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KATJA DREYER

CRY ME A RIVER

DE NIEUWE TONEELBIBLIOTHEEK

De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek

Tekst #NR 620

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1.

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De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek, Tekst #620
© 2019, Karen Røise Kielland, Katja Dreyer
Eerste druk 2021

isbn 978-94-6076-620-6
nur 307

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De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek bestaat uit
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Hollandridderkerk, Ridderkerk

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Postadres
De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek
Willem Beukelsstraat 42
1097 ct Amsterdam

Cry me a river is online te bestellen op:
www.denieuwetoneelbibliotheek.nl

Dramatis Personae

Karen
Katja

The stage is covered with a white plastic sheet. There are two workstations with buckets, moulds to make plaster body parts and plaster copies of a Fanta bottle. Centerstage stand a big bucket of water and industrial bags with plaster. The back of the stage is covered with an elegant, grey theatre curtain. Katja and Karen are working at their workstations while the audience enters. When the audience is seated, Katja comes to the front and adresses the audience.

prologue

katja Welcome.

We want to share with you our story of a journey we made together. In November 2016 my colleague Karen and I we went to Greece. We went there to look for the source of the river Styx. The news was full of facts or rumours that Western values were under threat. Even prophecies that Europe might go under. We were influenced by that, it was uncanny.

In the background Karen shakes out a blue towel creating a cloud of plaster dust. The towel features two classical white torsos.

karen We were scared. What if it was true?

katja As kids we had learned that Greece was the cradle of this Western civilisation, so to say the source, with places like Acropolis, the Oracle of Delphi and heroes like Odysseus and Achilles. So for the first time in our lives we felt we needed to go there, to Greece to look at this myth of Western civilisation and the 'rumours of doom' and the fears they created. The river Styx is located two and a half hours away by bus from Athens. The name Styx means hate. In Greek mythology the river Styx is the river you have to cross to reach the underworld. Some stories tell that the water can make you immortal, others tell that the water is poisonous and can kill you.

The facts or findings from this trip are fragmented but we made a story out of them;

And this story starts by the sea.

Karen comes to the front, stands next to Katja.

karen Two women are sitting around a fire on the beach. Their plan is to walk from the sea, along the river to the source of the Styx, hidden somewhere high up in the mountains behind them. They sit around the fire and read.

Karen and Katja go up to an improvised fireplace, a piled up orange rope with white plaster copies of a Fanta bottle lying around it, front right stage. They sit down around the fire.

fireplace 1

karen They read an ancient description of a Greek geographer who found the source of the river Styx 1800 years before them.

Katja holds an A4 paper with a classical head printed on it in front of her head.

1800 years before them he wrote: the water of the Styx is black when it falls down. He said he had heard that the Styx is the river you have to cross to reach the underworld. It might be poisonous, some stories told, it might make you immortal, others told. It is hard to know what is true, he said, 1800 years before them. They look at the sea. The two women are of the same age. One is greyer than the other; one looks Caucasian, the other Slavic.

katja They are not obvious heroes. Their hips are broad and better for childbirth than battles.

karen They are not particularly muscular either. Yet, these two are our heroes.

katja They pick up a rope a bit like this one and an empty Fanta bottle that they fill with seawater.

Karen walks towards the audience and hands a plaster copy of the bottle to someone, then she comes back to sit by the fireplace.

katja A man is coming towards them from the sea.

karen He's a local, he is carrying a spear.

katja No, a paddle.

karen A pipe.

katja A stick, it's their guide. He is called Odysseus!

karen They tell Odysseus they want to talk to locals along the way to hear whether the stories about the Styx change the closer they get to the source. There, by the source, they want to camp and sleep and note down their dreams to see whether the underworld will influence them.

Odysseus tells them there is a great danger of falling rocks up there. One falling rock is enough to kill you.

katja The sun is rising.

