

Court of Appeal

Michèle Causse

- Did your lover die?
- Yes she did.
- Did you kill her?
- I don't know.
- You are not sure?
- No.
- Where did you live at that time?
- In Montréal.
- Did you not live in France before?
- Yes I did.
- Why did you leave France?
- To live with her.
- What happened?
- She was afraid of me, she was afraid of herself. She was afraid of us.
- Do you know why?
- She said "What you are about is not life but illumination. And one cannot live that day by day."
- Did you believe her?
- No.
- Did she object?
- She said "you are so devastatingly true about truth."
- What did she mean?
- She meant she could not stand truth.
- What was the truth?
- Love is ontological.
- What did you do, then?
- I wandered.
- How did you feel?
- Bewildered.
- Did you still love her?
- Yes.

- Did she know it?
- Yes. I told her.
- Where did you go then?
- I went to an island under a volcano. For a while a while a while. Then I followed a writer friend to Florida. I met Barbara Deming who sheltered me. I listened to her. I listened to Sonia Johnson. I complained that Florida was too flat. I went back to the volcano. I was crawling or lying on the floor. Gaping.
- How long did it last?
- Five years.
- Did your lover ever call you?
- Yes.
- What did she say?
- She said "from the jaws of the ordeal one has slipped only further onto its belly."
- And?
- And "I cannot puncture the remoteness of the present, this now, this you."
- What did you answer?
- That I had only daydreams.
- Why did you go to Montréal?
- To be a few miles away from my lover in New York.
- What did you do in Montréal?
- I went on breaking my bones.
- Did you call your lover?
- Yes.
- Did she come to see you?
- Yes.
- What did she say?
- She said "help."
- Is that all?
- No. She said "In sleep, finally, there is no between."
- And?
- Between us there has been only the connection of dispersal."
- Did you make love?
- Yes.
- How did you feel?
- Like a ship wrecking.
- Did you ask her to live with you?

- Yes.
- What did she answer?
- She said "yes" she said "no" she said "let us go to India."
- Did you go?
- No.
- And so?
- I was invited to the Québec bookfair. It was April and it was snowing. I spoke on the day of the Stanley Cup final. The bookfair was empty. I said "please, don't bother to read my books because writing means more to the writer than to the reader." Then I thought of Gertrude Stein. A French author came to me and said "you were bold." Her name was Clarisse Nicoidski. The day after the wind was blowing. I went to walk above the river St. Laurent, and all of a sudden, it happened.
- What happened?
- I did not love my lover anymore.
- What do you mean?
- All of a sudden I was drained out, dried out. Dead.
- Did you tell her?
- Yes.
- Why?
- Because my love was air and breath and she could not live without air and breath.
- What happened next?
- She got sick.
- What do you mean?
- She got liver cancer.
- How did you know?
- She told me on the telephone.
- Did you feel guilty?
- No.
- How old was she?
- Fifty three.
- Was she an alcoholic?
- No. She drank soya milk.
- Did you see her again?
- Yes. After her first leave from the hospital. We went to Mount Desert Island. We walked. We talked.
- What did she say?

- She said "I don't see any light in your eyes."
- Was it true?
- Yes.
- Did you feel sad?
- I felt sad not to be sad.
- Did she say anything else?
- She said "terror has only itself for its meal."
- Did she know she was going to die?
- We were both already dead.
- Did you tell her the truth?
- Yes.
- How did she react?
- She said "the key word of life is frustration."
- Did you understand what she meant?
- Yes.
- Do you know frustration?
- No. Only deprivation.
- When did she die clinically?
- During the night of the 21st of February 1990.
- What were you doing on that night?
- I was reading the letters of Djuna Barnes to Natalie Barney in a public square in Montreal.
- Did you know she was agonizing?
- Yes I knew.
- Why did you not stay by her side?
- She did not want me to see her. Her stomach had swollen, her hair had fallen, her face had dropped.
- Did you want to go to her?
- No.
- Why?
- I had buried her.
- What was her last word?
- "Help."
- What did you do afterwards?
- On the 21st of February 1991 I went to Tulum in Mexico. I stayed in front of the sea for a while a while a while and I called her.
- Did she answer?
- No.