,  
he is wiping the table  
with a dirty napkin.

The place is big.  
I can feel it breathing.  
We are moving toward the lights.

The dream about my death  
drops into my head,  
foamy red and almost boiling.

I don't want it to happen  
if it's going to hurt.  
The things I hear

are going out my left ear  
and moving  
toward the lights

like a woman wearing a red sweater.  
Wearing a red sweater,  
I am attracted

by the view behind her,  
out the window  
at the civilized periphery.

It is clean.  
It is highly finished  
like these clothes of mine

moving toward the lights.  
I'm sliding down the bench  
into the scenery

out the window  
towards the woman.  
I'm thinking about inertia

as the wall vanishes.  
The woman is dancing.  
I am thinking about the woman

sliding toward the lights.  
The red sweater vanishes.  
Again, the ending gets a little vague,

as she slowly puts her arm  
around his shoulder, as she slowly  
puts a dagger through the bones

in his chest. She puts lights  
in his chest. Her arm is  
a big cloak. Pieces of him glow

all over the room.  
I recognize nothing  
but the color of brown

wrapping paper. Now  
she's giving me  
the big present.

The horrible hum.

1/6/75



## L' INVENTION COLLECTIVE

of the marigolds, of blue vinyl suitcase, of crud all over the stove  
she'd left shiniest

two to bring light to,  
yes a shelf in reach where the little both of them could begin  
could make his clean start as fresh as Watermelon slice (oh  
where was her life?)

in him his tiny mysteries her laughing sound alight  
in his throat

oh what was a mother to do, being her, and suddenly  
it's now?

when she went away there was this big boy who pushed him  
when she went away they pushed him in the puddle  
he was running home, he was running home and she wasn't there

but trying somewhere else to find out who  
and where, was she?

was she not the neat and tidy? did she not see.  
her seducers in a line and shaking their fingers and showing  
"be here, be here"

in her mind (was it?) she lay at the edge of the waters, at the  
edge of the waters

was it sand there? was her fish skin bare? all she knows is  
it scratches and when the waves collapse in inches she cannot  
swim for her finny body's half human. One day she's

plunk on the shore and her image comes to her in a picture  
as though holding a mirror of blue paint

just a whiff of horizon and the little waves creeping  
and folding and there it is, no way of turning her  
back now her thighs/knees, softest whirring of  
crotch hair and all the color of how she ought to be  
but suddenly those fins

and the beginning of silver slippery fish-lady lying,  
no arms no woman swimming, but a face cut deep with  
gills and the sad eyes panting

and the absolute quiet of something about to arrive.

4/20/75

## LES VALEURS PERSONNELLES

As a child she'd often considered the bathroom as her future, how  
it would be if it were her place to be alone in. Under the porcelain  
sink would be the stove. Next to the toilet, the radio (there was  
just enough space). She could sleep in the tub. Under it her blanket  
would be folded. There would be apples. A flashlight. Her mystery  
books. And noone would come in there. Noone would be asking her  
to be good. All the mess would go away.

Later she chose a boat. It appeared to her in a dream, before rising,  
and was smoothly crafted in the shape of a canoe but made of many  
pieces of wood of a natural nut-brown color. Its insides were sleek.  
She could manage, feeling the lift of the water under her. There was  
her comb leaning against one side, and a little mirror hung just  
under the seat. It would send out light, little flashes of it, to  
make it seem as though there were an electric storm about to ap-  
proach. But caught in one corner, to maintain the sense of home, a  
curtain of soft white cotton, as though a window were behind it, to  
open, if one wanted, or to look out of. For surely, white clouds  
caught in the precise boundaries of the window's rectangle would  
give one a different sense of motion, of how long it took a cloud to  
float from one edge to the other. On the floor of the boat, she  
imagined an oriental rug, opulent but of a proportion not to over-  
whelm the purity of the boat's intention. It fell into character,  
providing backdrop. Often she would place several objects there —  
a wooden match with yellow sulphur tip or one of those rich cakes  
of soap with beveled edge, oval, smelling of apricot, never touched,  
yet reflected in the mirror in two parts, as if used or broken.

