

03:00 - Raving to the Night © Jean-Paul Martinon, 2008-2018

What Was It That I Said?

I'd love to know what I raved that night to the night; I'd like to know what those dithyrambs were all about; what exactly went through my mind, the joy I experienced, the elation that convulsed my body, the ecstatic shouts to the night; yes, I'd relish to know all that, of course, but I'd also like to know much more than that, I'd also love to know what I ranted at the same time, what made me cry out to the terrors that engulfed me, all these pestilent thoughts that kept me captive to myself as if in a vice; all this, I'd kill to know so as to give myself a clearer picture of what all this joy and madness were really all about, neither jubilant nor desperate, at peace or war, yet another night, another sleepless night worth all the ones that occurred before and all the ones still to come, and, of course, none of them worth any one of them exactly; a night like none other, spent in restlessness and sorrow, filling out my coloring book.

Almost

Applying balm-like salt
To a badly healed wound
Once more, I try
Rubbing it in, as I am told

As always, salt corrodes
The torment
The heat increases
And the wound slowly pools red

Silence takes over
I stare, dismayed
Naked, to my
Always judging gaze

So in the cold dark night
The pills neatly line up
The resolve almost taken
Askance into the glass

I have no choice, it's over
I don't know, I'm tired
Closer still, I swallow
Easier than rubbing

The Persistent Order

From some mould, a drop
A trickle, already a stream
Slowly seeps and soaks
The nurturing swamp
Already nourishing
All beyond shores and bays

A thread of life emerges
Slowly gametes morph
Into amazons and warriors
Soon a fledgling pack
Swarming forests and plains
Seizing all on its path

Gradually, this unequal
But overfed crowd
Rectifies and corrects
The surrounding Order
Without querying earth
Sky, fauna, or flora

One day, the now unruly mob
Finds itself disgruntled
At the mouth of a dry well
Heaving a rusty old bucket
Spilling soil and waste
Into ballooned bellies

While suffocating miasmas
Bring a sweltering terror
A threat of death emerges
Amidst the now guilt-ridden
Mass without conscience
Rabble turned charnel

At last, as if from memory
The scattered few
Try to rescue in vain
The forgotten Order
While inadvertently
Choking to death

Indecorously, perhaps
But most assuredly
Without warning
Or needless guarantee
The Order continues its course
For no reason at all

Suddenly, Last Winter

All wrapped up in cold night
The forest slumbers, undisturbed
While at the end of a log I rest

At a distance, I can hear
The crackling of dead branches
Under the hoof of some creature

High above, in an oak tree
Stands a white owl watching the night
Alone, vigilant, sharp-eyed

Resting on one leg, motionless
The bird looks for his prey
Eyes scanning the woods

His neck slowly stretches out
With ears pointing to the sky
The owl flies into the night

Breaking the air without a sound
I watch him, eyes wide open
Fearing the future before me

Furtively, he flutters in the night
His down glowing white
The flare of an ominous end

He cuts across the shadowy woods
Piercing the moonlight rays
Sharply diving like an arrow

What has he seen? Why over here?
Without a sound, in a swift dash
He catches what I cannot see

Get out. Hide. —Too late
He grabs. Clutches my skin
Tearing apart pale white limbs

Stay Still. Accept. Surrender
He takes me high amongst the trees
Above the forest, I fly

Transfixed, I take wind while
Dawn is breaking, at last, I breathe
All wrapped up in luminous night

Abyssal Thinking

To be right there

Pushed by currents
Mere ballasting weight
Blip amidst swarms of galaxies

Isn't a life

(To come to terms with one's context
creates the aim and the aim generates necessity.)

Against the cynics who claim
Make us laugh, weep, or shut up

I shall shout

...

(Hush... not yet.)

Without bilge
I project this...

Let me seduce you with the depths of form
Lure you into the surface of vision

Not much, nothing less
A coherence in search of meaning

And Again

With one final thrust, it spurts
Spatial squirt of un-limited drive

Like a string of free-falling pearl
Jam, Newton again justified

Nothing less than a careless waste
Over unsheathed flesh

From a small quivering length
Unable to control or aim

A yearning to end deferred again
A towel never quite thrown out

A Cloud's Potential

To the very end
This cloud will be spurred
By the chaotic dance
Of an inner flurry

Unless one day, for no reason
Like a hazy grey swirl
Lost before a cluster of stars
It breaks up in dusty trails

Then scattered in disarray
In each corner of the skies dispersed
The drops dream of meeting again
In hope of rekindling its turmoil

If they succeed
Until death, it will grow
A distracted fuddle
In emptiness

If they fail
Forever, they will stay
A misplaced dispersal
In the vastness of Nature

But this day might never come
This cloud could simply persist
Whirling itself for no reason
To the last beat of its inner storm

