

The Remarkable Rooming-House of Mme. Le Monde: Tennessee Williams's Little Shop of Comic Horrors

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“Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you.”
Estragon, *Waiting for Godot*.

In 1982, George Bixby, a rare book dealer and the publisher of the small Albondocani Press in New York, had approached Tennessee Williams's agent at ICM for a play to issue in a limited, signed edition. At first Bixby thought Williams and his agent would give him permission to have *The Traveling Companion*, which Williams had earlier published in the November-December 1981 issue of *Christopher Street*, a glossy, gay magazine, now defunct, in New York. But Williams responded that he would rather see Bixby release something late and unpublished and subsequently sent him a typescript of *Rooming-House*, which Williams classified as a “new play.” Yet before the publishing contracts could be signed for *Rooming-House*, Williams died (on 24 February 1983), and it was left to his agent to arrange for publication and for his estate to be listed as the copyright holder. *Rooming-House* was published as Albondocani Press Publication No. 32 in October of 1984 in a limited edition of 176 copies (Crandell 360), 150 of which were numbered but not signed. The other 26 were “lettered A-Z for use of the publisher and the author's estate [and were] not for sale” (*Remarkable-Rooming House* 25).¹ A small play, *Rooming-House* is only 22 pages long. Because the pages in the Albondocani edition are unnumbered, I have supplied Arabic page numbers beginning with the first page of the script, immediately after the title page and list of characters. These are the page references I cite in the essay.

These are all the details that have thus far been unearthed about this mysterious late Williams play. The scenario above, though, raises as many questions as it answers. When exactly did Williams write the *Remarkable Rooming-House*, and why didn't he give it to New Directions, his long-time publisher? What type of play was *Rooming-House* that Williams was willing to offer it in a very limited print run and for a very restricted audience? Oftentimes publishers of small presses contact the author for a script, as Bixby did Williams through his agent. Moreover, Williams had intended to sign copies and to send them to a select circle of his friends, thus accounting for some of the circumstances surrounding Albondocani's receiving the script. But even more germane to the following discussion of *Rooming-House* was how the play relates to the expansive Williams canon, early and late, and why has it never been performed. As to the question of

when *Rooming-House* was actually written, it could have been done in 1982, but we may never know that with certitude, since Williams regarded any script as new if he had done any work on it, however small.

Distinguished Williams scholar Allean Hale recently told me that she thought *The Remarkable Rooming-House of Mme. Le Monde* was Williams's "most unpleasant play," an observation that may shed light on why it was issued by a small press like Albondocani. Unquestionably, this extremely late Williams play is outrageous, horrific, perhaps even beyond production. It reveals a Tennessee Williams wickedly exaggerating and punishing his own persona, egregiously magnifying the grostequeries for which he was (in)famous in the public consciousness. The sexual acts of felatio in *Kingdom of Earth*, castration in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, or rape in *A Streetcar Named Desire* seem by contrast with the events in *Rooming-House* less sensational and, surprisingly enough, less brutal. In the aberrant ecology of *Rooming-House*, Williams represented, or reported, homoerotic groping, pederasty, incest, child-killing, and on-stage orgasms at the mere recollection of an assignation years earlier.

Performing or responding to these acts is a cast of four characters, some of Williams's most salacious outcasts, worthy of meritorious inclusion for bad behavior in his *Memoirs*. There is the homoerotically aggressive Mint, a "*morphodite gimp*" (19) who, because his lower body is paralyzed, swings from one hook to another in the attic of the remarkable rooming-house but is dependent on others for extended locomotion. The second character is Boy, Madame Le Monde's son who is "hung like a dray horse" (6) and who takes Mint down and out for "perverse sexual act[s]" (2). Visiting Mint is Hall, his old schoolmate at Scrotum-on-Swansea, who has sex with Mme. Le Monde and tortures Mint in his own sadistic ways. Both Hall and Mint perversely reminisce about their public school, with its tarnished reputation of reveling in yet severely punishing pederasty. Finally, Madame Le Monde, the proprietor of the rooming-house, is the most pernicious of the four characters, killing her son and Mint, and her lover-broker Hall from whom she purchases inestimable quantities of Amalgamated, Inc. All the action occurs in her London rooming-house.

