

KAJE

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Paige K. B., "CHAPTER 33"

"Memory belongs to the imagination. Human memory is not like a computer that records things; it is part of the imaginative process, on the same terms as invention. In other words, inventing a character or recalling a memory is part of the same process."

—Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1986

In the late nineteenth century, a woman burns her own house down, ostensibly to get what she wants. A chimney remains in the ruins, like a reminder of the promise of ash. But if I showed you a photograph of this scene, it would be at most half-way toward proof of the event. Further documentation would be necessary, unless you're predisposed to take my word at face value.

A face confers values, and the one one chooses is a useful signal. But what is the content of an image, or a character, that cannot prove itself through surface alone? Further action required. It me? Multiply it, and the more you might realize how little you understand it—who left all these selves lying around? In the spring: shed my skin, leave it for someone else to sleep in. If you kick a dog, and it bites back, well, you know.

In her 2012 book *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*, scholar Sianne Ngai sets out to examine the predominance of those "undeniably trivial" tropes in visual culture, each of which "revolves around a kind of inconsequentiality." Cuteness, while "revolving around the desire for an ever more intimate, ever more sensuous relation to objects already regarded as familiar and unthreatening" might also evoke "a desire to belittle or diminish them further." Cuteness, then, is adorably contemptible... because if we can hurt them? J'adore, we may as well.

A dead dog has no bite, but, instead, is plush in its abundance of memorable associations—this seems preferable to the potential dangers of an unruly animal still alive. Step on a snake, it snaps in reaction—this is natural. If I held out my hand, containing the skin off my face, as a gift, I wouldn't be very lovable.

Characters, unlike people, are designed to be relatable. "Imagine how I feel!" Not unless you can tell a sympathetic story first. Say anything, but undergirded by the premise of character—a known and reproducible entity. Fictional as she may be, here she is.

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A voice actress named Yuko Miyamura once said, regarding her playing one of the main characters of the anime franchise *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, that “Asuka was a young girl—a ‘part’ that taught me a lot. She wasn’t so much a part of my personality, as a separate entity inside of me—something close to a friend.” The happiest we ever see this Asuka—born in December, a fire sign, and perhaps a skosh over thirteen years old—is when she decides that the dead are protecting her, so there’s no way she can lose. She falls upon the world.

Asuka Langely is not a metaphor for childhood; she was made by an adult and can be remade any day of the week. She is plastic, she is variable, she is potentially infinite, ergo I can use her however I like, just as a federal agency can choose anything it likes to base a warplane on. We share culture, we have designs on things. A crane for peace and a crane for war; opposites united in terrible consistency.

So, what happened to Chapter 32, anyway, or 30 or 19 or 27? Fell into the gutter—of the book? Light a match and take a look. Dead dog ate your homework? No, just lost in the post, I’d imagine. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chien.*

Someone else
once said—
but we just don’t have the time to address that.

What we would like to say is something along the lines of “It’s your birthday, happy birthday darling—we love you very, very, very, very, very much.” What we should say is “I am afraid you are falling and we sold the house with the landing a very long time ago.” Write that on a piece of paper, toss it in the fire, and watch it, what’s the word, burn.

BIO

Paige K. B. (b. 1988, Los Angeles) is an artist, writer, and editor who lives and works in New York. Recent exhibitions include a solo project at Lubov, a group exhibition at Theta, and an installation at Canal Street Research Association that developed into a collaboration with Shanzhai Lyric at MoMA PS1 for “Greater New York” (2021–22). Her writing has appeared across numerous publications for nearly a decade—including Frieze, Viscose, Spike, and Artforum—and her first book, a monographic essay on the art of Suellen Rocca, was published by Matthew Marks this year.

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ABOUT KAJE

KAJE was originally formed in the space between two artists' studios as a revolving-door dedication to the intermingling of attitudes, imaginations, and artwork. Over time, KAJE operations have evolved to achieve greater autonomy as an outright entity. Our mission remains – to support creative impulses that are difficult to define, and in need of participatory testing grounds. KAJE seeks to invoke new styles of audienceship through nontraditional programming and a spirit of spontaneity. Results range from dance to dinners, to books and their launches, and sculpture and drumming, research and meetings, and screenings and speaking and saxophone, indoor and outdoor moods, and language, et al.

Access to unconventional outlets within New York City continues to challenge artists, across disciplines. In a climate where the vast majority of exhibition making is market driven, we envision KAJE as a place to suspend belief, and develop experimental voices beyond the anxieties of that marketplace.

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