

WOMEN'S WRITING ONLINE NO 2

IZABELA FILIPIAK
MY LIFE AS A RABBIT
DRAMA

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MY LIFE AS A RABBIT. AN INTRODUCTION

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Izabela Filipiak and I worked together on translating this play from August through October, 2005, she in California, I in Indiana. We traded drafts, tightening the dialogue and sometimes changing the allusions—Russia became Chechnya, for example—to make them relevant for an American audience, as the play was later performed by a readers' theater in Berkeley. The premise of *My Life As a Rabbit* is at once simple and brilliant: the entire action revolves around a lesbian couple, H and Z, watching TV. Commercials, science programs, and movies prompt the women to reflect on their lives and the future of their relationship. As critic Elwira Grossman has observed, "This ostensibly light-hearted comedy is a revealing metaphor for how our thinking about gender and sexual behavior is constructed by the outside world (represented here by TV)." H and Z take on topics as far-ranging as motherhood, violence, gender roles, desire, and body image with the click of their remote. Arranged in 38 micro-scenes, the play mimics the quick pace of channel surfing.

Their conversations touch on archetypal images of women—muse, madwoman, mother—as seen on TV. When the actress Isabelle Adjani makes an appearance as Victor Hugo's daughter or the unhappy lover of Rodin, H observes that too often she portrays women who die a horrible death. "Why do they all have to go crazy?" H asks. And when a commercial for a famous brand of bottled water comes on, a mother and baby on its label, H encourages Z to rock their water bottle like an infant. Ambivalent about motherhood and the ad's marketing of mothers, Z nonetheless gives in to the absurdity of the moment. She cradles the plastic "baby" and even pretends to burp it.

The form of the play allows the couple to move fluidly through time, transitioning easily from memory to reality to fantasy. In one scene H recalls getting in trouble at school for refusing to wear a dress. In another, a Tony

Kushner-like “goddess” emerges from a mirror on the wall. Z, unhappy with the state of the world, asks, “Maybe you’re the goddess of light, truth and beauty, peace talks in wartime, and better communication in families?” (Mount Olympus, meet *Claudia!*) In response to that question, the goddess vanishes. Many of the scenes give voice to the women’s rage, which the culture tends to ignore. Z imagines her mother murdered her father, and H threatens to slit the throat of the brother who hit her on the head.

In all these ways, the play talks back to power—or at least to the corporate television programming that passes for conventional wisdom. In 1974, in the *Twenty-One Love Poems*, Adrienne Rich wrote, “No one has imagined us.” Filipiak’s play, in 2005, phrases the matter of representation differently: “This is how *they*’ve imagined us, and here’s what *we* have to say about that.” Elwira Grossman notes that in its exploration of what stereotypes conceal, *My Life As a Rabbit* raises provocative questions: “What happens when female sexuality is placed outside the ‘heterosexual regime’ where it can freely explore and express itself? . . . How does a woman’s sexuality — when it is liberated from heteronormativity—affect her behavior, views and attitudes? And finally, how does a woman’s perception of the world change when she becomes a ‘knower’ and ‘explorer’ rather than an object to be known and explored?” Even as it addresses those questions, Filipiak’s play wears its theory lightly. Her characters are quirky humans—not placeholders for intellectual posturing. They dazzle us and make us laugh as they struggle with the difficult art of loving.

In the end, H and Z recommit themselves to their relationship by turning the TV off. They place the television on the couch, and take up their position where it previously stood. Now presumably, the TV will take its cues from them.

Spring 2011

IZABELA FILIPIAK

MY LIFE AS A RABBIT

A play for two characters and a TV.

The action occurs in a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, and hallway.

H wears a T-shirt and sweatpants. Z wears pajamas which may be navy blue dotted with little gold stars and crescents. They are dressed like that regardless of time of day.

The bedroom. Morning.

H is awake, Z not yet.

H. You getting up?

Z (*confirming*) Uhh-huh.

H. Well, are you?

Z. (*denying*) Uh-uh.

H. That's good! Let's stay in all day and make love . . . but only in our minds! We're too exhausted by life to do it with our bodies. So we'll do it in our minds. We'll hug. And snuggle. Like a couple of grandmas! I'll rock you and you'll rock me. (*She hums a soothing tune.*)

The bedroom. Noon.

