

## Sample translation

***Clausewitz*** by Joost de Vries  
(Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2010)

Translated by Liz Waters

For additional information on Joost de Vries and other Dutch writers, please also visit:  
- The fiction pages at the foundation website: [www.nlpvf.nl/fc/](http://www.nlpvf.nl/fc/)

## Prologue (pp. 9-21)

My doctoral research was still only a few months old when I happened upon a little book in a flea market in the south of France and immediately decided to plagiarize it. On the black dust jacket was written in small white letters *Les politiques de FLF*. Aside from that there was nothing on the front or the back. Quite why I'd picked it up I didn't know, since although I'd been professionally engaged with the prose of Ferdynand LeFebvre for six months by then, I'd never heard anyone refer to him by anything so familiar as 'FLF'. I quickly leafed through to the title page, where the subject was rendered more explicitly as *Les politiques de Ferdynand LeFebvre*. Underneath was the name of the author: Pierre-Marc Brissot. It meant nothing to me, but given that I hadn't yet taken proper hold of my research project, that might have been a bibliographical oversight on my part. The book seemed to have the same chapter breakdown as I was planning to use. I couldn't see the name of a publisher, and the way the text was laid out, simply, soberly, led me to suspect it was a hobbyist's project. I felt hotter and hotter. I did find a year of publication, 1989, and saw that Mr Brissot had dedicated the text to the memory of his beloved wife Jeanette, 21 May 1921-14 May 1988. I could picture this Mr Brissot, an elderly, bald academic, slumped in a chair beside his dying wife's hospital bed, his head full of the camouflaged political messages of Ferdynand LeFebvre. When I noticed that the book had the very subtitle I was intending to give my dissertation, *Sleuth on the steppe*, a feeling crept over me of having slipped through a hole in time into a parallel universe where I had a firm grip on my own future. I paid (four euros) and took the book back with me to my parents' holiday home.

That evening I read the fewer than 120 pages at a single sitting. Mr Brissot wrote clearly and amiably about why he found the work of Ferdynand LeFebvre so interesting and why he thought there was more political reality behind the man's fanciful narratives than the literary world assumed. In the next hundred pages he deciphered countless parables and intertextualities hidden in the work and analysed a wide range of symbols and metaphors. All meticulously annotated.

In the online catalogue of the consortium of Dutch university libraries I could find neither the title nor the author. I had to create an account before I could search the French national library, but there too I failed to unearth any Monsieur Brissot. Google Scholar produced zero results. The book had no ISBN. It was as if I was holding something that didn't exist.

In the week before leaving for France I'd walked along a corridor of the university library that I hadn't seen before and happened upon the booklined wall where all the dissertations were kept. Thousands of surnames on thousands of immaculate, untouched white covers, an unread monument, with the names of doctoral researchers engraved on it like fallen soldiers. I tracked down the spot where my work would be shelved – between Modderkolk, J.M.J. (*Antarctic Models of Induced Nephokinesis*) and Modijefsky, C. (*Freemasonry in Utrecht, 1648-1794*) and could feel something in my stomach, just below my midriff, something squelchy and forlorn. I once read a newspaper article about a woman who found out she'd been carrying an ectopic foetus for ten years. They had to cut it out of her, a grey lump that had once been on its way to becoming life.

The book ended '*P-M Brissot, August 1988, Mirmande*'. Mirmande was a small village not far from our holiday home. It still had a Brissot in the phone book and the next day I drove there. At the house, a sandy-coloured bungalow built up against a mountain, the man who opened the door perfectly fitted the stereotype of a fifty-year-old Frenchman: suntan, slight belly, large nose, shirt open one button too far, thin hair. As if all Frenchmen want to look like Gérard Depardieu. I explained what had brought me to him and he took over the conversation: 'Ferdynand LeFebvre? Don't talk to me about that twerp. All through my childhood my dad stuffed those little stories about cats and dogs and horses down my throat. Utter crap.' The man ploughed on without pausing for breath about how his father had spent all his free time on what he called 'his studies', even after his mother fell ill. The ultimate party trick of his father's had been to put copies of the book under the Christmas tree as gifts for the children – he'd never read a single word. His father had self-published the thing, in twenty-four copies, as if two dozen people were waiting to read it. He still had a few left; I'd be doing him a favour by taking them with me, a long way away.