These characters and their outrageous antics prove that the way Williams ended his career complements the way he began it. *Rooming-House* is not a departure from Williams's dramaturgy but the culmination of it. In many ways, *Rooming-House* looks back to much of what Williams wrote. As in everything else Williams created, the autobiographical strain is inescapable. *Rooming-House* intensely builds upon many of Williams's chronic fears but also highlights his experiments with anti-mimetic dramaturgy, dramatic allegories, and comic horror. In fact, the play re-enacts the horrific, spectacular, even titillating tortures that had fascinated Williams from his early short story "The Vengeance of Nitocris," published in *Weird Tales* in 1928, and his love of Shakespeare's most gory tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, which he read at age ten in his grandfather's rectory (Devlin, *Conversations* 269). *Titus* offers the gratuitous violence and the theatre of cruel-

ties found in Williams's earliest and (latest) plays—child-killings, rapes, mutilations, cannibalism, and live burial. The accumulation of perversities in *Rooming-House* can also be traced to Williams's other outlandish cruelties—e.g., the torturous hellmouth of the Klondike in *Not About Nightingales* (1938) with its fiery suffocation, and the Poe-esque eerie conflagrations at the end of *Battle of Angels* (1940). Certainly, Mint can stake his ancestry in freakdom to a long line of mutilated/disfigured souls in Williams—the Strega in *Rose Tattoo*, Anthony Burns in “Desire and the Black Masseur,” Sebastian Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer*, Trinket Dugan in *The Mutilated*, the Fräulein in *Gnädiges Fräulein*, and the assorted denizens of kinky desire who inhabit Williams's last novel, *Moise and the World of Reason* (1975).

Rooming-House also displays Williams's use of a medley of dramatic forms—an odd pastiche—that shaped the theatre of his contemporaries. There are elements of British music-hall farce in *Rooming-House*, as there are in Pinter; large doses of Artaud, too, can be found in the proliferations of cruelties; and shades of Beckett's fascinations haunt Williams's play. Unmistakably, too, *Rooming-House*, like Williams's *Slapstick Tragedy*, partakes of the “Vaudeville, burlesque, and slapstick, with a dash of pop art” (Williams, “Preface” 95). What Linda Dorff insightfully observed about some of Williams's other later plays pertains to *Rooming-House* as well. They offer a distinctive camp view of the world in part displayed through animated cartoons of pop art which “provided Williams with a minimalist palette on which he could sketch reductive, parodic outcries . . .” (“Theatricalist Cartoons” 16). This description applies as tellingly to *Rooming-House*, with its combination of slapstick comedy, cartoon-like exaggerations, and graphic violence.

The central symbol in the play, the rooming-house, borders on lunacy, half in and half out of reason, half terrifying, half slapstick. It represents a world of disorientation, distortion, offering maddening bits and pieces, gnawing incompleteness. Though she does not discuss the play, Jacqueline O'Connor correctly points out that rooming-houses in Williams's early plays represented “social and economic instability” and the “modern exilic dilemma” of Williams's characters and the playwright himself (113), all true of his later work as well. Hardly a haven or refuge, the rooming-house in this late play presents its antithesis—dispossession, disbelonging. Everything is in an “off-putting state of disrepair,” as Hall observes (10). The movement in the play is unnatural, topsy turvy, illustrating the absurdity of the reversible, foreclosing on comforting or sufficient alternatives. What was intended for shelter becomes inoperative, unproductive folly. The plight of Hall's umbrella nicely symbolizes the spatial disorder: “I found myself in the vicinity of Mme. Le Monde's rooming-house, it was starting to rain and my expensive new bumbershoot was turned inside out by wind” (6). The gusts of Williams's comic horror turn everything inside out. The inside/outside dislocation starts with the *mise en scene* where at “stage left . . . an alcove with semi-transparent curtain . . . provide[s] a retreat for certain occasions that

require privacy”—that is, “for a perverse sexual act [that] occurs behind the semi-transparent curtains” (1-2). The audience’s visual fare is a *trompe-l’oeil*. Teasingly, we are asked to see and not see; things are inside that should not be revealed outside, but they are. Amid Mint’s “*Moans of masochistic pain-pleasure*” (2), another illustrative mixture of the half and half world of *Rooming-House*, Williams places us in a most uncomfortable, unstable position—we are voyeurs as well as moralists. We are in the world of dirty postcards that we want to see but not send. Most disconcertingly, we witness pleasure and agony conflicted in the crossfire. The set simultaneously intrigues and disgusts. Throughout *Rooming-House* Williams emotionalizes a physical set, as he had done throughout his career from *Not About Nightingales* and *The Glass Menagerie* to *Gnädiges Fräulein* and *The Red Devil Battery Sign*. The set in *Rooming-House* is personified, the metonymy of the suffering body.