H. and Z. among throws, blankets and pillows.

Z. I feel like I've been sent on a journey, far away. . . . I dreamt I was in Chechnya. Traversing the lush plateaus of the steppes and then ascending to some hamlet up in the mountains. . . . It was mystical and I had a message to deliver!

H. You don't want to go there. Not to Chechnya.

Z. Why not?

H. You'll get abducted.

Z. Not necessarily.

H. Oh yes, you will. There's no one there but terrorists. They kidnap everyone they can and hold out for ransom.

Z. What if we took a gun and a pitbull?

H. Who's going to shoot? Not me!

Z. Then I will.

H. *You* will?

Z. Actually, I've been feeling the urge to perform some serial acts of mindless violence. I just need an excuse.

H. What if they shoot you first?

Z. Then I'll need an ambulance.

H. If you want to shoot someone, kill me.

Z. And get rid of the goose that lays the golden eggs? No way!

H. I'm a goose that lays golden eggs? Hey, I'm a goose!

H. pecks and pokes Z., claws her, and clucks.

The living room, a couch. In front of the couch a TV set.

H and Z sit on the couch and admire a commercial for bottled spring water on TV: a brook, some trees, a couple of glasses, and a table.

The same water in a plastic bottle is on their table. On the label, a young, smiling mother hugs her infant. H. looks at the label, and then addresses Z.

H. Won't you rock our baby?

H handles the plastic bottle to Z, who appears disconcerted.

H. Come on, rock our little baby to sleep.

Z begins to rock the bottle.

H. Now look at that! See how she quiets down, once she's in your arms.

(Sings) Hush little baby, don't you cry...

H then takes the baby from Z, pats it at the bottom of the bottle, uncorks it to let it burp. Screws the bottle cap back on and strokes its belly.

H. Good little baby. She ate some num-num, and burped real good, and now she'll go right to sleep.

To make it sleep better, H rocks the baby wildly.

H. Our sweet little angel! *(sings)* Mama's gonna buy you a diamond ring.

Z takes the child away from H and pours water into her glass.

In the living room. The couch. The TV set.

H and Z are watching a program about whales off the coast of Alaska.

Z. Look, whales!

H. They can open up their mouths so wide, they can see their lower jaw! We can't do it. At best, maybe we can reach our lower lip. But then again, that's why we have mirrors. And we can use them to look deep within. Because we're intelligent creatures!

On the couch.

The TV set is on mute. Only the image, no voice – it's a commercial break.

H and Z sit next to each other, their cheeks touching. They look straight ahead while trying to stick as much as possible with the other's cheek, while they rock back and forth.

But then H forces a change in the rhythm; they rock energetically side to side.

They stop rocking. H wants to explain something.

H. At least we don't suffer from abandoned orphan syndrome.

To confirm this statement, they begin to rock again back and forth. With each swing they emit a sigh a tone higher than the last. When unable to produce any higher-pitch moan, they go back to rocking merrily side to side.

The living room. The couch.

H plays with the remote. Z leaves for a moment, comes back and sits down.

Z. Have you ever seen your own vagina?

H immediately shields herself with a pillow.

Z comes closer and sits next to H who keeps hiding.

H. (*all of a sudden very proper*) I beg your pardon. What kind of question is that?

Z. I heard there are some women who've never seen their own vagina. Have you?

H hides again.

Z soothes, rocks, caresses and reassures her.

Z. All right, okay. Let's just drop it. . .

H peers from behind the pillow but as soon as she meets Z's gaze, she hides again. She regains her composure as soon as she gets an idea.

H. But where is it exactly? Hey, let's check on a map! We'll find it in an atlas and determine its precise location.

Z. Get out the atlas then.

H retrieves an anatomy book.

H. Ah! The vagina is inside! It can only be seen with a speculum.

H is glad to be off the hook.

Z. Let's use a speculum then.

H hides again.

Then she pokes her head out and goes on the offensive.

