

EXTRACT #13 (KATHRYN ELKIN & JOHANNES MAIER)

*What then?*

I think we have been following the woman all this time. Yes, we follow her back in through another door to the villa. We peer carefully through a prism of glass, set on a black plinth. Through it we can see a wall. Looking through one side of the prism, the door in the wall is open, we can see a former couch and carpet that used to be on the other part of the room. Looking through the other side, the door is closed. Moving on with the woman, just behind her, we enter another space that is filled with people and just as we enter, they are milling around in separate groups. The woman breaks off and joins their ranks, and after we have moved all the way around the space to where we came in, with no apparent signal, they suddenly form themselves into strict and coherent lines, like soldiers, or dancers. It is as though they have been waiting for this woman to complete their numbers, to start some sort of rehearsal. There is no leader or anyone there who could be taken for a choreographer. Going by their appearance, as we move down the line and examine their faces a little more closely, they should have at their head either a mesmerist or a puppet master, or someone playing that role...

*Do they look so much like puppets then? Automata?*

Perhaps, on second thought, it could be more to do with their movements than with their expressions.

*Why?*

Because they move absolutely in unison. Their gestures are only consistent in that they are undertaken with perfect timing and are shaped by all rather than followed on from one. Only in their rhythm and the abstract nature of their movements would they strike a variety of notes, discordant. Let me see. No, I was wrong. There would be no leader upon whose movements the others depend and yet the movements themselves would not have the appearance of a dance, certainly not of a dance rehearsed, more like the manifestation of a single, simple instinct, as of a tight herd, or more like a murmuration of starlings. Honed, naturally, as one body.

*Are they dressed normally?*

Probably as one, apart from the woman we enter with. In grey dresses. Or grey A-line skirts, white shirts or blouses. Or black blouses. Altogether a sort of uniform, yes.

*Go on.*

I believe there would be a wide variety of movements, as I said. Sometimes, collectively it would look like an odd sort of dance, sometimes like a mutual fit or paroxysm; at other points appearing familiar, as though they all have the same numbers to play out at hopscotch, or with a nod towards Indian classical dance or at times, faintly ridiculous, like the hokeycokey. At other times, aggressive – an approaching mob, as though they would run hard at walls. At moments, they might even appear obscene. It would be good at this

point to hazard re-joining the thoughts of the woman but I am not sure how.

*What do you think?*

I think she would be following the rest, following the rest via a series of steps, turns and thrusts which could conceivably echo the progress of her thoughts. They turn, execute a turn, every pair of hands stretched out in front as though engaged in forming something, making, kneading, then the right hand forms a swift arc across and back, stretching a bow. Now a juddering movement takes them all and ends in a final lunge, then (all this in silence, by the way, only the sound of their foot stomps and their heavy breath) back to a start and then advancing, rhythmically, stopping again, then striking out the time afresh. The thing cannot last; even in theory the movement is chaotic but still, miraculously produced in unison. Even as her steps echo the rest, she imagines herself as the apparition of a dancing figure gone mad, advancing, retreating, clutching at her fevered head, spinning around alone. Her thoughts would then catch one another and spin around in pairs, until she would feel something, somewhere, break and drop. The feeling transfers to only half of the whole group, they would feel it then that half would drop to their knees; while those are down, the rest link hand in hand, and all spin round together. Then the ring breaks, they jump up and in separate rings of two and four they turn and turn until they all stop at once, begin again, strike, clutch, and tear, and then reverse the spin, and all spin round another way. Suddenly they stop again, pause and swoop screaming off and the

room, a moment ago filled, is now empty, apart from the woman. There is nobody else to be seen and even the woman's thoughts are silent, as though they have been taken away by the others, stolen from under her nose. Then eventually, she begins to look around her, is completely out of breath. She sits against a wall and it takes a good few minutes for her breathing to return to normal.

*Her thoughts return?*

Slowly. Slowly more calmly. She contemplates the rectangle of wall opposite her. She begins thinking what would happen if she were to make a film and what it would be like, how structured etc. She would like it to be about a friend, someone she would be interested in understanding even more. It would be a series of interviews with this one character. She would be interested in whether it might be possible to capture or suggest something of this person's uniqueness, that which was fundamental, absolutely unique to her persona, her sense of having a certain sort of status, but really also, of course, to some extent about herself. She would also want it to allow in other people, other friends, people she likes or admires or is curious to know. She would like the film to allow for correlations, to allow the overlaps between friendships to occur within it or be suggested by it somehow. She is not sure quite how yet. She'll drag them all in somehow, but she, the woman, she would not be in the video as an actual image. She would find an actor to say what would be her lines, the ones she would speak in conversation. It would be unclear as to whether they were just a really good actor or a real person...

*She would record real conversations, then reuse them?*

Yes, I think so. Don't you? She would already know the woman could tell a good anecdote if it was her own, but she did not yet know if the woman could act out lines to a camera. Maybe she could? We'll try, she says to herself. She remembered hearing someone – maybe Bresson – talk about how the 'image' of the sound lay within a piece and she had been captivated by that notion. She imagined there would be lots and lots of takes and that she would like to un-synch the sound, to use a slightly different take and mismatch it to the image. She is thinking about watching dubbed movies, the uncanniness of that, and trying to work out if everyone was miming. She is thinking while watching a man play the organ, about that delay between his fingers on the keyboard and hearing the sound come out of the pipes. That slight chink in time, that delay is really electrifying – also nauseating. She would try to film this film so it would look like a combination of the edit styles of other films she is interested in.

*Is it...I mean would that be a starting point of sorts?*

Yes, she would think that will be enough to get the material together and work it all out properly later on. She would be determined to make first and ask questions later, collect the footage, collate it. At one time, she thinks to herself, she would not make a move without having all the angles covered, not going into this thing or anything without a cogent plan, she could no longer do it any other way. It is enough to think about how it will look, the directions it might go in and she admits to herself, that is more than she usually does, ahead of things.

*What then?*