This unsettling liminality of disoriented bodies, half in, half out, is most egregiously situated in Mint, who rents the attic from Mme. Le Monde. He is a paralyzed, aggressive homosexual-drug addict who has met a Sisyphus-like fate, condemned to seemingly pointless motion: “*The whole attic is equipped with curved metal hooks which provide the little man with a means of locomotion, as his legs are mysteriously paralyzed and his hands swing him from hook to hook*” (1). (A parallel setting—a “rectangle of hooks”—can be found in Williams’s late novel *Moise and the World of Reason*.) Occasionally, he falls from his hooks and has to be set up again. He is totally vulnerable, dependent on others. For example, he pleads with Mme. Le Monde’s son, who has just sodomized him, to “Put me back on a hook, please, please, put me back on a hook before my guest arrives for tea” (2). That guest is Hall, Mme. Le Monde’s stud who is so offended by being groped by Mint that when the little man asks him to “run the risk of hooking me back up,” Hall revengefully “*lifts Mint from the floor with pretense of terrible effort and holds him under the hook farthest removed from the tea*” (7).

Mint has become a part of the *mise en scene*, inseparable from it, yet wishing he could be extricated. He is half mechanical automaton swinging from hook to hook, but he is also half man writhing in agony. Caught in a dehumanizing cage, Mint is the freak imprisoned on his hooks just as Willie and Winnie in their mounds of earth in Beckett’s *Happy Days* or Grandma in Edwards Albee’s *The Sandbox*. With brutal glee Hall reminds Mint, “At Scrotum-on-Swansea you were a notorious fag and bed wetter but reasonably mobile. Now you get about only by swinging from hook to hook, like that historical ape man swinging from branch to branch in the jungle” (7-8). Using his characteristic verbal and visual wit, Williams has Hall deliver these lines as he “*puts on broken spectacles to look about*” (8) and as a music hall “*mechanical piano fades*” in and out “*faintly*” (4), further reminders of the world of halves, brokenness, the outside becoming inside—blurred visions for a lunatic revel. Ironically, Mint’s outside is really Mme. Le Monde’s inside; his existence is confined to her attic. His only sojourns are around the hooks in this cruel, distorting world. Quite literally, Mint is

marginalized, skewered on the hooks on Mme. Le Monde's attic wall. Again, what Linda Dorff identified as a characteristic trait of Williams's late plays clearly applies to Mint in his rooming-house cell: "The individual isolation and madness in an alienating world enacts the subjectivity upon which Williams's work evolved" ("Theatricalist Cartoons" 16).

Mme. Le Monde, the *magistra ludi* of the comic horrors in *Rooming-House*, is enshrouded in secrecy yet perversely proclaims her subversive deeds. Though she appears on stage only during the last few minutes of *Rooming-House*, she clearly dominates the mood, tenor, and theme of the play. Because Williams fought against the world that sought to destroy him throughout his career, Le Monde deserves a special allegorical space in Williams's chamber of comic horrors. She is the quintessential Williams's *bête noir*, symbolizing his life-long problems with terrorizing mothers, sexually predatory women, bigots, and even arch capitalists. To develop Le Monde's multiple and vicious roles, Williams relied upon apocalyptic portraits, especially "the demonic side of apocalypticism" which he used "for social critique" (Dorff, "Babylon Now" 115, 116). On her most literal level, Madame Le Monde represents the nosy and noxious landlady, a character that bore Williams no benevolence, as he attested in his haranguing memories of the type in his letters (Devlin and Tischler) and most directly through Mrs. Wire, the pestiferous landlady in the inescapably autobiographical *Vieux Carré*. But Le Monde is more than the custodial Xanthippe of a London boarding house. As her allegorical name implies, she is the larger world, intimately betrothed to the flesh and the devil in Williams's (sometimes comic) apocalyptic cosmography. Attaching the contemporary icon of the apocalypse—the bomb—to her, Williams describes Le Monde as "*a large and rather globular woman with a fiery red mop of hair that suggests a nuclear explosion, as does her voice*" (18). Her fiery red hair and explosive voice—suggesting the fulminating tortures of hell—are appropriate for her roles as the vindictive mother, flaming whore, and holocaustic spoiler, all culled from apocalyptic literature.

