

26, more or less:  
Sophie Calle's *Secrets*

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*for the one who knows who this is for*

**Assumptions**

It assumes that there are lovers.

It assumes that some lovers have secrets.

It assumes that those secrets can be put into words.

It assumes that each lover will have only one secret worth keeping, or (a) an overriding secret among minor, trivial, or banal ones that renders choosing the critical one neither impossible nor of such difficulty that one quickly abandons the effort; or (b) a few secrets of some brevity, which, quickly ordered, amount to an assemblage of secrets, forming perhaps a meta-secret, so once more we are in the territory of the one; or (c) several secrets of equivalent merit and not of any particular brevity but of a form such that with a bit of editing or a slackening paraphrase it might be possible, and without losing the long line, to give each quickly, which is to say succinctly, so as to ensure that they might fit into a safe of 20-by-25-by-20 centimeters, which, all told, is not a large amount of space.

It assumes that these lovers would find it frustrating, agonizing—grating, at least—to live behind Vaseline-glazed glass knowing they cannot see all clearly, in proximity to the material reminder of the partner's intimate life, to see the physical manifestation of a distance from each other, measured in the sliver of wall separating the safes and given at the remove of this slip of language. Rephrase as: it assumes that love is a form of knowing, knowing incompletely, wanting to know, dying to tell. But maybe the only secret the lover cannot bear is whether the other loves one at all, and does the existence of the couple, the reference to "their" shared home, in which, on a wall, the two safes of 20-by-25-by-20 centimeters will hang, not imply some certainty on the matter of some quantity of love existing, so that this single basal question is in fact known and settled? *Will we dwell together?* At least this answer is yes.

It also assumes some other things.

**Barthes**

*"I like, I don't like:* this is of no importance to anyone; this, apparently, has no meaning. And yet all this means: *my body is not the same as yours.* Hence, in this anarchic foam of tastes and distastes, a kind of listless blur, gradually appears the figure of a bodily enigma, requiring complicity or irritation. Here begins the intimidation of the body, which obliges others to endure me *liberally*, to remain silent and polite confronted by pleasures or rejections which they do not share."<sup>1</sup>

A secret is a vacant form—paper street plan; fogged and wasted film. Secrets are MacGuffins, though we cannot be sure there are not lions in the Highlands. My secret attests only to this: *my body is not the same place as yours.* Respect the difference.

**Contract**

A selection of those contracts that may address lovers: the promissory ring, the I-love-you, the marriage, the dowry or mahr, the deed of shared property, the adoption certificate, the birth certificate, the mortgage, the joint account, the deed of sale, the prenuptial, formalized consent (blanket, suspended, meta-, non-), the divorce, power of attorney, the suicide pact, a will.

Sophie Calle's work does not require that its couple be married, but it does require that they form a natural couple, that they are in fact lovers, that they share a living space, are at least a *couple en concubinage*. Prior to entering the contract, therefore, the two parties have already participated in a number of agreements with each other, with property, and with language. Obviously, they are not strangers to each other. (A stranger's secret is often illegible. It is also often dull. [These are two risks Calle accepts for herself].) The lovers, the ones with the secrets, have declared themselves a couple for fiscal or other purposes and have already thereby given up the status (and some rights) of those who are to be recognized as single. A status designated by a contract means that the parties are not free to determine the law for themselves. We have now arrived at the general question of any public interest in a private couple.

How is the work's Agreement like other contracts? It is at once a declaration of the existence of the couple, a document of ownership, and a deed of authentication articulating when the work is and is not a work of art. It is also some other things.

Secrets need the contract because they require defending. They are just so easy to wound. Easier than bodies. More like love. Drunk, I slip up; an error or nervous laugh; a tired relieving; omitting an omission; swapped and shuffled details. The work courts collapse; it is a simple thing to render it silly, superfluous, null, not a work of art at all but just two safes, one plaque, and a voided contract. Some paper, and a bit of metal.