The three of them walk from the beach into the riverbed, under three bridges with the echo of their footsteps yelling at them. Echo was a nymph, the guide says, a very chatty nymph. She was so good at gossiping that the god Zeus hired her to distract his wife Hera with gossip as he crept off to have love affairs with other beauties. When Hera discovered this trick, she punished Echo. Echo would never be able to tell a story again. From that day on Echo could only repeat the words of others. The three of them continue.

karen The quest for the source of all things known to them, or the quest for the origin of Western civilisation, is well on its way.

oracle 1

We hear the music and battle sounds from the movie Troy. Karen and Katja apply a black stripe on their noses. They get up with a plaster bottle each in their hands, lifted as spears and start running around the stage. They throw their bottles onto the middle of the stage. The battle sound stops. Katja is ready to receive a message from 'the Oracle,' a pipe hanging from the ceiling. Karen is standing behind Katja, directing the pipe towards her.

karen Do you want smoke?

katja No thank you.

with a dark distorted voice

The Styx is the entrance to the underworld.

No, the Styx is not the entrance to the underworld!

Foreigners are the entrance to the underworld. They want to sit by your fire and warm themselves. You don't know their names.

They might be thieves, murderers, rapists. They might be gods.

The lights of Europe will go out.

You will be terrified!

The water is black when it falls down,

The water is black when it falls down,

The water is black when it falls down,

The water is black when it falls down...

Karen whispers in Katja's ear, Katja nods and stops the Oracle.

karen *to the audience* Would you like to hear some gossip? Yes?

Katja and Karen run to their workstations and start to work.

gossip 1

Katja and Karen start mixing plaster. They work in silence.

karen Did you hear about the two women that went to look for the source of Western civilisation and the source of the Styx in Greece? They didn't even go to the Acropolis!!!

katja Really?

karen But you know what she *pointing to a woman in the audience* said? She said they went to the Oracle in Delphi and later they battled...

katja Battled, like the battle of Troy?

karen Well, they had a discussion over who would be the priestess and who would be the smoke, and the winner would stand and receive messages like the Oracle of Delphi, but via a plastic pipe.

katja A pipe. The one they found in the riverbed?

karen Maybe...

They work in silence.

katja You know what I heard? Those two tried to break into a museum in Athens.

karen Why?

katja Because it was closed all the time.

karen What were they looking for?

katja They were looking for parchments, texts, the oldest stories carved in stone.

karen Why?

katja They wanted to hold it in their own hands.

karen Why?

katja To feel it, to sense where they are from, to connect.

karen So?

katja So?

karen Did something happen?

katja They met a guard.

karen A dog?

katja No, a man.

karen *to the audience* I heard something about a dog attacking them.

katja Well, they met a man.

Katja goes into the audience and asks an audience member to make a mould of his/her hands. She remains seated in the audience. Karen cleans casts.

katja *from the audience* You know what I said about the guard they met in the museum?

karen Yes.

katja He was really upset.

karen Well...

katja Not like you think. Not because they tried to break into the museum, but because he said: 'There is no democracy left outside of this museum!' *stands up, shouts from the audience* 'There is no democracy left outside of this museum!!!' he shouted.

karen Was he drooling?

katja He was drooling out of anger.

karen That's what I heard, too!

fireplace 2

Karen sits alone by the fireplace.

karen It's quiet along the riverbed. The two women and their guide Odysseus have been walking the whole morning. They feel protected by the cliffs on both sides of the broad river valley. The river flows towards them, still and blue. The sea lies behind them.

Then a bark breaks the silence. In front of them a big dog is blocking their path. It barks like it's never seen humans before. It's drooling, it might have rabies! Images of raw meat and white bones stripped bare pass through their head. Odysseus raises his stick. The dog seems to have three heads and a strange, snakelike tail. It is Cerberus, the Hellhound, who guards the underworld, or the Fenris wolf who guards the Norwegian underworld, or just a wild dog.

gossip 2

katja *from the audience* Did you hear that the guard...

karen The dog?

katja No, the man. *walks from the audience onto the stage to wash her hands* He guided them through the closed museum in the middle of the night!

karen Was it very dark?

katja No, he had a torch.

karen Ah. *relieved* Did they get to hold something in their hands?

katja No, it was all fixed to pedestals. It was a museum!

karen So, they did not get to touch anything?

katja No.

karen Did they only have copies or some originals?

katja I don't know...