The Ball

With my two hands
I keep a ball
In water down

I press, insist
To no avail
It won't stay down

The ball resists
With all the strength
Of mighty air

Even when my
Weight insists
With gravity

Obstinately
All my efforts
Turn to nothing

Even though I
Know that to let
Go is all it

Takes to freeing
Me of this toil
Without purpose

But when the ball
Bounces back up
As if with glee

My life at stake
I gasp in rage
At my failings

So with nerves
I go one up
I grasp my head

That should stay down
Once and for all
In water deep

Just for You

This new enriched formula

Gentle and soothing

A special blend of active ingredients

The luxuriance of an evocative fragrance

A truly refreshing texture

Designed for year-round use

Available in distinctive variants

Each offering their own benefit

To complement landfill

Sewage sludge

Gaseous cloud

Bleached coral-reef

All convulsing with rich impurities

And earth-quenching pollutants

A truly exceptional offer

For a special treat

A perfect indulgence

For external use only

Bleeding Punks (*à la* Marguerite Duras)

In a dark and cold basement sprawls an intricate labyrinth made of iron scaffolding and thin mesh curtains. You hear whispers and heavy breathing. The light from a large TV screen near the ceiling casts moving shadows throughout the labyrinth. Your heart is hammering with expectation. You sweat. Slowly you start, you turn, you meander and turn again. Every now and then, you hesitate to stop, but you go on. Suddenly a figure passes you by. You've hardly seen him. So you follow him for a while. The figure stops and then waits. You pass him. You look at him. You stop. No. Too ugly. You breathe. You hear yourself breathe. Your throat is tight. You can hardly swallow. You shiver. You stay still, anxious. You wait. Standing there, in the dark. Between metal bars and curtains, you watch shadows slowly chasing each other, dark profiles mingling together. You listen. Murmurs, incoherent words. And then you think. You know why you are here. You wonder whether to leave. You know where the exit is. But you decide to stay, enjoying being lost for now. The feat of the unknown. You accept. Chasing the other chasing you. You refuse to leave until you get what you want. Until an intrusive hand touches you; until your sweat mixes with another's, until you are relieved. Enough. You stop. The breathing gets more intense. Where? Somewhere you cannot see. You try hard to move again. To break the sudden lethargy. Your muscles are stiff. You force them. Slowly you move towards the breathing. Between scaffold and curtains, you turn left, then right and after a moment's hesitation, you choose between two routes. In semi-darkness, at a crossing, someone passes you by. Again, you slow down and look back. You cannot figure him out. You surmise that he stares back at you, but for no apparent reason, you turn away. You are not the one. Not him. It cannot work. Why? You don't know. You just carry on. Unconscious. You turn again and venture down an even darker corridor. At the end of it, there is a small room. Light filtering through a small trap door in the ceiling. You stop. Listen to the breathing coming from the corner, from two shadows thrown together. Clothes scattered on the floor around them. Bodies entangled in a necessary posture. You get closer. You are tempted. Your hand reaches out towards them. You haven't touched them yet, but you can already feel the flesh, the muscles, the hair. Warm, soft, hard. But it's no. You are rejected. Happy together. So you back away. You are crushed. You leave, slowly speeding up the pace in the maze. Fast and scared. You slow down again. You stop at another corridor. Another figure passes by without a glance. Without checking you out. What's wrong? You stop. You venture down a wider opening. You encounter someone else. And another who follows. They hide in a darker recess. You can hear kisses, saliva, spit. Somehow, you can feel them. The bodies stiffening, pushing against each other. You hear a belt falling on the floor. Clothes follow. You watch mesmerised in silence. You swallow. Sweat trickling down your forehead. And for the second time, you imagine the touching of bare flesh. You fantasize in darkness, alone, standing there, in that corner. But this time you refuse the temptation, you drag yourself away. You find another corridor, another corner, and lean against a side wall. The brick is cold against your back. You allow yourself a break. No. You allow yourself to be ready. Waiting for anything, anybody. Please touch me. And then you see it. A profile. An unknown figure at the end of the corridor, in half-light. A face comes out of the shadows. Someone stares at you. Finally, in this labyrinth, someone you like notices you. You feel the gaze on your skin, your clothes, your hands in your pockets. Hard fists. You know that looking back is permitted. At last, you can allow yourself the pleasure. To be the one. The eyes meet. Your gaze, for once, doesn't betray you. Doesn't reveal your insecurities. You know that he is there for the same reason, with the same weakness. Your gaze drifts over his body as his over yours. In the dark, you discern a silhouette: a punk with a small Mohican. Torn jeans, dishevelled. Your eyes linger down there, where his own attention is fixed. You

