

Dušan Merc: The Pizza Delivery Guy

Contentious essays about crime

an excerpt from the novel translated by Gregor Timothy Čeh

Motto

‘Into this work I had to offload all my experiences of this kind, which are by no means small if we consider that jail is the largest laboratory in this world, the greatest information office and the cruellest place for drawing caricatures of man and human institutions. Gathered here are soldiers beneath all kinds of banners, members of world police forces and agents, information agencies, here we find out secrets that the outside world does not even sense. This was why I had to descend into this abyss.’

Vitomil Zupan, *Leviathan*

‘The catchy sentence: every anxiety is essentially death anxiety, makes little sense and is in all aspects entirely baseless. What would to me seem more appropriate would be to separate death anxiety from objective (real) anxiety and neurotic libidinal anxiety. Such anxiety is a hard problem for psychoanalysis because death is an abstract concept with a negative content, unsuited to the unconscious.’

Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

‘This novel is my child, it is I who wipe its arse, I who listen to its teenage accusations about being a bad parent, I who love it and I who am afraid of it. Afraid of our common fate and the relationship between us. It will survive, my own survival is not important.’

The Pizza Delivery Guy

And one more thing:

‘The novel The Pizza Delivery Guy is not suitable for children and youngsters under the age of sixteen. As part of their education and attitude to good books, I recommend that it is read to them out loud by their parents or guardians.’

The Pizza Delivery Guy

A Cognitive Act

Delivered pizza with extra topping

Every Thursday at 5.30 PM I would receive the same order. A plain Margharita, always to the same address. Some place near an industrial estate in Ljubljana. ‘Pizzeria Lamborghini from Zasavje, the best, the fastest, Sicilian recipe, made in a pizza oven!’ the flyers and the web site claimed. And lots of praise all the time.

A small residential block, a few garages, never anyone in the corridor. The first time I came, the front door opened after I rang. The instructions were to ring the doorbell without a name. I found myself on the first floor in front of the closed doors to six flats. I went up to the next floor because normally customers would wait for the delivery guy at the door, I would hand over the pizza and sort out the payment. All the doors on the second floor were also closed, save one that was slightly ajar, the light from its hallway cutting through the dark corridor. I looked at the door. Solid wood, impenetrable, with a security chain so I could not just push it open. From the inside it could be locked by activating the steel rod safety mechanism that prevented any kind of forced entry. Even a well-prepared burglary would take far too long. I could not hear a sound. Someone inside knew I had arrived, that was clear, for they had opened the front door, but, it seemed, they didn’t want to see me. Or didn’t want me to see them. This was more likely. It didn’t say on the door who lived in the flat. This was all.

The money was always waiting for me, twenty euros for the cheapest pizza. After three deliveries I realised that I wasn’t expected to return the change, because on my second visit I received the twenty-euro banknote and the change from the previous delivery, six euros and a half, the money I had left after delivering the first

order. On my fifth visit I once again had a twenty euro note and double the change from the previous two deliveries. Thirteen euros. The total from five deliveries was thirty-two and a half euros in tips. Grand. Out of caution I didn't concede to a plain Margherita costing twenty euros. So I always took the tips for the previous delivery. Then I left six and a half euros at the door and only took this tip the next time I came, as a tip for the previous delivery. This game with the client lasted half a year. Perhaps a little longer.

Then one Thursday in the autumn, the game was interrupted. I had wondered whether the client might be a woman. That Thursday the door was visibly more open, meaning that the automatic locking system that prevents one from entering the flat was not activated. I took this as an invitation to enter. And as I needed to deliver the pizza, I stepped into the hallway of a rather large flat. I assumed it was large from the size of the hallway and because there were a number of doors leading into other rooms.

'Come in, come in!' I heard a male voice from one of the rooms. I stepped further into the hallway and heard the front door close and the security lock move. The noise of the lock proved that the three-part steel mechanism that connected the door to the frame had been released. I knew I was trapped.

'Come in, don't worry, come in!' the same voice was inviting from one of the rooms.