H. And have seen *your* vagina?

Z. I have seen my vagina.

H. And was it interesting?

Z. Not really.

H. Well, I myself am very interested in your vagina. (*Confidently, she peers again into the anatomical atlas, her ally and source of information. Her*

tone is that of a pedantic lecturer.) And the external part is called the, uh, libia. Majora and minora. One doesn't need a speculum to see them.

The living room. The couch. H and Z stare straight ahead. At times one steals a glance at the other, then both again look ahead.

Z. So what now?

H. We have to wait.

Silence.

H and Z sit, gaze and wait. Like at a photographer's.

H. Two women are waiting. But what for?

Long silence, so she answers herself, pretending to intone a solemn poem.

H. Until someone serves them breakfast.

They will wait for an eternity

Till the eggs disappear from their plates.

Z. Ha ha.

The living room. The subject of the conversation is the bedroom.

H signals for Z to come to her. Z does.

H. I'm going night night soon.

Z. How soon is soon?

H. What do you care?

Z. If you want to go to bed, go ahead. I was planning to read in bed, but if you're going now, I can do my reading here just as well.

H. There's plenty of room in bed. We could both fit.

Z is fiercely silent.

H hammers her thighs and expresses what she imagines are Z's feelings.

H. I don't want to! I can't do this! It isn't working! What crap!

Pause.

H. See? I'll get mad for you. You don't have to do a thing!

The living room. H and Z sit in front of TV and watch National Geographic.

H. Look at that little doggie. He has no defenses whatsoever. Just comes right over and begs to be petted. 'Cause if he hung back, no one would notice. That's how puppies are—they wag their little tails, and everyone cuddles them. Whereas people don't have tails so everyone ignores them.

The living room. The couch. The TV is off.

H and Z lie curled up on the couch. They shift to try to fit better.

Z. Isn't that what doggies do? They snuggle up wherever they're uncomfortable and try to fit in?

H. I don't know. Why don't we go to bed?

They continue lying pressed close together and trying to fit.

H. *(very whiny)* Woof.

Z. *(similarly)* Woof.

H. Woof.

Z. Woof.

H. Woof, woof. *(pause, then with a strong, mature dog's voice)* Woof!

They keep lying there as uncomfortably as before.

H. Then let's go party! *(She sits up and sings.)*

We'll head for home

Toss the dog a bone

The night will last till dawn

We'll head for home

And then belly up

To sing a few toasts

To the moon

The living room. The couch. The TV is on.

Z. Hey, that's that movie about the daughter of Victor Hugo. With Isabelle Adjani in the title role.

H. Uhh-huh. I know that one.

Z. Eventually she goes crazy.

H. You've already told me about it.

Z. No, I told you the one about Rodin's lover. The sculptress. She went crazy, too, and died a horrible death, and later the French made a movie about it. Adjani played her, too.

H. Why do they all have to go crazy?

Z. Did you read about that countess?

H. What do I care about some countess?

Z. No one expects you to identify with an Italian countess...

H. Was she the one who constantly wanted to be photographed, but no one wanted to look at her anymore? Vir. . . Vir. . .

Z. Virginia de Castiglione.

H. Right. All that narcissism put her over the edge.

Z. (*thrashing H with the TV guide*) Good for her! If there was even a drop of narcissism in your system, you'd have gone on a diet a long time ago because you'd care about how I look at you and if I still desire you.

H snatches the TV guide from Z, and begins to thrash her back.

H. Right! If you had your way, I would have turned out like you, as thin as a dipstick!

H stops thrashing Z.

Silence prevails. Z considers what has just happened.

Z. That was amazing! Was it as good for you as it was for me?

H chuckles.

Z. I'm serious.

H wonders.

Z. It was so... so refreshing!

H. *(handing the TV guide to Z)* Your turn!

The bedroom. The bed. Sleeping, they lie flat, toss, stir, then become still again. Z wakes up.

She sits up and looks straight ahead.

H wakes up.

She brings herself closer to Z.

H. Aren't you asleep? Go back to sleep... Go back to sleep some more...

Z. Is there anything you'd like to share with me perhaps?

H. I'd like to get some sleep.

Z. Are you depressed?

H. Yes, I'm depressed! Now let's go back to sleep!

H catches hold of Z and embraces her. Content, she falls asleep.