communicate. You get yourself understood, wanted, but then, so as to save yourself from the worst, you turn around. Just to be sure. And you wait. You know it's not over. You also know it hasn't started. Again, you sense him approach. And again, your eyes meet. He is now next to you. Looking at you, trying to see what you are made of. So you do the same. You stare back, straight at him. Flickering images from the TV screen dance on his face. His eyes are like yours, embarrassed of being desired. Not of being conquered, just of being seduced. Suddenly you become weak. You are his. You start anticipating. You wait for the move. For the hand. But it doesn't come. You are asked to be the one. To make the move. You are scared because you cannot see properly. Because you do not know who he might be. What he might do, want, demand. Something stops you. Can I trust you? And then, because you can no longer hold back, you do it. You have no choice, you put a hand there, where the desire is. To awaken it fully. You undo, and after a moment, you do it. You embrace. You kiss, taste, smell. You touch. Your senses command. He is all over you, all over him. His cigarette breath. The muskiness of his skin, the cheap lacquer on his raised hair. You bite the ear, the earrings. Your hand lingers over his tattooed arms. It's all revealed, there in your embrace. Your fingers lead the way; they give you the eyes you no longer have. You are reassured. He feels OK. Scruffy, but clean. You think all this while your tongue is playing, while your hands are working hard. You discover, you probe. You know. You bite lips, ears, neck. He answers back. You bleed. You retract, you stop and swallow. You look at him. He is bleeding too. He smiles. You think he is smiling, so you smile back. You look at him. You look at the one you've taken without seeing and suddenly, suddenly, you understand. You understand it's too late. You don't need to do more. You know. So you laugh without uttering a sound, relieved, free. And without a second glance, you draw up your trousers and leave, leaving him there, half naked, frustrated, unfinished. He calls after you, but you don't turn around. You hasten the pace. Guilty, but without regret, you reach for the exit, quickly for air, lest you forget.

One Way

So I need to find some wriggle-room
I have to loosen up the rules
Give up on the imperatives
And be less rigid about life

I must go back to a youthful time
To a past of torn jeans and bangles
Long hair, music, and dilated hours
When cares punch no weight at all

Be curious! A new catchphrase
No, not another principle
But an openness towards the new
A willingness to experiment

This is much harder than I imagine
Now that bangles have been lost
Jeans are comfortable, zeal is short
And the hair is slowly receding

To make things worse—if it can be so
Mates are now helicoptering parents
With IBS and pension schemes
Who are equally ruled by dogmas

There's no escaping this nasty arch
That turns us all into conservatives
Steered by petty obligations
False memories and tedious nostalgia

In the end, rigor mortis is our goal
Creeping up progressively
Setting us up uncomfortably
In what allows no more wriggle room

Dusk, St. George's Garden, London

At the center of a garden
Seated on a bench
Holding a pen
The dream achieves itself

A revelation—light at last
Reality appears unveiled
As if a beacon scorning
The indifferent dictionary

I can explain everything
Bright and comprehensible
The answer—or is it the spell?
Elucidates the night

From my new seat of power
In possession of this torch like a destiny
The depths of form reveal themselves
The surfaces of acuity open up

But suddenly, there, amongst the trees
Right when the Word is within reach
For no reason at all, the gloss gets misled
Sense and senses are thrown off course

Everything goes awry or oddly skewed
The achievement vanishes into the night
Reverting me back to babel's shadows
The dictionary remaining sovereign

Against Nature

For a long time now, I've looked for a common noun
Yes, one word that would stand for me

The only thing I found was endless properties
None of them applying perfectly

Amongst these, I tried to convince myself
That three or four almost made sense

That I was indeed this and/or that
Alone sheltered in these nouns

The result was a disappointing patchwork
Never cohering into something vaguely sensible

I wish I had been told that I was not an entry
Within an ordered taxonomy

Instead, someone should have insisted that I was
Mere verbs set off amidst untold possibilities

With such a different cluster of words
—in more than one language, to make things easier

I would have enjoyed without guilt, remorse, or fear
Those adolescent afternoon beach naps

When sun, sea, air abide to their own intensities—just like me
Verbal forces in an indefinite game of powers

Sovereignty

I am dead
With cotton
Up my ring
So nothing
Dribbles out

I am dead
With wire
'Round the face
So my jaw
Sets in place

I am dead
A needle
Off a vein
Easing out
The morphine

I am dead
My bones
Fractured
To fill out
The coffin

I am dead
You are here
Reading me
Continent
Sovereign

Have You Come Here to Repent?