Instantly I became cautious and did not step into the room where the voice was coming from, instead deliberately opening two other doors as it was obvious I would need to escape. Both rooms were empty, without any furniture, both with windows onto the street, both with handles with locks. This meant that they were both locked and I would need to smash through double or triple glazing. Almost impossible if you don't have anything at all in the room with which to hit the glass. There was an awful stench in one of the rooms. It was full of remnants of pizzas and delivery boxes. But the smell was worse than merely that. I found myself in a swarm of flesh flies. And I recognised the stench. I quickly closed the door to this vile room.

‘Come in, over here,’ the voice from the room I didn’t want to enter continued.

Inside was just a table and two chairs, at that moment I didn’t notice anything else. The table was set for two.

‘Come, let’s attack this pizza of yours together. Put it in the middle... don’t worry, I will pay for it. I always have done,’ said a voice rough from perhaps a cold or years of smoking.

Sitting at the table was a man a little older than myself. The problem was that his chair was turned towards the door, and the window was behind his back. So he could see my face very clearly, I could not really see his. Despite this, I was still able to establish that he was not someone I knew, that I had never seen him before.

There were two dessert plates on the table and two paper napkins, but no cutlery.

‘What are you looking at? Surely we can use our fingers for pizza, can’t we?’ he smiled when I placed the pizza on the table.

He noticed I was not keen on sharing the food with him.

‘Come on, sit down, we can chat, have some pizza, and that’s it. You know how lousy it can be eating alone. You know the feeling, don’t you?’ he was kind.

Kindness annoyed me.

I had to sit down. I had to figure out what was going on. Escaping was impossible at this moment.

He opened the cardboard box and took one of the eight pieces.

‘You know, you do have the best pizzas in town,’ he continued when I sat down.

I didn’t respond. Such a comment was not appropriate for the mood, which was unpleasant and tense. And besides, as he well knew, our pizzeria was not in Ljubljana.

‘Well, take some, I have invited you to join me at the table, so take some... Well? Right now we are alone in the flat, you can take my word on that. But we won’t be alone for long. Perhaps we won’t even be able to finish this pizza. Three others will come, but they won’t be interested in the pizza...’ he continued.

‘I don’t really want to eat either...’ I managed to utter.

‘Hey, finally you speak. That’s good. We can have our chat, then you will leave and never come back. Get it?’

I nodded, even though I didn’t know what he was talking about. Three were to come, I was to go. Considering the stench in the other room, did he mean, I would leave forever?

The occasion called for humbleness on my part, at least an appearance of cooperation, and most certainly great caution. Plus a frantic search for an exit, of course. There seemed to be none.

‘If you allow me, I haven’t introduced myself. And there is little point...’ he smiled somewhat haughtily.

‘It is probably quite clear to you why you are here and what we will talk about... at first only the two of us, then others will get their turn if we are unable to reach an agreement...’

I knew, I knew the moment the door closed automatically and now was the moment of truth. And I knew I had to win. Win!

I sat all hunched up and feeble, and this was the suitable, only-possible stance. It expressed helplessness, fear and despair.

My problem was that the clock was ticking.

‘Look,’ he continued. ‘There are cameras in the corners of each room, recording us. The image and sound are transmitted to the flat above. From there the guys can come at any moment and our conversation will change from a simple chat to a very awkward situation for you. Because I know that you know what it is that we need to talk about, just take a slice of pizza and tell me what you have to tell me, and

the door to the flat will miraculously open and you will be free, able to continue playing your role of an innocent pizza delivery guy.'

Of course I knew what he wanted. No extra explanations were needed. I took a slice of pizza, bit twice, and then choked, unable to have any more. I spat the chewed pizza onto the plate in front of me. Even though he turned away from me in disgust, as if to say, what a mess and what a weakling I was, my regurgitated pizza gave him a sense of satisfaction, convinced that he had achieved his purpose, that I was infinitely scared, that I was broken.

He didn't know I was prepared to piss myself in my pants just to convince him how afraid and terrified I was. But I didn't have to piss or shit myself! Why exaggerate when it is not necessary!

