



Vincent Dachy
Tribulations of a
Westerner in the
Western World

TRIBULATIONS OF A WESTERNER
IN THE WESTERN WORLD

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Introduction

Why Me? Why Not Me?

Mary Burger

What a “westerner” might be in the context of Vincent Dachy’s *Tribulations of a Westerner in the Western World* remains unsettled and unsettling from the work’s self-conscious opening to its playful end. From the beginning, Dachy’s irregular narrator strikes the diffident pose of the armchair traveler—one curious about the world, even engaged, but unable to fully surrender to the allure of another place, another

identity, another point of view. The westerner in Dachy’s book remains firmly conscious of himself as the origin of all he describes. Rather than eschewing the egocentric position of the “I” who defines the world in relation to itself, Dachy’s westerner embraces and even wallows in his selfhood, in the solipsistic condition of the solitary point of view, all the while proliferating multiple identities, migrating through various he–she–I–we subject positions, weaving in and out of relation with the audience and various projected selves.

This westerner, locating himself in that most classic surrogate traveler’s setting, a slideshow spectacle of someone else’s journey, offers only a pinhole perspective on the events of the evening. Who is the photographer who created these images? Where in the western world did she go on her travels? What was the purpose of her trip? Where is this slideshow taking place, and who else is attending? Of this we learn nothing, only the narrator’s moods and observations and flights of fantasy as the show proceeds, a process made all the more disorienting by the periodic appearance of photographic images having no overt relationship either to the professed slides or to the sliding narrator’s ruminant reflections.

Yet, in contrary manner, rather than elevating himself to the role of arbiter of taste or reifying his point of view as universal or even divine, this westerner in his multiplied instantiations seems intent from the beginning on parading the unflattering, undignified and even self-indicting elements of his personality. "I am grumpy," he declares as opening salvo. But, "I like to be courteous, especially when I am grumpy." This contrarian has some investment in projecting a positive image, but already we know we are privy to the self-revelations behind the polite façade.

This contradictory westerner very quickly unveils a variety of attitudes and fantasies which belie his projected courtesy, and traverses through the vulgar to the depraved. His fantasies start mildly enough: during the second slide, contemplating a landscape that seems to vanish into emptiness, he considers the freedom of the vast unknown, and concludes, "I could do anything. I could pee, pooh, spit in the open." He elaborates on a defecation fantasy that begins to reveal more about where this westerner finds himself. In this western world of decentered selfhood, solipsism is not the arrogance of egomania or even the obli-

ousness of self-absorption, but a defense against insignificance. The only recourse for the self-conscious, imaginative westerner against the "wild voluminous unshapen" is to assert his ego. Yet unlike the confident rationalist of, say, the Enlightenment, Dachy's westerner doesn't propose to master the wild, unshapen world, to bend it to his purposes, or to remake it in his image. Rather, he has been reduced to merely asserting his own irrationality in response to the greater irrationality of the world.

The narrator's enthusiastic fantasy for taboo bodily functions in reaction to overwhelming nature perhaps puts him closer to a Romantic sensibility, with its passionate, emotional response to the terror and beauty of the sublime. Yet, lest we think that this westerner might be prepared to relinquish the tribulations of his self-involved ego in the face of natural or supernatural powers greater than his own, we have only to continue reading to see such a hypothesis collapse under his further gymnastics.

You'll want to discover for yourself just how far afield this narrator is prepared to stray in his role as respondent to the ostensible slideshow

in order to illustrate his own multi-egoed hardships. Yet two instances perhaps bear mentioning. In one, at slide twenty-five, an image of five “rotund people” elicits an unrestrained rant against the obese and their presumed gluttony, self-indulgence, and lack of control. The westerner’s vitriol on this topic anticipates and rejects arguments made in defense of the obese, driving him into a further frenzy with each turn of thought, until his spluttering at last subsides in a deeply sarcastic apology. His performance in this passage plays like an enhanced version of his imagined outdoor defecation: as in that scene, the narrator here performs an act that is in violation of social norms. Yet here the act, rather than a response to the sublime excess of nature, forms a railery against the presumed excesses of humans themselves, of human appetite in literal and figurative form.

The narrator’s struggle, and ultimate failure, to permit himself this rant, and his need to infuse his own politically incorrect diatribe with judgments and criticisms and contempt for his own view, reveal how far his world is from allowing an untrammelled ego to proceed unchecked. With neither human mastery over nature nor nature’s eclipse of human

pettiness to wipe out his tribulations, this westerner is caught in the sticky matter of quotidian human complaint in its contradictory perspectives.

Another scene worth mulling over appears at slide thirty. Here the narrator locates himself in one of the recurrent motel rooms that punctuate the slideshow. Eliding himself with the traveler who took the photograph, he imagines himself in the room, lying on the bed and surrendering to anxious daydreaming—and envisions himself committing mass murder at a shopping mall. Perhaps the ultimate anti-social fantasy bequeathed to us from the heady days of late-capitalist modernism, mass murder may be the contemporary version of the sublime: a force powerful enough to inspire awe, to eclipse the small concerns of daily existence and even to evoke a quasi-religious sense of fear.

And yet, of course, the failure of this degenerated sublime is that it rests on an act of human violence. Once again, our westerner can find no power outside himself, or outside human acts, great enough to arrest his human tribulations. As with his rant against obesity, in this murder fantasy he is beset with guilt and self-disgust, repeatedly

labeling himself “coward,” and finally resorting to a riff on Mallarmé’s “Un coup de dés,” as if to explain his anti-social need to find, at least in fantasy, a power that might approach god, the sublime, or anything worthy of awe.

This westerner, a sort of debased Virgil guiding us through this alien yet recognizable landscape, is unable finally either to escape the carrying-on of his own ego or to elevate it to a more significant or dignified source of meaning. In the end, the force of this work turns upon the very transiency and portability of its ego involvement. The western world we travel through here is not a fixed place. The very motif of the slideshow, with its randomly changing images, puts the narrator into a nomadic role in an uncharted territory. The westerner regenerates himself with each new image, plying his irks and displeasures against the sheer unpredictable variety of the world. Since one can’t be prepared for what comes next, it seems, the best defense is to vent a wild variety of spleen. That too is a way of engaging with the western world.

Tribulations of a Westerner in the Western World

Vincent Dachy



I am grumpy. I don't like it to show though. I can smile nonchalantly.

I do not particularly like slide sessions. We'll arrive courteously late. I like to be courteous, especially when I am grumpy. After that, it is just a matter of avoiding the cantankerous Mr. Important and the sighing Ms. Nobody-Notices-Me.

The grain of a skin, the smell of a warmth, the inclination of a neck, the vanishing meeting of glimpses, the weight of hands on shoulders and arms, a step on a foot, the whiff of a breath, a shade on a breast, the wraith of a sigh...

Clasp the blokes and peck the birds.

Pleased to meet you.

Yes, gladly.

Red please.

– Hi. (shake)

– Hi. (shake)

– Hi. (kiss)

– Hello. (shake)

– Hi. (kiss)

– Good evening. (kiss)

There is a large hunk of self-interest in passion.

...

Women with a smile and an undulating gait. Oh Dog, with a pinch of rascal pout!

Topsy turvy, to call out deep sighs...

Yes. Yes. Oh yes.

Hum, huhum, yes.

Oh yes, yes; by all means.

Sure.

Oh yes, I would think so.

In any case, for sure.

Oh yes I am sure, no question about it.

I agree entirely.

I realise that!

Definitely.

Yes, honestly.

Really? I cannot believe it; marvellous.
Wonderful.

I think the moment has come to carefully select a seat for the evening.
In between the curtains I can see the street. A very ordinary street. A street which peacefully looks like somewhere.
Let's travel.
The rustling prodrome of nostalgia.

People are taking place.
A cordless microphone, a projector with a remote control to divert one's invaginated soul towards an outward relish, a foreign convolution, the delights of the outsides of my mind.
We are concerned by ourselves. Otherwise, who would be? I really like people who go out of their way.
Nimbused by a quivering glow, the light goes off.



1

Blue, black, yellow, and white.

The sky—blue.

A road—black.

A petrol station—mainly yellow.

A wooden church—white, old white; the type of white with most of its life behind. Not grey though. Just old white.

The sky is immense, the road ends so far away that you do not even try to wonder. It's a half profile picture, to enhance the sense of unknown. It is appealing. It is sunny enough.

On the right of the picture, the station with the car. Through it you can see the little church where the slope of the hill starts.

The photographer doesn't talk about the church; if you give me a minute I'll drop in there quickly.

White inside out/outside in. Slightly whiter inside; it has retained its blue soul—you know, this other colour that always haunts the whites. It is bare, walls, ceiling, floor. It is clean. Benches well-aligned. A chapel, yes, it is probably a chapel rather than a church. Or a small church perhaps.

One of those places to practise humility, application, supplication, and verticality.

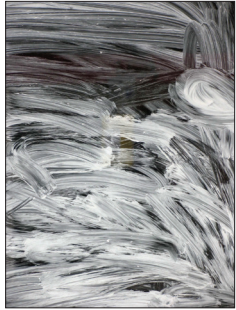
Do you disapprove of the notion of sin? I don't. A sin is a real thing, it exists and has nothing to do with God or any Santa-Disney-Claus. Well, a sin is to take a credo for a credit.

Always there floats a smell of rot, of sogginess, of sick breath. A smell you find in large spaces, often vacant. It is empty. As it should be.

By the door, as you leave, there are two galvanized buckets full of cream sand.
There is not a single burning soul in sight.

I suppose the car tank had time to be filled by now.





2

Click.

Now we have a tree in sight. In the same powerful sunny light, a tree; just one. A fairly steady big tree, sparse foliage; sturdy exclamation point in the scorched, singed grassy plain.

The other side of the road, I suppose, in front of the petrol station.

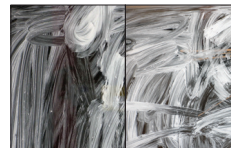
A fuzzy exclamation point in fact, more like... well, I don't know... like a bare old tree whose dark shape cuts itself out of the radiant blue background. I think I can see a few sparrows, or little birds of that ilk, immobile, keeping their thoughts very much to themselves.

If it were a piece of sense, I'd opt for a monument to Tenacity in front of Peril. I like isolated trees, especially those that look dead at the end of summer and cannot wait for the end of winter to push their buds out. Isolated trees with a temperament.

Beyond the tree? Nothing but the same withered land until the eye meets the end of the world. The last tree before the end of the world. The kind of place to breathe unrestrictedly. An amplitude to venture forth. At venture. Yes. Just between you and the Amplitude.

An isolated tree, last post before the wild voluminous unshapen. In no time I'll howl and wail, yelp and roar at the unresponsive immensity, telling of its disdain. After, I intend to whistle, hum, chirp, and sing. And maybe a bit of warbling. Yes! I'll be my own master. I'll decide where I go. Directions are on me! I decide; I decide and nobody else but I. I hope I'll remember a few marching tunes; I used to know some, at least parts of some. That will do. I could even make the lyrics up as I go. Nobody to hear anyway. Ahahaahah... I could do anything. I could pee, pooh, spit in the open. You know what? I will. I always wanted to do that; take my clothes off and have a damn good crap in the middle of nowhere. I am not even sure that I would cover it afterwards. No, maybe I would not. Do not get me wrong, I would not hide behind the car door or the tree or anything.

I would leave the keys in the car, walk without a look back, and defecate. Nothing to cover my back. Surrounded by Nature, I would give it up. I know this is a bit childish, not very mature manure, manners, I mean. However, a bothersome detail just struck me. Paying closer attention to the tree, I noticed this sign. A not very big sign, the usual sort of sign. A square piece of plank nailed to the trunk. It says: For Sale. How dispiriting.





3

We are told it takes time to cross the land, the arid plain. No photographs were taken because the landscape would be monotonous in pictures if quite beautiful in reality. Still the camera was used, just taken out of the car while driving and snapped at random. Would it make interesting views for those who were not there? “You’ve got to be there”... to know the difference between a body immobile for hours in a car and the bland memory of the plain.

I grumbled an approval. Not a snarl, a bit more than a mutter.

Let’s get on with it. Let’s cross the open country: I close my eyes, I breathe deeply, I exhale very slowly, very evenly—I am plying a way along the middle of nowhere, I am crossing, I am crossing. Blue sky, dry grassland, and the black stripe that I trust without a doubt, without a choice, without even thinking. I am crossing.

... , ...

The other side of the middle of Nowhere is not far now.

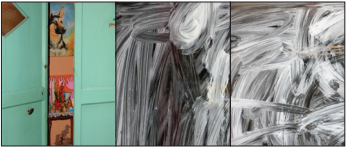
I open my eyes as I hear the click of the projector.

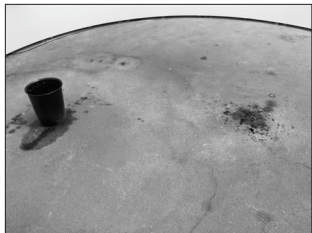
I cannot believe it. I smile.

We have arrived in a town—buildings, electric lines, pavements, shop signs, traffic lights, well, the lot, but this is not what I found funny. The slide shows a crossing before which the car has stopped. A crossing. Witty witty photographer. Not a vulgar crossing, an ordinary one I mean, no, a crossing crossed by a pack of dogs. Twelve of them, of all sorts, colours, and sizes, trotting airily at the end of their leads forming a loose splayed

web at the centre of which a boy is extending his right arm. A dog-walking boy. What age? Twelve, thirteen, fourteen if he does not hurry. He wears an amusing tee-shirt covered with red, blue, and white lozenges. So this is no ordinary crossing. Is there an ordinary crossing? The boy could ride a horse or a bicycle. A loopy looby could make whoopee hopping on the white stripes. What's an ordinary crossing? Magpies, penguins, and an assortment of the black and white family playing "now you see me, now you don't" as they slowly go across. A group of Far Eastern women eating chocolate, dragging rolling suitcases? A brace of held briefcases going to work?

This is the effect of life. It changes the landscape as it passes. The life's crossing. Passing or crossing?





4

Life does not stay still, life bobs and diddles. Perhaps we sleep to tolerate rest and motionlessness.

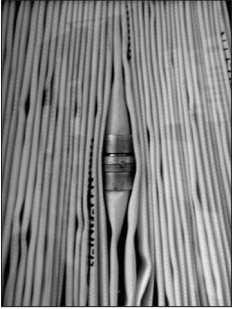
Click.

On the screen, a human being has been doing nothing.

A very tanned man sitting at the bottom of a flight of stairs, bare chested and fairly chubby, hands on his lap, is occupied at nothing. No pain, no strain, no despair, no exhaustion, just caught between vocations.

Do I see the vanishing shadow of a smile flitting on his lips?

Topless in overalls, a fat factotum sat on his step.



5

Once upon a time, sometime in the Beginnings, Whatever's were falling out. In a moment of grandiose dead end, they dashed, clashed, and crashed. It was a time of such tussle we've never known, but a time of great importance, despite our absence, as things resulted from The Big Fracas. All things. We only emerged from a big fuss. Well, well.

Before this fuss? Ask the poet, the kind that withstands the shakes before the word takes consistency on your tongue, even before the sound finds the slide of your ear to slip down the back of your throat.

After the fuss? Light could not rest anywhere without the soul of a shadow.

It looks like an "S" and a "U." It's illegible after, lost in darkness.

I like the picture. It is a beautiful presentation of space emerging from the immobile tension between lights and shades.

Here you are, on the screen, in an empty car park, but for three cars, a bright sun halfway up, the sharp shadow of a skyscraper blinding the bulk of the photograph. But at the fringe there is a strip of dusk passing on the left side of a huge billboard at the back of the car park. I can only read the first two big letters. An "S" and a "U," I am pretty sure. "SU...."

I have a friend called Sue; she proved to have a talent to get herself and many others into trouble anywhere any time. She is so vindictive. Two talents actually, she also always gets away with it. When she annoys me I call her "sue-Sue." It is incredible that nobody has ever pressed charges

against her. She is so abusive. I like her though. Perhaps I could. I've never sued a soul in my life. Well, you do not need to be intelligent, the lawyer is there for you. Perhaps I could. You do not need to be vicious, lawyers are there for you. This is a right after all. To sue is a right. And I want to exercise my rights. I am fed up with being walked all over. Standing up for myself, yes sir, it's about time. I will exert my right. It is MY right, I deserve it. I only expect my due. I want compensation. Enough of this being squeezed and conned.

