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«Is all that we see or seem but a dream within a dream?»  
— E.A. Poe

# EX OBLIVIONE

## Marine de Dardel

Marine de Dardel, born 1990, studied architecture at ETH Zurich. She works at Made in Sàrl (Geneva/Zurich) since 2017, holds a position as a teaching assistant and research fellow at ETH Zurich with the Voluptas Chair for Architecture and Design (Charbonnet/Heiz) since 2018 and studies creative coding and computing at the Zurich University of the Arts since 2021.



Figure 1: Plate I, Part I, Page 1.

Plate I, Edith  
*faithless eyes faceless sighs, alone alone and blind*

*to Ward Phillips\**

    bells are tolling last days drawing near  
    driven to madness my mind is weak  
    bless the irradiate refuge of sleep  
    gentle rains swell up sunless streams  
    soft scented winds the south is calling  
    undying roses iridescent arbours  
    swift travels to the underworld

    purple twilight scarlet haze  
    lore of Eden lure of mayhem  
    strangest stars in burning skies  
    deadly nightshades withering  
    horse gentian grotesquely squirming  
    giant trees twisted and thrown  
    bent columns of marble and stone

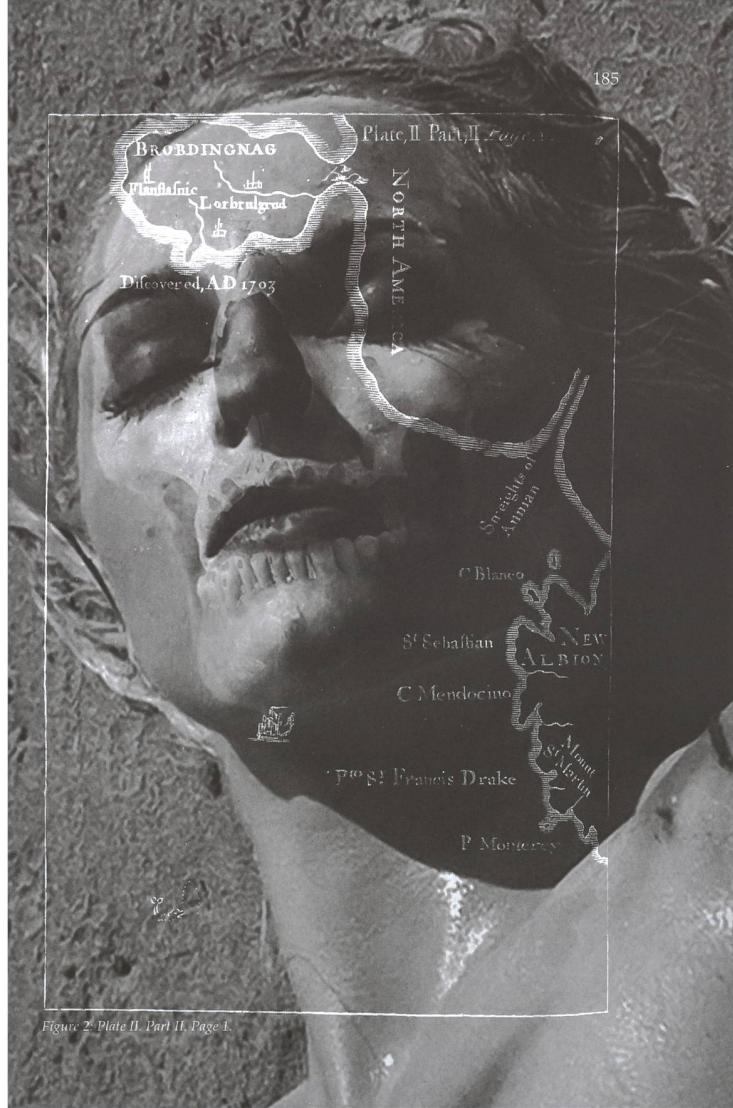


Figure 2. Plate II, Part II, Page 1.

Plate II, Wanda  
*monadic sirup faint wallop, fall fall and die*

budding grove and shadowy ruins  
a marquis once hid here his muse  
ball-and-chains ill bleeding walls  
weeping wives or weary whores  
screams so faint behind closed doors  
lifeless stares and tinkling teeth  
she should have listened to Judith

enchanted ruins walls are weeping  
sudden abyss headlong my dear  
lids so swollen heavy as lead  
melting though puddle of mead  
feet fell off bare bones are aching  
dripping red soles skipping away  
tripping tumbling halfway



Plate III, Jemma  
*candid vice comma splice, sigh sigh expire*

brains once dreaming putrid and flask  
soaked in dew feeding the maggots  
songless sorrow senseless marrow  
guts poured out on the ground  
golly Winnie looka yonder  
ropy polyps foundered flounders  
out cold on the sand

dream demon your grip so tight  
shoulders yielding with delight  
fluorescent marbles staring out  
mares unbridled fouling their pawns,  
bored creatures stifling their yawns  
aching chest and brittle bones  
deaf numb and alone



Figure 4: Plate VI, Part IV, Page 1.