At the moment he gave me a patronizing smile I leapt at him. Attacking him across the table, I launched myself from the floor, hitting him straight in the face with the edge of the plate. I could sense his nasal bridge crack. We fell to the floor together. Fortunately I stayed on top. I also realised that the back of the chair, which wasn't exactly straight, must have injured him. Before he had a chance to begin defending himself, I was already in the full mount position. Sitting on top of him, I was seizing his neck, while he tried with both hands to free himself from my grip by raising his hips to try and wriggle out of the subordinate position. He would have succeeded, he was strong and probably well trained, but hitting the plate on the edge of the table with my other hand, I took the sharp shard that remained in my hand and thrust it into his left eye. I pushed as hard as I could until I heard something crack behind the eyeball which was spilling all over my hand. His hands, trying to fight me by grabbing at my neck, released me instantly and for a mere moment instinctively moved to defend the eyes. This meant his fight was lost!

He howled in shock, in deathly terror due to the immense pain. I knew that this was not enough, that I had not yet won the battle. I knew that people like this are beasts and when wounded they become infinitely stronger. I needed to stay determined and focused. He turned sideways, this he still managed. But he didn't figure out that that was even worse for him. From the broken back of the chair I

pulled out one of the rods and, using both hands, thrust it with full strength into his right side, between his ribs while his hands were still at his face, trying to protect his eyes.

The blood didn't really come gushing out at me. I had to pull out the rod and turn him towards me so I could hit him in the soft abdominal cavity. There was no other way. The job had to be done. But it still wasn't enough. He was screeching like a pig being slaughtered.

This was a problem as were the cameras that were undoubtedly working. At any moment his mates will come storming into the flat and will, of course, deal with me in no time.

In fact, what annoyed me most was his howling. He didn't want to die. So I kept stabbing him with the rod until there was blood everywhere and I too was filthy with his blood that was finally draining away fast enough for him to calm a little and no longer have the strength to put up a fight or continue howling.

When I stood up, it was all over. The remnants of the pizza were scattered over the table, which was a shame. I stuffed the last untouched slice into my mouth.

The job was done. At least part of it. A small part of it. My game of being the innocent and invisible little man was over. I knew that they knew about me, I knew that it would happen, and it did happen.

I had been exposed, discovered, and the battle for life and death had started. What had begun, so I thought, was a new flight for life and death. Until the end of my life and the end of this story.

Then I thought of my phone. I switched it off immediately. I knew that they could still track me down if I kept it on. Small measures. I needed to prepare myself for the arrival of his henchmen. What wasn't clear to me was how they would come. The front door to the flat was still locked, the safety shutter still activated. Anyone wanting to enter would need to have a key. That, of course, is not so unlikely. So I took the chair from the room where I had been offered the pizza and placed it under

the handle, against the front door. An old and simple measure that can be effective at least for a short time.

When I returned to the room, I almost shat myself in fear. My host was standing at the table, trying to attack me. But he collapsed of his own accord, without me having to do anything. What strength and will, I thought to myself. None of it enough to overcome the fact of a damaged eye socket with the wound going all the way to the brain, being stabbed in the ribs, so the lungs must be damaged, and multiple stab wounds to the abdomen which without doubt have caused internal bleeding. All there is to do is collapse, drop dead and end your spiritual presence in this world. Which is also what happened.

In panic I checked the other rooms. There was nothing in any of them. In the kitchen all the drawers were empty, the fridge also. It was clear that nobody lived here. The only items of furniture were that table and the two chairs.

While inspecting the flat, it had four bedrooms, I kept looking towards the door, checking whether the door handle was moving or not. It seemed more and more likely, though I could not be entirely certain, that there would be no special unit coming to intervene. But there was still a possibility of this happening.

I returned to the room where I had the last pizza ever of my life and began paying attention to the cameras below the ceiling. They were not wired, but, of course, they could have wireless transmitters. I immediately disabled them, tore them from the wall and destroyed them. If they had been watching me and know what happened, they will have to now make do with mere guesswork.