In the formal parlance of Calle's corpus, the contract functions as the safe's caption. It converts things to photographs and in turn they contract it to explain (something); the contract forces the safes to be meaningful for awhile.

In "Le froid et le cruel," Gilles Deleuze emphasizes the degree to which "in his attempt to derive the law from the contract, the masochist aims not to mitigate the law but on the contrary to emphasize its extreme severity. For while the contract implies in principle certain conditions like the free acceptance of the parties, a limited duration and the preservation of inalienable rights, the law that it generates always tends to forget its own origins and annul these restrictive conditions. Thus the contract-law relationship involves in a sense a mystification ... Since the law results in our enslavement, we should place enslavement first, as the dreadful object of the contract. One could even say, as a general rule, that in masochism the contract is caricatured in order to emphasize its ambiguous destination."<sup>3</sup> This contract is not very ambiguous. Three ontologies can undergo change: the lovers can break up (the couple destroyed); the work can no longer be declared to be a work of art (the artwork destroyed); or the artist can die, transferring responsibility to her representative (the living body destroyed). All three endings might well occur; at least one certainly will. I love the arrogance of a contract, insisting it can account for endings in advance. *If they separate or divorce in the contract means when they separate or divorce.* Lovers like bodies are provisional works.

After a certain upheaval in the history of contract law, a contract might be nullified because of mutual mistakes, voided because both parties did not consent to the same thing. This revision narrows the class of enforceable contracts, and means that arbiters are less interested in

meaning than in what the parties did—how they lived among their walls day after day. The law, as elsewhere, must go by externals, and judge parties by their conduct. No weight is given to states of mind.

The contract here is signed by Calle, each Owner, and the Artist's Representative. A signature is more than a name but less than the trace of the entire absent body. It is, at best, a mark made by the weight of the side of one hand, accompanied by a date specifying what has here and now as a one-time assent taken place. In this sense, it is like some secrets.

#### Destroy

Temptation to, I mean. As in the left foot of Michelangelo's *David*.

Calle's work proposes a new form of intimacy, the proof of which will be the vandalism and subsequent eradication of the artwork. The safes are not beautiful, but they are seductive. Put another way: the contract transforms love into the possibility of iconoclasm. Does this raise the stakes of love or lower them?

The work is a work of art, according to the strictures of the Agreement, solely under specific conditions. Stipulation 9: "If ever the Artist realises that one half of the Couple attempted to break in (physically or intellectually) or succeeded in obtaining the secret kept in the other half of the Couple's safe, the Work shall be inauthentic and no longer a work by the Artist. The same shall occur in the event of a break-in of the safe." No other situation—the death of the Artist, death of the Couple, sale of transfer, donation to a gallery—nullifies the Work as an authentic work of the Artist. Unaddressed is the thief's disappointment.

For no particular reason, one day it becomes unbearable to think that there are worlds of your lover you cannot access. This is the kind of conversation often had in the late afternoon, deliberately lingering amid snarls of sheets, the nape still damp, forearm wales not yet faded and we feel so close but how much closer might we feel, reaching out the plummy fruit *tell me yes, yes I want to tell you, I want you yes and yes this is a way to still be new together.*

If you were at this moment to measure blood volume and pulse amplitude, so recently subsided, there would be a noticeable autonomic increase.

But if these two lovers are to disunite secret and safe, the violation will come at a cost. Their profit will have ruined, irremediably, the work of art, any affective vitality mitigated, at least a bit, by the minutes later—for true secrets do not take long to say—as the sheets need be straightened, the children will be home soon, and someone needs to go grab a towel, and both are thinking now we are poorer, our assets diminished, all that capital wasted and nothing to show our friends, plus we will have to notify Sophie, I guess it's over, there's nothing else, I guess we take them off the wall now, and was it worth it, after all, after all, if one, drying the leg and smoothing the skirt should say, You know, I knew that all along. I knew that one, all along.

Lovers, strictly speaking, are conspirators. *Conspiratio*: lit. (merely) to breathe together.