Le Monde's role as mother easily coalesces with her role as vindictive destroyer. She is flesh-channeled to the devil. In this context, Williams grafts even more damnable sins onto Mme. Le Monde's unnatural body—she is a rabid and jealous homophobe, killing Mint for having unnatural sex with her son and for parading his "public school" acts of pederasty in her house. Her murder of Mint is as comically cruel as was her fatal assault on her son: "*Mme. Le Monde seizes Mint and throws him onto his cot which flattens to the floor. Mint evidences no sign of survival*" (21). Le Monde is like a slapstick, burly wrestler. In leveling Mint, she once again expresses the perfidity of her universe through negative numbers: "The world is accident prone, no use attempting correction. After all, the loss of one fool makes room for another. A super-abundance of them must be somehow avoided . . ." (22). Given the outrageously unexpected assaults on Boy and Mint and the consequences, the gruesome turns wickedly funny here. Seen in terms of a personal allegory, both youth and old age suffer in Williams's battle

with the gay-bashing world. Mother Le Monde views these individuals as a “super-abundance [to] be . . . avoided” (21).

Autobiographically, the eponymous Le Monde may suggest the band of precipitous and cruel critics who panned Williams’s later plays without giving them the deliberative consideration they deserved. Most of his post-*Iguana* plays closed after frighteningly shorts runs on Broadway (Saddik 22). *Slapstick Tragedy*, for example, lasted only seven performances. In the apocalyptic world of theatre, Williams bitterly realized that to control an audience is to control the response to his work. The critics, like Le Monde, knocked him down with their lethal chops (invective-filled reviews) destroying his work before audiences.

Mme. Le Monde could also represent the destructive business world, particularly the financial brokering that Williams satirized in *Red Devil Battery Sign* and that he feared and battled against with usurious producers from the *Battle of Angels* to *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*. His contempt for power-mongers—the Wall Street brokers—boils to the surface in his portrait of Le Monde. She ushers in the “Novus Ordo Seclorum”—she is a trader, and Hall is her agent-salesperson helping her acquire “controlling interest in Amalgamated, Inc.” (19). Even the name of this ubiquitous corporation participates in Williams’s provocative satire of accumulation—children, orgies, murders, assets. Additionally, Madame Le Monde’s perverse maternity—as a breeder-executioner—is imagistically conveyed through her business dealings. Says Hall: “You’re a business lady after my heart and you’ve no idea how wisely you’ve invested your nest-egg, at what a spectacular bargain” (19), a compliment that comes only seconds before the lethal karate chop. (Ironically, “her nest egg”—the rooming house; her womb—destroys instead of nurtures.) Her financial victories will be news on the “Exchange,” testifying to her economic covetousness. Moreover, as the devouring capitalist, Le Monde cruelly curtails the delivery and consumption of food in her house. She starves Mint by limiting his daily ration of biscuits and tea, and in this is abetted by Hall, who viciously hooks Mint out of reach of the little nourishment he is allowed. She also denies her children nurturing sustenance, life. Ultimately, Le Monde is exploitative, a representation of an engorged consumerism.

Mme. Le Monde, of course, is a multivalent, highly symbolic character and, like other Williams figures, cannot be rigidly fixed. She may very well be a satiric portrait of Maria Britneva, Countess St. Just, Williams’s self-appointed literary executor. *Rooming-House* was written at a time when Williams was most furious with the imperious St. Just who tried to dominate him, just as Le Monde does with Mint. Interestingly, Williams was a guest in St. Just’s west side London home and stayed in her attic (Hale). Collateral evidence supporting St. Just as Mme. Le Monde comes from “The Negative,” Williams’s “last short story” (Bray vi) written about the time of *Rooming-House* (November 1982). First published in Number 2 of the *Tennessee Williams Annual Review* (1999), “The Negative” chronicles the fate of a young writer, Tonio, who is in the service of an old homosexual lecher, Lord Amberly. A sickly man, Tonio writes poetry “with vio-

lently shaking hands" (xiii). He is fated to be sent away to St. Jude's, a sanatorium/nursing home, but is offered help from Mona, a woman who mysteriously calls him at all hours and somehow knows of his writing, his fears, and his inner-most thoughts. The woman, Mona is, I believe, Le Monde/St. Just, and Tonio is a portrait of the debilitated Williams groping for assistance.

