PIERRE LOUŸS

A SUPPRESSED CHAPTER

From

APHRODITE: MŒURS ANTIQUES

Translated by Patrick Kearney

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Translator's Note

Pierry Louÿs' celebrated novel *Aphrodite: mœurs antiques* began life in 1893 as a short story titled *Chrysis ou la Cérémonie matinale*, published by the Librairie de l'art indépendant in an edition of 125 copies. This was expanded into a novel and published serially by Mercure de France as *L'Esclavage* in six consecutive monthly issues of the literary review, spanning August 1895 through January 1896 (Volumes XV–XVII). The first edition in book form appeared in 1896, under the Mercure de France imprint.

The novel's great popularity encouraged many reprints in the years that followed, crowned in 1913 by the magnificent edition published by Georges Crès, issued as the twenty-fifth volume of his series *Les Maîtres du Livre*. Unlike the cheaper 'popular' editions, the edition published by Crès was deluxe affair, limited to 1,250 numbered copies printed on *papier de Rives*, and small quantities of special copies on *Japon* or *Chine* for subscribers. The book was favoured by a woodcut frontispiece, a portrait of the author, specially done by done by Pierre-Eugène Vibert.

What was certainly unknown to the general public was the existence of the highly erotic and scatological Chapter VII, comprising a letter from the Galilaean courtesan Chrysis, to Démétrios, a sculptor and lover of Queen Bérénice of Egypt.

This chapter, which is published here in what I believe to be the first English translation, would not appear until 1928, when it was included in a surreptitious edition published by René Bonnel, with the false imprint 'Tiflis: Bagration Davidoff.' It is a beautiful edition, using the more complete text of the 1913 Cres edition, and decorated with 16 erotic engravings by Serge Czerefkov. The issue was limited

to 166 numbered copies : 1 on *chine*, 15 on *japon* and 150 on *hollande Pannekoek*.

A reprint of this appeared in 1938, from a different and unknown published, in an edition of 200 copies, 16 on *Japon impérial* and 184 on *grand vélin d'Arches*. It was decorated with thirty-two lithographs by Georges Villa.

My copy-text for this translation is my own copy of the 1928 edition, now at Cambridge, at shelfmark CCC.74.65-67.

Patrick Kearney

Un Chapitre érotique inédit d'Aphrodite

"I, Chrysis, courtesan, natural daughter of Neaera, herself a courtesan, famous in Rhacotis and throughout Egypt for my hair, bright as gold, and my skin, white as cheese, but forsaken by the only lover whose love torments me, write to you, Demetrios, so that you may recall me to mind and cast your evil thoughts far from you. You left me because a handsome youth passed by. You live with him, heedless of Chrysis, and his bowels receive each night the dew for which my flesh so thirsts. You tell him, as you told me, that his belly is soft and his hands skilful, that his eyes resemble lotus flowers beneath the water, and his hair resembles showers of rain illuminated by the sun. You take him in your arms, between your thighs; you open your mouth to him, you caress him slowly… Ah, wretched me!

"And since you no longer remember, I write to you, Demetrios. I write to remind you of my form, my gestures, and the tremors of pleasure that shook me beneath your body.

"Do you still remember how you loved me, and what delighted you in me? Remember that I am not like the courtesans of Athens, who suck men's members and envelop their bodies in caresses. I could have learned to caress men, but my mother told me early on that men's pleasure is born of the pleasure of the women beneath them. And I have learned to experience pleasure to the point of suffering. My spasms — do you still remember them, Demetrios? — are violent as gusts of a tempest, and my belly swells like a sail beneath Boreas: there is no woman in the world who takes pleasure as fiercely as I do, and my vagina burns the skin from men's cocks.

"Since you left, Demetrios, I have pondered the mysteries of Eros; I have sought to discover how I might experience still greater pleasure, and what arts you would need to know to wrest my soul from me. I have found the answer.

"If you wish it, Demetrios, I shall dye my hair black, and it will stream across my face like frightened clouds passing before the moon. Beneath this vast black veil I shall be whiter, shall I not? I shall be wholly enveloped in a blue shadow. I shall resemble a funeral urn, draped in black and fashioned from marble.

"You will divide my hair into three dark streams: one will fall before my face, the other two will pass beneath my ears; you will braid them across my breasts and my belly, and they will pass between my breasts like an ebony sceptre between the breasts of the Queen of Egypt. But below my navel you will stop the braid, fastening a little golden serpent into it, and all the loose ends of my hair will then spread out like a great fan of black feathers before the sexual mystery of my lap.

"If you wish it, Demetrios, I shall dye my hair brown. You will braid it behind my head, and it will beat against my back as I walk.

"The plait will be so long that it will reach below my buttocks. You will insert its tip into my anus, and I shall look as though I had produced a great brown turd which climbed up along my spine and spread out around my head.

"Or else I shall look as though I had bent beneath the swollen arse of another woman and received upon my head the fallen avalanche of her intestines, still so soft and liquid that it would have trickled between my shoulders before slipping, in a muddy stream, into the deep cleft of my buttocks.