I stood rigid on the threshold of the Brissots, the ungrateful family of an unnoticed man of letters. From behind the house, out in the garden, I could hear children's voices and the man talking to his wife in a hard Paris accent. He came back and pressed a box with another ten of the little books into my hands. 'I think you're likely to get a lot more out of these than I ever could. If you'll excuse me, we were having a barbecue...'

Back in the car I turned on the radio and heard the opening bars of Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The notes climbed the scale, tingling up my spine, to my cerebellum and onto my crown, until it felt as if the roof of my skull had flipped open like a cigarette pack.

\*\*\*

My father had a photograph of Ferdynand LeFebvre in his bookcase, one of the few pictures of him in existence; LeFebvre was a short fellow, fat as a barrel, and in the photograph he's seated at a typewriter in a white robe, like the high priest of his own divine authorship. His short piggy fingers are on the keys and his mouth is pursed in a smile. In the background you can see his study, some five tables pushed end-to-end with perhaps two hundred ring binders like a long line of infantry in close formation. Against the wall stand filing cabinets and document storage systems, all made of grey plastic. In them he kept every sentence he'd ever committed to paper, every brainwave, every metaphor, every scrawl to add to his literary universe.

LeFebvre and my father met in the early seventies, long after LeFebvre had stopped leaving his Amsterdam mansion. He hardly ever received or put up with new guests. Tonko, my father, visited him there just once, and afterwards LeFebvre gave him to understand that he'd rather keep in touch by post. All told, Tonko received fifteen letters from him, ranging from four to nine sheets of closely-written paper. Tonko wrote twenty-one letters back. The basis of my doctoral research.

\*\*\*

When critics or academics need to place Ferdynand LeFebvre in a genre or a literary category, they usually choose the label postmodern animalism, or else impressionistic neo-baroque. Although the hippies were crazy about him, he was never regarded as a political author. That was how he saw himself though, as his letters to my father demonstrate, but he felt the critics were either too lazy to pick up on his implicit references or interpreted his complete absence from politics – 'The strongest statement of all!' – as detachment, preferring to concentrate on his style fetishism.

'Political detachment. The day that comes to dominate the European novel I'll turn in my grave (I hope),' he wrote to my father. Tonko Modderman, my father, political attachment personified – it's quite possible that LeFebvre was ingratiating himself.

\*\*\*

I'd graduated in May, twice. I was awarded my master's in International Relations in a Historical Perspective based on a thesis for which I and my best friend Joost happened to win the National Thesis Prize, and then I became a Master of Laws. I'd specialized in the philosophy of law in international relations, and there was

considerable overlap between my two theses. While doing a minor in literature in the third year of my studies I happened to brag about the LeFebvre letters, and the dean of the literature faculty, with the gleam of the thesis prize fresh in mind, promptly offered me a doctoral position. The correspondence had never been published. It was a literary treasure trove, I was assured.

\*\*\*

Since my doctoral degree had no funding, there was no room at the faculty, so I was allocated an office in the dilapidated attic of a wing of the university library. The brass nameplate next to the door read T.S.E. MODDERMAN, M.A. LL.M. The room was yellowing and full of IKEA bookcases that looked as if they'd been shot at. The grooves in the parquet were wide enough for entire mouse families to walk along side by side.

'It's actually quite funny,' the departmental secretary said. 'The man who had this room before you passed his medical exams and then went on to gain a PhD in public administration. His nameplate said DOCTOR DOCTOR.'

I smiled politely.

'Oh and by the way, I heard Bint on *The Mole* saying his younger brother's called Nose. That's you, isn't it? Why do they call you Nose?'

I thought about the man who was doctor doctor and tried to bat away a vague sense of despondency, somewhere in a distant corner of my mind.

I laid my index finger flat against my eyebrows and pulled it steadily down over the bridge of my nose to the tip, then on up into the air like a ski-jumper.

'Because I've got such a funny little snub nose.'

\*\*\*

Not a great deal was known about Ferdynand LeFebvre. He was born in Marrakesh in 1918, the son of a German doctor and a French nurse. His father was put in front of a firing squad for espionage when Ferdynand was still in his cradle. Or so it was said. His mother gave him her surname, and that was the last thing she ever gave him, since she then packed him off to her sister in England. He was sent to boarding school, St. Poppy's. A gap in his biography follows; from the mid-thirties onwards we have no information at all. After the war he turns up in Jakarta, where he witnesses the Police Actions and bases his first novel on them, *Rue Chevalier*, written in German, surprisingly enough. Then again there's a gap, until he surfaces in Amsterdam in the late fifties, buys a mansion on the Keizersgracht with an unknown

fortune and proceeds to leave it only on exceptional occasions. According to his various biographers he had fifty visitors at the most between 1958 and 1978. My father was one of them. After 1978 no trace remains of LeFebvre. Suddenly he's gone, vanished. Paff. The person who knew him best, his housekeeper Mrs Connie Zipporah-Meijer, widow, spoke to no one about him before her death (suicide; gas) three years later.