The living room. The TV's off.

H and Z are seated on the couch, looking serious.

H. When I was little, I was always climbing trees.

Z. When I was little, I was afraid of heights. I can still see myself clutching the railing, hanging out at the top of the stairs during recess, because I was too scared to come down.

H. I refused to wear skirts to school. Finally, the principal called my mother and said: "Ma'am, try to convince your daughter to dress up for the graduation ceremony. Maybe for once in her life, she'll make an effort to look like a woman."

Z. The school director talked to my father. He said: "Your daughter has a fear of stairs, and we don't have the personnel to bring her down."

H. I used to play soccer with the boys until the girls found out and said I was "too fast." I thought I'd rather hang out with girls anyway if that was their idea of a welcome, but it wasn't.

Z. It wasn't just the stairs but the hordes of wild kids running up and down that scared me.

H. I started playing basketball instead. I liked the competition and being part of a team.

Z. So there was never any question of me climbing trees.

H. Until I started skipping school, it was fun.

Z. At last I learned to slide down the railings to reach my classes.

H. And then life made me settle down.

Z. After awhile, I settled down, too.

H. And I resigned myself to thinking that it was over for me.

Z. Don't say that. You've got me.

Pause filled with expectation: So what?

Z. (*hesitantly*) I'll protect you.

The living room. H is lying on the couch.

Z is giving H a face massage.

H. Ooooh, that's so good! Your fingers feel like little bugs, dashing here and there. You can't believe they could go any faster but then they do.

Z. The bugs from the movie, you mean? The mutants?

H. The rebellious mutants. Leaping, hurling at my face! Munching the live flesh away...

Z. You watched too much of that movie.

H. Creeping and crawling from all sides, they're closing in, help, help!

Z. Stop paranoing.

H. What?

Z. It's Indo-European. Stop paranoing.

H. You're supposed to say: Stop being paranoid.

Z. But you're an active voice.

H. (*smugly*) You bet.

On the couch. They have just watched a documentary about the film director who shot his wife and her male lover, a pop-singer. H and Z are upset by the subject.

Z. Let's say someone's stalking you. You know that someone and he tells you he's going to kill you, but you don't seek help or try to hide. So now what? Your pursuer has no choice. He has to kill you, or else he'll look like all talk and no action.

H. And *now* how does he look?

Z. I'm just telling you they were in it together, pursuer and victim.

H. But he's the one who did it.

Z. The point is, no one tried to stop him. If the wife had an affair and didn't want to be with her lunatic husband anymore, then it was her duty to protect herself. And since the lunatic husband was from France, the solution was simple: he could be deported for making threats.

H. Maybe they didn't think he was serious!

Z. They didn't think he was serious?

H. Maybe they liked being a little scared!

Z. But they were scared shitless.

H. Oh yeah? People have affairs and get involved in love triangles all the time, and no one gets killed.

Z. Tell me something else I already know.

H. He bought the gun abroad, he brought it in legally. What were they supposed to report?

Z. So that's that—if someone waves a gun and starts making threats, you won't tell anyone?

H. People talk shit all the time.

Z. But what if he hoped to be stopped? Any one of them could have told him: "Slow down. Give it back. This game's gone on long enough." They could've set a limit.

H. He was a grown-up, he was responsible for himself. Were they supposed to lecture him, send him back to kindergarten?

Z. Grown-up people take part in coups, mobs and massacres all the time!

H. That's a different matter altogether.

Z. It's always grown-up people.

H. We're talking a man who killed his wife who left him for another man!

Can't you see...

Z. No, I don't see the difference!

H. And he got off so easy! Doesn't *that* make you mad? To get just a couple of years behind bars for a murder in cold blood? He planned it! It was premeditated!

Z. Well, that's life. You know how it is: when a guy's wife cheats on him, he can't possibly restrain himself. He has to go crazy, he has to run amok.

H. And that lets him off the hook?

Z. That's what men are like!

H. The hell they are!

Pause.

Z. You're all wound up and you want to fight.

H. It's you who want to fight.

Z. I'm just trying to tell you that before people do something they don't really want to do, they usually become a little wound up.

