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## Peace

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## PEACE\*

Mariana takes her pleasure with her body.

The habit she has taken off, lying on the chair, slips to the floor, where the stockings that she has hurriedly removed now seem thicker and whiter.

Her legs, soft and thin, lying stretched out on the bed at first, slowly rise, half-open, hesitant; but now her knees come up and her heels dig into the sheets; now her haunches arch with a moan that soon will become continuous, and then break off absorbed by the silence of the cell, drunk in by the mouth that awaits it.

Why should Mariana care what hands guide her—her own that slowly descend along her hips, or his that suddenly set her free . . . ?

The walls of the cloister are breached then: he holds her fast by the breasts, tearing her nipples with his teeth.

Have the walls of the cloister been breached then?

Her tense pubis arches again: his swollen tongue. His burning-hot, rough tongue, wet with saliva, and the long, lingering, persistent, rhythmic sucking, slowly draining her of life.

Mariana is taking her pleasure with her body, self-taught, forgetting the reasons and the sorrowful complaints that lead her to the writing of letters and the forging of a self. 'I discovered that I loved him less than I loved my passion . . .': she is now immersing herself more and more deeply in her exercise. The exercise of bodily passion, the exercise of baring the roots of passion.

She keeps her eyes wide open, fixed on his face, staring at it intently as though mesmerized, inventing its outlines engraved upon her memory, or not certain whether she is inventing them as she falls upon his chest, her thighs writhing rhythmically, possessing him as though she were a male—she feels—and seeing his taut lips she buries herself deeper within him, she impales herself upon an enormous pleasure, on the outcry of one who flees or surrenders. Yielding herself entirely to that blinding conquest of the violent hardness of a penis: his fingers deeply buried in the slippery wetness of her vagina, his shoulders erect, his head leaning against the pillow, his arms tense, as

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\*From *The Three Marias: New Portuguese Letters* by Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Isabel Barreno, and Maria Velho da Costa translated by Helen Lane, copyright ©1975 by Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc. and used by their permission.

though to hold down her narrow haunches moving compliantly in this common search for the vortex of the uterus.

“You know how dangerous you are: a woman swept up once again by the river that you seek to silence in your veins, you wicked creature. In the silk of your buttocks, in the scorching smell of your armpits. A plot of land, that I breathe in with great gasping gulps and form with your sperm, my seed; the mistress-wife you left behind is neither won nor lost; you see how I surrender myself and offer myself, guide myself and show you the fastest or the slowest ways to enhance our pleasure. Standing on my feet now, I take you again, I traverse you, I possess you; my already thick secretions, mingling with yours, flood my terribly sterile, sealed, sleeping womb.”

Mariana allows the fingers to withdraw from her vagina and search up higher so as to end the spasm that softly creeps up through her body. The mouth that sucks her, that traverses her is like a well in which she deliberately drowns herself, throwing herself into it in a mad frenzy.

Slowly my love, slowly reaching our orgasm, your tongue or mine tracing its outlines. Slowly I suddenly lose you, I forget you, as everything becomes a single great wave of vertigo.

And the watchful night devours the room where Mariana lies stretched out, her sweat soaking the bed, sticking to her smooth skin, her fingers lying forgotten on her benumbed, drowsing clitoris.

Peace has returned to her body, still lying stretched out as before, ready to burst into flame once more, should Mariana again wish to take her pleasure with her body.

*21 March 1971*