You know what? Women are right, it is not all our fault. It's not my fault, not my fault if I'm not richer and slimmer. It is not my fault at all. It's about time that I recognise this. IT IS ABOUT TIME THAT I GET RECOGNISED. The time of the silent victim is over folks! Here comes the time of the utter victim. I have cried enough, now it's my turn, my revenge. Why should I bear all this slush? To whose advantage? What? What do you say? Nothing? Very well! Shut up. Ah! You don't even get a "Thanks." Millions of people should sue. All slaves, past and present—to start with. All these people sold by their peers and used like machines by liberal enterprise mongers, maintained not even like machines. Sue, sue!

Red Skins that the Pinkies tried to wipe out and pack in wastelands only after they lost the battle against their last qualm. Sue, sue!

You don't even want to know when and where the last attraction park disappeared, where you could observe aboriginals from some remote place displayed in comfortable cages. Don't ask, don't ask. Sue, sue!

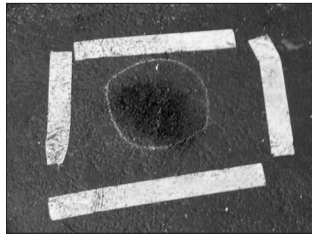
Get your money back!

The Vietnamese children who grew up underground, the Cuban children who, I heard, are still weaving their armed toothpicks, the Cambodian children, new seeds of a reformed people with less than four limbs, the children of Sabra and Bethlehem, the millions of "Siberians" whose frozen breath kept their words iced and their brains crumbed. Sue, sue!

Missing Chileans, Bosniaks, tribes of Africa, tribes of the Amazon, tribes of Romanies, tribes, villages, compounds, hamlets. Sue, sue!
And you, the Jews, friends, relatives of those in the gas chambers. Jews and gentile Jews.
You of the silence of the gas chambers.
You about whom we must orate a memory beyond opinion.
All of you about whom we must invent something between mission and omission.

Everything is possible, they said; everything.
Find hemp and make it an empire, they said.
So?

I am disappointed. Very disappointed. So few promises have been kept. I've been cheated. As simple as that.
Before, I thought that suing for a "yes" or for a "no" was stupid. I thought lawyers were vultures, rich cynical bastards abusing people's frustrations, ignorance, and self-esteem. Now I believe they are the Knights of our times. They may benefit extravagantly from the Order, they may very well nourish It to flourish; they may even instigate the whole business. Who knows... I do not care. Now, I no longer care. I want an agent in life like everybody else. Life is hard, simply too hard. I'll show you who I am. And if someone doesn't like it, tough shit! See my agent, see my lawyer! I will sue you. See my agent.
So, Sue, I will sue you soon!



6

There was this friend who was always watching her washing machine. Staring through the small window, she let herself be hypnotized by the tumbler making clothes whirl inside. It was an eventful sight, especially when colours were washed: they twirled round but you never knew what would come next. She loved it, she found it so relaxing. From time to time I'd spend a few minutes watching with her, but it quickly made me restless. She liked to disappear for a little while, spun into the machine.

She might have liked this hotel room. In a roundabout way it also looks very soothing, very bland. Perhaps too much for her. Nothing happens as such. Everything is immobile and so obviously has no intention of making any difference. It is familiar. Not that you ever lived in a home like this, but it is familiar. You have seen it before—*déjà vu*. So familiar you have seen it even before you enter. It is even, very even from any point. And you get everything you need: hot water, bed lights, additional blankets, portmanteau, television (I cannot see the set but the square of reflected light on the bedcover leaves me no doubt), a chair and a table, a small fridge, plastic glasses, toilet paper, clean sheets, long enough curtains. You even get chubby pillows—marshmallows for woolly dreams.

Everything you need.

It is only sad if you are sad. It suits your mood like a glove. I forgot the crucifix, the beige bath mat, the worn-out tiles around the tub. And the beige sludgy joints between the tiles to match the mat. On the walls, a few framed colour pictures, for waiting rooms.

“Pictures for waiting rooms” as in “Rondo for string quartet.”

I cannot tell you where the air conditioner is, but there must be one. You get conditioned air everywhere now.

Let's go in with a pen and write something short very small on the wall.
This perhaps:

Ajar—secure—inviting—
It never did betray
The Soul that asked its shelter
In timid honesty

E.D.

A very good night's sleep.

It never did betray
The Soul that asked its shelter
In timid honesty

No recount of any dream.

The Soul that asked its shelter
In timid honesty

Leaving the next morning.

In timid honesty.



7

Some people and some buildings look like they know something about History. Others show nothing but a vapid glassiness. Not a reserved simplicity but a blandness to attract no attention, to be left in peace lest Destiny harbour another whim. Probably some idea that life is better lived unheard with a daily apprehensive flavour of survival.

Nothing like this in the picture. A glimpse at this man suffices to know that you'd better sit and listen to his stories. For more than sixty years and with an appetite for life that never strayed for more than a few days at one time, you just know it is epic time. If you did not read this in his smile reaching out like a bullet, or in his wrinkles—lines of memory from ear to ear—you would find out by following his finger. His right hand's forefinger directed upwards keeps in equilibrium, by virtue of the corniest effect of perspective, an unused very big shed. Elegant combination of planks and rusty pieces of iron. A water mill as the wheel divulges. A grain mill as our man knows.

Why a man of his age in a blue checked shirt and a pair of grey cotton trousers chose to wear those pink flip-flops remains a mystery (but didn't the Jester whisper that not all questions will be answered?).

The history of the grain mill moved everyone.

The land, the soil to foster;

the sun, the rain, the winds, the storms to weather;

the oat, the corn, the wheat to scatter;

the feet, the back, the hands to gather.

The spittle, the sweat, the tears to muster.

And the water.

The cloth bags on the shoulders.

The tickling sound of the grain falling down the grinder.

The chaff. The dust in the air.

The brook, the flow, the drought to power.

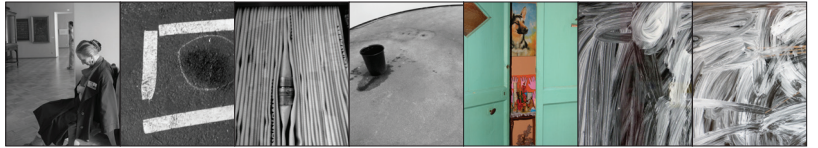
The heat, the sweat, the spittle to flounder.

And the flour.

A man with a heart and a home. Not a grain to go against.

The breeze disturbs a lock on his mop.

A thrasher alights on the wheel and flaps a few times, then flickers and flutters again. But the old mill has been around and, with an imperceptible softness, stays in steady equilibrium on the finger.





8

Well, I think I'll skip this one and slip away for a toilet break.

Excuse me; sorry; no, it's ok, don't move.

In some apartments, like this one, you just know which door is the right one. A question of layout, I suppose.

It was not a crap photograph actually. A bit plain perhaps? Maybe the very point of this picture lies in its plainness? Just a crack; it's just a crack, nothing else. A crack in the road. A nice break in the shape of lightning.

When you think of it this becomes quite interesting: "the shape of lightning." How do we recognize that shape? Only because it has no shape really; irregular, somehow linear. A kind of zigzag with no strong inclination for curves, rather a taste for angles and a jerky attitude. I know some dancers like that. A bit like me. Always a bit of doubt about what to do in between beats.

A zigzag crack in a big black track.

A zigzag crack in a bleak blague track.

Do you not sense the rising arousal of a ribald lilt?

Do you not feel the araisal of temperature?

With all modesty and renewed humbleness shall I now appraise anew my hasty valuation? It cannot possibly be a stark chink and nothing else. Why would have the photographer snapped it? Unless of course he blew a tyre and had an insurance claim in mind. But why show it to us then?

How not to wish for more? It must. Does this not expose to the willing eye the remarkable mark left as an imprint by the streaking flash of lightning that undoubtedly struck someone, leaving him enlightened? A line so deeply impressed in someone's flesh that it precluded any possible recovery. Saint Paul on the road to Damascus—of course! Omar ibn al-Khattab dented by his own sword, the Çâkyas ravished by their own honour. All crackers of the no-return-point.

Such a simple fissure in our time where only flats, cars, and money remain convertible. And gulls, mugs, suckers, and gudgeons! Mugs and suckers. Gulls and gudgeons. Nice matches for firecrackers!

I think I like this photograph very much after all.

A black, grey, white picture in a colour film; I like it. Tricksy. The dark grey of the road, the black depth of the cleft, and some very bright bits reflecting light immersed in the asphalt.

The asphalt.

That's it! I got it, I've got it now.

The asphalt. The "asphalt." Can't you hear it?

The "as fault."

This photograph stands before us as an invitation to redeem, as a chance to reminisce, as the occasion to acknowledge the crack in the matter.

The trick crack. This is obvious now, clear as a bell.

I need a drink. Just a fill-up. I cannot face the allegory of guilt with an empty glass. I suppose I could, but it would make me anxious. I really dislike the rift of a wave of anxiety riffing through my throat.

Can anyone fill my glass? Common, come on I mean, let's sing something. When I am tipsy I do not mind tripping. I even do it well without a crevice.

“Ring-a-ring o’roses
A pocket full of posies,
A-ti shoo! A-ti shoo!
We all fall down.”

Come on switch to another one. What can you still be saying about this one?



9

Are minds single?

Singleness of mind...?

After the road crack comes the cement factory: rectangular, industrious like last century's vanity. Not that roads contain any cement; not one ounce actually. But from cranky cranny to gummy seam, the wanderer follows his pursuit. With this sedulous portrait of Manufacture we enter the realm of greys aggravated by the yellow luminescence of the colour film which makes more palpable how the spectrum has been saturated by particles in the air. Everywhere.

Even the sun's brightness has been eaten away—left as some brain-dead spotlight doing its time in a storied car park staircase.

Everywhere. Just looking at the picture prompts you to blow your nose and scrub your eyes.

Everywhere. The dust. Everywhere.

Already you learn how to speak with your lips barely open. If you do not learn quickly, your saliva glands dry up, you lose the unctuousness of your mucosa forever. When you drink, the powder is washed off but your throat still feels like gauzy sandpaper. As your voice becomes thread-like, you want to speak more and out. As you are grinding, you can feel the coarseness on your enamel. You are dyed by the dust. All equal before the dust. No skin colour anymore. Nobody needs to be famous here. We are all dead grey. Everybody. And your hair stands on end, almost brittle. Everybody. The folds and lines on our flesh are laid open threadbare. Everybody. Even the water is dry. Even the clouds look papered, pestered by the wind like old drags driven by a gale in an impasse.

Here, better than anywhere else perhaps, we know that what you breathe is what you die from. But you will not find a single miserable soul here. No! Fluffy happy souls only. We know the job is arduous, we know the cement slips into the goggles, masks, underpants, between toes. We all have been to the sandy beach. We all have been kids. Everybody has been a child. Like you lot, we are made of clay; mixed with charred limestone, there is no reason to quibble.

It is a good job, it is useful, it's good money. And do not be mistaken—we only look like ghosts. Unlike them we are never short of dreams. You won't ponder for long on what one can desire in a place like this.

A dulcet mellow drama to make my eyes water. We have all the specialized press we want.

A juicy smarmy wo-man to melt inside down. We are reputed for our very steady, unalloyed orgasms around here—oooh yeah. From under the crust one could hear the gush of our fluids.

After a fondling bath I'll be dandled by a humid breeze in my hammock. Our oily swimming pools are the best in the world, as is our range of oils. The way their scents and softnesses, agape at different temperatures, is so voluptuous that some people are drawn into their insatiable rapture. We know how to perspire with joy. Our senses are sharpened beyond what you will ever know.

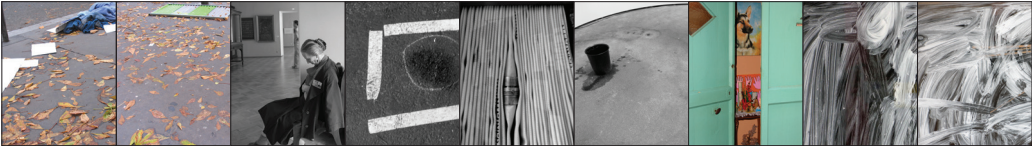
How can you stay in such a harsh place, people wonder. Nobody asked you to hang around, I'll tell them.

You either lick the dust or you bite it.

Lick it or bite it.

I lick it.

I bite it.





10

Black: 50.

White: 80.

Well, well... Is it a riddle? Is it a score? A chess contest? Damn, what is this sign about? Damn, damn, a quiz on chocolate perhaps? Damn, damn, damn, it cannot possibly be the price of skin? Is white selling well now? No, no, probably just the bets on a cockfight. Shall we play colours?

Please tell us; deliver us from the increasing uneasiness creeping between our chairs: bumps squirming, throats hemming, and a few heads looking under their nails for distraction. Anxiety rises. Some calves on high heels brace themselves backwards, fists shuffle on chests, deep breaths fight butterfly invasions, necks paralyzed by the grip of an inflexible hand get an itch, tense tights find nervous fingers kneading brawn and then inconsiderately. Space between bodies thickens as the air is whisked by an agitation of sound and balanced souls being swayed in the twisted whirl of ambiguous uncertainty that a picture, without any foreseeable clues, has precipitated, an apprehension that troubles the social consensus on which this bunch of relative strangers were very happy to rely until now.

The soufflé drops flat as we are told in confidence that we were in a snack-bar where, amazingly, they did not serve “espressos” or “cappuccinos.” How remote a place this must be. At the heart of the Western World?

Wave of relief in the public...

But beyond an apparent appeasement of the cooling audience, one palpates the ashamed rampant disappointment. We were getting excited. We wanted more than a coffee or two. Sitting still for a quarter of an hour now, we hoped for a tingle and we were almost there. We got all thrilled. And nothing to bite on. We were ready for something really bad, something to frown on. Something unacceptable. Something racist, something sexist, something to twist on. Not that damn wan hot beverage business—with or without milk. No! Something pert and rakish. Damned.

I don't know... What about tobacco Browns, sallow Pinks, and hay Yellows?

I'd like Brown's bottom, Pink's chest, and Yellow's complexion please. Just stacked like that. Do I still prefer it doggie style? Dog, yeah, I should think so. Not a glimpse. Lights off?

And what about buggery? Do I feel it degrading? Do I feel it hurts? Is it better if it hurts? Do I really like it? Hot and bothered?

The woman straddling—singing a breathless squalling and uncertain melody, and the man bawling his hoots.

It roars, it begs, it agonizes. Oooh yes, use me! – Malarkey.

Make me your bag, I beg! – Baloney.

Do you want me to spit in your mouth? – Hogwash.

Shall I blow your crumpet like a trumpet? – Jackass.

And old people? And challenged people? How juicy do they like it?

Lewd, salacious, and arsy-versy.

Defiled or nothing; anything but a bore.

Minion Mickey crawls in his drilled buttocks-baring miniver shorts, the ring-collar around his stick trotting after a minnie skirt. He sneezes. He throttles.

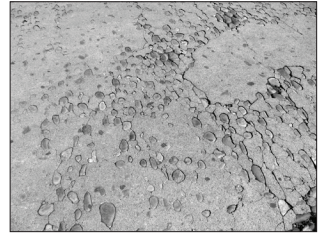
Meanwhile, her painstakingly mowed snatch lurking in a lace gin, Barbie spreads her hips. And gargles some smut.

Don't I love comic strips?

Don't I like a laugh? A bit of fun! Don't I like good fun?

What about a peaky, busty, unemployed, cross-dressed, nationalist, fatigued tourist staring at the horizon where the big orange slips away? He is delighted at his sunglasses. Aren't we all?

Vulgar. Are we not all? The humorous race.