#### Eroticism

[s.v. "obedience," see Contract]

#### Frustration

—I have forgotten my secret. Honestly, I have forgotten my password, my answer, my wallet, my promise, my place, details of some old lies.

#### Grammar

Examples of conditional sentences include: *If she fell, she would get hurt. If he had asked her to be with him, she would have blown up her world. If it rains, I will get wet.* Type two conditionals refer to a hypothetical condition and its probable results, but the temporality is shifted to the present and its consequences in the real are implied: *If you really had loved me, you would have said so at the time. (But you didn't, and so you never did.) If the rain had not started, we would have taken a walk. (But it is pouring, thus we will not go.)* It is appropriate to use the subjunctive mood and write, for example, *If I were sure that you really wanted me, I would be able to come (but I am not, and accordingly stay shy). Or, If I were a flower, I would crave the rain. A lover's*

secret may take a conditional tense (*If my father had cut me off, I would have broken our engagement, or If you had not lost the baby, I would have left you both*), but of course it does not have to: e.g., the present perfect continuous is well suited for stating *I have been puking after dinner for the last three years.* The conditional does not name certainties. *I will get older, and I will regret having left you; I will regret we never spent the night together; I will regret all the days apart* are not optimal terms for a conditional sentence. *Now can you say whether you loved me, now that your attention is elsewhere?* is also not hypothetical. A rather excitingly "mixed type" of construction specifies the results in the present of an unreal past condition: *If + Past Perfect – Would + Inf.* For example: *If you had told me (then), I would not be so suspicious (now). If you had warned me (then), I would not still be holding out hope ((cruelly) now).*

All lovers' secrets can be translated into one specific conditional verb form: *If you knew X, you would no longer love me (as much, at all, the same, again).* The content of this declaration is less important than the formalism of a perceived threat to love (because it induces shame, because it suggests fault, it trivializes, recasts histories, maybe it cheapens or else compromises, tarnishes or bruises).

Grammarians regard the conditional as ideal for specifying an unreal, improbable, even impossible situation. Yet rain, never having been loved, and falling all seem real, possible, even probable.

#### How to evade certain of these conditions

You can always burn your shared house and thus each of your shared walls to the ground. (Acquire new shelter.)

Undertake to seduce the Artist (or her representative) and at a later time propose, as a gesture of an ardent love—you only require one person to endure censure and disregard the law and betray the rules of the work for you.

**In the Mood for Love**

*I once fell in love with someone. Usually secrets begin this way. I couldn't stop wondering if she loved me back. Though some begin this way.*

*I didn't think it would hurt so much.*

Not every secret is kept in the same way. The way is what matters.

Some end with: *Then let me tell you something.* (Others begin this way.)

*In the old days, he says, if someone had a secret they didn't want to share, you know what they did? They went up a mountain, found a tree, carved a hole in it, and whispered the secret into the hole. Then they covered it with mud, leaving the secret there forever.*

One the monk at the temple; two the hole, the grazing finger; three his profile and the ridges of rock—and when he leans in, his cheek disappears, absorbed into the texture of stone—four the spectral encircling of columns. Leaving him to the long, jaw-tremoring whisper, the camera turns away, this drift of the image giving a measure of privacy. Also the jarring orange; also the impossibly high angle and magisterial space; also the green, the blue, the hallway and light-split stairs, the earth, the grassy earth spilling out, blocking and filling what once was a hole that ruining time, and not the lover, had initially carved.

**Jealous**

It would be neither incorrect nor unusual to say of someone that he or she has guarded a secret *jealously*.

In the preceding usage, what, precisely, does the last word mean?

**Kindnesses**

Only have told me secrets: a mule's burden of words, and dragging now. Never have told me secrets, claiming at a gray-eyed distance to have none.

**Last two lines of a villanelle**

How do you know that I happened to you? Love is what you do not do.