H. He didn't want to kill her?

Z. He did, but many people want to kill their spouses, yet they don't!

Pause.

The silence continues.

H and Z look each other in the eye. Their eyes narrow, their lips curl back, and they bare their fangs. All of a sudden they are at each other's throats, growling and barking.

Silence. H and Z gaze at each other again. They muster up all their strength and come up with the rumbling of dull hatred.

Silence.

Each is waiting for the other to give in.

Luckily, it doesn't take long for one of them to be the first to produce a conciliatory whine.

The bedroom. Z is admiring herself, while H torments her.

Z. People adore me.

H. Nobody likes you!

Z. They all want to talk to me.

H. They just pretend they do!

Z. They listen to what I tell them.

H. Because you pay them to.

Z. No, they pay me!

H. Nobody likes you besides me.

Z. Everyone likes me besides you!

H. Anyone else would dump you, but I stick around.

Z. Go ahead, dump me.

H. I can't, I'm different.

Pause.

Z. You aren't different, you're just possessive. But I can see right through you. You want to turn me into a doormat. You want to rattle my pride, so I won't ever leave you.

H. No, it's not that at all. I just don't see why anyone else should have to suffer your presence.

Z. Okay, I'm off.

H. Where to?

The hallway.

Z has a vision.

The Goddess emerges from a mirror on the wall.

Z. You haven't created this world, have you? But maybe you're working on the next one. Maybe you're the goddess of light, truth and beauty, peace talks in wartime, and better communication in families?

The Goddess looks like a supermodel, and she attempts to walk down the hallway as if she were on a catwalk. Yet her discomfort is growing. This space is too dark, cramped and inferior. Her energy sapped, the Goddess turns pale and withers. She must have had

something urgent to say (a message?) but now finds herself unable to utter a word. At last she vanishes.

Z. And somehow we manage to carry on.

The living room. H watches TV while Z brings in a message.

Z. Well, how about it? We won a cruise to Chechnya!

H. You can't win a cruise to Chechnya. You can only get there by land.

Z. But I have the cruise tickets and the message was passed to me. It says: "We should end war now by discarding the idea of wars."

H. The message was passed to you, how?

Z. Well, it hasn't been exactly but since no one will listen to me or to you while we're still alive, we need to conjure up some ghosts. Convene the Dead Lesbian Consortium, they'll back us. So, listen! (*reading*) "All history textbooks need to be rewritten, the thirst for power derided, military exploits discredited. All kinds of examples of peaceful conflict resolution from all over the world should be collected and a new historical canon should be established." Now we just need to sign it – that's it, with our names. Then we'll add a note below, in smaller print: East European chapter. So they'll know where we're from. I'd also like to squeeze in some in-depth explanation: "As the secular philosophers of the Enlightenment questioned the *sacred history* of holy deeds and promoted the concept of *secular history* instead, we are ready for another revolution. It should be stated clearly that no war can ever further social justice. Or else future generations will look back on our times with pity and horror, and they will consider us barbarians."

H. And what does all this have to do with Chechnya?

Z. I guess that's where it all started. The great migration of peoples, four thousand years ago.

H. But these won't be the same people.

Z. Don't you have to go to the root of the problem to solve it?

H. Not necessarily.

The living room, the couch.

The TV is off.

H and Z are looking out at the audience, not saying anything.

The living room.

Z. So I guess we aren't going?

H. Uh-uh.

Z. We could have our families housesit for us and see how trustworthy they are.

H. We could skip the family altogether and fast-forward to the next subject. We could talk about plant life instead.

Z. Do you know that bamboo shoots grow in families just like humans do? The whole bamboo family is a lot like a human family. There are bamboo parents, bamboo grandparents and bamboo children who are the least responsible. The biggest responsibility falls on the parents. They have to care for the children and the grandparents both. When the grandparents die, they turn into nourishment for the whole family. That's all that matters anyway. Their whole life revolves around food. I guess that pertain to most people, present company included, doesn't it?

H. But they'd never admit it.

Same place, the couch.

H continues with her breakfast until it's time for dinner.

H. Okay, my dears, it's time to go back in the fridge. But don't worry, you'll have company, there will be other cheeses in there. You can tell each other stories about how you were produced.