Like Le Monde, everything about Mona is mysterious, terrifying, and eventually destructive for the writer. Offering to help Tonio escape Lord Amberly's and St. Jude's, Mona, over several phone calls, has Tonio write down phone numbers, addresses, names of places exactly as she dictates, turning him into a helpless automaton. When he flees Lord Amberly's to meet Mona at the proscribed assignation, Tonio feels "the wind whining about him like a chorus of witches" (xix). When he meets her, "the sight of her was instantly alarming" (xx), and as he lifts her veil, "the voice of the woman Mona rose in a shrill tirade as the voice of an actress at the climax of the drama" (xx). A dragon lady, Mona immediately denounces him, and has him evicted from the restaurant. The defeated Tonio throws from the borrowed clothes Mona gave him "the illegibly scribbled poetry of his life" (xxi) and drowns himself in the Thames. The parallels with St. Just (and Mme. Le Monde) are too precise to be coincidental. Like Mona, St. Just was an actress; like Mme. Le Monde, St. Just attempted to control every phase of Williams's life. Mona and Le Monde both stand for the demons that Williams fought in the last years of his life.

Ultimately taking into account Mme. Le Monde's multiple identities, we can say that her last words conclusively deny redemptive epiphanies in this unbrave new world: "Now evening descends. The moon is out, serenely. It goes. There's nothing more to be asked for that will ever be given" (22). Everything is predetermined, existentially regimented and heartless. Williams seems to echo Vladimir's words in *Waiting for Godot* justifying his existence as the moon sets: "It's evening, sir, night is drawing nigh. My friend here would have me doubt it and I must confess he shook me for a moment. But it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day . . ." (74). Ironically, both Vladimir and Le Monde cohabit a disturbingly ungenerous, uncaring universe; and Le Monde shares a fate similar to Vladimir's at the callous conclusion of *Godot*: "That's how it is on this bitch of an earth" (28). Their very existence is peripheral. Le Monde's boarders learn what Vladimir points out: "It's not every day we are needed" (68).

Essentially, *Remarkable Rooming-House* confronts the idea of performance, to the point of becoming self-referential. The play interrogates the world as theatre and the world of theatre, providing yet another of Williams's postmodern commentaries as in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (Kolin). The bizarre menagerie of characters in Williams's grim horror comedy are programmed to stress their roles as actors on a stage. For example, sentimental, tear-jerking ditties from British music halls are juxtaposed against Hall's and Le Monde's horrific revelries, calling attention to the hilarity, the outrageous artificiality of their actions. Hall may, in fact, have been named to allude to this popular British

form of entertainment. Not coincidentally, Hall's costume recalls the artist and clowns who dressed in like attire for their music hall skits: "he primes himself in his oddly—fashioned outfit; plaid jacket flaring at the waist and the long parts adhering tightly to his long legs" (18), and at one point, he "*Exits singing a lively music-hall tune*" (18).

Williams radicalizes various other dramatic stage conventions, stripping them of their conventional seriousness to show anti-mimeticism of *Le Monde* and the other characters in *Rooming-House*. Almost anachronistically, he reconfigures the *Rooming-House* stage to mirror the playing spaces of an Elizabethan or Restoration theatre, or maybe even a modern proscenium arch playhouse. The acting area obviously is to represent the attic of *Le Monde*'s rooming house, but toward "*Stage left, there is an alcove with semi-transparent curtains to provide a retreat for certain occasions that require privacy*" (1-2). As we saw, Mint is taken into the alcove for sexual tortures with Boy and is discovered behind the curtains by *Le Monde*—"What's going on. Boy, are you back of the curtains with that morphodite gimp?" (19). In function and structure, this alcove, or curtained recess, suggests the so-called inner stage, or the fit-up booth, used in earlier theatres to effect epiphanic revelations that stunned and dazzled audiences. Yet in *Rooming-House*, the comic horrors—Mint's crawling from behind the curtains when *Le Monde* calls and "*Her son emerg[ing] from the alcove zipping his pants*" (20)—visually undercut the tragedy or sublimity of such discoveries and reduce this otherwise venerable dramatic technique to a sordid and superficial one. Mint is an absurd *tableau vivant*, once more half concealed, half revealed in semi-transparency.