**Midas**

It seems an overreaction when, in response to the king's awarding the victory, in response to the beautiful music, in response to the competition—the Pan-Apollo stuff—his ears are stretched and lengthened, weakened, and probably wounded—while it is not specified how or if they tore, at some point in being stretched skin becomes too thin not to fray and the elasticity (especially if it is quick, and we have no reason to presume patience) weakens and fails, gives way—no sense of how long it took to heal, and obviously amateurish or hurried stretching can lead to infection, to scarring (nor is it reported what, if anything, this did to his sense of balance)—and after all someone had to win: this seems unfair as they did demand the contest be judged and he did only what was asked. The king arranges his hair differently. He thinks it hides the ruined pinnae. This leaves only the problem of the barber. (Artist will have to learn from him.) On this point, the reports diverge: it is said the king pleaded with the man, but it is also said the king ordered the man. One pleads from those in the face of whom one has no power; one orders those over whom one has entire power. Either way, the message was: This ugly's what you must not tell. Here once more our accounts disagree on the details: some are rather hard on the barber, insist he was unable, unwilling even, to honor the juicy oath. But one can also err by being overly charitable: a few versions tack maudlin, make the king's story into one of the haircutter's illness, emphasize the weight of the secret, its toll on his spirit, his visceral, emetic need to cast it out. Either way, on this agreement they are willing to end: barber digs a hole and sets his mouth in the mud and looses—then he grabs enough dirt, pats the depression, smooths the ground, and gets on with it. In some versions, it is a tree that grows and divulges the gossip to animals who spread it abroad. But in most, reeds flourish on that patch of scarred land, and the wind, slattern cunt, makes them spill the defacement over and over for all to hear.

In his youth, offered love, the king instead asks to have everything he touch turn to gold.

Later, he begs for the gift to be taken away.

**Nothing**

Calle's rules ensure that nothing is not a possible outcome; this game cannot end in a draw. One is not permitted to declare *I have no secrets*, no coy *that is my secret*. Nor may one party demur, raise doubts, abstain in protest. Silence, blankness, reticence, and above all asymmetry are thereby curtailed. This is a kind of fairness.

**Open**

Containing secrets, the safes are closed. Empty, they remain open. Slightly parted, not unlike stunned or hungry mouths, would it be preferable to write of these doors that they are ajar or that they are *agape*?

*Agapé* is an interesting word for lovers because it is the love they do not do; neither *eros* (*I want to clean you like a cat, with my tongue*) nor *philia* (which Aristotle gives as "wanting for someone what one thinks good, for his sake and not for one's own, and being inclined, as far as one can, to do such things for him"<sup>13</sup>—*It has been a bad year and I am broken; the friend, iff said with no intent to seduce, replies: I want to unbreak you*). Christian *agapé* is the unconditional love, that of God and charity, compassion, radical forgiveness (as in Kierkegaard's agapeistic ethics: principled, transcendental, abstract, what Adorno dubs "cruel" in its cool rigor). Before then, in ancient literature, it named numerous forms of affection, including loving one's child and loving the dead, and sometimes, presumably, and economically, those loves overlapped. The *agape* mouth dates to the seventeenth century, at which point affection is converted into wonder. The etymologies, however, have nothing in common: what *gapes* is a breach, an opening in a wall, unfilled space, and has more in common (despite the wonderment) with the Old English *ginian* for yawn.

Ajar: what is neither open nor shut. So either term will do.

**Psychoanalysis**

"That the dream actually has a secret meaning, which turns out to be the fulfillment of a wish, must be proved afresh for every case by means of an analysis. I therefore select several dreams which have painful contents and attempt an analysis of them. They are partly dreams of hysterical subjects, which require long preliminary statements, and now and then also an examination of the psychic processes which occur in hysteria. I cannot, however, avoid this added difficulty in the exposition."<sup>4</sup>

**Questions**

For example, what happens between steps two and four as outlined in the plaque? Each half of the couple is to tell this artist a secret. Each secret is to be locked up in its own safe. But let us presume some time passes as the safes are being installed—let's not get distracted by the noise and studs, the levels and sensors, cutting the holes and worrying over wiring—and instead ask: what all the while is happening with those now-told secrets? This is where the crookedness of the game appears. Things are no longer adding up; I suspect other scenes. For there is an unstated leap between "Have each of them tell me a secret" and "Lock each secret up in its own safe."