This morning she'd awakened smelling the sea. Before thought,  
she'd noticed an urgency in her left foot to dangle in the water, and  
it crept up into her body, pulling, wanting the openness of the sea,  
the wetness, wanting her body to be taken into the largeness  
without any walls, no object to distract her into order. She felt the  
boat tipping. She felt the possibility of doing nothing to stop it.

8/11/75



## LES JOURS GIGANTESQUES

Have you noticed the little shadow?

How when you are in the middle of brushing your teeth  
there is something gathering around the corner?

She is dreaming this thought to a self  
awake in the world

when she feels a tug, something like a hand pressing  
down upon her thigh

and she remembers she is naked and alone in the room  
and wishes for her silk blouse  
and the zipper with its three silver hooks at the top.

In her body's emptiness  
a growing sense of intimacy,  
the pressure of a shadow in its black suit,  
its right hand moving  
around her waist, as if looking  
for a pocket,

or the push of a head against  
her shoulder, as though  
this movie from some little light booth  
on the opposite wall was focusing,  
on her, and the image was him,  
his half head

moving towards her nipple,  
with the thirst in him, black  
against her white body. She looks down,  
she looks down at, oh, the hand, or is it  
the shadow of a hand  
pressing in on the thigh that is hers.

Her muscles bulge with effort  
and become tremendous

in their flex. The color drains  
from every part of her, but

the red mouth,  
holding its shape steadily,  
the scream, at first uncertain,  
enters the air  
and becomes the third,  
the knowing, between them.

## LA REPRODUCTION INTERDITE

I am interested in the logic of secrets, how it has always moved me, in particular, to be invited by a face into the aura of its withholding, as though we were designed to bring forward two opposing sets of facts and bathe ourselves in the resulting struggle, as in watching a tight-rope walker move from one point in space to another, each foot brought precisely from behind and placed in front of the other, but without the delicious possibility of falling, were it not for the rope stretched tautly beneath him, cutting the air with its odor of hemp.

The secrets between men and women are of peculiar fascination. My father, for example, invited me into a dream last summer where I discovered that he was making preparations to die. He was busy doing small errands, rushing about in his impeccably tailored suit and polished shoes, with a face so sad, so preoccupied with its secret, so designed to escape observation that I immediately began to pay attention, invited as I was by that closed-off expression to become the rope upon which he demonstrated his journey.

As I watched him moving to get everything in order before leaving, my sense of dismay began to take on its own life, expanding into anger and then curiosity. "How does he know?" I asked my mother. The fibers in me were twisting and vibrating. A conviction was growing. I became filled with the possibility of his life continuing and decided to speak to him directly, hoping to convince him that his death need not be imminent.

I go to my father and I say "Why do you think you are going to die?" His feeling is more one of resignation or tiredness, than any specific illness. I ask him matter-of-factly to take off his clothes so that I may look at his body. He does so and his body appears to be fine, a bit shorter and stockier than I remember, but ruddy and glowing. I see immediately that he is perfectly well and able to live for a very long time. I tell him with conviction and energy that there is no reason for him to continue on this course of dying, that he



is wholly alive and has many things to do. As I tell him this, we are walking outside through a woods, now up a slight incline to a clearing. My father seems very joyous and happy to hear the news. He accepts it, but with a kind of privacy that he's always had, savoring it for himself, indicating that he hopes I won't make a public issue of it. There is a kind of charged excitement between us, a flirtation with the possibilities that now lie ahead.

In 1965, my father was hit by a car and pronounced dead. I asked for his first set of architect's drawing tools, wrapped in a chamois case he'd sewn himself, each metal pencil and compass enclosed in its own soft pocket, each a potential source of precision and invention, given a hand to hold it.