Katja dries her hands and comes to sit with Karen by the fireplace.

fireplace 3

karen The river is skinny now. Rocks crack like bones under their feet, but they still see and hear water. A field spreads out beside them. In the far corner of it, a donkey is standing, looking at them. Donkeys make you strangely melancholic, they agree. It looks sad and has been looking sad for a very long time.

katja There are many stories from different places and times, where humans were given donkey ears as punishment for bad judgement.

karen These humans then try to hide their donkey ears. In all the stories they tell their barbers to keep the ears a secret. But none of the barbers manage. One barber yelled the secret into a water well. Then the water rose and flooded the land, killing everybody in its wake, like an army looking for revenge.

katja They walk uphill in the riverbed, with a slight fear of what lies ahead.

Battle music mixed with Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries fades in, Karen repeats the run of the last Oracle. She gets up with a raised bottle, runs through the curtains and ends up in the position under the pipe, centre stage, as Katja works.

oracle 2

Karen stands under the pipe.

karen to Katja, urgent The towel!

Katja comes and slips the towel under Karen's feet.

karen Thank you! Can I have some smoke please?

Katja exhales smoke at Karen, then lies down in front of her on the towel, producing more smoke from a vapour.

karen *speaks with a distorted voice*

The Styx might be the entrance to the underworld.

No, a story might be the entrance to the underworld,

a man,

a roman,

a roman man,

Tacitus.

A book.

Tacitus wrote a book: Germania.

Tribes in the north will appear...

There.

Noble tribes free from interbreeding with foreigners.

Strange and awful dreams will spring from it, the book,
they will echo through time.

Sons will die in battles.

Books are written, books are read.

Fragments are copied and copied again,
copied and pasted,

forming the stories one likes to tell, tell, tell, tell...

to the audience When the river dries out,
you know you are on the right path.

The world hates truth but loves its shine.

The water is black when it falls down.

Karen stays, close to the Oracle, Katja goes back to the fireplace.

fireplace 4

katja There is almost no water left in the river.

A tiny house is almost falling off one cliff. 'It belongs to the Head of Western Heritage,' Odysseus says, '...she lives here during the summer.' 'Who?' the women ask. 'Yes, yes, The head of the Western Heritage Collection. She works at the British Library.' They walk, no climb, fight their way uphill in the river. It's very narrow and steep. Odysseus looks tired. He raises his eyes towards the stinging sun, then Delphi. 'We have to leave the river,' he says. They walk on asphalt in the heat. They are very disappointed.

katja *to Karen* The whole point was to walk inside the river all the way from the sea to the source.

karen I turn quiet and sullen. I don't like to talk in the mountains. She *hints at Katja* is chatty like Echo before she lost her voice. I just want to walk in silence, feel how the valley gets deeper, darker with the tall walls of the mountains almost forcing us along to the source, beyond the chaos and chatter of life, the sea, the sea of links that only reveal more links. I want to stuff my head into the source, be swallowed by it, to see life more clearly, more simply, fearless. She *hints at Katja* chats and chats not to feel her disappointment at having to leave the river, I think. I think, she is actually relieved because she did not like to walk through water and secretly is afraid to reach the source. She fears the clarity she might find there. Maybe she fears being robbed of the illusion that everything is open and possible, and that nothing is decided yet in love and in life.

Karen goes to sit by the fire, holds the A4 paper with the Greek mask in front of her face.

katja In the distance someone follows them on the asphalt road. A foreigner?

Katja sits down by the fire next to Karen with the mask print.

katja No, an old Greek woman. She's barefoot.

Her eyes are dark. She looks like a nice person.