How is the secret to be told to the Artist (whispered, in person, in French, all at once, over a dozen agonizing negotiations—is she priest or translator, student or scribe)? How, affectively, is the secret thus confessed (with delight, in heat—she is at least requesting this intimacy, no torture room like the receipt of unwanted confidence—or with footnotes and alibis, defenses, or just flatly)? Does Calle then write it down right away, jot a mnemonic, remember it easily? Are the two secrets told in sequence, on different days, and who goes first, and who decided who goes first, and what if there is tension about how it was decided who would get to go first? And what happens now (always the question)? By the time the safes are finally firmly installed, at the "Lock each secret up in its own safe" stage, what form has the secret taken? Has she written it in ink or pencil, in cursive or plain, or is the secret typed, and in what face, and has she rephrased, paraphrased, annotated it, or is it verbatim, transcribed meticulously, and what has thereby been lost—or what has thereby been gained? The details, obviously,

matter—one detail otherwise and I might have been able to tell you, we might have shared a laugh over the whole episode. And how are the pronouns to be handled: in uttering the secret, presumably there has been an *I*, and has she retained it or has each *I* become its avatar, discourse directed into a “He” who “said” some “that” that “he,” et cetera. What if Calle forgets—there are other projects, after all, and trains to catch, and life does not stop because two lovers have secrets—or, when the wordings become confused: are there provisions for clarification? We still have not yet begun to treat the enormous matter of punctuation, including but not limited to those designating terminus, emphasis, enthusiasm, irony. All this is the secret of the work. Or, rather, it appears to be so until one turns to the contract.

For in the Letter of Agreement that constitutes the final part of the four-part work—two safes, one accompanying plaque, these three to be installed on the wall in the home, and now also this, the contract (which is shown with the provisional work but presumably, being a legal document of some import, will find itself, at the moment the safes are themselves installed, the secrets therein, copied and placed in its own safe, in a bank or in the closet, at the new distance demanded by living in the wake of the game [It is exhilarating to tell someone new something new, but in time they have heard it all before, or at least are not someone new, and eventually the safes will have to be dusted, and who will dust the safes will not itself remain a secret, and the codes for the other safe, the one with the copy of the contract, plus maybe the gallery documentation, lost then found then lost again...])—in the second sentence already is the first discrepancy. “Each safe must contain a secret in an envelope or other container given to Sophie Calle (the ‘Artist’) by each person representing one half of the Couple. Neither half of the Couple has or shall have access to the secret of the other. The Artist undertakes not to disclose the secrets.”

Let us pause here. All of a sudden, we are dealing with envelopes. Instead of the couple telling Calle their secrets, they each hand over an object and now unspecified is whether it must only contain words or whether words can or will be accompanied by an image—supplanted, even, by an image, or some thing, or a thing or an image on which has been written something else, and then which element constitutes the secret, precisely? And are the envelopes to be left unsealed, later closed by the Artist, mouth to the gum, her saliva staining the edge of the paper, or does she prefer wax or glue or tape? Or are they given over already sealed, to be

ripped open and exhumed by the Artist, and once more we have questions of duration, protocol, handling—and are they produced at the same time, in each other’s company, and if B were to see that A>B, by this I mean in terms of envelope dimension, thickness, weight, for whom might this discrepancy in volume enclosing confession become a new, and fully known, source of turmoil—and we have still not yet answered the prior queries regarding protocols for sealing (now resealing), which present themselves once more and remain unclarified.