The next problem I had was how to leave the flat covered in blood, if indeed I manage to get out of here. No wardrobes meant no clothes. The bathroom was decent enough. There was warm water. This would be sufficient if I had enough time. It seemed that time was elongating without anyone trying to enter the flat. So my hospitable client had needlessly lied and threatened me.

Because he was mistakenly certain that the winning situation was in his hands, his safety had been guaranteed solely by the locking mechanism on the front

door. It had clearly been set to a certain time when it will be possible to open it, if you have no other options. Or it will never open, if you don't know how. I most certainly could not leave this flat through the front door. Even if I did, I would have to hide somewhere on the terrace or the cellar. Covered in blood as I was, I couldn't go anywhere.

I also could not convince myself that nobody would come and was constantly on the lookout for any kind of movement at the front door. And beside this, I was not entirely convinced that my host was truly dead. I discovered that in the entire room, the only window that could be opened was the one in the room where it had all happened. It looked out onto the yard, which was partly satisfactory. The second floor was too high up to just jump. Inspecting the outside, I realised that with a little effort I could jump two window ledges along and grab hold of the lightning conductor. All I would need to do was wait until it got dark. Until then, I was caught in a trap.

In the night between Thursday and Friday, I managed to get out. Freshly showered in wet clothes. My escape was not even that difficult. At least not this time. Or ever after that.

A few minor, essential clarifications

The freedom I had known before I was discovered no longer existed. I remained alive because they were not entirely certain, well, convinced, who I was and whether I was the right person. And, of course, where what they were looking for is, dark and unreachable.

They were more successful on their second attempt. At least partially. Well, the dark thing they wanted, the reason they and others were looking for me, was in a safe place. Unlike me. Because they could not get to the property they had stolen – how silly, they were the ones stealing and accused me of taking their property – they wanted to remove me. And somewhere they most certainly had the footage from the events at the flat. I could not be so naïve as to not assume this.

If I had previously known that someone else knew what my role was soon after the pivotal moments for our country, when we were being liberated from the criminal, single-party state, when we fought for democracy and government, for full shopping trolleys in shopping centres, after the traffic accident I knew that this omniscient someone was doing all he could to get rid of me in order to get his hands on a few documents which to him were of infinite value, and that he was, of course, fighting for more power. For total power over all of us, for power in the extreme. So I was justifiably convinced that I should start wearing, either on my front or my back, a banner with the well-known question that arises after every revolution or political upheaval: 'Comrades, is this what we fought for?'

He persisted, persists and will persist to his last breath: the power is mine, I am the power.

Let me make it entirely clear that I didn't do anything at all, did not move a single pebble, to get rid of the old party system, to make us free to make our own decisions about ourselves. It was all of little interest to me and then, as now, I might simply say 'Don't give a fuck!'

I knew that my accident, when a car hit me brutally without even braking right on the main road in town, was more of an assassination attempt rather than anything else. All of a sudden, I was run over. By whom? Don't ask, read on!

The traffic accident, this simple and common event on the road, untangled many things: first I came under a general police scrutiny, then a more detailed one. They too had information and traces from the events in the flat. That body 'of mine' floated of its own accord towards investigators and after that it was all easy. Of course they might not have paid attention had I not, because of my pathetic life and early beginnings, appeared in a number of their files. The traces on the body were mine, who else's.

And, of course, they had me. Previously they were searching for me and chasing me, now I was lying motionless on the road. How handy.

‘Gotcha!’ the copper in stories might say. ‘Nowhere to run!’ he would grab my sleeve and everyone would laugh at me. I should have cried. I was interrogated, they paced around me, but none of them asked where this thing was that was elsewhere and not with me. They didn’t bother much about investigating who it was who had hit me. Perhaps they knew anyway and wanted to leave him alone. They didn’t chase after him or fight for my right to the truth. Certainly not. Not now or ever. This is something I have to fight for on my own.

I soon got tired of all the bullshit you hear in hospitals, I had enough of hypochondriacs, those who went on about ailments and doctors, about the injustices of the health system, how doctors don’t know anything, how bad everything is. I was fed up of the false optimism of people with damaged spines, amputated limbs, disfigured faces, I was fed up with visitors to our ward, relatives, grandmas, wives, children, colleagues. I begged them to drop me off at the prison, as long as I didn’t have to return to the hospital! They did, but they still sent me to the hospital from there. A little later.