Z. I'm full.

H. So we're not gonna eat together?

Z. I already ate while cooking.

H. But that couldn't be a whole lot, right?

Z. No comment.

H. You ate from the pot?

Z. From the casserole!

H. From the pot! What a lady, eating cabbage straight from the pot!

The living room, the couch. Rhythmic music on TV. H and Z, seated side by side, keep extending first their right arms, then their left arms, as gracefully as they can. Right hand, a pirouette, left hand, a pirouette, then a wave. This activity turns into a form of dance involving only the upper parts of their bodies.

H is seated on the couch. Z is walking around restlessly.

Z. My mother killed my father. And I can't do anything about it. She said there was a tranquilizer in the IV drip and tried to put the blame on the paramedics... The same process must have taken place in her mind that normally takes place in reference to anyone whom she's wronged in some way, like when she says: And now your half-sister and her gang of lawyers are trying to steal a helpless old woman's inheritance! That's just her thing: *They* overdosed him with tranquilizers, not *her*! But I know it was her. She doped him up, and he had a stroke.

H. Then write her a letter, and call her a murderess, and see how she responds. Go ahead and tell her: It was you who stuffed him with lard! You fed him whole milk and triple-fat cheese smothered in cream!

Z. I will! But then the letter will fall into my half-sister's hands. She'll sue.

H. And who will pay the court costs?

Z. Guess who.

H. You with our savings.

Z. I'll have to protect my own mother, won't I? It would be awful to have a murderess for a mother.

Z sits down and glares into her inevitable future.

The couch, right after dinner. H is seated while Z is lying down. H would like to lie down, too.

The couch is too narrow.

Z. (*feeling her chin*) I must have put on weight after that dinner.

H. How about the one you had yesterday?

Z. That I don't know, but today's dinner did me in. I'm growing a double-chin as we speak. I can feel it.

H. Sit down.

Z. Why?

H. You'll see, that crease will be gone.

Z. Okay.

Z sits. She doesn't seem to have a double chin anymore but now she is examining her belly.

Z. It all kind of moved down.

H. You know what? Now stand up.

Z. No...

H. Yes. I guarantee you, it will all even out in the end.

Z stands.

H. See? You're all trim and smooth. Now take a few steps, the door is there.

H sprawls out on the couch. She is very pleased with herself.

The bedroom. Night. They are falling asleep.

H. I'd like to be a tree if it wasn't for...

Z. The axe?

H. Boredom. A sequoia can live close to four thousand years but only in the same place. For me forty would be too much. To stare at the same thing over and over...

Z. What else can you do if you're stuck?

H. You can always wither.

Morning. Kitchen. H at the window.

H. Honey!

Z. Now what did I do?

H. Look what's happening!

Z. It's snowing! And every flake is different.

Indeed, it is snowing outside.

H. Honey, how could you do that to us? (*H acts proud of Z, for messing with the seasons is no mean feat.*) Make it stop. (*With tenderness*) It's spring, after all.

The couch. In front of the TV.

Z. What if I just don't want children? Is that so strange?

H. Even if you wanted them, you wouldn't necessarily have to adopt.

Z. Don't even go there!

H. They act as if you couldn't hope for anything else. Like your only alternative was to adopt their babies.

Z. Am I applying to be a nanny or something?

H. Truth is, it doesn't really take a lot of effort to make a baby.

Z. They keep breeding, and I'm supposed to clean up after them?

H. No, you should beg them to let you clean up after them.

Z. Please, ladies and gentlemen, let me raise this poor kid to be a buffoon so he can look forward to a future in politics, and if it's a girl, a dunce so she won't in any way resemble me.

H. Because that would be the end of the world.

Z. Better yet, they can go screw themselves and raise their own damn kids.

The couch. Much later. The TV is off.

Z. As a matter of fact, I would like to have a child with you.

H. Would you?

Z. Yes, and I'd like the kid to be just like you. And a little bit like me, too.

So this is what I think. We'll splice our eggs together. Then we'll raise the kid so she knows how to be true to herself. We'll teach her all about love!