The truth is I did not come here to repent
There is no reason for me to do so
Because I was not here when it happened

Nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets
I did not erect barriers at crossroads
Did not hold anyone's machete

Let alone nail-studded cudgels or hammers
To bash babies' heads against latrines
Or wrench out fetuses from pregnant women

True, I did not hear the cries of victims
Nor the shouts of the armed forces
Urging others to defy all logics

True, I did not even hear of the outbreak of cholera
Of the rotting of flesh in overpopulated prisons
Or the stench of decaying corpses over the hills

From the far-flung place from which I hail
These news were muffled by others
More pressing or congenial: Mandela or OJ Simpson

I can't tell you how much all this pains me today
As I visit again, the Kigali Memorial Centre
And you challenge me with your impossible demand

Twelve years after all this happened
When everything around us shows signs of progress
Is it not time to stop this deflection of blame?

Come on. Let's rekindle over a *Melange*
I hear they have goat on the menu at Terrace 42
You know, there are a hundred ways to resume speaking

Even though I cannot erase your memories
I never wanted us lost in warring words
Will you come and eat with me?

Land

tears
rain slanted by a furious wind
 buries
 a greying horizon
dashing hopes

 how to
wallow longer
& emerge from
 a wasteland
this funeral

who
 —for you read these lines
are you
 to mock
this down spiral

 my throat
a flooded gutter
 tightens
 the bile discharging
when at you

I throw up

Mrs. A.

What are you for?
Stumped, I blurt out
For survival? Makes no sense
To not fail? But in whose eyes?
To be perfect? Not a chance
To avoid death? Pu-leeze

Gasp—

This is hard to spell out
Gratuitous Mrs. A.
Is endearing like nothing
Creeping up from behind
Holding me as if in a vice
Choking me into silence

Gasp—

I swallow, I need air
Mrs. A., please let go
I questioned you
Put you in perspective
And yet, you persist
Because you are me
And for nothing, we are both

Gasp—

You win, again, needlessly

Tug of War

I fade in the abyss of the Most Down
Close to the end, I am lost in His depths
Without tether, He abandons me there
Dark, cold, alone, in harm's way
His lack of faith, I make it my battle
Against His ghosts, steadily I shall fight
Of false lights that flicker in His pit
None will brighten my journey without end

I swell up towards the Most High
From high above, I am held under Her wings
Wrapped around, She shelters me with feathers
Light, warm, I am relieved, abandoned, free
Her trust in me, I make it my pride
Terrors by night, I shall not be afraid
Of the pestilent thoughts that stalk at night
None will touch me in Her light embrace

Again, After All

With the ebb of cause
 At close of day
Stretching shadows
 Engulf all in darkness

This is not fading light
 But the slow
Withdrawal of reason
 With banter, pints and kebab wraps

Merriment, longing, and sex
 Or with the same alacrity
Boredom, impulse buys
 And wanks

But when dawn
 Recedes the unruly excess
 Reason restores disorder
 And bad sense resumes its course

This is not first lights
 Conquering all
Just more blurred vision
 Revived slurred speech

Against Trees

No, not the ones outside in the cold winter night
But trees of knowledge with arborescent progression
Salubrious growths and dubious pinnacles

I won't fall for the promises at the end of your branches
For all these abyssal inheritances lost in your soil
Or the dizzying heights pointing at false futures

Instead, I'll let myself be tangled by the surrounding
Growths with spurring rhizomes leading nowhere
Lazily surrendering to their sly creeping

In this wonderous and lively tangle without start or end
I will blithely extend without rancour, anchor, or claim
My limbs no longer mine, theirs, or truly Other

Happily spread out, I will no longer progress
I will regress even less amidst this dilated time
With no more centre, before or after

I will be me, at last, and without much effort
A chaos more chaotic than absolute disorder
The only true fact, the one that quivers with joy

Alternative Terms to Define the Characteristics of the Proposition: Human

Grass [grɑ:s], n. (Old English *græs*, probably of Germanic origin). Small semi-aerial entity with no secure homeport, reduced motility, and variable sensitivity. Lives generally within a cluster, as part of some odd tangle. Sometimes moves (blown by the wind) from one tangle to another. There are all kinds of grasses. The most famous is the weed. No, not the drug, but what is always considered to be at the wrong place. Due to its tenacious nature and its invading qualities, it is often thought as common to all parts. Its short life and profusion makes it a being of little interest. Its only distinctiveness remains the herbaria it forms with pride or melancholy.

Mould [məʊld], n. (late Middle English: probably from past participle of *moul*, “grow mouldy”). A furry growth of minute entities occurring typically in moist warm conditions, especially on organic matter. Lives generally in clumpy lumps, attached to soil or stone. Never moves, but spreads easily when the ratio of wetness and matter are right. There are thousands of known species of molds with diverse life-styles. The most famous is the microbe, which can be found in profusion from the poles to the equator. Due to its pervasive qualities, its aim is to cause biodegradation wherever it is to be found. Its short life and abundance makes it a being of little interest. Its only relevant particularity remains its ability to produce beverages, antibiotics, and pharmaceuticals to contain its many excesses.