\*\*\*

In the late eighties Swiss amateur historians discovered by chance that in 1939 he'd spent six months at a sanatorium for the mentally ill, in a picturesque Alpine village.

\*\*\*

His classmates at the British boarding school described him as: withdrawn, bibliophile, asexual, excellent fencer and equestrian, sensitive, ironic, gifted painter, futurist and colour-blind.

\*\*\*

*Rue Chevalier* (1952; 212 pp.) is about a deserter from the Dutch colonial army who lives among apes in the jungle, watching the fighting and the torture. After that book comes a literary silence, indeed a silence of every conceivable kind, lasting more than ten years, until 1963 when *The Steppe Rider* appeared. *The Steppe Rider* (745 pp.) was the book the world had been waiting for, unbeknown to the world itself. It tells the story of Pierrot Krapowski, a doctor fleeing St Petersburg, Petrograd, as the Russian Civil War rages in 1920. He recounts memories of his beloved Natasha while being pursued by wolves across the snowy landscape of Transbaikal, his life saved in the nick of time by Djam, a nomadic warrior of the North-Tibetan Kuropatkin clan. Together they follow the Yenisey, the heroes' river that accompanied Genghis Khan to the Arctic Sea. In Tuba, the last telegraph station before the steppe, Djam rescues Krapowski from a group of Bolsheviks. Krapowski schools Djam in physics, so that he no longer fears the ghosts and demons of the bog, which turn out to be merely bubbles of gas. The duo is later freed from a prison for counter-revolutionaries by Tushegoun Lama, a Kalmyk sorcerer who obliges them to fight for the anti-Christ-like General Baron Ungern-Sternberg, commander-in-chief of the Asiatic Division of Outer Mongolia. The book ends with the idle promise 'to be continued', as Krapowski and Djam, foot soldiers in the front lines of the guard, storm

Gandantegchinleng, western outpost of Urga, the Great Vehicle of Perfect Joy, the only monastery outside Tibet where theologians and clairvoyants are trained. Later, in the only interview he ever gave, for *The Paris Review*, it turned out that he'd written *The Steppe Rider* before *Rue Chevalier*, some time shortly after the war. *The Steppe Rider* was no instant bestseller, but after a few years the hippies took it up and pitch-forked Ferdynand LeFebvre to the status of cult hero. Pierrot Krapowski became a symbol of individual self-sacrifice and pacifism, with Djam as the idealistic portrayal of a man who has broken free of family ties and sets off in search of new brotherhoods. The dialogue between them concerns reason versus faith, freedom versus commitment, sacrifice versus self-preservation.

\*\*\*

As a critic Ferdynand LeFebvre never fully came into his own. The newspapers dutifully published his essays and criticism, accommodating pieces in which he tries to work out what the author is aiming at in writing the book and goes on to say whether or not those aims have been achieved. Perhaps he was a bit too gracious. Many papers would have preferred a critic who could be a sniper, someone with the guts to knife good intentions in the back. Readers want to see writers bleed, too.

\*\*\*

LeFebvre's star was rising. The books that followed *The Steppe Rider*, such as *Morning Falls* (1969), *Night in the Occident* (1971) and *The Barking Deer* (1972), enhanced his international fame and reputation. The latter title in particular, a novel that's eighty per cent dream sequence, in which a sailor crosses the sea on the back of a barking deer, was regarded as a small masterpiece (121 pages), mainly because of the poetry he worked into it. It was in his poems that he laid claim most directly to his counter-cultural identity. The best known is 'Mariah':

Senses in the sallet  
A skeleton stockade  
A confection of vaière  
full of pheasant longing  
pert in the hands  
of staccato paladins.  
But I know  
You and Sir  
Smelt together from the garret

That poem turned up on posters and in the front window of anyone who wanted to demonstrate his engagement; it poked fun at what Gudrun Ensslin called the 'Auschwitz generation'. The 'staccato paladins' were the government bureaucrats who could answer only by saying '*jawohl*' or '*nein*', and the fusion of 'You and Sir' was a plea for an entirely new set of manners based not on hierarchy but on equality. This was the period, the early seventies, in which his name was whispered every year when Nobel Prize time came around. Jean-Paul Sartre dedicated a novel to him. Even though he didn't write in Dutch and hadn't submitted an application, the Literature Foundation gave him a fifty thousand guilder grant.