There are fundamental differences between the plaque and the contract. I am not trying to be mean; I am aiming for precision. But how could the Agreement be precise enough? No contract can account for every contingency, which is why arbitration, to take place only in written form, is provided in the final stipulation. Unsaid is what becomes of that writing. The contract only allows nomination, transferal, or destruction. Unsteady negotiation. There will not be an end to questioning.

These strict and noisy instructions: they guarantee nothing. Let us never hold this against the effort.

What can you take? *Can you take me having the secret but no one knowing, can you take someone knowing but not you, can you take knowing who knows but it not being you, can you take seeing the envelope, can you take feeling its weight, can you take making out lines of script upon holding its plane to the light, can you take wondering if I lied, can you take wondering if I did not lie (why didn’t I sense it is both a question and an accusation), could you ever call a bluff, can you take putting the thing in the safe yourself, can you take the closing of the chest, can you take seeing me smirk or finding it all quite light, can you take me chiding you for not deeming it amusing, can you take seeing me take your secret with ease, can you take wondering for whom love is always lovely, can you take sensing me not give a damn about your secret, can you take me suggesting your secret is likely tame (ridiculous even), can you see me unbothered by someone knowing but not me?*

Lover asks two questions: How much can you bear, and will you accept (believe) the apology (remorse)?

*My entire history of falling short.  
—But we laughed every day.*

## Rules

*Find a couple.  
Have each of them tell me a secret.  
Install two safes in their home.  
Lock each secret up in its own safe.  
Keep the codes to myself.  
The lovers will have to live with the other’s secret close at hand but out of reach.*

## Separation

If words are to be trusted, a secret is a separation. Perhaps in stating a secret each lover gets to announce that they are ultimately on their own. *We have excluded each other at least one time.* The Latin *secretus*, what is hidden or concealed or private—the veiled quality most familiar to us—is a form of the more interesting *secernere*, “to set or put apart,” “to place asunder,” “to divide,” even “to sever.” *Cernere*, “to sift or distinguish”; also “to decide.”

*I have distinguished my body from yours.* I already wrote this decision, we have not moved on.

Safes also separate in that they hold valuables *en sauf*, in safety, free from—excluded, marked distinct from—danger; uninjured, protected, and watched over (earlier forms imply both assured spiritual salvation and the earthier good, solid health); intact; cloistered from all risk, save, of course, the risk each safe solicits: that of being robbed. Safes also, in taking in and absorbing the secrets, holding them outside economies whereby they might be deployed (the secret kept truly safe must never be used), could be said to consume the secret, as in *consumptio, consumere*, “to use up, eat, deplete.” Most safes resist the action of heat. Professional burglars speaking against self-interest recommend against safes with thin metal doors, in addition to those bolted only to the wall. They are easy to remove in full, to be interfered with elsewhere at a later time.

## Trust

Calle here takes on the opposite role of the Barthesian *l’informateur* in *Fragments d’un discours amoureux*—the one in the public amative network who “busies himself and tells everyone everything.” This informer, Barthes specifies, “by furnishing me insignificant information about the one I love . . . discovers a secret for me. This secret is not a deep one, but comes from outside: it is the other’s ‘outside’ which was hidden from me. The curtain rises the wrong way round—not on an intimate stage, but on the crowded theater. Whatever it tells me, the information is painful: a dull, ungrateful fragment of reality lands on me.”<sup>65</sup> Instead, Calle will absorb the two secrets: house in her body the pressure of those inside confessions. Though, perhaps, at some cost. Who would not be delighted to receive in detail whispered words like *wrists, restraints, Damaris, inversion*, and who would remain unstained by slack confessions of cruelties against a childhood pet, or unbothered hearing of debts unsuspected by those whose encumbrance they will bear as inheritance? Who would not be mildly embarrassed to receive as the secret worthy of vaulting a carnal fascination one tired of decades earlier?