H. We won't have any time left for love.

Z. Can't we stretch time out?

H. And what do we need a kid for?

Z. To take care of us when we're old.

H. Then I need to know one more thing.

Z. Yes?

H. Who is actually going to raise the kid?

Z. That's not fair!

H. Because I have a job and you have your stuff to do. So I'm curious who's going to take care of the child.

Z. We need another person to take care of us and the child.

H. We need a bigger apartment.

Z. And more money.

A pause filled with consternation.

H. Then let's not have a child and we won't need any of that.

Z. We won't?

H. Maybe not.

Z. I need some.

H. Let's stay the way we are.

Z. Leave well enough alone.

They stay where they are.

Z. Now what?

H and Z look straight ahead while trying to maintain their composure.

At times, one or the other bursts into giggles. They glance at each other furtively to make sure the other is doing the same and then look straight ahead again.

The living room.

H is kissing Z good-bye.

H. I'm going to. . .

Z. Go then.

H. Take care of yourself. I'm going to. . .

Z. Go in peace then.

Pause. H appears to be leaving while remaining in the same spot.

H. Where do you think I'm going?

The couch. The TV is switched off. H and Z are watching a talk show.

Two girls are living together as a couple. One of them says she is really a man. She tells the audience why she thinks so and that she can't afford an operation. Actually, she doesn't work at all. The girl who is not a man supports their household. Someone from the audience (a man) points out that it isn't the girl who says she is a man but the one who says she isn't, who wears the pants. The psychologist and most of the audience support the girls' plea and their right to love. H and Z are disgusted.

Z. Isn't that sick?

H. These people are sick.

Z. So women don't know how to control their emotions?

H. Or make decisions.

Z. And you call her a psychologist? I've never heard so much shameless chatter in my life!

H. Men, on the other hand, have amazing control over their emotions and are extremely well organized.

Z. So they'll save up for her operation, taking their time, and live happily ever after in the meantime.

H. But she won't ever be called a dyke.

Z. No, she's a man awaiting sex reassignment.

H. Everyone accepts that, so why shouldn't they?

Z begins to entertain this idea, too. Why not?

Z. Let's start saving up for your operation!

H. And then we could use that money to buy a new car.

Z. We'll fake your operation!

H. Then we'll get *you* to be reassigned! And we'll end up as a couple of gay men cross-dressing in a vintage cabaret style. *(She stands upright and with a regal gesture demonstrates how this is going to look)* Ta-DUM!

The hallway. The closet. Housecleaning.

Z is crouched inside the closet and flings out a variety of objects: dressing gowns, sweaters, cashmere stoles, curlers, stocking caps, galoshes, tornadoes, earthquakes, military takeovers, infants and little kittens. Schmaltzy music is coming from the living room, the TV. H puts on an old flowered dressing gown and her mother's felt hat, and throws a mink stole over her arm. In one hand, she holds an open umbrella, and in the other, a tacky handbag from the 50s. She assumes several elegant poses, while Z snaps pictures.

The hallway. H and Z are in the corner marked by the door and the closet. No music.

H. It was right here. In this spot. My brother hit me over my head.

Z. Why would he do that?

H. That's just how it was – we'd fight all the time.

Z. What a drag!

H. Until I told him: Wait here! I went to the kitchen, grabbed the biggest knife from the drawer, went back to my brother, put the knife to his throat and said in a very soothing voice: If you hit me again over the head –notice that I didn't tell him to stop fighting with me altogether, I just didn't want to be hit on the head– if you do this again, then I'll come to you while you sleep and slit your throat.

Z. Then what happened?

H. He didn't hit me anymore.

The hallway. H and Z are seated on the pile of stuff that came from the closet. They shall continue with the clean-up in a while.

Z. You know what, honey?

H. What, love?

Z. I think I'd like to have another life after this one.

H. Yes, love?

Z. I'd like to be reborn.

H. That's nice, love.

Z. And in this life that I'm going to have right after that one I'd like to be the same as I am now.

H. Fine with me, love.

Z. Because I think the world is changing for the better in spite of itself. So there will be new opportunities we won't manage to have in this life and new experiences still unavailable to us. And the life that I already have has been such a rapture, and I would like to learn better how to share it.