They walk together in silence for a while until they come up to a white church. There, they sit down in the shade on the parking lot to have a rest. They ask her what she knows about the Styx and the source. The old woman laughs, she lifts up her skirt and they look in between her ancient legs...

Creatures are crawling out of her,

they keep crawling:

daughters, mothers,

sons and fathers,

uncles

and brothers and sisters.

Blood,

heads,

legs,

fingers,

hair,

drool,

sperm,

eggs,

books,

snakes,

fruit,

pipes,

brown, blue and water.

The old lady laughs and closes her legs. Then she stands up. They watch her as she walks off.

Odysseus nods: 'Myths are facts one needs to know to know oneself.'
karen The two women trot after the guide towards the mountains, wondering what their myths are.

They both hold smiley face cut-outs in front of their faces.

fireplace 5

karen The sun is getting warmer. They have been walking uphill forever on a steep mountain path and then, they arrive at an orchard! There's shade and the trees are full of fruit. The grass is lush and green. Goats are lying in the shade of the trees next to wild dogs and birds are singing. Lions and lambs are licking each other's fur. They walk on and come to a tree that is bigger than the others. It only has one fruit. The two women yearn for that fruit. They approach this wonder when they hear a hissing voice – a snake.

I heard, he said, you should not eat from this tree?

You should try.

They do.

And forever after the bittersweet juice touches their tongues, they want more and more and more and more more more...

Katja and Karen make clay pussies. They hold on to the clay for it to dry, covered like Adam and Eve. Someone knocks on the door, Karen leaves to open. She comes back with a plumber, who carries a toolbag and pipes. She instructs him on and off stage. Katja gets the mould off the audience hand. Karen and Katja make the mould of the audience hand together.

katja You know, I just heard they did hold the oldest fragment of the Odyssey in their hands.

karen I heard they got a hard on when they held the fragment in their hands.

katja No!

karen Yes, yes. And I heard one of them had to cry.

katja Wasn't it Odysseus who had a hard on when they passed the Sirens? He was tied to the mast and got an enormous erection.

karen Yes, true, and the erection wasn't classical enough so it was cut.

katja What do you mean cut?

karen It was cut out of the story.

They walk towards the fireplace. They both pick up a copy of the Fanta bottle, pretending to pee into the fire. Smoke comes out of the fire, as if being extinguished.

katja I heard they found Germania, Himmler's favourite book...

karen Himmler, Hitler's friend?

katja Yes, Germania.

karen Tacitus, a man, a roman, a roman man.

katja Exactly. Do you know that Himmler cut out all the parts that describe the Germanic tribes as lazy...

karen Of course.

katja ...and not wanting to work or sweat on the fields.

karen Of course.

katja He only kept the parts where the Germanic tribes are called fearless.

karen Ja!

katja Pure.

karen Ja!

katja And heroic.

karen Genau.

Karen holds the bottle in a battle pose. They both slowly start to lift the bottles as if they were fitness weights.

karen What do you know about the Styx?

katja I knew when I gave birth that my son would die in battle.

karen You have a son?

katja Yes.

karen What's his name?

katja Achilles.

Day and night I wondered how to save him. I climbed to the source of the Styx with my baby and dipped him in its water to make him immortal.

karen Did it work?

katja It only kind of worked.

Katja and Karen start jogging.

katja The water could not touch where I had held him.

karen Okay. So where did you hold him, then?

katja His heel. If I had known I would have been more thorough. But I knew he would die in battle anyway. The Oracle had said so.

karen Yes, yes, I remember. Right after his death, everyone gossiped about how he died.

And then, later, they told the story,

over and over

and over and over

and over and over.

oracle 3

katja *with echo effect on her voice*

Future?

Future!!!

Future.

Present.

Present?

Past.

fireplace 6

Karen is standing by the fireplace. Katja still stands at the Oracle position.

karen They have arrived at the last village before the wilderness. Far below them they see the river like a snake in the abyss. It's an empty looking village clinging to the rocks. In the distance: Delphi. They enter a village bar. Once their eyes adjust to the smoke and the dark, they see the features of three women dancing around a fireplace. One is young, the other middle-aged and the third ancient.