11

The place where I grew up was very dry. Water was a big thing there. The thing no one messed up; the thing we most talked about. And laughed about—laughing moistens your mouth quickly. Not sure this is entirely true but it was a cheerful belief. I have always wanted to live in a water tower. Close to the water, suspended high up between ground and sky. Felicity could not have been better than this: the peaceable flic, floc of the water against the smooth insulated concrete of the pool, the sparse light sinking slowly, bobbing around at first on the surface's blues whose sparkles go matte to finally dissolve in the deep mass of water. Often I only wanted to watch the riddles for hours or to read, my back against the cool wall. And I liked the echo in the hall, the ladder plunging into the water... I liked everything there.

I have always wanted to live in a water tower.

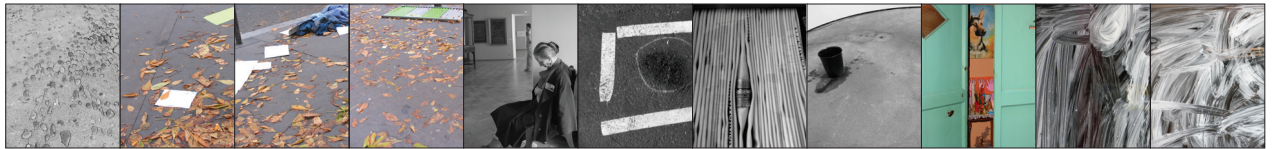
One just like the one on the screen would have been great.

I have also always wanted to live in a lighthouse.

Perhaps a lighthouse installed in a water tower. That would be marvellous. At home quite a (large) number of people were involved in leakage quizzes, pipe pressure guessing, water reserve statistics, and what not. They even organised contests and exhibitions of water system maquettes. Water was a big thing really.

Water did not mean a thing in the place I moved to later on. They even cleaned their cars with clear drinking water and smeared them with cold cream afterwards lest they not be moist enough. Years on I still get a heart pinch when I see that. It's with me for life, I am sure. They even scrub, rinse, and swill floors and everything with tap water. I am not telling you about their toilets, I leave that for you to guess.

They simply demean water. In their opinion, I think, water is poor. They don't like poverty. Even bottled water is flavoured and bottles are tinted. For decades I imagined drinking fresh running water was a sign of civilisation. In fact, it seems that sipping at the tap reveals a lack of manners. Do you need ice blocks, slices of lemon or lime, and sparkles for water not to be sullage? I bet they get well water to fix their ice blocks. I used to love ice blocks, especially mixed with fruit juice. I could suck them for a lifetime. Not far from my house there were those very high poplars at the feet of which a modest brook tried to get all the shade it could, and under and between the rocks would slow down a little before evanescent underground to avoid evaporation. Sometimes the flow was strong enough to chirp its way through and the wind larkish enough to sough with the poplars. I had my feet bare in the water and a cube of ice chafing my tongue. I loved it. I used to love it all. That was to die for. I still love it. Especially poplars; especially a crispy tickling thin trickle of water; especially grapefruit.





12

Sometimes, surreptitiously, you realize you are thinking about Life. It happens. It may not be funny but it happens. A moment of inattention perhaps. It can happen anywhere; you get serious in very inadequate places. Look at this one, this motel room. Not the same as before but, distracted by the gist of Life, one may simply miss the difference. Double bed, bathroom, tv, crucifix, beiges, and so on. You know the panoply, don't you? This time the bed cover is the colour of some red *in illo tempore*. Wouaawh! Can you believe it, I still remember some Latin. Well, this brain has not completely turned into a sponge, then; not yet. How comforting! *In illo tempore, in illo tempore*, it sounds odd—sounds good though. In bygone past—this is what it means, more or less.

Let's hope my piece of brain will not play tricks on me; already has perhaps. Maybe it's responsible for this ridiculous snap about Life. Truly I haven't thought about it for ages. Why just now? At the same time, I remember a few Latin words. Isn't that scary? Especially when you stand in a bedroom on a fluffy mat decorated with green and orange geometric forms facing a wall papered with repetitive motifs: a pistol, a sabre, a bow. I think this business about Life started the day I wondered about the limits of the Universe. That was a tough question and I didn't know any Latin then.

A lot tougher a question than that about babies. I knew my parents were lying to me; I could see it miles away. They came up with some stories just good for tots. Some fanny/willy meeting or whatever. They tried to drum it into my head with smiles that even a baby could identify as a flag of fib. But that wasn't a big deal, I would work it out for myself later—one does not have to rely on one's parents for everything after all.

For the Universe it was a different story. No fib flag, no smile. You could just hear something dropping at the backs of their throats with the metallic sound of anxiety. My father, with a voice made deeper to conceal the tremble, his hand on my shoulder and his eyes advertising “staunch talk,” replied “nobody knows, kid!”

This was a damn good question then!

And the only reasonable thing to do then remains the only reasonable thing to do now. I’ll just do what my father did. Do not hesitate. When you stand at the brink, a moment of hesitation can prove fatal.

Switch the tv on!

Surely this is simple enough to prevent anybody from slipping away. Even the very little. I understand people often leave it on all day long. It may very well be a piece of wisdom. I have even heard of individuals keeping it on at night, looking after their sleep.

One day, in a bar, there was this guy. Pleasant guy, nicely dressed, clean, a bit tipsy perhaps but no red eyes and no dilated pupils, no body odour either. He started to talk to me without warning, without introduction—without even offering a drink. And straight away he started something like this:

“I like to suffer. It is true, I do.

I do not like to be hurt, I like to suffer.

I do not wish to die, I only want to suffer.

It is not necessary to prepare anything or to hope for some disaster; I do not want to be anxious or sad, nothing like that, I just want to suffer. And I certainly don’t want anybody to make me suffer. Life takes care of it in all innocence. That’s enough, that is plenty.”

I thought the guy was making a sick pass at me.

But he left after his declaration—not another word and he was gone. I was left looking at my glass, feeling a bit numb between my ears.

Don't you think we are better off at home watching tv rather than being on our own thinking?

They explain everything on tv. Everybody knows that.



13

Ooooh wouaahh. Waaoooh! This is simply to die for. Simply magnificent, fantastic.

“Don’t get too excited,” they say. Well, it is very difficult I tell you. It is very difficult in the presence of something so overwhelmingly beautiful. To die for literally.

I do not know why sunsets produce such an invariably stunning effect. I do not know but they do. Proof by happening!

You only look at them and you are done. You want to go there. You want to be there. It’s immense and ephemeral, powerful and peaceful, grandiose and modest, kitschy and guileless, Hardy and Laurel, mish and mash, explosive, restful. And reversely. Like a pancake with three sides, a bottle that fills up when you pour, uncontrollable laughter. Bigger than sadness, anger, and anxiety all together, bigger than vanity. Like nothing else! And, amazingly, despite the fact that every single sunset is like no other, they all transport me through the same thrill.

And I should not get excited?

How? How could I not? Wherever it’s happening, I want to attend.

Would it not be tremendous to win such a sunset? As a prize, for instance, for being elected the best talk show’s personal testimony of the month or as the winner’s reward of “Morals Contest”?

I could probably not concoct striking enough testimony—stupidly, my private life’s kinkiness trespasses in the ordinary—nor would I pretend to have any noticeable Morals knowledge. Let’s be realistic. Damn! What can I do?

What can I do to get my sunset? Cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine? A cocktail of the three? Flushing birds and cats? Dancing? I’m not very good at that. Moving to the beach?

Can I not do something different, something for a change? Actually, I believe I'd like one of those loopy videos. On a large screen, surely, it must demand very little effort to soar into effulgence. Nothing but sunset for hours on end; nothing to get tired about, from the beginning you see all there is to see. Just the view of a sunset on a continuous tape. And perhaps, once or twice, a few birds flying in the distance. No action, a blink from time to time, nothing but a full-eyed sigh.

Other days I may prefer the company of the Great Ice Barrier or some fish to mistake the box with an aquarium. A cascade at lunch time perhaps. A long close-up on a cigarette's smoke round midnight. The flow of a river or clouds from above at any time. What about the wind playing with a sweeping-willow when I feel a bit shambolic?

I have heard that regular poetry maintains creativity. To keep your well filled, it is advisable to reach certain emotional peaks on a regular basis. It sharpens efficiency which obviously increases returns. This has been scientifically proven, I believe.

This is good news for sunsets.





14

One does not find a mismatch of colours in natural phenomena. Why should that be? Such good questions annoy me—especially because I have asked myself this one several times. That Nature is organised as a system that always reaches its equilibrium despite all shakes, jerks, and quakes, does not strain my thoughts. But why it should be aesthetically satisfying for human beings is less obvious. What about our naturally engrained sense of harmony, God-the-Universal-Painter, and the poetry of chemicals?

We have a new slide on the screen.

How shall I describe it?

It looks simple enough.

The front, the ground floor of a building takes the entire space of the picture shot front-view. The building is occupied by a bank—there is a big sign to let you know. A double swaying door on the left. A large barred window in three parts divides the length of the right side at waist height. That should give an idea. As you have guessed, I am not an architect. Architects are incredible. They draw buildings, plans, and so on but they are most incredible for the talent with which they can talk about any four walls imaginable. Even pavement suffices. They could talk about pavement for a solid hour, so grippingly you would put slippers on before you ever walked outside again.

Another question is put to us: “How much money is there in the World?”

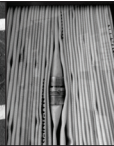
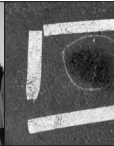
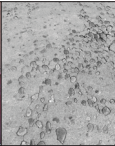
And: “Why is it a secret?”

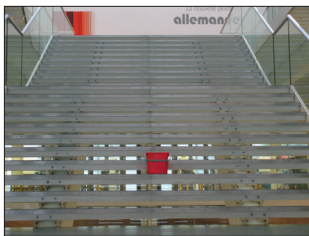
And: “Why is it a shame?”

I was left thinking of a new enterprise which could be most titillating and profitable: a new sort of pornography. The exhibition of financial privates. In my first clumsy attempt I fell into complacency and called it poornography. After this unfortunate goof, I put my solecisms together and opted for “coinography.”

Shall I not omit a detail that undeservedly escaped my description of the picture: two legs of two different passers-by. One on the left, the leg forward, preceding a passer-by we still might see. The other, on the right, the left-behind-leg of a passer-by we could have seen a moment earlier. Don't you find photography cruel when it leaves the world at the mercy of $\frac{1}{125}$ of a second? Still, these left-coming and right-going legs, spread across in an impossible step, between optical distortion and magic trick, roused a brief gape of amusement.

Another detail of importance that makes me wonder at how much of the obvious I don't notice. Apart from the windows, the whole front of the bank is painted, lip-serviceably, carnation. I mean: pink. Lipstickly so.





15

I could not dream of a nicer fence. Such a bright and lovely green. Some glossy laurel if I knew anything about plants. And the lawns on both sides of the hedge look great with all the flower beds and bushes. The washing dries outdoors, swinging nonchalantly like agile animals enjoying themselves on the lines.

Over the low hedge two well middle-aged couples are chatting in the most relaxed and friendly manner. They seem interested in each other, sport congruous smiles with delightful simplicity. No sense of forced effort emanates from their ensemble, only a non-effusive tenderness not even aware of itself. Uncontrolled. Genuine interest in others, a bit of teasing, a bit of memories, some worries to share, an unsophisticated humility, some common taste, and a cogent sentiment of belonging.

This is not even a village but a suburb! A pleasure to watch. A real sense of citizenship.

On both sides there is enough good taste to use holed plastic bags for drying underwear out. Stupidly, I thought people were using them because they were ashamed of displaying their intimacy. Either you would look kinky and you are good for the doldrums or your sex life looks normal and plain and you are already in the doldrums. People would know. Perhaps I am being unfair and should envisage that the purpose of such a peculiar conduct was, on the contrary, aimed at not hurting anybody's feelings. To avoid anybody's embarrassment; anybody who at the sight of underwear would immediately think less of themselves. That wouldn't be nice and it's so easy to avoid. Aren't there enough reasons to prevent people from feeling inadequate? Especially in one's own community?

Call me weird but I could not help thinking of other possibilities. It must be me. For instance I could not exclude the option that those bags were some sort of bait. Maybe not for fetishists but more likely for underage kids whose inappropriate curiosity would show signs of sexual imbalance

that could be picked up soon enough and rerouted to sounder grounds. It proved to not always be so easy for everyone to achieve a regular healthy erotic life without unnecessary hiccups or complacent lechery. Therefore the game of mature citizens promoting a communal responsibility in sexual matters, surely, can only be encouraged.

Of course, this technique could give paedophiles a convenient resource to spot the little depraved ones before the happy libido squad...

I am probably going too far. After all, why could it not be just a very admissible harmless trick for people over fifty-five to enhance their zeal? Is it not true that fervour ebbs in the autumn of life? Maybe so, but I do not believe that such nice people would resort to such pathetic props. If some hormone, with age, appears to restrain its delivery of spasmodic emergencies, well, it tunes in with the diminution of physical capacities anyway. Is it not for the best? What you lose in itch you gain in tenderness. Well done Nature! What would you do with a raunchy grandmother anyway? Enough! A glimpse at the billow of solidarity soaring over this fence proves it all wrong, misplaced, and screwed up. I don't know what these bags are for but I know those wonderful people are respectacle of each other. Respectacle, this is the key word.





16

Arses and tits that's all there is.

The curvy "W"s of bottoms and bosoms.

Lying, offered to the sun like jelly dreaming of a cool spoon. One layer of bouncy bumps topsy followed by a layer of round tops turvy. And the same giggly, cheerful mood everywhere around the pool. Swim-suited bodies as fluid as cats (I mean big cats). Some truly magazined. As for the others, the less they worry about being disregarded, the more they loom.

Ogle goggle /

you try to splash / you only plop little bubbles /

squirt no more / sloppy flop /

ogle goggle /

a chink, a kink / it's everybody's quirk says the lore /

here we plunge / bogus focus / shallow waters /

slosh, slosh / so swamped are we / swallow water /

boggled we are /

ogle boggled.

(Flock, flack, fleck, flick.)

They all seem to know so well how to enjoy themselves.

Trotting on the brink, plunging in a splash, tittering for nothing, twittering at everything. Junket all day long—eyes wide open, smiles wild open, a swim, a long drink, a lay down. Wallowing in warm air and fun, the revelry lasts all day.

With so many sunny hours and so many swimming pools, how do you explain the proliferation of so many sex clinics? I cannot figure. Masturbation classes for instance—women only. Shall I suppose men do not need to learn much about this?

So every Thursday for a few months I will follow the exploration of my down below hello. The first week I'll be told things of all sorts by our teacher. Then I will talk about it, we'll all talk about it. To other women the second week. With other women the third. The fourth week we are sisters. The fifth week I just love my pussy. The sixth I've already forgotten that I might not have loved it or was ashamed of it or did not know what to think about it. The seventh I know everything I should have known if only... The eighth there is not a chance left to even wonder why I might have been here in the first place. The ninth time is just for fun and the tenth to say good-bye and have a cry over it.

Two and a half months to become self-sufficient and a lifetime to sharpen my dexterity. Everything is possible, no dam; oblivion at a touch. Only to put my finger on. Hit the nail on the head.

Weren't they happy around the swimming pool? I thought they looked so lavishly free.

Perhaps they are only allowed to go to the swimming pool after class? Perhaps they have learning difficulties?

Homework first.

Self-sufficiency first—then spend your leftovers. It's a question of education.





17

If I have never seen a big open mouth, it befalls right now—at leisure. A big mouth fully open. Roomy. Be my guest, examine. I am sure they chose a black guy because there is nothing like a contrast for the teeth to look bright white. Pinkies' teeth always look grey or yellowish, tarnished—slightly disgusting, almost used, second-hand. Too real. Also, in a black mouth I find the delicate drift from matte dark brown to soft milky rose. It looks so sweet that I want to taste it, so cushioned and dulcet I've almost already curled up—a place to be forever. People in advertising spend hours assessing wee details of all kinds with extreme vigilance. Does this sharp tooth give an aggressive edge or a dynamic one? Appetite or cruelty? You just need to get your image right, that's all.