LeFebvre expressed his gratitude to Dutch society, more or less, by setting two novellas in the Netherlands. *Madeira Pudding* (1974) consists of a dialogue between a man and a woman in a hotel room, narrated by Benno, a minor figure in the painting on the wall, a dialogue about, among other things, Dutch tolerance, which he (the dust mite) believes has less to do with the spirit of the East India Company era, the trading mentality that demanded openness towards other cultures, than with an indifference deeply ingrained in the national character. It was a wildly anachronistic work, and only in the final pages did the reader realize that it was about Balthasar Gerards with a prostitute, the day before he shot Prince William of Orange. The second novella, *North-South Line* (1977) was about a horse, Amarillo, that walked from Groningen to Limburg in the nineteenth century. Since LeFebvre had never visited either province, his nature descriptions were somewhat bizarre, but apart from that the book received unanimous praise for its page-long passages about the falling of rain and the rushing of wind. The book, his last, has no human characters or dialogue.

\*\*\*

Now, more than thirty years later, the university had given me a four-year appointment to write a doctoral thesis about his oeuvre. I was eager to begin. I rang some friends and we painted my office. Through a couple of useful contacts I managed to circumvent the bureaucratic rigmarole of the university. That same week a concierge came to lay an entire new floor. I went to a menswear shop, bought a shirt and jacket and hung them in the cupboard wrapped in plastic just in case I should ever spill anything on my clothes. My ergonomic desk chair looked out over the canal; the office smelt of freshly minted promises.

I saw Bint live on television, in the Lower House, and took a taxi to his place. His girlfriend wasn't there and since it had once been my parents' home I had a key. In the entrance hall I carefully took Richard Caton Woodville's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* down from the wall. I went to Bint's study, removed a blank sheet of A4 from the printer and drew a big fat prick on it with a permanent marker. With veins and pubic hair and a big gob of sperm shooting out of the tip. I impaled the prick on the nail that had held the painting and took a taxi back to my office.

I hung the painting prominently in my shiny new workspace, sat at my desk and turned on my computer. I would write a dissertation the way you vacuum a floor, systematically, dividing the surface into blocks of equal size and dealing with them one by one. I can do this, I thought. I'm going to do this.

\*\*\*

Two months later I sat at my desk in a blind panic without a single word on paper. I went to the office in the mornings, never before ten, read the newspapers, then ate lunch at my computer watching various television series. In the afternoons I reread the works of LeFebvre and underlined whole pages. When I leafed back through them later, I couldn't remember why I'd marked them. I read all the novels again and every time I finished one I bought a new copy, the luxury edition in his publisher's stylish series, and put it in my bookcase at home with a false sense of satisfaction. I spent a good deal of time looking at the painting of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and scoured the library for books about the Crimean War and the Battle of Sebastopol. I could lay my legs across my desk and stare at the painting for fifteen minutes, half an hour. There was something I lacked that those men had, the discipline to gallop into a valley of death in perfect battle formation, straight at the Russian guns. It had to do with a sense of duty, I think, and the feeling that you were

serving in a regiment with a certain history and you could never turn your back on that history.

\*\*\*

I'd be the last to say that LeFebvre's oeuvre is overvalued. Stylistically brilliant, it occupies an exceptional pioneering place in European literature, but it also suffers from that malady that afflicts so many European novels, namely the delusion that pain and art are one and the same, that art must always be about loneliness, failure, war and Holocaust. His prose was sometimes brutally honest and sometimes disconcertingly real, but the virtually permanent absence of humour meant it had something clinical about it. Of course there was irony, but then irony is all too often a stylistic device of the intellectual novelist – real life means laughing out loud at stupid things, farting and slipping on banana skins. Still, I thought, who am I to say that literature ought to be about real life?