Plate IV, Madeleine  
deadly fears diamond tears, raise raise and dice

feel it now the distant gaze?  
see it now the violet craze?  
Cheshire smiles laughing always  
lost shaken shall we awaken?  
ghostly shadows forsaken  
close your eyes close your eyes  
soaring comets in empty skies

hear it now the dreary dirge?  
taste it now the deathly urge?  
no bullets would cheat the gallows  
no prayer could meet the sorrows  
the precious precarious  
asymptotic state of mind  
again on the verge of oblivion

\* Few rogues dared to imagine what humanity's most unspeakable secrets and fantasies might be. Masters of fiction and horror, fearless poets, ill bodies and minds on the brink of madness, their phantasms reach far beyond reason. Poe's tales of the grotesque, de Sade's cruel satires, Wells' otherworldly fictions, Swift's furthest Utopias, Rimbaud's savage mysticism, Bataille's sacrificial verses, Lovecraft's horrific mythologies... Let us consider «horror» and «dream» as the maximal transgressive hypotheses, as possibilities of coalescence of the phantasm: Incarnate the «criminal craftsman» decomposing and recomposing the «body» in a singular way. I hope to unscrupulously exhume the long procession of specters excluded by history, the battalions of accursed fantasies rejected by reality. Let us, too, assume the cloak of the dreamer, the lens of the poet, and walk with the mad.

Psyche's fleeting anatomies are endlessly contorted by fugitive but painful tensions, warped around faint obstacles, hazed by mental uneasiness. Shaped through swelling, tearing and scarring (Bellmer), damaged by ecstatic visions (Charcot) or dissected by the lacerations of madness (Lovecraft): The mind is an elastic landscape perpetually changing; the subliminal self, a sensible film, distorted strips ebbing away, burnt by a black sun and intoxicated by gothic landscapes. Headless ghosts (Bataille) invoke the «end of history» (Hegel) joining the violence of the guillotine to the equivocal secret of a decapitated figure. They propose a debacle in the history of figuration, freezing the representation of the human body, now unrecognizable. A «headlessness» that leads the way towards a return of the Myth, excluding any return to the order it combats, but adopting somehow the return to the figure — even by decapitating it — and the return to form — as an independent entity — conserving a figurative plastic language: It realizes the struggle of content with form.

Between the real and the surreal, painfully exposed to macrocosmic turmoil, quivers the unconscious. All gestures it produces, all reactions it provokes, tend towards perpetual poetry. Some looming thoughts even, forever inexplicable by reason, reveal the dark collusion of the individual with everything it «isn't» and definitely «shouldn't» be. Through icy, fanatic passion, dreams unveil certain instinctive resolutions to the never-ending conflict opposing the subject to its exterior object. For its own sake, life seems to continuously demand a string of such solutions — themselves subsequently subjected to the constant menace of despair, disgust and doubt — seeping through an imperceptible breach of the subconscious. Because a live equilibrium is always unstable: Heavy formless masses of the mind swallow reason beyond reach. This mental drama in turn corrupts matter, shapes, lines. The worse the inner conflict, the more atrocious the impossibility to live and the more intolerably scandalous the plastic resolution will be. Form itself has thus long become a major preoccupation, an obsession even: The quest for one that exists independently from the matter it accommodates; a new form that may harbour disorder; a shapeless signage, a nameless language of exhausted meaning.

\*

*Sightless silence, senseless existence: Unconscious creatures lie strewn across the land. Immortal beauties cold as stone, heads rolling like pebbles, cataractous marbles and deluging souls, drifting across empty skies towards foreign wards. Winnies wounds are weeping, scarlet streams spline the ground as soft winds carry melancholic sighs:*

*«Scars are seeping, walls are bleeding: Poured out of my skin, my mind is like a dream, recording otherworldly images of beauty and dread. The haze is thickening, no land in sight. Losing grip now, nightmares are billowing; oh! Please, please let me drown tonight.»*

*open your eyes  
open your eyes  
devour the night*

*(Plates I to IV) Marine de Dardel, Photogravure, 10×15 cm, 2021*