Katja walks over from the Oracle pipe, carrying the pussy replicas.

katja They are past, present and future.

Katja lays the pussy replicas down by the fire. They start to jump around the fire.

karen They ask the women what they know about the Styx. They laugh. They say:

'If you really want to know about the Styx,
just Google it!'

They start dancing around the fire to a club beat. Then they venture out into the space, dancing wildly to the beats in the stroboscope light coming from the fire. A mountain shadow, with the Acropolis, appears on the backwall. The shadow is created by a random looking pile of Fanta bottle copies lying on one of the workstations. They run towards the mountain, again and again. Wagner, Ride of the Valkyries is playing, mixed with marching band music.

Karen and Katja disappear behind the curtain, their shadows are seen running in battle mode towards each other, clashing mid back stage, over and over, producing battle cries. They appear through the middle of

the curtain as a three legged creature with two heads. They walk towards the Oracle and look up into the pipe.

oracle 4

katja and karen *screaming, Hooligan style* Golden Dawn!

Golden Dawn!

Golden Dawn!

Golden Dawn!

Golden Dawn!

Katja and Karen fall to the ground, slowly.

odysseus recording

One beautiful morning I met two beautiful ladies, one from Belgium and one from Norway, who were engaged in the history of Greece. As we arrived at the immortal water of the Styx some days later, the ladies undressed and took a bath in the source to become immortal like Achilles. And I filmed them. Thank you very much for this unforgettable trip, with love, Odysseus

fireplace 7

Karen and Katja sit next to each other, under the Oracle pipe. They are facing the audience, the Oracle towel around their shoulders.

katja We sit in a dark cave, looking out like the first humans. We are at the source.

karen Fresh water drips from a narrow slit,
it's surrounded by thick, green moss. Outside, ragged mountains stand tall. The stone wall is coloured black by algae, so when the water falls down it too seems black. Once in a while rocks are falling as well, hitting the ground outside. But we are fearless in the cave.

katja We are happy and fearless, at the source.

The view fits the descriptions we have read,
the ancient description by a Greek geographer
who travelled through this terrain 1800 years before us. We make a fire with pages from Germania. It burns well. As the flames are eating away the letters on the page, the fire seems to talk to us:

katja and karen *both, flat*

The people of Germania seem to me indigenous and free from interbreeding with foreigners.

The people of Germania seem to me indigenous and free from interbreeding with foreigners. The people of Germania seem to me indigenous and free from interbreeding with foreigners.

karen *decisive* The Fanta bottle with seawater!

We empty it into the fire. It doesn't work.

katja ...the people of Germania seem to me indigenous and free from interbreeding with foreigners.

karen We pee in it. That works.

katja At night I dream of us going to a monastery, the one where we always wanted to go because they have the oldest, most beautiful parchment of the Odyssey that still exists in the world.

karen We want to hold it in our hands, to maybe feel or get a sense of where we are from.

katja But only males are allowed there, so in the dream, we decide to dress up as a donkey, a male donkey. And dressed like that we are able to enter the monastery.

karen In a dark courtyard, there's a fire. We don't dare to take off our donkey costume. A monk stands by the fire. No, it's a woman! She's black, muslim, transgender, with freckles and pink hair. We take off our male donkey costume and she introduces herself as the Head of Western Civilisation at the British Library. She tells us the fragments aren't here. None of the material, the parchments, clay tablets, rocks collected by German travellers in the 19th century as they were looking for proof of their own greatness in the mountains of Greece, are here.

katja We shiver, we're so dissappointed.

karen Scared somehow. To comfort us, she reads us a list of far away places. Places, she says, that might hide, or protect, the source we are looking for... Egyptian Museum, Cairo...

voice-over is taking over, as Katja and Karen start to clean the space
Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Abadia Roca, Monserat, Barcelona.