H. With whom?

Z. Would you still be my partner?

H. What do you think, love?

Z. Fine, but I'd like to have a couple of affairs, too.

H. Then have those affairs first, before you settle down with me.

Z. Could I have them while I'm still in this life, though? To make sure they'll happen before.

H. *(suddenly deaf)* What did you say, love? I can't hear you.

Z. N... nothing.

H and Z are looking out the window.

H. Gray, sad and stupid.

Z. Why stupid?

H. Because it's gray.

Z. But gray doesn't mean stupid.

H. Says who?

Z. The modernist poets. "At the window, rain's ringing, the autumn rain's ringing. . ." I forget how it goes.

Silence. Anticipation.

H. (*reciting*) At the window, rain's ringing, the autumn rain's ringing
Its tapping is measured, unchanging, unceasing,
Fat droplets keep thudding against my wet window
A crystalline moaning escapes from glass bellows
And twilight's gray shimmer is drowsily seeping. . .
At the window, rain's ringing, the autumn rain's ringing. . .
Today someone left me in this cloud-drenched season. . .
Who was it? I can't say, but I'm left feeling lonesome.
Someone died. . . Who? Vainly I shuffle through memories. . .
Someone close. . . at whose funeral I drifted through elegies. . .
Joy wanted to come, but was scared off by shadows.
Someone dared love me, but his heart broke from sorrow
When he saw the spark in me catch fire, then stutter
Thus he died without alms like an unlucky debtor. . .

It became very sad and no less gray.

H and Z wail dolefully.

The couch. The Phantom of the Opera is on the screen. H doesn't pay attention. She's reading.

H. Sweetie, I didn't say that. You've made it all up!

Z. No way! I'd never just make up that you were able to lay eggs.

H. That's not what I meant.

Z. (*kindly*) So what *did* you mean?

H. I'm only clucking. I've never laid a single egg!

Z. Yours is a great talent. And I'm just your faithful scribe.

H. Is this what you think?

Z. Of course.

H. Just don't show it to anyone, honey.

Z. I won't. Don't worry.

H. Don't show it to anyone, or they'll lock me up. And how will you manage without me?

The couch. The TV. They have just watched an old movie about a woman spy who died because while she was able to redeem her crime with her love, she couldn't part from her rabbits. (Nor did she know how to turn into one.)

H. *(singing)* You'll be forgiven by love... Love takes no offense at all...

Z. *(sighing)* Oh, I certainly hope so.

H. *(serious and upright)* Honey, is there anything for love to forgive?

Z attempts to be both plaintive and comical in her denial, as if hoping to divert H.

H. *(gravely)* Tell me the truth, rabbit. Is there anything that love should forgive?

Z. You said you didn't want to know.

H. But now I do.

Z. Isn't it unfair to change the rules after the game has begun?

H. I know but life is brutal. *(friendly, yet firm)* Answer me now, rabbit: have you ever betrayed me in thought, word or deed?

Z. *(shaking her head)* No.

H. You're lying to me, rabbit. Have you ever been unfaithful in thought?

Z. *(considers her options and nods)* Yes.

H. Have you been unfaithful in word?

Z. *(almost silently)* Yes.

H positions her mouth to say "in deed," but no words come out. She pauses an instant, then does it again, all the while watching Z.

H. In deed?

Z. *(shakes her head, then says)* No.

H. Love forgives you. Go and stray no more.

Z earnestly nods her assent. She looks more and more like a rabbit from a cartoon as she nods.

The living room. H on the couch.

Z by the TV set.

Z. I'm leaving.

H. Where to?

Z. I don't know yet, I don't care. I'm leaving.

H. Then you must be going to. . .

Z. This isn't a joke. I can't stand this any more.

H. What is it that you can't stand?

Z. That!

Z points to the TV set.

Z. I wish we could just once connect truly so it would be only you and me...

pure, natural, and plain. But not like plain yogurt, please.

H. Honey! Has someone hurt you?

Z. I'm telling you, it's either me or it.

H. But it's only a TV!

Z. That's just it.

The living room. The TV set is laid on the couch. H and Z have taken its place. They aren't switched on. No one says a word.

Translated by Karen Kovacic and the author.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS OF WWOL ISSUE NO. 2, 2011

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