

OUR LADY  
OF THE FLOWERS,  
ECHOIC

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*with a preface by  
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TRENCHART: LOGISTICS



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On the news Weidmann, his head  
Like a nun in white or a wounded  
Pilot, falls down in silky rye  
The same day Our Lady of the Flowers  
Stamped all over France dangles his crimes  
By a golden string — nimble assassins mount  
The back stairs of our sleep

There were others, of course, orphaned  
Fragments I overhear prisoners sing  
Inside when voices rise in psalm  
From the depths of their misery  
Each time my heart bangs like it did  
When the German dropped his bomb  
And I smiled, a tiny sign between us

It can't be pure chance that I cut out  
Those handsome heads with empty  
Eyes or rather sky-blue windows  
On the construction site not yet up  
Who said vacant? When their eyes do close  
It's creepier than a viper's nest to the girl  
Who walks by the barred spy-hole

That each cell becomes where strange types  
Crash, swear and dream on straw pallets  
Or maybe something of a confession  
Booth with its dark screen. Empty  
Theatres, deserted prisons, idle machinery  
Those eyes hold me entranced and I feel  
My way, groping along like a blind man

Until in wild panic I arrive by a sordid alley  
Face to face with nothing but a void  
Propped and swollen like a huge foxglove  
The papers torn, sheared of their pimps  
Like a May garden looted of its blossoms  
It is you I remember at night: stretched  
Like a coffin at sea, pale and wintry

You flow into me, white blessed body  
Now a halo, supernatural cocoon  
You prick with both your feet.  
Out of chewed bread I make glue  
For my cutouts — some I pin with brass wire  
That inmates use for funereal wreaths  
Now star-shaped frames for the criminal

Element. I live here among ruins  
Smiles or pouts all enter through  
My open pores, myself, my family.  
To give them their due, their retinue  
I've added a few profiles from those  
Cheap paperbacks we smuggle in the yard:  
Young half-breed or Apache with a hard-on

Under the sheets I choose my nightly  
Outlaw, caress his absent face  
Then the body which resists at first  
Opens up like a mirror armoire  
That falls out of the wall and pins me  
On the stained mat where I think  
Of God and his angels come at last

With the help of my unknown lovers —  
Nobody can say when and if I'll get out —  
I'll compose a story: my heroes are  
Stuck on the wall and I in lockdown  
As you read about Divine and Culafroy  
You might at times hear lines mixed in  
With a drop of blood, an exclamation point

In the drowsy morning as the screw  
Throws in his low "Bonjour"  
The fact of a few pink girls, now white  
Corpses, flows through  
An ineffable fairytale I tell  
In my own words  
For the enchantment of my cell

Divine died yesterday  
In a pool of blood more red  
You would see Jesus' oriflamme  
Flying for The Sacred Heart  
Her lungs like a piece of evidence  
In the judge's chamber squeezed shut  
Now it rains behind bars, wind too

A spiral stairway leads to the attic  
Overlooking a small Montmartre  
Cemetery where D lived for a spell  
It will be the anteroom of her crypt  
Thick with putrid flowers and incense  
Floor to floor it rises toward death  
And then at the top no more

Than a phantom shadow  
Tinged with blue while outside  
Let's say under the black canopy  
Of tiny umbrellas, Mimosa I,  
Mimosa II, Mimosa half-IV,  
First Communion, Angela, Her  
Highness, Castagnette and Régine

Await holding sprays of violets  
All the queens, boys and girls  
Are there knotted together chattering  
And tweeting, pearl tiaras on their heads  
I let myself sink to my old village grave-  
Yard where snails and slugs leave  
Trails of slime on white flagstones

“Poor darling!” “Can you beat it?”  
“She was losing it.” “Where’s Mignon?”  
Any minute now there’ll be a black horse  
Procession and the rest by way of Rachel  
Avenue. Oh the scene! The Eternal makes  
His entrance, smiling, supple and elegant  
Without a hat. They call him Mignon-Dainty-Feet.

In the rectangle of my door I thought  
I saw him once like a dead man walking  
On pricey furs. In a flash, I’m his  
Discharged to the core — not a dab of self  
Remains but ruffian, pimp and gangster  
He’s lodged instead, his lacy fingers —  
Baby Jesus in its crib — receive the world

As he moves through the queens  
Like a shiny slaughterhouse knife  
They part and recast in silence  
Their traveling line — two at a time  
He runs up the steps, lifted, I'd have  
Said, to the house of death now real  
As tears, flowers and mourning veil

Old Ernestine, Divine's mother  
Though still a beauty was done for  
Having ransacked a thousand and one  
Roles from pulp novels that corrupt  
The real: gun in gloved hand  
She stages her son's dénouement  
The way others shoot up smack