So what is it about, then? I didn't know that either. I've always disliked people who think they know exactly what something is about. Perhaps that had been my problem for too long as well. My research was such a defining thing – the notion that from now on I would be the so-called expert, that I'd have to pronounce resounding judgement. It was only when I found that book by Mr Brissot in a flea market in France that things shifted in my head like Tetris squares. Brissot had written down so many of the ideas I'd had myself that it never felt like plagiarism. Later, when I translated the text, giving the sentences my own voice and my own language, it automatically became my story and my text. I typed out the correspondence between LeFebvre and my father as an appendix, and within six months my thesis was finished. Of course I couldn't submit it there and then; my appointment was for four years and it would seem suspicious if I came out with a final product within a year. I'd have to wait, I realized, and spend at least another twelve months at my desk doing something arbitrary, pretending to be busy, staring at the *Light Brigade*, before I could move on.

[pages 74-76]

Reinier Koot put together a reportage about them in 1983 for the VPRO, a documentary filmed five years after LeFebvre's disappearance at a sort of memorial gathering at his house in Amsterdam. All the acolytes were still alive and they dutifully put in an appearance. After a bit of faffing about with the remote control I was able to watch the film:

A dark canal; streetlights. A single cyclist passes. While the camera is still outside, the sounds of a party can be heard: clinking glasses, music, voices. The camera lingers at the door to an imposing canalside property. Then comes Koot's rather tinny-sounding voice:

*This is the house in which German-French writer Ferdynand LeFebvre lived until his disappearance in 1978. To an entire generation LeFebvre was one of the most distinguished voices in literature, a man who found his multitude of young readers in the counter-culture movement but was read outside it too, in intellectual circles – a candidate, it was said, for an invitation to Oslo to receive the Nobel Prize. Tonight his colleagues and friends, most of them well-known faces from the world of Letters, have gathered to talk about his work and to celebrate his literary legacy. (the camera pans across one of the large rooms of the house; we see columnist Helen Cagafuego-Burghard with her husband, minister Ernst Burghard; famous professor and future biographer Obbo Kooijer; Henk Koetsier, one of Dutch literature's Great Three, or Four, or Five – depending who's doing the counting)*

(hubbub, footage of people holding drinks, young and old, probably students with their lecturers)

*One of the speakers is Professor Obbo Kooijer. He's writing the 'definitive biography' of LeFebvre and has access to the writer's private archive. He was always one of LeFebvre's closest Dutch friends. This evening he'll read from *The Steppe Rider*, still regarded as LeFebvre's masterpiece.*

(we see Kooijer addressing an audience but cannot hear him; he speaks with great pathos and expansive gestures)

Koot (now in front of the camera for the first time himself, a yellowy shirt, a razor-sharp crease in his beige slacks, a slab of brown hair stuck to his forehead): *You always collaborated intensely with him. For years you were his sounding board. What made him such an extraordinary writer?*

Kooijer: *Ferdynand was more than anything else a voice to me, a murmuring, gravelly voice that had wafted across from the battlefields of Europe, and that voice told stories with a mystery to them. We could often decipher no more than fragments of that mystery properly, but at the same time, in our heart of hearts, we felt the mystery contained a truth. That's what readers, young and old, looked for in him: an intrinsic truth.*

Koot: *What do you miss most about him?*

Kooijer: *His stories were always dark and sincere, serious and playful. And that's how he was as a person too. He could think on different levels.*

(close-up of Henk Koetsier, in velvet morning dress, smoking a pipe on the balcony)

Koot: *Where does your work touch upon that of Mr LeFebvre?*

Koetsier, smiling condescendingly: *Whether they touch upon each other I don't know. You should see it as like the counterpoise between the planets. They don't touch in any way, but they certainly influence each other.*

(the camera climbs a staircase; people are sitting on the stairs with their drinks; we see Amalia Dennerode among them – she brings a cigarette to her lips with her sinewy fingers and takes a fierce drag. In an open doorway the camera comes to a standstill. We look inside and see manuscripts, pens, a typewriter. We hear Koot's voice)

*Here, then, is the room where it all happened. After LeFebvre took up residence in this canalside house in 1959 (an error; we now know he moved into the building in 1958), this is where he wrote all his novels. His colleagues say he was famous for his stamina and discipline, and he had an ability to transform his whole life into Art. The room remains an inner sanctum and this evening no one will cross the threshold.*

*Nevertheless one question hangs on everyone's lips: where might the writer be now? Professor Kooijer at any rate is clear that he doesn't intend to speculate about that in his biography.*