You cannot get a better mouth than this one. It is deep, it is vast, it is friendly, it is powerful; this mouth has everything. A fab mouth. Look, don't be afraid, check it out; inspect it properly. What do you see?

I don't know what to say.

I think it's magnificent. I'll never forget this, right? Anyone who would shrug it off only inspires pity, don't you think? Can you see the small letters? Just in the middle, in the deep end. Can you?

Obey your thirst.

You see! Barbed one, don't you think?

Feel good. Feel good!

I am thirsty, I've been thirsty for a while now.

I've been wiled for years. My thirst. How long since I've quenched it? How much longer will I hide my hankering in my handkerchief?

Why do I get confused? Why do I get lost in this quandary? My thirst: that's me, this is my core.

My thirst: incompressible.

OBEY YOUR THIRST. Obey your THIRST. Obey YOUR thirst. OBEY your thirst.

Yield up.

Well, "obey your thirst" is still "obey," isn't it?

Shut your mouth.

My trust, thrust away, shattered into pieces of suspicion, stains the pavement like spit.

All the same, I reckon that a tongue would make the most wonderful pillow.

Can I rest my wrecked head on your fond tongue?





18

Another room in a motel. Travelling does not prevent sleeping. Perhaps we would not have houses and homes if we didn't sleep? Perhaps. The room's everything green radiates solitude. The blissful tranquility of a cow grazing in a meadow. Wallpaper, tiles, carpet... Green, green forever and the cow saunters throughout her patch showing remorseless (without spite) disdain for this wisp and heads ploddingly onto that tuft. That kind of green.

As the cow browses on the grass I zap channels with an impatience that only my thumb notices. I might even be looking at the wall actually. Sometimes I forget my distractions, foolhardy me. I knew someone who said the same about pills.

One day I will try to listen to television programmes. I suspect it could be intriguing. Just listening, without image. Not like a radio though, because the speakers will not know I cannot see them. I shall try, but for the moment I leave my thumb to its nervous stepping dance and, with my head resting on two pillows tucked up together, I let myself undulate as a billow traverses me. A billow of motions. I chew the cud. It goes as follows. There is not enough for everyone.

Why should (not) Nature be interested in justice? A tree is not just, a cow is not just—but justified.

Holdings prove worth.

Life is better than death, anybody would understand that.

If one falls out of the medley there must be a reason. There are thousands of ways to be picked, thousands of thousands maybe. So if one does not find a way, one is outweighed. No mystery. Sorted. It is true for plants and animals, it is also true for wares. Either you are wanted or you are not.

Before Life, and without considerations of colours, gender, sexual predilections, weight, size, backgrounds, and every other difference, we are radically equal: either you are a loser or you are a success, it's down to you.

If you are a success, if you are select, you will be confident and affluent. Therefore you will have fun and deserve to be wild. You are in control. You bestride—graciously or strenuously, this is your caprice; happiness makes you right. Yours prevails.

If you are a loser, you will probably feel depressed. You may choose the dignified option of self-consciousness, covering up your poverty in loneliness. You may also try to content yourself with your fellow “dead-ends.” With a sense of self-assortment, subservience remains a possibility; you could easily like it. Make the most of it. Not everyone is destined to last. And happiness outwits misery—children know that.

It may sound simple but why should the truth be more involved? And why should television spend so much time rejoicing in misfortunes when it should acclaim victors?

Life is electricity. You are on or you are off. Turned on or turned down.

I get up from my green bed. For minutes I play with the switch. I play life.

On, off. On, off. Do I like life? I do, I don't. I do, I don't.

Agog and extinct.

During which: the cow's voice—distinct from the box's voice.

The cow bellows a raw word of sorrow and awe.

A word that flays every nerve bare and harrowed.
A word for your fright to grow by the second, forever.
A word to be your throes to the end of Time. Galore.

Take my hand off the switch!



19

On this one I understand the photographer easily. It always fails but still, it's irresistible. As soon as two or three horses frolic in a lea one gets one's finger on the camera's trigger. For some reason the exuberance of pep and vim amounts to a picture of a nice animal wearing a fixed smile. Inevitably.

As a child I wanted my parents to be horses—wild horses in the prairie.

I wanted all sorts of things as a child. I wanted to be a stalker (perhaps after I heard about Ulysses?). For a while, I also wanted to be a spy. But the things I wanted to be most were a “threater” or a “treacher.” I could not make up my mind. My childhood was not always peaceful.

My father wanted to be a music director and my mother may well have always wanted to be what she was—she certainly had plenty to do. Really, I never knew my parents. Is this why I haven't had children, or at least one reason? No. I don't think so. I've always chosen lovers who did not want offspring. Afraid to be upstaged in the play of love? I must suppose so. Saying that I was busier with other things does not sound pleasant enough to be true, does it? Or was it fear of responsibility? Or both? Are there any other possible reasons? I was once told that it was a sign of decadence. Or degeneration? I do not remember which. Decadence, I don't know if I am out of pace; degeneration, well, that's pointless to dispute.

This is a matter in which I've never forced myself to shake off sloth, funk or timidity. I thought about it more than once but it never nagged me long. Sometimes I look at my lover and feel a riddle of taut void. Sometimes I worry about finding such an intense way to age.

I am not sure this has anything to do with it, but I always believed in love. Gradually over the years it has been the only thing which did not go through the sieve. I am not talking about the love I hankered after in my teens. What a turmoil that was! I thought—no I did not—I assumed love

was the name of happiness. I would have sworn that when you fell in love it proved you'd rightly guessed the equation of life. You fall in love and everything would fall into place—puzzle solved.

Well, there were always a few misfit pieces in my jigsaws.

Anyhow, I tried to turn things around. I had some harsh times and more than once I didn't know whether or not I even wanted to be a treacher or a threater anymore.

Came the wall, came the evidence. If there was nothing to solve my equation, not even love, then I had to call it into being. For this new wading, this new gear, I didn't find another word but love. So I kept it. It did not resolve my erotic life though. It didn't dissolve it either. I don't think I'd like my erotic life to be fathomed or cleared up anyway! I am pretty sure that I would abhor it, frankly—even for what it is. No surprise, no hope, no excitement, no encounter, only the drawn motions—are you kidding? All together it did not make me love everyone. And not everyone loves me. But I'm whinging so much less.

It has been a while now since I have not wanted to be a horse.





20

They are so well made nowadays, so alikely likewise that you must be careful. Should you be heedless for a moment, a twinkling of an eye, it might be too late. You'll have fallen in love with a dummy! I assure you. Take those there in the shop window, they are beautiful. Their clothes are beautiful too. I do not find falling in love with a dummy a figment that answers the call of my imagination. Thank Luck they are all the same, so perfect and perfectly the same. I am sure that's what saved me. Despite the lure of clothes. Something clicked to tell me "too identical," "not alive." Damn, that was cut fine. Just in time.

Some years ago (but this did not happen in Occident), I visited a town where men had just started to wear suits. They wore them with such pride that they left the labels sewn on their sleeves. Exhibited labels of brands unknown in the Occident from where they were supposed to come. The men walked with a gait that said "watch out."

And here I was, speechless, having almost laid my heart at the feet of a dummy. The dim dumb and the dummy! Such devotion and such a fag at the same time!

Cult chore, cult chores, and Civilisation.

I hope I've got my labels right.

What about this: "manikin"—"mankind."

Difference? An "i" for a "d," yes, exactly: "ID." Manikins do not have ideas or ID cards. And they do not run errands. And they don't sleep with dummies. They don't even doze off. Never. No sleep, no dream, nothing to forget; no time, nothing to afford.



21

Generally I can tell without thinking twice. At first glance with no need to ponder longer. Whether a building is being built or demolished does not require laboured attention—if you put your mind to it. “Being built” or “being demolished,” well, one will decide long before the cows come home.

I concede that some cases are slightly tricky. Ruins for instance. Some centuries ago some rich people got the fancy to build themselves ruins in their back gardens—large back gardens. Probably people who feared a lack of regrets. More recently other rich people rebuilt ancient constructions (partly in ruins as well) in new places, using the very beams and stones used in the first place. Import–export people surely. But most of the time the decision is straightforward. New construction materials: new building; old grey, time-worn beams and ex-boons: old one. Mayhem, chaos: destruction; organisation, shaping: construction. It’s simple reasoning, it works and it’s about the same for life and death, creation, and wrecking. Simple, efficient, and useful. Not to forget. Either up or down. Life goes up, death goes down. Play with it and you’ll get the enjoyment of the seesaw you still remember feeling as a kid.

This is the reason why the photograph we are looking at disconcerts us. New stuff and chaos. Brand new, shiny, stainless, glossy, impeccable, neat, sharp girders, picture windows, aluminium panels, prefabricated walls put together by some drunk steaming bigot facing the grime gruesome sneering grin of his favourite devil on a bad day. That’s the look. No square shapes, no possession of space, no claim to unity but a disaster of lines going nowhere and joining nothing else; lumps hanging out versed in teetering, prone to trip into gravity; a catastrophe of holes with no grounds whatsoever to hold up their positions. Outrageous display of illicit pretensions. And not even the paltriest aesthetic merit.

I toss and turn my perplexed spirit, torn between the very unpleasant prospect of the inexplicable and the less dramatic but equally distressing perspective of my intellectual shortcomings.

Then, surprise! I find an explanation that makes me proud of my character—as I had failed to consider such an odious and vile possibility until just now.

Constructors, in a hurry to finish, committed faults so grossly irreparable they had to take the entire building down to nothing as soon as it was done.

Hurry Harry, hark Harry
You hashed your horn
What will you blow
To holler hurrah
 hooray
 hoorah?
Hollo Harry, hollo.

As I silently hum my spontaneous tune with naughty delight, it suddenly occurs to me that this building hasn't had time to become haunted. What a pity. We should not ignore the importance of haunts. Hauntless, homeless, that's what I say. Ghost for it! I want to have a ghost, sure I do.

I want a past. You don't think it's the same thing? Sometimes I even want a papast, a mommie, and several soul mates.

Well, trust me, only people with a past life can host a ghost. Ghosts don't become forgetful. Never. And I don't know any ghost with Alzheimer's disease. They remember even if you don't.

Aaah, don't I love the cold soft stroke of the invisible hand on my neck, passing by and away? Oh yes, I like my mumory.

What did you say? I heard something. Sssh, I swear I heard something.



22

Picture: two quondam cinema or theatre chairs—the kind attached at the arms, with folding seats, worn darkened crimson velvet—in a paved yard. And nothing else.

A man sits leaning with his right elbow on an armrest. One shoe on, one shoe off under his foot, on the ground. An open sandal that doesn't stay on the foot without some sort of a pact. A bit like cats who come and go, faithful but impervious.

He does not do much. Not much at all.

Invariably when I see someone unoccupied I believe that he thinks. I cannot help it. There is a good possibility that I am right, I know; people think. That happens quite a lot.

It's not simply the likelihood of my hypothesis that caught my attention. Not at all, I am used to it. I was rather struck by the haste with which I decided that he was thinking.

In a word, I wanted him to be thinking. Doing nothing as he was, he had to think. I did not want to be pushed. Don't push me to think of the possibility of doing nothing. What is it "doing nothing"? I hate that. I hate inaction. Man hates inaction.

Let's move, keep busy, you-stop-you-die, let's get out of here, next! Come on, move on.

To?

Towards!

...

Looking at people can be a very interesting activity. Just looking at the ways they walk can be engrossing.
Only their gait if nothing else.
Some stride, some step out, and some move at a crawl.
Some go somewhere, others are less sure.
Some hurry, some go at their leisure.
Some saunter enjoying a pretence of being lost—let's say I was lost... exploring.
Some walk according to their clothes, others do not.
Some seem to shun and some to seek their target.
Sometimes people feel looked at and trim their poise.
Some listen to their conscience, others to a walkman; some people even read or eat walking. Sleepwalkers are rarely observed in daytime.
Some look armed and driven, others—or the same—so stiff, walk under command.
Some yank, some concentrate, some do both.
And there are those people who amble, progressing by lateral movements—which is definitely slower.
Some just walk slowly and carefully.
I think I may look gangling at times.
Others, taller than me, can also be lanky.
Some very heavy and others lithe.
Some follow their bellies or breasts and others step ahead pushed in the back by their bums.

Some are always on a beach, others always on an escalator.
Some give the impression that someone else is walking for them.
Some limp. Some wobble. Some even squirm—I do not know how they manage that.
Some bob, some slide.
It's crowded out there, you know.

The man is sitting and he does not even look to be watching anyone, anything, or anything in anyone.
It is so difficult to do nothing.
No thing. What remains? And where? Where is there no thing?
Even if it occupies my thoughts, I hate this.



23

I suppose there is no human settlement without some bath of blood. No compound without abductions, arsons, lootings of people or goods. Even in the case of two soulmates dropping their bags in an extremely remote coomb and looking at each other with a smile that radiates in front of a sunset of gold and glory. How long does it take for Cain and Abel to join in? But beyond the violence turned against oneself that always amazes the starkly credulous, how far is far enough not to have neighbours? How far can the smoke of your bonfire transport the smell of your dinner? How far can the brook carry the bow that slipped out of your hair?

Therefore: either you become extinct as your own blood will tear your flesh apart, or a neighbour, one day, will come and ravage your properties if Time hasn't done so yet. Most of the time, the neighbour option wins the contest for the very simple reason that you are the neighbour of your neighbour which leaves entirely open the possibility for you to take the initiative for devastation. Beyond the sheer hoicking delight at mastering arms and necks into submission, beyond forcing creatures to beg for humiliation, taking possession of other people's wealth and not to mention the roaring glee of potency at the destruction of anything under your thumb, under your thrust, do not, please, do not undervalue the acquisition of an enemy. It relieves internal tensions pretty well and under the pretext of fighting for your life, you stop contemplating the horizon from where you never saw the rise of The Answer.

"One day my prince will come... , ... happy ever after."

When will s/he arrive? WHEN? I am getting slightly restless.

Meanwhile... Let's get busy.

There is no community too small to shed such monstrous cacoethes.

For the first time since its naming in 1865, this village crossed the line of seven hundred registered inhabitants. And in this village they do not accept unregistered people, as was explained to us.

Apparently they have fierce regular disputes about the best wet fly to use in the south bend of the river, about which apples should be used as the first layer in some pastry and a few other things, but they unequivocally and unanimously agree on their most precious gem in town: their museum.

“Museum For Peace” says the notice above the double door. Inside you’ll find three rooms with pictures on the walls and some glass display units full of knickknacks, gizmos, and curios. All relating the atrocious vendetta between two families from which the existing community emerged. A story that some elderly can still recall, but never without a screen falling across their face. The screen reads “Terrible Old Times,” “I Still Cannot Believe That Anybody Could Do That.” The screen of a harrowing shame that comes with memory.

Which family arrived first?

Who pronounced the first insult?

Who declined the proffered hand?

You could see their different food, dances, and work hours. You could see the same pride.

Corn versus wheat, horses versus cattle, quinine versus angostura, milk versus cheese, morning sex versus evening sex, loud prayers versus quiet prayers, apathy versus ennui, maidenhood versus maidenhead, tea versus coffee, quip versus wisecrack.

You could admire the lace on which somebody tripped, triggering the war.

The lace led to the yarn. Infamy and odium. Opprobrium and abomination. Violation and villainy.

In the lace lies the yeast of hate
In hate the yell of murder
In murder the yearning of vengeance
In vengeance the yelp of agony
In agony the yield of waste
In waste the yike of memory
In memory the yowl for a future.

Then they built the museum. For the yarn.

If only devastation could not preclude such returns, such a gust, such a flurry.
But it does. Oooh, damn, yes it does.



24

What is your most intimate place?

Where would you locate intimacy?

Bedroom or bathroom?

This is obviously one of the advantages provided by these en-suite motel rooms. You get two in one. Generally a door separates both parts. How many people close that door? Do I shut the door when I stay in such a place?

Do I fart in bed? I fart anywhere, if I can, with various apprehensions of course. Almost anywhere. Do you daydream with more satisfaction in a bath or on a bed?