Secrets are aesthetic, in that they are oriented toward their judgment. Hidden, because they are judged in the negative. Exposed, because they are judged unbearable or illuminating, essential or urgent. A secondary humiliation is thus always possible: to utter, finally, one’s secret and to be thusly responded: *And so?* One’s secrets are above all one’s own—one’s improper property. To fail to be shocked is to fail to register the other as able to possess meaningful property. Those who cannot hold property also often may not enter into contracts.

Calle’s work is constantly said to expose the innermost, to reveal in the previously private (how others are unseeable to themselves, in torpor, possessions, habits [*The Sleepers*, 1980; *The Hotel*, 1981; *Cash Machine*, 1991–2003]; impersonal words to end the affair [*Take Care of Yourself*, 2007]; memories of suffering or the lived dying time of a mother [*Douleur Exquise*, 2003; *Rachel, Monique*, 2006]); but here she becomes the secret’s cloister, its guarantor. *Share my bed* is not the same as *tell me. I will make your last milky sight* is not the same charge as *your secret is safe with me*. The function of the work is not to create the secret, but to prevent its easy obliteration (it is the future that requires the antithanatic). *How do I know it was real unless someone else saw, knew, knows . . .* She gives this gift.

### Unsure

The history of safes includes secrets hidden between the inner lining and outer wall. How can you be sure you are not living with her secrets, as well? It might not be a one-sided intimacy. To be sure, one would have to risk ruining everything.

### Vanity

Doubtless, I would think it's about me.

### Wearing one's heart on one's sleeve

It is very difficult for some people to keep secrets—others cannot help but perceive their inmost feelings. This is often cause for blushing. This is sometimes cause for disaster. Or one might offer up this disintegration of secrecy as proof of love. A lover's sleeve might have had pinned to it for general attention the favor of a lady. Harm is likely. Early in *Othello*, Iago vows, "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at." Daws are small birds said to be foolish, worthless, and thievish.

"In the expression wear one's heart on one's sleeve, the verb functions as a trivalent predictor in a manner no different from its function in the non-idiomatic wear one's name tag on one's lapel; the third valence slot is in each case filled by a complement which is realized as an adverbial prepositional phrase with a regular and semantically motivated choice of preposition," instructs Ernst-August Müller in an essay on "Valence and Phraseology in Stratificational Linguistics."<sup>4</sup> This introduces a key question: will the two safes be labeled, one name tag placed on each? How do I know which secret I am looking at years later hanging on the wall? How can I be sure I would not risk breach only to find my own words spilled back to me?

### X'd out

Lovers are waiting to no longer love. Someone leaves this work; it cannot just go on. This is what is declared agreeable in the Agreement.

There are only two events available to lovers: parting or death. So really, one.

### You

Being what I have to live with.  
Being what I cannot shake.

### Zeroing in

How to maintain intact and in perpetuity?  
Bodies are such sad stuff. Pinched nerves and thinning hair.

All along, we thought it was about love. But these are nothing but rules to be followed in the event of a death. "In case of the death of the Artist." The Agreement, what bonds the lovers to Calle in a curious and conscripted intimacy, is also a will, a document for the dispossession of the work after. It may be their secrets, but it is not not about her.

### Assumptions

It assumes that there are lovers.  
It assumes that some lovers have secrets.  
It assumes that those secrets can be put into words.  
It also assumes some other things.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* [Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes], trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977 [1975]).

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze, "Le froid et le cruel" [Coldness and Cruelty], in *Deleuze and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Masochism*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989 [1967]).

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, trans. W. D. Ross, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* [The Interpretation of Dreams], *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, vols. 4 and 5, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1956-74 [1900]).

<sup>5</sup> Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* [A Lover's Discourse: Fragments], trans. Richard Howard (New York: Noonday Press, 1978 [1977]).

<sup>6</sup> Müller, "Valence and Phraseology in Stratificational Linguistics," in *Functional Approaches to Language, Culture, and Cognition: Papers in Honor of Gregory M. Lamb*, ed. James E. Copeland, Peter H. Fries, and David G. Lockwood (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2000).