Kooijer, delivering his speech to the throng: *Now, five years later, our friend has disappeared. Do we know where he is? many people ask. To that question we can respond in only one way, namely with a counter-question: if we knew, why would we tell? We're*

*talking about a man who, throughout his work, advocated freedom, the freedom to be who you are, to believe whatever you choose, to say what you think, to love the person you love – freedom to go wherever you like. Why would we sacrifice his freedom to satisfy the curiosity of the media?*

[pages 84-86]

6) Maria Scileri, actress, in *Mancini con ospiti* (Radio Uno), 30 April 1999 (author's translation):

When I arrived in the Netherlands in 1971, the only people I knew were a Cuban poet in exile and Henk Koetsier. I saw the poet just once in the year I spent there, in passing, on the street, and of course Henk got me pregnant with my first child.

I'd met Henk in Rome, when I was still a student. Actually I'd already given up my studies and become a photo model. Or if I'm really honest: nude model. After my student grant ran out I threw in my lot with a photographer, Dione, who had a little studio close to the Pantheon. He called it 'artistic nudity', but in reality they were soft porn, full-frontal photos in provocative poses, strip-tease style.

I can't remember exactly how I met Henk, but it was after a session with Dione, in a café, or at a party. Perhaps it was in a flat that belonged to Dione's brother or cousin, where lots of poets and artists used to come, as well as Red Brigades and secret agents going through an identity crisis. Henk stood head and shoulders above everyone else and he talked with great passion and knowledge about the Pantheon, saying the temple would have a part to play in the literary masterpiece he was planning. We'll see, I said. We became lovers, probably for no more than a week. Then he left again. We wrote a few times and I once sent him some photos that Dione had taken of me. I think there was one in which I was posing as Bernini's Proserpina. In the nude though, of course.

Then I 'broke through', as you're supposed to call it. I was given roles in several Italian films and then English films as well. Not all of them were good films, but some were. Maybe not even half of them, but there's certainly a handful that are still worth watching. Which is not to say my roles in them were particularly good, or at all essential to the films, but still. It improved my financial position. I hurtled around town, Rome, Milan, later London, Paris, parties and premieres. La dolce vita. I'd never been so happy. Then early one morning, as I was leaving the Ritz where I'd had a liaison, I saw Coco Chanel's body being carried out of the lift. Sadness rose up in me like an umbrella, a hollow and empty feeling, and I wanted to leave Paris there and then. Immediately. (I don't know why I reacted so strongly, probably because I'm a hopeless hysteric.) A cameraman I knew who was going in the direction of

Amsterdam asked me if I wanted to come along. I rang Henk from a motorway phone box and he said I could call by. I had one suitcase with me.

When we arrived at his place it was dark and the house was teeming with people. He lived in an immense villa overlooking a park. It was a party. Dutch people didn't seem particularly fashion conscious to me. But Norman Mailer was there, and Roman Polanski. Everyone disappeared reasonably early. There was something on, at the Stadsschowburg I think, and Koetsier said: I know of another party. By bicycle (I'd never experienced that before!) we went to a house on one of those picturesque canals. An old lady opened the door. I wondered where on earth I'd ended up, but in the living room were all kinds of people who responded enthusiastically when they saw me. A couple of women took me under their wing straight away, saying they'd seen my films and respected the way that by displaying my naked body I made my femininity inviolable. I nodded and said: exactly, that's precisely what I do. Henk pointed to a fat man and told me: that's Ferdynand LeFebvre; this is his house. The name sounded familiar, but only vaguely, very vaguely. I lied a fair bit to Henk about how many books I read.

Anyhow, a little later I went to the kitchen to get something to drink and Henk slipped in after me. He pressed his nose – what a delightful nose he had, a real Roman, maybe that's why we clicked – into my neck and I turned my bottom towards him and he grabbed my breasts from behind, one hand inside my blouse, and at that moment LeFebvre walked into the kitchen. It was really weird. Because of Dione's photos, and then all those films, I was used to walking around naked in photo studies and on movie sets; perhaps a hundred men had seen me nude plus tens of thousands more on video or in the cinema. But the way LeFebvre looked at me in that kitchen, running his red watery eyes over my skin and seeming to register every hair and every pore individually, a toxic feeling of prudishness came over me and I didn't dare look in his direction for the rest of the evening. Still, as I said, I've always been rather hysterical. After that I visited the house on the canal twice, but he didn't show his face on either occasion, just stayed upstairs, in his study.