Istituto Papirologico 'G. Vitelli,' Florence.

British Library, London.

Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven.

Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Fondation Bodmer, Geneva.

University Library, Leuven.

Half in darkness Katja and Karen transform the working space. A nymph, dressed in a long white dress enters, playing the lyre.

She is followed by the plumber installing pipes and a faucet from backstage onto the middle of the stage.

All characters disappear again and for a moment it is dark. Only the noise of water falling down is heard.

The light comes up again. The stage has been transformed into a museum: two rows of pedestals with female torsos are placed from front stage to back stage. They run parallel on a blue carpet. Each female torso that is placed on a pedestal, is a copy of a copy of a copy, copy, copy, copy. A visual echo through space.

The faucet with the running water is placed in between the two rows, with the water as the only moving aspect.

Pieces of plaster fall in a circle of light.

Black.

Cry Me a River, the quest for the source premiered on the 12th of June 2019 in Oslo's Black Box teater

Idea, direction
and performance Karen Røise Kielland
 Katja Dreyer

Dramaturge Marit Grimstad Eggen
Scenography Ole Martin Lund Bø
Composition & music Jessica Sligter
Lighting design Ingeborg Staxrud Olerud
Speech coach Isabelle Barth

www.kaaitheater.be

Thanks to Linda Theodoru, Danae Theodoridou, Dimitris Anagnostopoulos, Anastasia Efstathiou, Willem de Wolf, The Norwegian Institute, Athens Panayotis and his mother, kunstencentrum Nona, Kaaithheater and PACT Zollverein

Co-production Buda, Kunstenwerkplaats Pianofabriek and Black Box teater. With support of Norsk Kulturråd, the Flemish Community, The Flemish Community Commission, Fond for Utøvende kunstnere, Norsk Fond for Lyd og Bilde and Performing Arts Hub Norway.

Katja Dreyer (Berlin, 1974) studied drama (directing and acting) in the Netherlands and has lived in Brussels since 2004. In her own work she tries to shed light on history and its consequences by zooming in on the personal lives of ordinary people. As a performer she has worked for many artists and choreographers such as Mette Ingvarsen, Mette Edvardsen, Miet Warlop, Ivana Müller, David Weber-Krebs, Superamas, Begum Ercias, Lotte van den Berg, Karen Røise Kielland, Ant Hampton, Danae Theodorou, Lito Walkey, Bernard van Eeghem, Davis Freeman and Dolores Hulan and Wouter Krokaert. From 2006 till 2012 she was part of Ivana Mueller's I'M COMPANY. She has written and produced several original plays. She is Artist in Residence in Pianofabriek in Brussels.

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Toneelwerk

*Cry Me a River** – 2020

*Ophelia comes to Brooklyn** – 2017

*Kroniek** – 2013

Überflieger – 2010

While We Were Holding It Together – 2006

* teksten uitgegeven bij De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek

Karen Røise Kielland (Oslo, 1975) is a Norwegian director, performer and writer. After her studies at the Amsterdam School of the Arts, she co-founded Blood for Roses with Anne Rooschüz. Her work has been showed and co-produced by among others Over Het IJ Festival, Festival a/d Werf and Hetveem theatre in the Netherlands and Henie Onstad Kunstsenter and Black Box teater in Oslo. Next to her own work, she's been performing in the work of other artists including Zhana Ivanova, Than Hussein Clark and Maria Barnas and filmmakers such as Felix Weigand and Joachim Trier. Between 2006 and 2012 she was part of Ivana Müllers I'M COMPANY. Her book *Å gå med Kølle* (Walking with Kølle) was published at Forlaget Oktober in the spring of 2019.

www.blood-for-roses.com

Toneelwerk

*Cry Me a River** – 2020

BIG BANG SHINY – 2016

Swallow, smoke and weeping willow – 2014

A Slow Escape – 2013

The Nature of Hunting – 2011

Burn baby, burn! – 2009

So long snow – 2009

Exilium Arboreum – 2008