

**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-quickening 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.