



Genitalia Philosophica

John Repp


A buzz-cut blonde called Madeleine and I talk Bachelard with a dusting of Wittgenstein. We don't require coffee or cigarettes, food or wine, table or chairs, preferring to squat flat-footed, haunches swaying a little as we make our points or struggle to recall piquant phrases.

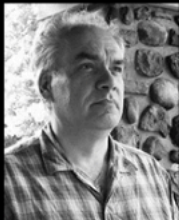
Madeleine wears a motorcycle cap jammed down so hard a roll of flesh gathers over her eyebrows. Her black leather Dr. Denton's are too small for her, dollops of flesh protruding here and there like burnt dinner rolls. Her slightest movement produces a pungent creaking.

Whenever I glide from the cognitive troposphere to pluck some Bertrand Russell commonplace and toss it her way, I notice with dispassionate keenness how her outfit gaps open at the crotch, her pubic hair shaved but for a bristled fringe ringing the *labia majora*. As she slyly offers a morsel of Whitehead or a few crumbs of Berkeley or Popper and I unwrap another hunk of trusty Hume, I think, "What

geometric genitals," contemplating the closed-clamshell symmetry of that impeccable pudendum. This puerile fascination, this sexually regressed purity nevertheless registers the respect—nay, the awe with which I regard her.

Tonight, the talk has delved especially deep. Bachelard's elusive meditations on birdhouses and attics have not yet yielded to our heated inquiry. My irreplaceable interlocutor falls silent a moment, the chuckling hiss of the woodstove cinching the air more tightly around us. Then, rocking back on her heels, her lips parting slightly, Madeleine turns the sort of conceptual corner for which she's so revered in our circles: "In a journal entry (after all, it *was* 1842), Kierkegaard called circumcision worse than torture because it denies the victim—who lacks perceptual acuity, language, and memory (in short, all but the most rudimentary consciousness)—not only the recollection but the full experience of torment."

Not for the first time, I realize I'm naked and lack a foreskin. My genitals hang quiet, *sui generis*. 



JOHN REPP is a widely published poet, fiction writer, essayist, and book critic. His latest book is *Fat Jersey Blues*, winner of the 2013 Akron Poetry Prize from the University of Akron Press. Explore his website at JohnReppWriter.com