This was approximately what it was like the first time, and somehow I managed to raise myself back up. When they ran me over the second time, they smashed me up, totally crushed me, and I never recovered. I will die, drop dead, pass away, disappear a complete invalid. A lump of meat that was not even able to write on its own, that was almost deaf. Things oozing from it. But only a long time later, later on in the story, so there will be more about this.

And, let me remind you, I was also hit on the head, so my thoughts are often unclear, my memory is melting away like patches of snow in spring, nothing is reliable any more, apart from the fact that I am a cripple. Back then, way back, when my flight began, after the traffic accident, Čaba used to come and visit me. She was expecting, I know, that we would get married before I was taken away to serve my prison sentence. Well, nothing came of it. Now she no longer comes and wouldn’t want to marry me anyway. She liked strong, healthy, hard and real guys. Pathetic as I am now, she would probably simply find me repulsive.

Things are as they are. I am nearing the end. It would be better, perhaps even cheaper, if I had not been sent to jail. I would have some social support and a woman, I'm sure I'd find one, and would live at least partially independent. Instead, this dear country took over all responsibly for me after my second encounter with its serfs, those it employed, who were only efficient in completing part of their task, crippling me and punishing my body, but did not reach the goal they had been set. It was all about revenge – they sent me to jail in a wheelchair for at least twenty years. How humane and understanding of them – wheel you in, in a wheelchair!

Well, when you are locked up, your space shrinks and time seems to extend. And you stay who you are. Your mind only slowly expands to the edges of the former world you knew, before you were in an induced coma for four months. After the second intervention of the State into my own privacy, when, as I said, it totally smashed me up, my new world first began building with the physiotherapist who moves my limbs, the nurse who feeds me and the voices that surround me. When they woke me from my artificial coma, I was supposed to be well. How optimistic. I was well. Everything was working, only that I could no longer work, move my head, though I could move my eyes, etc. As will become clear later, somewhere towards the end.

I never said I wasn't guilty, never accepted I was guilty. I hadn't been on the run, I just kept out of sight. You could say the motto of my entire story is 'Flight, from what is, what was and what will be.'

When they lock you up, beat you up, put you on trial, when they interrogate you, when you are theirs, when you are on the run, when you occasionally take someone's life, all that is happening is something routine, every day is a nice day because every day is your routine. What else can a day be if not routine? It is routine that you are found, locked up, that your freedom is taken away, that you are accused of all possible kinds of things, of things you did and things you didn't. They like you because you are a symbol of their success. And they despise you because you are their victim. Of course, I am referring to the police, the prosecution, the judges, the tabloid and broadsheet press. Of course we need to add the national broadcaster. For all you are an object and a means of earning money and serving the State. You are

the object of their desire, a conviction that, thanks to their actions, the world is a more beautiful and better place, and they all benefit from you. They vilify you and make fun of you.

I must forgive them. They found me, they convicted me, and it was fair. My first victim was anonymous, not somebody I had known before. It was unimportant. Not only to me, many others were well aware that the victim of the bloody crime at the place near the industrial estate was not merely a family man, a mild-mannered philanthropist as you could describe him, to the public and officially he was an administrative clerk at the municipal offices. For other officials at the town hall, those closest and dearest to him, and for the media, not only was he an excellent sportsman, more or less a champion, he was also a truly important, useful and spotlessly clean member of the Ljubljana sporting community. Some, though not many, knew that he was a member, fervent supporter and soldier of an invisible army, an armada, part of the subservient machinery of the parallel state. Well, something like that. Not entirely, but still. I got rid of him somewhat inadvertently. But he was part of the system, part of the organization, part of the dark world of democracy.

So, read on.

Who are you, where are you, my One-Armed Dude

In the state I am in, I dare tell it all. I am free of fear. Therefore I can now tell everything I know with certainty as well as the things I assume with a confidence based on real facts I know and the causality of all that I know. It could be no other way. For this reason my story can be taken as pure gold. Finally the national broadsheet reported on everything. So it must all be true, isn't that so?