Have you noticed how well ordered are our habits in the morning? Every day I get up and get going in the same way, doing one thing after another in the same order at the same pace. If we are creatures of habit, it plainly shows in the bathroom. Such a string of habits may generate boredom in bed but not in the bathroom. Oh no, nothing can be regular enough there.

First rest seat, a glance between the legs, then run the bath, crack my knuckles, etc. At which point do you scratch your groin? When do you stretch? And rub your eyes? All those details, minute gestures that know so little modification. I hate when the phone rings at that moment but I always run, thinking that I should not forget the bath filling up. By now the coffee starts dripping in the percolator. Do you eat similar stuff every single morning? Do you need your coffee? Do you know how quickly you should chew to beat the clock? From time to time I eat in the bath to gain a bit of time. It makes for a change also. And make-up! The passionate chore of colouring this and erasing that. The magic mix between the invisible woman and the everywhere pursued Beauty.

What do you do with spots? I have different techniques if the spot stands on my nose, my face, or my shoulders. And it differs whether the spot is black, white, or red. Well, it has to, doesn't it?

Sometimes I feel so good in bed, so curled up in contentment that I don't want to get up. I believe this happens to lots of people. And when my bladder cries for help at the same time, I invent stories to piss me off.

The sense of intimacy definitely grows with closeness. With smell and taste even more than with sight and sound.

The body smells uncanny, I swear. Sex, arse, armpits, patently, but also the skin, particularly when it folds—between toes, articulations, wrinkles, and fingers, ears even. Eyes, no smell? In a word, the body smells unfamiliar. Babies are supposed to recognize their mother's smell amongst dozens. I bet I would not recognize mine (and I thought I was still a baby?).

What about a nice TV show "Blind Scents" or "Blind Palates" later at night?

Very surprising smells at times.

The robust effluvium of a gallop in the underwood;

the almost fruity, sugary, cloying morning pee;

the always acrid earwax;

the effulgent cheese sweat;

the effusive honeysuckle;

the effrontery of rot;

the stout mixture of smoked meat and the cogent appeal of peaty whisky.

The nose is so close to the mouth!

Are you preoccupied with hair? Do you remove lots of it? What do you think of those left on the brink of the sink? I tend to let them dry before putting them in the bin; wet they cling to my fingers with desperation. Reversely, I remove the scum immediately after bath. It becomes rough and resistant if you let it dry: dead skin (I understand why for some cultures our Western bath is a puzzle. Why would anyone want to steep in one's filth? Well...). Dryness and wetness, creams and deodorants, vaseline and eau de toilette. Variations on the theme of humidity. Let's not forget ear bud and dental floss. So enjoyable. Fantastic impression of lightness in the mouth and in the ear hole, an exciting thrill, a tickling caress whose intensity opens onto infinity. On a good day.

We are born between shit hole and piss hole. I do not remember which Roman author wrote this. In Latin it sounded less repellent.

Have we become so sensitive, so fragile, that we are perturbed if anything smells or holds a taste? Nothing must be the secret of our zeal. Smell nothing, taste nothing, look like no body, and please do not sneeze as it spoils the charm. Nothing is the key of our excitement. I bet I'll need to quit picking my nose. At least in public.

Strange things our bodies are. Alien somehow. Oooh Nature, which designed everything so perfectly, You don't have the slightest idea of nothingness, do You? Emptiness maybe, but nothingness not a clue! No wonder that You care so little about our eroticism. Eroticism turns around nothing. It turns crazily around anything elusive enough to be loaded...



25

If only I had known what the next slide was going to be.

Well, I have been mocked all my life for the way I look. My deformed teeth, my thin hair that never keeps shape, my psoriasis, my slight but distinct limp, my very small ears, and my strained abdominal muscles have inspired, separately or together, all sorts of heed, mention and consideration, banter and gibe. I'll spare you the details that have only caught the eyes of lovers, the seen pleasure of an unexpected discovery. I know the range of askance head-moves and the equally large scope of too tardily swallowed facial miens. I keep my composure almost effortlessly now. But I have this thing with rotund people.

Not plump or curvy or chubby people, but the obese ones, the really oleaginous people. I know I am an oaf, that I should know better, but if I owe the truth—or some of it—I must speak of my utter choler, I must try to spell it out.

It is not disgust, it is choler—that's a start.

I should add that I am not talking about these obnoxious sniffing fights, aggressive prats who use their paunches as a weapon, crushing and punching, their greasy laughter gargling down another beer. I call them belly thuggies, and close the matter.

No, I am talking of perfectly respectable people just like those on the slide. A group of five overbodied fairly young people sitting uncomfortably outside, on a step of stairs leading to some public building and examining their map. One of them wears a tee-shirt which says "obease."

I am not sure whether this triggered my wrath or if it was the ludicrous sight of five people so big they seemed to look at a map the size of a stamp. So it's possible to be so huge and get lost!

Somewhere, once, I saw a slogan—the pretentious type raising awareness—claiming “Obesity kills.” Well, I can tell you: it kills me. First time a charity made me so uncharitable. It is also clear that knowing overlarge people personally and counting a few very corpulent buddies amongst my good friends does not exempt me from anything. Knowing a large black Jewish-born homosexual Muslim-recently-converted woman does not constitute the grand opening to universal love. I know that. But I also do not feel obliged to sink into besottedness every time I meet someone who was not born in my hometown, or even north of the river.

Here, I should add that I am perfectly able, and I make a point of this, to be amenable, respectful, and painstakingly equitable to anyone. My hypocrisy has reached a point of such suppleness, resilience, and facility that it can only be called elegance.

But what is it with obese people? Are (non-domesticated) animals obese? If some are, they do not make themselves very conspicuous. So, for people who suffer from some hormonal, glandular, genetic mishaps, I only hope they’ll find a treatment. Sincerely. They have nothing to do with my cholera.

But you do not understand that it really is a disease, insists the whinging siren of slimy compassion. Fine, it’s a disease, a disease of our Western World, an epidemic in fact. It’s a Westerners’ specialty, massively available. And do not give me the figures of the Elsewhere World. I am not saying the Occident enjoys any exclusivity. I don’t even exclude the way some people envy fatness as a sign of prosperity. Still the gripe continues, “it is not our fault,” “it is not our fault.” I know, I know, nothing is nobody’s fault anymore. The era of faultlessness has begun at last. You pass it to the next person. New social rapport. The fault has become the great game. The new hunt-the-slipper. Hey presto! If you are not careful you’ll get back to Adam and Eve in a jiffy.

Fluking hell, can’t you even admit that you cannot stop yourself stuffing, swallowing? That you do not have too much of two hands to glut?

No, no, the moan goes: “But I barely eat anything.” Who cares about your justifications, I am no bony spinster headmistress or beefy sheriff. You should know that nobody gives more credit to your words than you do; everybody goes along with your denials—with or without a lenient smile. The reason is simple enough to grasp. If people believed you they would agglutinate around you, observe you with tremendous fascination and bothersome expectations. It has been such a long time since human beings have tried to crack the secret of matter. This would upstage the craziest hope of the alchemists. How can you gain weight if you do not eat? How can you create something out of nothing? Fantastic!

“Nothing is lost, nothing is created, things only transform.” Sorry, Mr. Lamarck you got it all wrong. Was it Mr. Lamarck? Or Limerick?

Thanks to the resolute determination of adipose people, modern Physics has reached its most fundamental transformation since its origin. Henceforth Nature not only loves nothingness but relies on it and does everything with it. A new era is brought unto existence, a world built on new principles that ought to revolutionize the way we live, die, love, work. And eat I suppose. I wonder what excrement of nothing looks like. Maybe there will be no excrement anymore? Aren't adipose people sweet and gentle to give Mankind such a hope so graciously?

Physics, you say? Humm, I thought it was Arithmetic and Geometry. They count: two for the place of one; they take space, impossible not to notice. They disturb the rules by which space is apportioned; they own more personal space on earth than vulgar people. Their individual claim on portions is exorbitant.

They have more body than anybody else.

They are embodiments, prodigious inordinate statements of Being.

The embodiment of an answer. The question? How did Westerners grow so big and strong? How much do you weigh up?

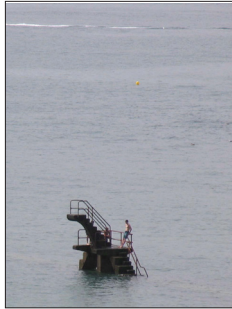
Lots!

Oh—did I disregard the subversive power of obese people? Perhaps they count amongst the last courageous people still capable of passive resistance.

My apologies.



Ballast



26

Here comes the photograph of a fair to middling woman.

Smile or grin? Willy-nilly.

First one is attracted by what one sees. Then by what one hears. And again by what one sees, etc. Isn't that right?

Something to be said for encounters at the pool or other places where people promenade in the altogether? Do you like what you see?

Pick me up!

I like that relaxed attitude of mutual approach. "If you like my looks and if I like yours, if we have enough common interests to spend time together, if we are compatible sexually—and let's not leave this too long because there is no time to be wasted discovering our secrets and souls if our bodies cannot even couch with each other—then I love you." Do you not find such an attitude amazingly mature? Know yourself, know what you like, remember that ideals are made of dreams, and find a compatible counterpart.

Why can't I be upfront and straightforward?

Too many hiccups? Hang-ups? Unnecessary shame? Do I think too much? I think I do. Or perhaps the difficulty lies in the often experienced fact that too many people attract me. I am not fussy enough. Perhaps there is another side to people and truth doesn't appear at first sight. I've found that truth comes with time. But lassitude also comes with time. So, is it that lassitude comes with truth? Do you see how it gets complicated when I get involved?

Perhaps I should not let time disturb my penchants. Let's be inclined—"eat it whilst it's hot." Perhaps maturity dwells in not allowing time to get hold of you. Like sleep. Maturity invites hurry—one only lives once and the more convenient the experiences, the richer you become. But should I experience as diversely as possible or stick to what I know I like and just move on when the savour wears off? I am still confused...

Let's go back to the portrait, a shoulders-up portrait. She has dark hair and a simple good cut without permy frills. I like that.

She wears make-up—the whole panoply. Foundation as a concealing seal. I don't like that.

Her eyes are vivacious and deep enough for sighs. Spunky with a fixity that knows something about silence. Of course I love that.

Full glossy lips posturingly kept ajar. I do not like that very much.

Her solid shoulders—I like that—flattered by a black low-necked linen floppy top—I like that—livened up by party sequins—I really hate that—give a good balance to a bust which does not boost or boast—I like that—leaving her neck a sinewy pulpiness enhanced by a mole in the dip above the left clavicle—I love that.

I suppose that I like her looks but am uncertain whether or not she figures as a Fisher-Price girl. The Fisher-Price girl operates on two modes only:

a) continual fervent and ebullient amazement at the World's wonders and gifts; b) jumpy creaky squeamish apprehension at the World's dangers.

If only she could move. Movement has always been determinant. If she moved I would know in no time. In a flesh.





27

Announcing two slides of little interest to us but of sentimental value for her, the photographer inquires whether we would appreciate an interval in the projection to shake limbs, attend private needs, and rest eyes and heed.

To my stupefaction the suggestion finds itself ruled out by public (m)utterance. No sighing but a spontaneous reluctance before the possibility of drifting out of the plot.

Fine by me, I always hated intervals in plays anyway.

The assentient audience squirms with delight. We are about to discover the first of two boring pictures.

As to the first one, ...

..., I agree with the photographer.



28

Bear in mind your disappointment at the opening of a gift, your dislike of a good friend's creation, your boredom at flipping through the photographs of an acquaintance's wedding reception. Certain moments in life require a brisk reaction to mask your sincere feelings.

Looking at a flashed snap of an unknown crowd in the attitude of dancing could be added to the list.

Most of the time dancing fills me with great embarrassment. I do not understand how people can dance to any music whatsoever. I must pay too much attention to the music, that's part of my problem with dancing.

I do not understand what enjoyment those who dance get by repeating the same steps and gestures more or less quickly, tune in tune out, for hours, the same absent smile hooked to their lips badly hiding their burden, a vague gaze lost beyond any possible contact.

At the other end I am very much unaware of the gods to which the dancers pay their frantic respect, oblivious to the world—too entranced to gain a divine blessing.

In between, the middle class of dancers makes me self-conscious. When asked, I am told, they say it's just a laugh or that it's for fun. Of course, I never imagined it wasn't, it's obvious enough anyway. But does it not strike everyone that these moves express very high sensuality? Does it appear evident to everyone that dancing figures a barely stylized sexual intercourse? In public!?

Yes?

That's what makes it a laugh and great fun?! What fills people with such a positive outlook and no second thoughts?

Yes?

So... So.

Now I know what inhibition is.



29

Folks, if I read the signs right, we are on the move again.

Against a white wall a bicycle is leaning. On the saddle lies a book, on its side.

For angle and distance, title and author remain out of reach.

And nothing could help this ignorance. No alteration to the very soft almost creamy chiaroscuro in which the picture is bathing would bring any other insight.

From the book we mainly see the open part of the binding; the part that makes a book resemble a flaky pastry; the flicking ends where sometimes, with an unnecessary velocity, a finger zipping along the verge will get cut.

As for the bike, it looks old, unused rather. Unused for so long that should you remove it from its spot you'll discover its coloured shadow retained in the paint.

Possibly it takes ages for a bike to read a book.

Unless this book lags behind riding.

Personally I have never been farther than cycling through books or booking a bicycle, besides learning both at the same kind of time. Like most in the W.W.

Do books and bikes entertain other relations? I should not think so. Current times do not favour being seen in the company of a book. The case being, it would probably indicate that you cannot think for yourself, that you feel insecure and the need to compensate for your shortcoming in

such an arrogant manner. Be skilled but not well read! Be operational but not articulate! And, in the unlikely case that the above argument be proved groundless, why should we admire someone who makes us feel stupid?

Let alone a book that can drive a bicycle!

What does your sophistication bring you anyway?

Do you have more fun? I should not believe so! Do you reach any higher level of happiness in your reclusive reading-on-your-own-ness? Wisdom? Where is your wisdom? How are you better off for it? A good book, from time to time, can be a thrilling distraction, for sure, I know; but from this to worminess, no way—get a life for Dog’s sake! Bestride your bike and go, just go, straight on to the horizon in the uplifting light of mornings that smiles to the coming day. Drive, drive, and enjoy the light beat of your heart.

The bicycle perseveres in its attempt to find a route amongst the log of words.

Why is a book called a book if to book means what it means?

What does it denote to note a note?

What kind of conversation “amen” and “one” must have roamed through to come out with “cyclone” and “cyclamen”?

“By sick culls?”

Log/logic/logiccup... of tea.

Some hundred years ago, in the summer afternoon, a breeze on undulant willows swept the canal towpaths as two people on their velocipedes were conversing.

“Where do you find ideas for your verses?” said one to the other whose life was literally gnawed by poetry.

The latter answered he wrote words rather than ideas.

And then, afar they passed, leaving no word to be further distinguished. Later, they went into the deformed perspective of the canal, and still later, the deserted bicycle of the poet kept musing on impertinently, “but what are words made of?”

Letters or sounds? Speaker or reader? Mish or mash? Melting or pot?

The whispering clamour floating around like a mist in a vacuum resonates: distrust words my dear, do not trust them; they are deceitful, made of no observable molecules, they are nothing. Brave them. Words are the Fault my dear, the cause of our fall, of our disruptions; they break marriages, turn brother against brother, render the wife envious and the husband jealous. Do not become sick of words my dear, do not brave their beguiling concert. Or you’ll be sorry. You will be sorry, my dear, you will be sorry. How do you not become diffident if you surrender to a word like “battology”? You’ll be sorry, my dear. Facts, my dear, only facts or you will be so sorry.

To which the bicycle responded, “I am not sorry, I apologize.”

Ensnared by its puzzle, the bicycle leaning on the wall did not realize the deposit of dust time leaves as it elapses.

Meanwhile the log of words leant on the bike’s saddle with a pinch of despair for no word seems to attain the treadle.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI.



30

I am lying on my back on a bed.

Why is this damned room beige again? Beige engrained with motifs of the most insipid shapes and blendings of indistinct colours. Vomit is what crosses my mind.