Like so many of Williams's other plays, early and late as well, *Rooming-House* embeds outrageous narratives into the ongoing script to undermine performance as a theatrical hoax, a stunt. There are three of these narratives: (a) Hall's recollections of the punishment meted out for bad songs at Scrotum-on-Swansea—accidentally "dropping the composer "off the chapel belfry soon after its composition" (3); (b) Hall's chronicle about being seduced by Rosie O'Toole, a "deep throater," and his refusing to have sex with her because he fears disease but nonetheless "shot [his] load immediately down her esophagus" (13); and (c) Hall's story about "'Slasher' Slymm of Hampstead" who "dismembered his Pop with a hacksaw" (15) and performed ghostly experiments with chicken brains. Each of these performed arias of dismemberment/depravity serves as running commentary on or corollary to the atrocities being staged in the attic, rivaling them in absurdity and comic horror. Incorporated into the play proper, these narratives are as gratuitously outlandish as the tortures reserved for Mint on hooks or for *Le Monde*'s Boy. In fact, they compete for the audience's laughter and shock. In performing these narratives with salacious glee and abandon, Hall serves as the play's standup comic for the horrors that Mint, Boy, and *Le Monde* perform on stage.

Williams packages stage fright in these vignettes like so much confetti ready

to explode with hilarity. For example, hearing of "Slasher Slymm's" experiments with chicken brains, Mint "falls to the floor, totally immobilized with panic" (15). Mint regularly falls to the floor because of sexual escapades and cruel punishments, but having him enact the same gesture over the "unprovoked slaughter" of Slymm's father or chicken eugenics both lessens and distances the impact and immediacy of his plight for an audience. Their expectations are outrageously thwarted by the ridiculous. The calculated hilarity of the wickedly salacious acts on stage and the narrated events around which they occur positions audiences to see performance as a series of slapstick horrors, over the top, to use Dorff's phrase. Like Williams's characters and Williams himself, the audience for *Rooming-House* is suspended in half worlds. They watch a play with characters but recognize that the fictions upon which and through which the characters perform are being mocked, visibly contrived, grossly exaggerated. *Rooming-House* is cracked with the fissures of Williams's transparent fictions.

Also incorporated into *Rooming-House* are four playlets, plays-within-plays, that further stress the outrageousness of performance, the extremes to which Williams burlesques his own drama. Twice, Boy comes to unhook Mint and to take him to the alcove. For Mint the first of these escapades yields pain and pleasure alike. But the second one is ripe with the sadomasochistic, the unthinkable poison in the homoerotic space, the comedy that bites. Performance undercuts its own seriousness. When the "strapping young man" apprehends Mint for yet another sexual experience, Mint cries: "Oh, no, no, no! Well, maybe, since you've come with—lubricant, is it?" (18). But Boy's one word response is pure devilry, slapstick horror—"Astringent." Mint "*cries out in terror.*" The terrors become more hilarious than horrific. Performance, Williams stresses in his last plays, is riddled with both folly and tears, outside laughter, inside pain. Indecent lines and acts are taunts to upset the *status quo* as well as cries of loss, humiliation, and rejection.

The Rooming-House of Mme. Le Monde bears Tennessee Williams's special privy mark for the theatre of his mind. The play is scatological, impudent, filled with enough carbohic laughter to make it ineligible for almost any production, save the limited reading space where the Albondocani edition would be wryly received. Yet while the select circle of Williams's friends who were to receive signed copies from the puckish playwright would have roared with laughter at Mint's dilemma and Hall's antics, they perhaps also would have sensed Williams's own pain in the process, his private nightmares at the end of a phenomenal career in the world. The play was all Tennessee—coterie camp and apocalyptic lament.²

Notes

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²I am also deeply grateful to Allean Hale for reading an earlier draft of this essay and giving me the benefit of her wise criticism, and to Andreas Brown for initially suggesting the connection between *Mme. Le Monde* and *Maria St. Just*.

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