I know that they have me not only on their register of criminal offenders, list of unregistered weapon owners, the system at the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice, in the health system, the banking system, the list of motor vehicle owners and list of people with driving licences, etc. They have us everywhere.

I was right: God's revenge, the One-Armed God's revenge, the revenge of that someone or merely his subjects, due to the fact that I had for so long been stringing them along and also avoided them, was all planned. And it will be carried out here and now, at the State Penal Service Facilities, otherwise known as jail. I am convinced that it was he who exposed me, the One-Armed Dude. The One-Armed God who has access to all the registers.

We used to know each other. My advantage was in the fact that I recognised him, while he just waved his artificial arm around, directed and ordered, merely hinted at something and indicated, and it was done. Why? God knows why. Perhaps because of the cautious, terror-stricken and calculating arses of my fellow countrymen. Almost certainly just because of them.

When I found myself in the common room with a few other persons in a similar predicament to my own, I recognised his mighty, heavy hand, familiar to everyone in our homeland, the Creator's handicapped arm, plastic or wooden, certainly not cybernetic but artificial and clumsy. Nobody knew who it was who had chopped off his right hand. Perhaps he was once a carpenter, perhaps a butcher, perhaps a thief punished rather excessively if he stole little more than a loaf of bread for his hungry children, or something else. His palm and fingers, covered in fake leather were made at the Institute for Rehabilitation in Soča where one can receive anything, from an artificial knee to perhaps even a dildo, an artificial penis or cock, whatever – it's worth checking out.

I met him, heard his voice. He was the one who assembled us. Only I knew this, the rest were clueless. Well, almost certainly he was the mastermind of our fate, of all this shit that had happened and ended at this establishment. Aldo Smrekar, the Furrier, knew all about it. I knew that he had exposed me. He was the sledgehammer of the official and unofficial power centres. He was our executor.

In the classroom or assembly room they had all become a pack of rats, rodents which, when there is no other way out, will begin biting each other. When all the societal crap they feed on and reproduce in will be gone, when confinement within the system will become so troubling that nobody will manage to escape, it will

begin. Initially the rats are amiable, satiated, with shit on their long whiskers, their snouts are fresh and gentle, their fur is shiny and could be fashioned into a nice fur coat, glistening and luxurious, they are happy. Then, at the end, of course everything will be bloody, the furs will be ruined, the squeaking full of fear and terror. This too could happen in our perfect homeland.

The rest of them, my fellow sufferers, were unaware that they had been and will be tools in the hands of someone still invisible in these systems, someone omnipresent, as I said, the One-Armed God. Only Aldo knew this. Because the others didn't read the broadsheets. So they could not see the world as a hypothetical possibility but merely as a general political and moral pigsty filled with everyone here, at home, in Slovenia. They were too direct, and perhaps this was why they were happy here in our home, I repeat, in Slovenia. But they were nothing else other than by their own nature and fate the criminal tools of the One-Armed Dude who with Aldo's help eventually assembled us into a group that has to defeat me, take from me what was once his, what I was now the owner of, the sole owner, the sole caretaker. If until now he merely suspected, he will in the end be convinced that I had been the one. Of course I had been.

I am not bragging, and I am not lying. I had him by the short and curlies for almost three decades, played around with him. He didn't know me but he had to think about me, he didn't know my name, didn't know what I looked like. But to me he was standing out in the clear. He was all over the media, hiding his flaw by always only publishing pictures of his upper torso, portraits, so to say. A skewed image of the truth. But is that not what the media and public opinion are about? So any fear of him was on the one hand destructive, and on the other being on the run from him and the game I was playing with him were slowly becoming the purpose of my life. I was running from him and his executioners who were now, all of a sudden, all in this room with me, in the common room as it is called, but is essentially a classroom on C wing of the State Institution for Penal Servitude. The more I was afraid of them, the more ridiculous, pathetic, weak they seemed to me. This was how I defended myself. With ridicule and laughter, with superciliousness.