I lie on the bed and stroke my chest heedlessly. I feel the heat of my hand. I'd like someone to make me explode. Right now I'd like hands other than mine. Real hands.

I roam about this motel room, still lying on my back, still on the beige bed cover. I caress my chest and I already know it will end badly. I am thinking. I always do. I should do rather than think. Do what? (That's often what people think.) Do what I think? Should I do what I think? No, I cannot do that. I should? I can hardly tell what I was thinking. I should at least do that? Get it off my chest?

Well... Very well. I was thinking of killing people. I was going into a shopping mall with a silencer.

At first, I shot people and looked at their fall, the sinuous ways their bodies gave way. But I got bored quite quickly with those brief unrestrained concessions to gravity.

I started to wound people in the flesh, in the limbs mainly. Obviously their reactions were far more lively. Most people showed immediate disbelief, some started jiggling, while others needed time to realize they were hurt, injured. But even this wide scope of spontaneous responses to such a striking surprise wore my excitement out.

The cries for attention, the subtle merger of fragility coming full power from a voice appealed to me more and more. I decided to concentrate. I listened to what people were prepared to say and do as I cornered them in a lift, in a toilet and anywhere. As my gun menaced their body parts, I observed how in front of my demanding silence, they offered to give, to take, to bend and pull, to pretend, to confess, twist and turn. The more guilty they were the more threatened they felt, and the more imaginative they became. Very imaginative. After I signified that they could go, some people asked whether the gun was loaded. Many did. And indeed by this stage it was not. I knew it would end badly.

I am lying on my back on an ugly beige bed cover in a very ordinary motel room. I have pinched my chest once or twice. I know I am a coward. Freakishly so. I knew it would end badly. I am lying on the bed and I think of women, of democracy, and of other important things. On my back, otherworldly. I wonder how dreams, claims, and quests for equality can be achieved other than on the lowest common denominator.

Coward—common coward.

Cowardice. Cow. Ward. Dice.

Cowed toward dice.

Other words, new words again and a gain?

Appendix for the sophisticated diceward overawed:

Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard.

“God does not throw dice.”

Mallarmé versus Einstein. Strange match.

Consequential deductions:

God will never abolish Chance.

or

For God there is no Chance.

For Chance there is no God.

Where did the dice stray?

Does anyone see the dice?



31

Children look great in photographs, don't they?

Whether they jump, sulk, smile, or pose, they display an obviousness that convinces the best of doubters. No attempt to pretend they don't pretend to pretend not... and other convolutions in which growled-ups will get coiled. They don't realize that the camera always tricks them or they don't care or they ignore sentimental morons who always go into great raptures about their cuteness or whatever.

Is any of this true?

Well, I would not bet my little finger on it. Certainly I find children interesting for their bluntness and the versatility of their movements. About their supposed innocence, or naiveté, it seems to depend on how close you observe them and how much you like the idea of virginal nature.

The two boys in the picture look disturbingly beautiful. They are six years old at the most, in rags and with retroussé noses, wearing a grimace of amusement.

I remember a friend telling me how troubled she felt by her four-year-old son. They were having a bath, as usual, when suddenly he left his boats, ducks, and dolphins, looked at his mother and said with an even voice, "Mummy you are beautiful." And, approaching on his knees, he carried on asking if he could touch her breast, his hand already tingling her nipple. "I want your body" heard my friend with disbelief and as she was trying to think quickly through her confusion, of a way to handle his agitation, his determined and unsure hand was moving down her tummy. Steady, he asked with a soft and genuine tone whether it hurt to not have a willy. When she saw how lively his was flicking the by now cool water, she could only jump out of the bathtub with an apology for a bold front. It was not the first time that she had received his burning declarations of passion

and she was aware of how flattered she felt but never did she feel so... accessible. She spelled it out to herself: she had to refuse him concretely. She always thought a few words about “babies” and “later you too” would show him through the jigsaw. After all it is not often that you are forced to act upon your words.

One Sunday morning, while half asleep, a different friend felt the hand of his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter on his cock when she joined them for the habitual fun of curling up between mummy and daddy. The only thing which came to his mind was, “no, that’s mummy’s not yours.” He was not very proud of his line—after all the books he read—but it seemed to do the trick. She answered, “so, if this is the case, you cannot play with mine.”

Do you have children? I don’t. I can’t anyway. I think they look gorgeous though—especially when they wait for adolescence to become duly self-conscious.

Do you have strange friends?

Do you have friends?



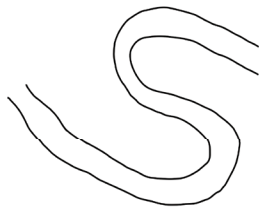
32

Nothing, I hear nothing.

Now, yes, the fricative gliding of a glissade. Something to resonate. The click of the slide. But there was an unexpected moment of silence. Quid pro nothing! In the incessant cacophony from which my body emerged.

The little music of words keeps me calm, together and afoot, something to hum when I sink.

The image of which I ran afoul was taken from the sky. The most sensational meander, that's all there is on the picture. A river describing an "S" flattened almost to the point of creating two islands in the main stream. Almost. The river turned around and suddenly, just before completing a circle, changed its course the other way round. Perhaps I should draw it:



From the sky everything on earth becomes points, lines, patterns, textures, etc. And it takes very little imagination to find a resemblance between these views of earth and microscopic images. Big or wee, same shapes. Everything seems to be intertwined along similar possibilities, more or less complicated, variations of combinations perhaps but the same basic cuts. Are minds, maybe not brains but minds, shaped according to the same basic forms?

Has anyone found knots in Nature? I surely know about the ball of knots in my mind! Even something simple like the sign for infinity? The horizontal “8” I have always seen as a twisted zero reclining lazily on its side: ∞.

Natural knots? Perhaps some tender supple stems or taproots? They rather opt for winding like scrolls, don't they? Parasites maybe, prone to secure their attachment? Minerals and plants harbour bunches of my ignorance and I can't think of any animals (bird's nest?). At least knots do not make themselves as evident in nature as they do in the commerce of humans who cherish them unrestrainedly and relish their social bondage. The tighter the better?

Let us affix our affine braids, aft and fore, after and afore (*affettuoso*).

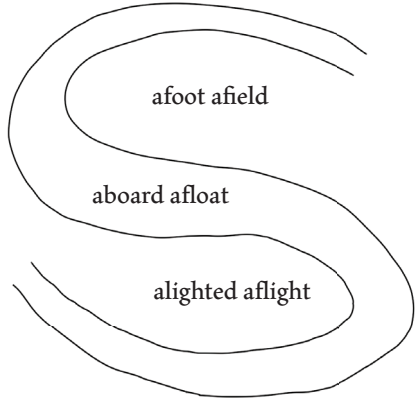
Don't be afraid to be affranchised, knots do not know any other less odd note to nod at.

No effluence utters the Big Knotter.

Aaaaaah (*stretto*) the little music of words, the effulgent effusive effluence.

Clouds from the ground look very different than the earth seen from the sky.

Clouds from the sky look very different as well.



Meander.
Me and her.
I fell for words again...
Let's trust my knot abides. I'll crash otherwise.



33

As the next slide comes up several people giggle and I don't get it.

The photo shows the front of a shop. On both sides stand two big metal bins full of artificial flowers whose stems are painted in all different colours while the flowers are painted green. Above the door in the centre of the facade a sign reads: "Third-Hand Everything Shop" with a double subtitle "From Bin To Table Again," "Recustomised Items."

All sorts of garbage brought back to life? That sounds great to me. I can't see any reason to giggle. If they do a good job to fix and breathe new life into articles whose parts were gagging to be used again and if they do not launch an expensive fashion of it, I think this wonderful. (People with a determined fashionable mind should be crafty and gutsy enough to make really broken objects outrageously expressive—and expensive. The fourth-hand stuff.) I'd like to go in the "Third-Hand Everything Shop" and buy a good garb out of garbage. I do not think I would be embarrassed at all—given I find something that I like, of course. My second-hand clothes give me great satisfaction; I do not see why third-hand clothes should not. No, I will definitely not giggle.

When I die, I'll be at a loss. Will it have been a waste?

I'd like to die in a waist coat.

Actually, I have it all worked out and set up. I have prepared myself, I have thought about my death. Not morbidly, I hope, but I have given it some attention. I wrote a simple will in my mid-thirties without drama and without much to hand down. A few objects of little value, but gathered with care and attention, my music, some books, and my flat. The whole lot takes up half an A4 page. Modest, no doubt, but written.

In addition, I have rented for the last eight years and for another forty, a small warehouse with very high ceilings and a goods lift, in which unsold copies of newspapers are stocked; odds and ends garbled.

Some time, I'll go there for three days and for three days I will not leave the site.

On the first day I will arrive with (very) good food and drinks for several days, music, sleeping gear, and other necessities. And a book, in case. It will then be time to dispose the piles of newspapers in such a way as to leave the centre of the room empty.

From the goods lift it will be easy to access the top of the piles that will have been arranged safely along the walls. This will probably take a few hours at most. The stacks of papers should reach the height of the highest windows because I want to be able to look outside if I so desire. For the rest of the day I will crumple sheets of newspaper and throw them in the middle of the room. I like the feeling, I like the noise, I am less fond of the smell. At my pace the room will fill up with hundreds and hundreds of more or less densely crumpled paper, bygone information, and very dry ink.

I will spend the entire second day—with pauses whenever I shall fancy—jumping into the creased pool.

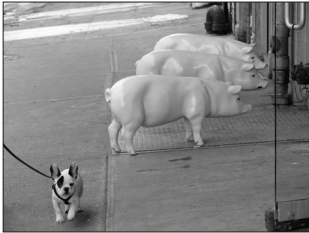
To jump, to fall, to slip, trip over, stumble and leap and hop and plunge—with some caution and no moderation. Relentlessly. I will rub and roll, draw and blow. And walk for hours in the paper space.

On the third day I will rest and calm down.

I want to revel in it before I die.
If I die I want it to be in crease.

“If...” I die.
There is a failure at the end of days.

If when. When if.



34

This kid truly breaks the picture through. And the picture is lovely too. In the background dominates a blurredness of vast fields of blue-green planted to infinity in regular lines. Cabbages, let's say. The kid stands in front, in focus, grimacing with wanton amusement. On his red tee-shirt above a central big blue spot the catchphrase says: "Further forever." One may doubt it or believe it but this is definitely written on this kid's chest.

Further? I'd like to go further. Farther? Deeper? Higher? I'd just like to go beyond something. I'd like to cross some sort of fence. To not only content myself with new challenges which always taste the same; something that would not be just new and more. Newer, bigger, faster... more... I'd like to go beyond inflation.

I am running, focusing on the next milestone, I am running concentrating on the next target because it takes a hell of a lot of energy to forget I am running on a round track.

Sometimes I feel someone is catching up with me and, for a split second, I know if I could see beyond the horizon, I would see the back of me running. And there is not a damned soul to watch me win. Will I ever be famous?

My legs ache—I'm at the gym all the time! I feel great, on top of the world; I feel people will be damned crazy about me. My chest is very well-designed now.

How can anyone stop this? Not to lose, not to give up—only to stop. How? Has it become impossible? We run, we run, it aches, it aches. And we get the permanent company of one anxiety or another to pamper us. We feel culpable all the time, mildly at least. Running we can't differentiate between culpability and anxiety. This terrible angst to let down and the even more excruciating anguish to be left out. In order to alleviate the

strangling hand on our throat—which makes running uneasier, we wonder who could be blamed. This question does not provide any long-lived relief when, all angers, fights, and irascibility consumed, one always ends up with the same private answer: me! I'm just not up to it! Blame on you, you dud. At this point I contemplate the temptation of depression—remember the thirties?

We do not know how to stop (if we wanted to), we do not know how to feel properly guilty.

What's left to really feel guilty about these days? Let's see. What should nobody do? Not only within your congregation but even to the bunch that you hate and despise...

Murder? Does it still count? It hangs on by the end of its teeth.

Abuse? Does it yet? Even to your baddy?

Domestic violence, incest, sexual intercourse with children under the age of consent. Even abroad?

Shall we go further?

Trust me, we will. First we will shout and lynch and we will find it so difficult not to inflict the perpetrators with the offence of their choice. With enjoyment. Soon our fascination will grow, evoked visually under the cover of information and good will. Indeed, the question of will nags us all the time while we are running. As the voice for the Victim finds its tone and tunes, the horrible fascination gets more clearly spelled out. It has a name: sadism.

How long will we have to wait to see Tour operators offering packages including—let's not go too far—rapes of virgins in front of their fiancées, fathers, or mothers? And the reverse? You just have to be at the right place at the right time.

Life is cheap. Perhaps life has always been cheap? Bodies are plenty.

Ideas—the kind that you cannot replace every other week with another one and clear your stock—do not fly in close order. To keep our ideas we will feed them with bodies. Welcome to the Vempire (with a V for Victory).

We will not stop this, it will have to find its own end. It started (for our times) in 1642. Trust me, sadism has not finished troubling you.

During that time Oliver M., his old cotton cap on his scarcely haired skull, perambulated through fields and woods. With great attention and serene gravity he spent hours writing down the songs of birds (obviously running was strictly forbidden). What a silly thing to do.

Somewhere else a sightseeing soldier, musically inclined, jotted down the due notes of a body he'd excelled at making scream. A body that would have liked to run.



35

Have I already said I once took a picture of a shadow using a flash? Amusingly, it only clicked gazing at the glossy all over white print. Why was the photo blank? Not a shadow of doubt prior to this illuminating instant.

I've always liked shadows, their apparent independence, their versatility, and the way they playfully fool your anticipation. Sometimes, of course, they may diffuse an overhanging threat of being engrossed in darkness forever. But they are friendly most of the time.

Can they be infectious? The idea has crossed my mind that I could be contaminated by a shadow. That I was the shadow of my shadows.

I do not feel really real sometimes. Usually it happens just before a knock on the door or the telephone's bell.

Have you ever noticed the shadow ballet on the streets? I bet you have not. Don't look at people, just watch the shadows.

I relish the shadow these three birch trees project on the lawn. Of their shapes there is not much to say, we all know about the fuzzy contour of trees. But in the shadow I can catch visual twitters for winds and leaves. A two-dimensional image of tickling swishes.

I rest well in the rustle; the whatforist loses its poise and the go-foritist's squawks sound out of place.

Titters, whisky tittle-tattles, quavering whistles, wavering quivers, whooshing babbles: the only acceptable vegetarian music.

The big voice that usually enjoins me to be-have is pulverized into myriads of sonorous particles up for grabs.

The enjoiment retracts, lapses, and falls apart. Haggard.

BEHAVE! Behave; be-have, have-be; have been. Have beans. Hafff bin. Hhfff bing-bing, bing-bing.

Fhfffh... bing, bing, bibing, bing... A gale sweeping between hedges makes a revolving gate rattle in the distance.

The revolving gate rattles and I on too.



36

Another beige Heaven! Ô Mottledness which protects the privacy of our lives, the anonymity of our moves, Ô Mottledness, camouflage of my evidences, mixture of every thing, consensual miscellany, Ô Mottledness be blithe. Tepid, neutral you are and nobody likes you, but nobody hates your guts either. Colour of the ordinary, colour of the bland and trite. Cloying hue of my soul manifest through craven smiles of specious geniality, you're tasteless, you're nobody, you're discretion beyond confidentiality, you're so abstained.

Having said this, the hot water flows boiling hot out of irreproachably silent pipes, the mattress receives your back with firm tenderness, the tv screen is clear as a coast, the coat racks hold no crawlers, and the armchair does not even think of being rickety.

Beige Heaven.

My friend the photographer—I call her my friend because I know her pretty well by now; perhaps “friend” does not duly apply but we'll simply chalk it up to poetical freedom if necessary. My friend the photographer exhibits an obvious thing for motels. Strange kink. Even put in a series they do not lose their oblivious nature. Places of passage they are, stations of transit they will be. Staying in a motel for weeks triggers brewing suspicions of wrongdoing, of awe and woe, of imminent suicide. Nobody wants to dwell for too long in a halting venue between two steady points on a lifeline. Nobody should. It's no place for a holiday but a good resort to hide oneself from the face of the World.

