

## Appendix v



### Obituary

#### **Katrin Cartlidge**

15 May 1961 – 7 September 2002

Nobody knew what had happened to her, and if she knew, she couldn't say. Whatever it was – perhaps it occurred quite early, about thirty years ago, when she was nine or ten or eleven, whatever it was, it meant she was henceforth able to lend herself in a very striking way to anything and anybody who gained her respect. To gain her respect it wasn't necessary to be a winner. Indeed it perhaps made it impossible. She lent herself without interest (in the banking sense) and without reserve (in the heartfelt sense). At the same time, whilst doing so, she remained completely herself. This was mysterious.

Perhaps what had happened is that somehow she had lived a thousand lives. She couldn't narrate them, yet she could immediately recognise any one of them. When she was acting a part or discussing somebody's story, one had the impression that she had gone back to living one of those

thousand lives, or, to be more precise, that one of those lives had come to join her again. And this was done without the slightest drama. She simply turned her back to you as if to fetch something. And when she turned round, it was done. It was as if she knew, after those thousand lives (and those thousand deaths) nearly everything.

So much human experience does not bestow, as one might suppose, power, confidence, unquestionability, but the opposite. She was vulnerable, she could be frightened, yet she was never hesitant. She had the determination of a swallow in flight. Her thousand lives loved her too much to let her ever hesitate.

And the protection they offered her meant that she too could offer protection to others, like no-one else I have encountered. An open protection, not an enclosing one, the protection of a sky, not a cave.

She never stopped looking again at what she was working on, her left eye reading close-up and her right scanning the horizon, the lashes of both singed. Untrue of course. But today I see them like that. Singed because when she lent herself, she went as close as anyone can do to another's soul. And given the way she worked and lived and the choices she made, her lashes never had quite enough time to grow back before being singed again.

Between their lashes, Katrin's eyes had many expressions as she had perhaps had lives. The one they returned to, was of a flickering wonder, not far from the oldest laughter.

*John Berger, 16 September 2002*