1/13/76

## L'ELOGE DE LA DIALECTIQUE

On the plumped-up couch (it was scratchy wool stuff of couches made in the '30's, their thighs rubbed, diverging in similar directions, parallel but inaccurately compared to anything else,

and soon

the vision of that summer, unexplained by logic but still new and rolling into view,

was there in the room.

At least she thought she felt something shifting, a quality you couldn't measure but feel, and it was autumn. In California, bright orange pumpkins popped up in various sizes and flung themselves over the fields near the ocean, a broad merging of blues and greys.

But here,

mist hung around the house like a mood and what had been playful and sexual in the summer seemed to verge on melo-drama by its very withholding and the possibility of someone important arriving at any moment through the gauze curtains, reducing the sharpness of the light even further.

She had come with her suitcase and a certain equilibrium not available at an earlier time.

There was business in the world

and there was memory. Wounded on army cots holding hands.

How did they

get their clothes off? Had the light been on? Was that really Tito Puente's mambo coming through the heating unit under

the desk?

The age of bitterness had receded. A relief. That useless system of blame, of someone else or of the self, even worse a circle as predictable as the gold circle pin they used to wear in the East, to show good taste.

He was tasty. Of that she was certain.



His blond beard, which she'd often remembered as black,  
was something she liked to pull on, hard. Or just sift her fingers  
through it, thinking of clouds, of a Georgia O'Keefe  
bluescape with

puff puff puff of various whites  
unattached to  
any set of values but the last stroke, when the painter stopped  
for a moment of thought, as the phone rang or the coffee boiled  
over, and never came back.  
and never came back.

But she came back,  
not expecting anything but touch. Was it in the hot room  
or next to the lake? There was a path, too, that made the journey  
to supper longer and it was there, she thought, their minds touched  
without plan.

How does one recognize these certainties?  
To think of kissing, behind dialectic.

Their sentences climbed together, if there had been stairs,  
but everything was flat, it was summer and spacious on the outside,  
though the corridors always had bodies in them and the urgency  
towards motion, predicting a scene already played out.  
She was not interested in that,  
though she seemed to walk at the same speed as the others. So

when he kissed her, as common as kisses are, it was not common  
because she hadn't arranged it in her mind.

And here they were, now,  
on the rosey couch, with winter hovering, about to break in through  
the grey air and their hour was almost up. They had kissed again  
and wanted more

but even that wanting could not expand because  
the window was planned to reveal life in a little town  
at any moment. Someone could walk by. Someone could look in. And  
oh, his life was happy.

## LA REVOLUTION

For A. K. B.

Everything is so agreeable, tangential, so light  
of foot.

Tangerine, all pungent with its leaves intact.

Still, revolution is your quietest intent,  
it throbs through your kindness like a double bass  
without amplification,

but you are persistent and grow a callous of light  
from so often stroking the gut strings.

You hold

its body next to yours, in the air,  
and when you play in the key of C  
molecules forget their lesser purpose

and turn swiftly  
breathing the new physics.

I listen. You invite me to care on a grand scale.  
What must I leave behind me?

Like you, I give the finger to  
standing still. I'm tactile.  
Here are all my fingers to place inside yours.

Looked at, loosely, within any frame of reference,  
I could seem predictable.  
Don't be fooled. Bumpy ovals of color thrill me.  
Tangentially.



I count on your intelligence, with or without you  
sitting there. Still, I want more.

Perfection begins to hurt because  
love feels dangerous

and only one of us is you,  
only one of us is taking the other's temperature. It might be me.  
But that could be over-simplified, since you often choose  
not to tell.

What do you notice, awake? I notice I'm afraid to break in on  
the fluidity. My dreams ask questions,

the ones I've thought about  
but can't speak.

Sleeping next to you counts for a lot.

Your shadow wrestles with mine. The glow is Kirlian. What you hide  
in the revolution pours intimately through the dark.  
Its effect can't be measured in the "real" world.

All controls break down. The sheets convey your deepest sigh  
to my body. You are not alarmed because we don't say a word.

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LYN HEJINIAN

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