How do I know? Easy answer: I do not.

I suppose I have a tendency to fill things up.

Do you not like the control and security of knowing plenty and throwing a net of learning over the dark gaps of uncertainty? Most of the time we stuff ourselves with likelihood. I do. It's quite strenuous to show more humility and find a way to live in a world full of holes. I prefer the roundness

of earth as a model for my thoughts. You start somewhere and when you come back home, you know that you've completed a safe and rewarding journey that has proved itself more than likely, and consistent.

Have I been hoodwinked into likelihoodoo?

I do not know much about hotel and motels—that is true. But I do not take back a word about beige or, more precisely, on beige mottledness. I could be a world specialist in beige mottledness.

Another thing: when I get bored and soon after, when I am bored, I often do not like it. So I take action and don't need much time to overthrow the big Book of Life closing down on me. For me it's as easy as getting rid of a hiccup. I stop breathing. I let my shoulders drop, I let my stomach drop, I fill my lungs with air, opening my chest sideways. I wait. Soon the hiccup does not want to know, out of twitch.

The equivalently efficient fashion to purge yourself from spells of listlessness without excessive effort (which the majority of individuals do not keep in high esteem), requires a minimum of imagination of which there is no shortage amongst bored people for the very well-known reason that people without imagination never get bored.

The procedure goes as follows: in an environment deprived of overheard noises, such as a screaming boss, skimmed milk crying over its cream or any irksome crush of bones, sit or lay down. Think about anything—situations, memories, words, whatever you like—of the most frightening nature. Soon, if you have comported diligently, a thrill of anxiety will despoil your apathy of its *raison d'être*. On good days your thrill may verge on an excitement which will not fail to render your whole self keen and honed. If not horny.

Feeling horny in beige heaven... That may have to figure on the restricted list of lifetime's essential experiences.

Aroused sense in motley bliss.

Do we not all need anxiety-kissed holes to live our lives to the full?



37

The picture shows a motorway spinning an amazing reversed “S” between the soft bellies of dry hills. Oranges, blues, and greens share the whole space with virtuosity.

But I don’t want to talk about this, I want to talk about the dream I had.

I walk up and down a street, smiling and then not, and again and so on. I am the chief executive of an advertisement company. The campaign in full swing says:

“I do not have a car.”

“I do not have a television.”

“I want a job.”

“I have a job.”

“I do not want a car.”

“I do not want a television.”

“Shall I be safe?”

“Should I be saved?”

(Or was it “Shall I be shaved?”—not everything is always clear in dreams.)

And back and forth again I stride along the pavement. As it looks, I rather resemble a self-employed placard man with some proselytic touch. As the dream progresses I even sell myself a first-hand dream for an ulterior life (dreams can be so strange sometimes). At the same time the voice of

Transcendence wafts up my nose, distinctively whispering as it comes out my ears: Sell my son, sell. Sell yourself, my son. Be always prepared, my son. Always. Be always on the sell. Do not miss your chance, my son; opportunity makes Destiny. Be prepared, always. Never forget, my son, never, that you can be called. That you can be called at any moment, my son. Always.

At this point I woke up.

I did not like it. No, I really did not one bit.

Commerce has become vulgar; for the simple reason that it is sustained by an infectious debasement of objects. It is paramount for objects to be exciting and desirable, but it is imperative that those objects be replaceable. The vulgarity intervenes when the most obvious and basic motives are stroked and titillated as the most efficient strings to stretch to get everyone gagging for the buy. Vulgarity is the facility of the facile. Even luxury rolls in vulgarity, the expensive cheap...

Ooh vulgarity can be quite exciting! Well, it's actually what it is; and quite funny, ooh yes it can; and it talks business.

One repeats with adulation, "everything is possible," "everything is possible." Vulgar! "Life is to be enjoyed; TO BE ENJOYED." Vulgar! No, not everything is possible. Not working is not really possible! Vulgar! Why do we all want to belong so badly to the circles of merchants? I suspect the reason might be that everyone aspires to become rich (perhaps it has been proved the best way to not work?).

Becoming rich has become most vulgar.

Being rich: the secret gist of our instincts.

If that's so, the only question henceforth resides in finding a good justification for my instincts.

The only question is finding a good slogan for my product.

And I will not forget to pay my respects to Nature and its laws, which I obey with industry. Vulgar, perhaps, but I love my lure. Follow your natural pruritus.

Traders blow their trumpet arguing they have always been the path of exchanges, of mixes, of mutual discoveries. I agreed heartily. The rise of the middle class is the greatest achievement of merchants. Thanks to them, differences—of colours, religions, traditions, and cultures—have started to speak to each other, to be curious about one another, to share common interests and invent new modes of community. Truly the middle class should be called the mingle class. And who could deny the mingle class has held responsibility, and still does, for the promotion of human rights, rights of respect, rights of choice, right of equal rights for human beings?

I suppose vulgarity sits at the nub of rights.

When I don't dream and when I don't work, I like to go shopping. I look through windows, I roam around, I rummage about, for fun.

I see things I don't have.

I do not want everything, I only want everything I like; or even everything I really like.

Then I buy. It's simple. It makes me happy. It is nice.

At home I have only new things. Nothing has the time to wear, I've such an appetite. It's nice. I am brand new at all times.

I don't have rags or rugs, but the other day I bought a nice vacuum cleaner anyway. I like vacuum cleaners. I like them a lot. Cleaners of vacuum are nice.

Rights of choices! Only one real point: profit. What's there in it for me? Who does the crime benefit? All criminals...





38

It is a bright sunny day somewhere in a park of the Western World.

The carefully groomed, tamed vegetation blooms without vegetation. A pleasure for the eye. But these are only the surroundings. In the foreground a bunch of retarded children in their early teens recreate joyfully. They must be playing something but it is not always easy to understand children's pursuits. Their romps and jests can be cryptic to the outsider and follow variations only a devoted practitioner can sniff out from tip to toe. They also garishly suck coloured lollies. All of them, and this is easier to grasp. Those children might have sustained some lesion but no one will have anything to teach them about the art of sucking lollies! They do just amazing things with their mouths—not to mention their tongues.

This is probably how they get their medication. I can't see why they would not deserve to get some when everybody finds them so indispensable. Life is an illness, it's been demonstrated. So as they are swirling their lollies, licking their chins and performing the most perilous loops and twists, they also swallow their drugs.

Drugs in lollies—wicked!

(If any of you were curious about the imbroglios and ramifications of our economic system and what is named "the Market," I would strongly recommend that you pay very serious heed to the ins and outs of both the legal and illegal drug markets. You will be astonished at what you'll discover. No matter how extreme those examples appear, they will rapidly enlighten you on the underlining principles of our entire system of exchange.)

Maybe they are just sucking lollies for pleasure after all.
Have we never sucked lollies ourselves?





39

As long as I remember I have liked to be massaged.

It's really surprising how unaware of our bodies we are. All the tensions and the unexpected places they dwell! Fixed abode or fly-by-night stiffness, I like to be triturated, to be manipulated.

On a minor tone, I like to sit on a train and be at the mercy of its regular vibrations—its jolts and twitches.

I recall some occasions when talking gave me the sensation of my body being kneaded. Once I was being insulted and another time I was giving a speech before two hundred and fifty people. The length and breadth of my body was run through by waves, streams, whirls, and pricklings playing all sorts of figures with my nerves.

It doesn't say much to talk about adrenaline or endorphins or what not.

It's rather closer to my experiences of fairs; rides up and down, dexterity games, houses of horror, strength challenges. Fright and guts, tricks and crafts.

What about making a parachute jump? What a sensational sensation!

Falling.

The danger of becoming pulverized and reduced to a ground mixture, undifferentiated, mud of living stuff.

Scared to be falling flesh. It is so difficult to accede and concur.

And after the jump, what do I do? Pick myself up?

I gambol of course; naturally one dances.

Bodies palpitate.

Only heed your body; score for selected percussions, winds (bassoon, flute), strings (cello), and positive or portable organs.

Creaking joints (wooden blocks and rattles) /

Breathing (tide on organ) /

Heartbeat (counting – percussive touch on organ) /

Cramps (pitchy – cello) /

Sighs (for organ and cello – morituri snorzando) /

Farts (flute, bassoon, and rattles) / Sneezing and sniffing (cello, flutes, and bassoon if fever) / Burps (bassoon and resonating drums – moderato con motto tutti) /

The Tongue clicking (ticking tichy tic, percussion with bassoon keys) /

Yawns (aspirated flutes and bassoons. Contrabassoon welcome if in the vicinity) /

Blinkings (silence – sostenuto and stretto) /

Mastication (mouthbeat for prepared percussions including sticky sticks, moistened flaps, and erratic natural or latex tongues) /

Borborygmi (snowballing feast for chamber ensemble with salient presence of a mobile xylophone, low combined muttering of bassoon and organ, and a contortionist able to play a recorder while using it as a bow on cello)

Corporeal cacophony.

This is a start for someone like me who never had any sense of what one should do in the presence of a musical instrument. I've never found any way to converse with any musical instrument except a piano once that was quite happy to learn counting up to eight. But he soon got bored with me. It didn't take him long to allegroly combine numbers whilst I was still reckoning on my fingertips.

Ha! Body, body of mine, flesh of my shape, silent but resonant where impressed by words, I've long fallen in the open withinside you.

My body is a musical instrument played by the silent wind of wordings and heard through the soundbox that is my inner ear.
Does it always sound the craziest when it touches the most serious?

Musical massage.

Meanwhile on the screen, one of the most beautiful sunsets I ever looked at (not the type painted by numbers).



40

You have no idea what happens in motherhood.
You have no idea what a mother is.

What is the slide on the screen?
A side-car. Well... it is.

– Mother: epitome of abnegation. Vomiting for at least three months, carrying a distended body for another six and being torn open by hours of pain, just for starters, followed by sleepless nights, utter frustrations in front of cryptic howls. When speaking creeps in so do the joys of no's, the relentless demands and unflagging attendance. Should the requisitions abate, it is only to be disowned and relegated. It ends with fluctuations of vague ungratefulness ranging from birthday cards to baby-sitting requests.

Many are called but few are chosen.

For indeed some are chosen and then the young'uns really make their mothers' delight.

Beyond the stunning admiration for such sacrifice, shall we try not to sink into the toothsome depths of adulation and, mustering our half-defeated spirit, ask: why on earth do we do this? Do mothers entertain an indulging propensity for gambling? Should we infer that a mother's delight attains a satisfaction above all else, above the pleasures of a woman in full bloom, which well-informed characters have rated from the beginning of Time nine times higher than any man's?

– More bemusingly, mothers experience unremitting anxiety. Even if their progeny were as pleasant as a troop of mice and cockroaches invading kitchen and bathroom, they never lose touch with the possibility of illness, accident, troubles of various kinds—and death, of course. (I probably should mention that we pay no mind whatsoever here to mothers who do not—sometimes to their own surprise—love their scions.) Mother’s daily life is spent in the company of imminence. Not even the rest offered by sleep is left in peace.

– Despite the above, mothers want the best for their offspring.

At great length and expense they will prevent their darlings from being traumatized, being afraid of or being anything. Mummies hear everything; tell Mummy, no secret between us, you do not have to be ashamed of anything. At any price should the little ones be protected from hang-ups or inhibitions which would knock their confidence and condemn them to a life of self-conscious squirms and wiggles (or to compensatory excesses). And there we are smiling with more or less reserve at our toddlers rubbing themselves on the armrest.

And there we are admiring with discomfort the vitality our offspring exerts on his kindergarten pal’s head. The discomfort becomes positively unbearable as the same vitality finds its support on our offspring’s sibling’s head.

Should mothers confine their devotion to an only child? Being rid of any conflicting feelings should ease the want for their kid to be the best in town.

Sometimes, for obscure reasons, unconditional love provided unrestrictedly fails to impede our baby from becoming quite impudent. Some, as we know, are very sensitive, hyperactively hypersensitive even. And so difficult to please; tortured souls that can not tolerate the softest touch.

What a pity when he went out angry that evening and shot those fellows who really shouldn’t have called him pussyfoot. What a pity! They probably did not realize how sensitive he was. One bullet each. A pity!

And there we are in the parlour every Wednesday afternoon. We do not like the place, but there we go. (Why is it that unconditional love seems to be reserved for those destined to prison?)

– Not only do mothers have to be able to listen to everything, but they find themselves cornered by questions that invade, compromise their own privacy. Do you think masturbation is ok? Did you masturbate? Do you like it? Spit or swallow?

All pride certainly swallowed, you answer with humility; and with courage because you do not want to resort to paltry ways out.

Such courage! You want your kids to be cocksure, don't you?

When your nine-year-old comes close to you, coaxes your bosom and wonders how it was to have your tits sucked, or asks about periods or about itches and wants you to cover their bottom with cream...

Remembrance.

Everything happens before the age of five they say.

Well, how true that is! They grow up so quickly!

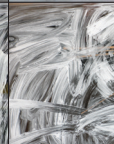
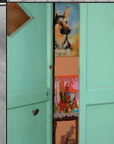
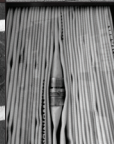
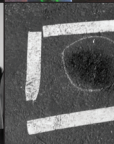
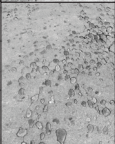
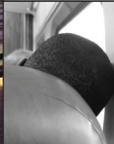
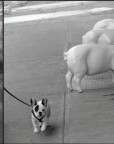
By the age of five they would have been swaddled—pat and pet—looked at in the dark, sung to in whispers, the breath coming through their lips drunk with amazement. It was such a pleasure to coddle them, to cuddle them, their weight on our belly; not an inch of their body we didn't caress, fondle, and kiss. Not an inch missed. How they wriggled with pleasure! We could have licked their shit. We could have kissed their groin. Actually, we did and felt immensely thrilled by it. And we ate the same food in the same bowl with the same spoon. No disgust whatsoever. Our smell was enough for them to smile and crawl towards us. They devoured our smallest gesture with gaping attention. We were enslaved to each other. We felt

lordly and we enjoyed their lasciviousness. How sensual they made us feel! More than men for sure. Beguiled and flattered, even embarrassed by their declarations sometimes. Love, tender and voluptuous, worth any spasm!

You have no idea what a mother is.

But we know one always snogs with one's mother tongue.

You were clay once and we were there, right there.





41

And now Ladies and Gentlemen, the same side-car, same colour, same year, same shine, the very same side-car now viewed from the side...

Even during sombre grey clammy November evenings of the Western World, when a chilly gale invades the slits between our scarves and our skin, even if the bus did not deign to stop at our sign, and even though our ulcer plays up, we know how much our Time has achieved. There is no need to list the exploits of Progress, the strides in all domains—the envy of people outside of the gate speaks for itself.

If we had to privilege one area that shows our most outstanding advance, it would have to be, with few hesitations, Honesty. Today we can look at ourselves and at each other and accept the truth about human beings. We now know what human beings are about, what really drives them—do not pretend.

We know that the less you say the more you imply; we have proved and verified that loose communication doesn't work and that each of us, for our own benefit, should participate in elaborating sufficient numbers of reliable codes in tune with our knowledge about people's satisfactions. Because satisfaction has been undisputedly demonstrated as the universal goal of humans; everyone wants a big portion. Hence, there is every reason to facilitate this by reducing the misunderstandings caused by talk and waste-of-time blabla.

So let us try something other than knowledge! Be adventurous and plain for a change.

“Tell.”

“Say it... Say it.”

Yes, it is true, anxiety and excitement intertwine their treads in an uncanny dance of twists and turns. Afraid of what you like and attracted by what frightens you, pulled by repulsion while appeal makes you dither.

Be bold, claim the second, and gag the first.

Start with a daring and simple change. At your front window, use only holed translucent plastic bags to dry your underwear. Not the opaque ones. Remember, what is not work is a hobby. And hobbies should be fun. Lace your life, for Dog's sake, ornate your interior, slope along, follow your inclinations; enhance your intake of pleasures.

There is no "man" or "woman" anymore. There are only pleasures, moods, susceptibilities, sports, and impulses.