Our common fate was not only to live together here and now, but especially outside. The governor of our fates was this mighty agent who ordered them to hunt me down, find his 'property'. Thugs and thieves are always convinced once they have appropriated, taken or stolen something, it, by some natural law of the weakest victim, becomes their sole property.

Whenever things were bad, I would crouch. This was why I became a spider, hovering somewhere, silent and not moving. They don't think about it because they cannot detect it. If they don't think about me and cannot detect me, they live in error and are not successful. They will continue being naïve and unsuccessful. They were incapable of even figuring out that I was a plain old pizza delivery guy. Delivering and occasionally also baking pizzas.

Neither did they detect the secret threads that connected us, delicate as a spider's web, or our common fate. Apart from that someone, the One-Armed God who was powerful, invisible to all but adored by many, hated by many for this immense power. For my part I do wish, and this is also why I am writing all this, that it would all be known because I was the spider creator, spider hunter and spider fugitive who could at any moment sting or bite that worshipped One-Armed Dude. He was aware that I was hiding in the meanders of his brain and that he will not find peace in this world until he destroys me. We could sing *We Are So Much Alike* together.

I was unable to rid myself of him until almost the end of the story, written down forever, because he is like a mutilated god, like someone alive in a room of mirrors where everything is reflected over and over again. I am there and I see him. He cannot sense me. Of course not. He has been afraid of the images of himself that he has seen since the times of his rise into his despotic rule, all showing a weak little man, afraid of his own image in the eyes of others he is fighting with – afraid of pity, ridicule, contempt, the truth from other people. He is afraid his flaw will be exposed, his wooden hand with which he cannot even pull out his cock, cannot even masturbate. The only images of himself he likes are those that inspire fear. He boasts and frowns at himself and at everyone else, to stir admiration and fear, he is a peacock and a lizard, a particular political and personality amphibian who seeks out

mirrors that will magnify him, that will reflect his own ego as the existence of the immortal and eternal master, the bigshot arousing respect from everyone else in this hall of mirrors. This is how his desolate and frightened soul is reflected, always to be more terrifying, afraid of himself and all others, becoming truly foul, truly unacceptable.

Even stronger than the fantasy and the fear are the acoustic intruders that he also doesn't know. I don't know where and when he encountered them. They constantly buzz in his ear, telling him he should act, that everyone is making fun of him, that they are humble and hypocritical, that they are threatening him with defeat and imprisonment. He hears them day and night, at meetings, hears them when he exercises, when he is attending press conferences. This is why he says little and speaks emphatically, because he is simultaneously battling these intruders and the press. They are the combined evil voices of his soul in each of his lives. And creeping into his earlobe are also my spider brothers. He is ashamed of his right hand because he cannot suppress them, cannot simply rub his ear in order to get rid of them and defeat them. His replacement right hand truly is a problem.

What could I do in the face of such might, such evil, such omnipresence? Fate has assigned me an enemy who never closed his eyes, always listened in with a reality he doubted was real; what if even his friends, his army, are in fact merely the enemy disguised. This was more or less how it was. And it never changed. I escaped him, slipped away, eluded him and his henchmen.

He will persist in this position until death, the evil images and evil voices will never leave him, he will never defeat them, 'Be afraid of me, so you will never see and know that I am even more afraid of you. I am infinitely afraid, so I need to punish you in order for you to be even more terrified and fearful.'

Up to this moment, I have not met any of the five who were scheduled to participate in this project anywhere at the institution. I didn't even know that they were in the institution. If I had known, I would no longer feel as if I was in a safe shelter, as if this was my home. I was close to thirty, and bearing in mind I received a twenty-year sentence of which I would most certainly spend at least seventeen or

eighteen years in jail, I would have been close to retiring when I got out. Were that to happen, I would become a recipient of social support from the State. This State of mine that fed me, gave me shelter and chose my company! How stupid!

We had much in common out there, and here everything is shared anyway – especially the fact that we are not free, that the toilets, the bathrooms were shared, that we all had the same food, the same guard dogs looking after us, the same anxieties, and thus the same shared fate.