"And you will make love to me, Demetrios, thus covered in hairy filth.

"But if you love me as I am, I shall keep my hair blonde, fair and luminous as a shower of rain lit by the sun; you will see it again, as in

former days, scattered across my shoulders, countless and light, and you will take it in your hands.

"Ah! My hair is blonde as the dust upon the roads, as the leaves of birch trees in autumn, as the coats of the horses of Hispania that come with the caravans; my hair is blonde as the desert, as the eternally sluggish Nile. It is so nearly the colour of my skin that, at a distance, it can scarcely be distinguished, and I seem, beneath my veil, to be a little mist of rose and gold. I shall leave my hair as it is, shall I not, Demetrios? I shall leave my body as it is, as it was when it was loved.

"You will caress me beneath the armpits when I spread my numbed arms apart; you will place your thumb upon my breast, and with your fingertips you will explore beneath my armpit.

"You will feel it all wet with warm sweat upon the skin, and cold sweat upon the hairs.

"You will press each of your fingers, one after another, against the thin, taut skin; you will tickle me endlessly, making me tremble with frenzied convulsions and nervous laughter.

"Then you will take my hairs between your fingers, my soft, silky, wet hairs, and roll them as you would the tips of your moustache. And then, suddenly, you will tug at the whole tuft as though you meant to tear it out; the skin of my armpit will bulge outwards, and you will hurt me so much that I shall weep with the pleasure of suffering.

"I shall caress you with my belly.

"Kneeling beside you and almost lying flat, my hands supported by the sheets, I shall let the marvellous skin beneath which my frenzied entrails writhe wander over your body.

"I shall brush against you by turns and crush you beneath it. You will feel it come alive, contract, hollow out, and swell again.

"Sometimes it will be empty and hollow like a cup of rose-coloured marble, and I shall press against your skin only the artificial thinness of my ribs.

"At other times it will be more swollen than if it were carrying twins, and I shall inflate it so much that you will lose sight of its hairs.

"But I shall restore it to all its beauty, so that I may offer it to your face and brush your cheeks beneath it. And I shall excite you with the illusory promise of a sex that opens and withdraws, yet does not surrender itself.

"You will kiss me beneath my breasts, in the soft, fleshy fold where the most delicate sweat of my skin lingers.

"First beneath the right breast, which I shall lift with one hand.

"Then beneath the left breast, stirred by the tumult of my heart.

"And you will trail your kisses around my waist like a belt.

"I shall squat over your face and, with all ten fingers, violently spread my buttocks apart so that you may lick the cleft between them.

"There you will discover mysterious sweats, for the cleft of my buttocks is more secret and more secluded than my vulva itself.

"You will guide your gentle tongue through the ravine of my backside. You will loosen from my pink skin the dry crusts of my pleasure, and if a few tiny pellets of shit remain caught in the hairs at the very edge, you will eat them with delight.

"But you will not touch my anus, so that it may thereby be all the more excited.

"At times I shall squeeze my buttocks together, and your tongue will be caught between two burning masses.

"Or else I shall spread them so widely that the skin of my cleft will offer itself to your tongue, thinner, broader and more purplish, like a badly healed scar in which the puckered anus still lives.

"You will plunge your tongue into my great vulva, your tongue stiff, broad and long. You will make it move like your member, and my belly will heave like that of a woman coupling.

"It will be a member, but softer, more lascivious and more alive. With the tip of your tongue, you will caress the hard folds of the vagina, right up to the neck of my womb.

"My urine is clear as liquid gold. A single drop upon your tongue will give you more bitterness than an entire cup of absinthe. A single draught will intoxicate you as though you had drunk three jars of wine.

"And I shall pour twelve generous mouthfuls of it into a kylix. My urine is golden like the wine of Samos.

"When I squat, my thighs spread apart to piss upon the marble slabs, one might think that my long golden hairs were dissolving into water, and that long, shining rivers were flowing towards the wall beneath a faint vapour.

"You shall no longer let me piss upon the marble tiles, Demetrios; you will lie naked beneath my sex, and I, almost seated above your face, shall empty my belly freely, releasing upon your parted lips a sudden storm of hot urine.

"And your lips will come to wipe my vulva, drinking the last trembling drops from the tips of my clinging hairs.

"Ah! Who will weigh my beautiful turd, heavy, brown and supple as a single long plait hanging down the nape of a virgin's neck! Who will have the right to run his tongue over it! Whom shall I choose, what god, to put it between his rounded lips, like a youth's cock in the mouth of a friend, and suck it with delight?

"Ah! It shall be you, Demetrios.

"When I bend my buttocks towards the ground, how I wish you were there, beneath my taut rump, watching the parted cleft in which the contracting anus opens. You will see the hole widen, smile like a little child's mouth, stretch, blossom, come alive, and all the shit pass slowly from my intestines into your mouth…

"You will eat it, chew it, savour it; some will remain between your teeth, some will slip down your throat, some will mingle with our kisses; your mouth will remain sticky with it, and your breath will become powerfully fragrant. Eat, Demetrios, my beautiful, heavy turds."