Sex toys for Christmas, sex toys for birthdays, sex toys for Valentine's day, sex toys at Mothers' Day and Thanksgiving and Good Friday. Year in year out. A key ring that answers your call with a troubled voice. Cushions that sigh, a doorbell ringing "I want you." A fluffy keyhole. False removable electrostatic mustaches. Tight hats, collars, bras, and underpants to hold your body very firmly. Penis pasta, distributors of surprise-knickers. Wallpaper with sitting people watching you, rough toilet paper. Heavy breathing chimes on your telephone. Recipes to cook Bambi, 101 Dalmatians and various weepy suckers.

Audio tapes for the long public transport journeys.

Side A:

"Are you sure nobody is looking at you?"

"Are you sure nobody is wondering about your body?"

“Are you sure nobody thinks of behaving improperly with your feelings? Right now!”

“Are you sure nobody wants to talk muck at you?”

“Are you sure nobody wants to make you yell?”

Side B:

“Are you sure somebody is not looking at you?”

“Are you sure somebody is not thinking of your body?”

“Are you sure somebody does not find you beautiful?”

“Are you sure somebody does not want to talk to you?”

“Are you sure somebody cannot put two words together because of his emotions?”

“Are you sure somebody would not do anything for you? Anything?”

(Large range of tapes available. Also in CDs and minidiscs.)

In the event that we have not reached complete fulfilment by this stage, we could join the millions of people who have already faced the final progress in honesty: wanking is best.

Let's progress!



42

Salmon this time. The usual room is covered with salmon-beige this time. They made an effort. Regardless of my taste, they made an indisputable effort; it looks clean beyond hygiene.

TV's on. A preacher listens to people eager to be pushed to confess the zigzag of their sins. At each inched transgression, the preacher finds a way to convert the broadcasted revelation into a thrill that whets the audience. The bedevilled vulgarity of the whole show crawls so beguilingly it requires effort to not be drawn in.

But why should I deprive myself of such a pleasure? Turn the sound up, they may not hear it distinctly next door.

Oysters taste like fresh saliva clouded with a droplet of blood. I have this taste in my mouth right now. A tiny crack in my gum probably. I feel oysterous.

I was so sick once after some crustaceous gluttony. So sick I did not sense any hope after already vomiting my entire soul. They said I'd been contaminated. Since, I cannot open a can thoughtlessly. For some time now in the Western World the opening metal plate has to be pushed inside the little container. Inside into the liquid! Am I the only one to be disgusted? Disgusted and discomfited.

Every time I push it inside, I wonder about Death. Every time. I wonder whether bottles will regain the public's liking?

On the bright side, as heaps of casualties due to can contamination have not been reported, I assume people do not spend most of their time in malevolent plots. I must darken the risks. Would I want to poison millions of people? Although it does happen with computer bugs. Wouldn't people go to any extreme to prove themselves powerful? Power, control. Control, power. Is there anything else?

Every time I ask this, a lithe puff of the best silence tickles my ears. Every time I shout this in some remote place, the echo alone is left to measure my earshot.

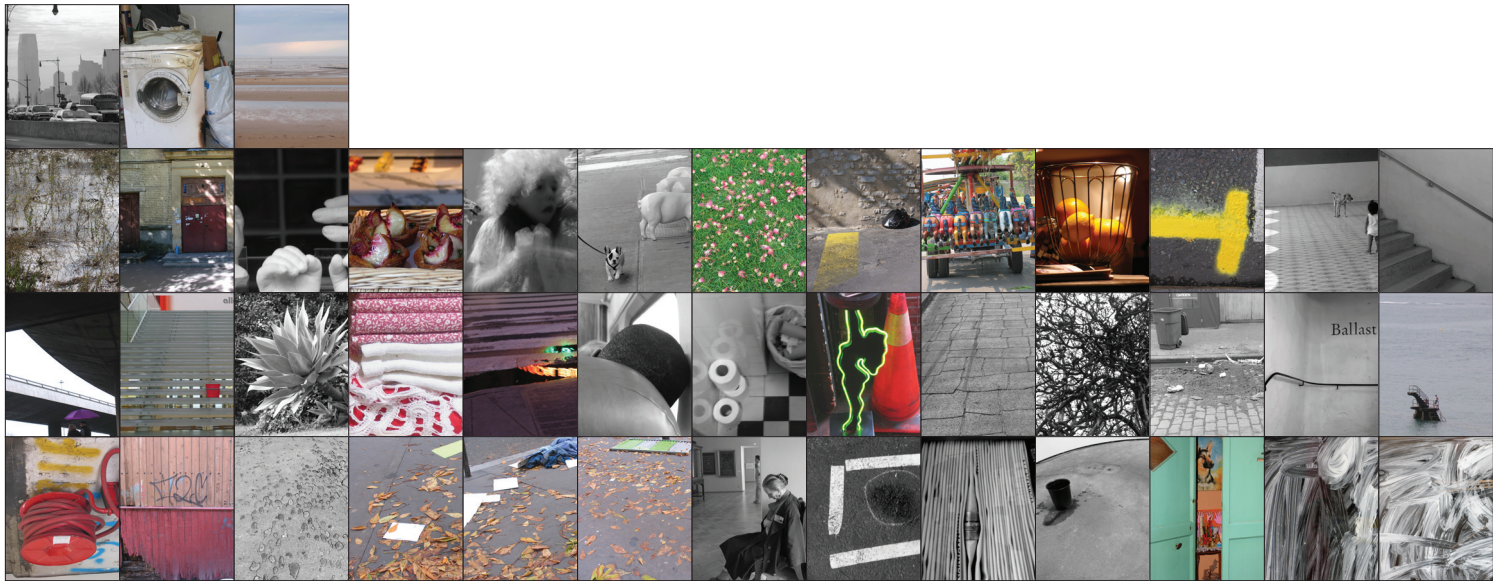
You give, you give... and get nothing back—the usual story.

I suffer a hunch of loneliness. I do. Most of the time I do. I am sick of it and cannot wrench myself free. I even feel lonely while fucking. After, of course, but during as well and even before sometimes. Loneliness disorder? Don't make me laugh. I know exactly what it is: I am ill from expectations, sick of hope. I want to hear someone telling me "You won't be fine," "Relax or not, it doesn't matter anymore. Things won't be all right, you won't be fine. You have been born and that will not be forgotten." Perhaps loneliness enhances my experience of life? Perhaps I should not smash it? Perhaps the time has come to not feel obliged to be sad?

I feel lonely fucking only sometimes after all. Not always. On the hoof.

Perhaps I should stop autosuggesting? I always feel oysterous for it.

Salmon-beige might not be such a good colour after all.





43

So we got out and started our rummage, hanger after hanger with the polished skill of filing experts. Soon we had ferreted a handful of frocks and duds and headed towards the changing rooms quite pleased with the good haul.

This was the moment chosen by the owner to emerge from her cavernous greyness. With her whole tiny body she stepped in my way and physically stopped my progress.

– I am sorry, Sir, but we don't like gentlemen to walk beyond the line.

The line? A line, where? Well, after a speedy span of spin I saw the yellow line painted on the floor. I saw it distinctly.

I felt an equally distinct urgency to fight the fricative friction whose fret invading me, could soon only lead to unfortunate fray. I had forgotten my froe to chop off her toes anyway, and the shop was fairly crowded. I, therefore, stood on the line, returned her smile and laughed loudly with the most mocking nonchalance I could find in my riled throat. I added, not very charitably, "I bet this is not a joke, Madam?" She confirmed my pervading intuition. I closed the matter in an obedient but not submissive way. "Well, I'll peep from here then, shall I?" I got a vapid mouth in return and stayed on my spot waiting for my girlfriend's parade so we could exchange notes on the fittings.

My short if pungent conversation must have triggered some whiff of whiffing because all changing rooms got busy in a trice. In between my girlfriend's changes, who made a point of exposing herself a bit more than necessary, her neighbours were taking my side in various demonstrative fashions. Even an outraged lady who'd given me the eye at first was fumbling around with her fittings in such a clumsy way I could rest my eyes on her without hindrance. And so I did. And so she saw. Flushed on and carried on. The rarely wide enough curtains were left open for possible glances in the mirror. An arm overhead here, a frilled roundness there, a fringed curve, a movement of bare flesh.

I particularly appreciated the woman who took off her dress to try on a jumper.

There was titillation in the atmosphere. The lovely owner realized the wile and firmly requested I withdraw further.

– But I won't see anything at all then, I whinged cockily to the gallery.

I could read her wish to frogmarch me out. But so far none volunteered to back her up—so good.

I admit my deep dislike for this old lady who might have been the beloved grandmother of some adorable brats, she might have been able to dispense more affection around than I will ever fribble. Maybe, but I rather pictured her liking nothing more than a bit of naughtiness. Like a second glass of sherry for instance, that she later regrets in her prayers, squeezing her thighs together. Skimpy character fouled by the entertainment of the horrifying possibility of dire deeds... to be avoided.

But the excitement continued. A lady came out of the fitting room in a tight dress and asked my opinion “as a man.” It was a beautiful dress—and expensive. I turned to the owner to get her permission to intervene... And, of course, to use the mirror. She resolved herself to defeat, dissolved back into waxen greyness, and left my leeways.

After some adjustments before the glass, I told her jokingly that men will get so flurried and aflame they will not trot easily after her in the streets. She bloomed with glee, chortled and declared, “I'll take it!” Did I detect a twinge, a shiver in her Greyness?

For half an hour my tune sounded popular. One wanted my views on her cleavage and to know whether she was overtly right not to wear a bra. Another desired a frank development on the equation between her bump and stripes.

After forty minutes, I'd married two women, been the secret affair of another two, the indispensable homo friend of one, become an old chum, a dance teacher (to test the slit of a skirt), an attendant (by the tone of this ashamed-of-being-easily-excited business woman), and occupied various more flimsical fugacious employments.

Time elapsed. Friskily I frittered away my frivolous ad-libs.
Outfits were leaving their hooks like lice on a bald head.
I could not help liking the owner's smile of balm as she neatened the notes in her purse.
Time elapsed and the moment came to leave.
As I passed her, I heard myself saying, "Shall I come tomorrow then?"
She lifted her eyes towards me with gratitude and dubiety. I gave her a wink, her eyes oiled.
"I shall come back tomorrow as well then," added an amused lady going out.
I believe my girlfriend smiled proudly for me. It was my day of glory, really.
I must have more or less dropped off and day dreamt for a few seconds.

However, the air folds with frizzles. Lightsome trills. Frizzles of arrant joy.



44

Again I have heard someone saying that everything is possible.

Well, “everything is possible,” actually.

For some distracting reason this keeps bobbing in my muses’ pond. It claims to be the catchphrase of the Western World. I cannot figure it out. How did I not realize this after more than forty years in the Western World?

I believed—in fact I spent ages researching the subject—that not much was possible, that what was possible was not possible for everyone, that only the best would attain possibilities. I was convinced that one had only the possibility to move forward, of taking up new challenges, that the only possible want in life was lack of achievement. I was left with the impression that luck, determination, and strategy were the three nipples of success. I genuinely thought people endured anxiety and depression because they knew how little chance they had to be counted amongst the happy few. I was certain this stood obvious and transparent to everyone, that the cowards who were too poltroon and suffered from frail guts would have to resign one day, that the game and its aims were evident to all (few infrangible rules, maximum latitude), that the wins would be in the hands of those who could pretend best with confident self-indulgence. I held the firm opinion that people did not know how to talk anymore, that television—in a civic hope of assistance—programmed shows to teach people how to talk, that millions of people, for the same reason, were happy to pay someone they liked, someone who could understand them and laugh at the same things; a friend? A *therapist*, long-life homeopathic remedy. At last you could afford an imaginary friend in the flesh regardless of the well-recognized fact that words are elusive and, in the end, blabla. I imagined that people were pretty lonely. I even resolved the most puzzling question of all, about the ultimate reason people suffered such

hard lives. The consistent answer, beyond the glitter and the mighty, amounts to one word. A word stuck in their maudlin throats as they choke on their sobs with relief: family.

“Why do you do all this?”

“For my family!”

Why would one not believe this?

At first I wondered whether it wasn't some mawkish blurb to fool me. But it wasn't; this word covered the abyssal anguish rising between the moment you open your eyes in the morning and the moment you wish yourself a wild day in the bathroom mirror.

Or so I thought.

How mistaken I was!

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

On the screen: the picture of some church, in front of which leans a sign written by hand with thick felt-tips and a ruler, exclaiming: “We are soul agents.” When you read such a sentence you start believing; believing everything is possible. You just have to try it out.

Let us stop bashing around the bush. Facts: life is to be enjoyed, suffering is useless. In order to enjoy you need means. Go and get them. Enjoyment should not engender headache; to be efficient, be simple: health, drink and food, fuck and power (for the less ambitious, control will suffice). This established taut and tight, your capacity for invention and your talent to charm chance will determine your merit. Life is what you make it be. You can choose, you are free. Do not blame anybody for your actions, learn from your mistakes (everybody makes them), remember that negativity belongs to losers; take risks, if it does not pan out, try elsewhere and do not pay attention to rejection, it's meaningless to heart-throbs.

You are free, the rest depends on your stomach. Life is too short to be defective. You can either polish doorknobs and hope that someone will open the door, or you can sell the damn doorknobs.

Everything is possible. You can sculpt piano keys if you so decide. Life is a gamble, life is the gambler's red gaming mat: you can only win because losing is the rule.

Do it for your family.

I am sure my husband is possible.

I am sure my wife is sucksexfull.

And my kids?

They are my capital future and I am their soul agent.



45

We are looking at a highway interchange.

There is not a single vehicle; and the pale dawn just only starts to distinguish things from light.

It looks magnificent. Not only do I feel small in front of such an edifice but I find it sublime; words are shrinking, my respiration shortens, my eyes water, a slight dizziness accompanies an invisible thrill; I'd like to be able to hook what I see to something else but just now I can't. I need to sit. As there is no chair around nor even a suitable rock, I sit on the ground, legs tucked up. It is like a theatre, a waterfall, a field of clouds... Yes, a theatre.

I am looking for a superlative but I know I won't get it. It is superlative + 1, superlative + ∞ , superlative + ∞/∞ .

For a while I swirl in the vertigo of being. For a change my fat ego does not need any gymnastics, it feels tinier than cigarette paper—and flimsier too. It is more unusual than unpleasant.

But it does not last forever, I'll come around soon.

The beauty of those curves, how they converge and diverge, how they come close, almost flirt and stray, how they fork in the middle of a turn, one taking a drive and passing under the other.

They must be the solidified ripples of many wakes, the routes left by whatever elapsed here, folding space in creases. Strips cutting out space without tearing it beyond its edges. Real lines! Lines following their path. They merge, they part, they depart. Beautiful lines. Space folded by the passage, the relapses of time.

They cross over, and something changes. Alluring loopily the encounter brings a moment of uncertainty. The lines had to choose themselves I suppose. Do lines have souls? Don't you need a bit more than a line to have a soul? Just a bit more, like a strip. Do strips have souls?

Do you travel by train sometimes? Do you look out of the window? Have you ever followed the electric lines on the side of the track? Have you noticed how they move along? Sometimes they whip the sky spry, sometimes they vibrate steadily for miles. And suddenly go up, up and down, and up. Down, up, up, down, up, down, down, down, up/down, up... and move away avoiding a thicket or a tunnel, and closer again. And suddenly again, they multiply, from one line we'll get five in a trice. They'll wave and weave and twine. And plod along again only to prepare for the next frenzy. They dance an obscure ballet, an unsung opera. *Con motto*. Graciously. *Stretto*. *Larghetto*. *Legato* all the way.

I should film this one day.

The ways of Dog do not seem so thick anymore—you just need to fathom.

Lines are great. Often, unfairly, we like points, particles, iotas a bit too much. I could watch lines' moves for daze. They move like a stave that would conduct itself. A music that would try to make its own gestures, that would try to speak. I cannot read music. A friend told me it is nothing but a code... I didn't feel better for it. I can't read it at all. It's abstruse to me. I like to look at it though. All these dots creeping, crawling, and jumping and disappearing. Some whisper, some growl, some shout, some run out of steam. Some tickle, some tinkle, some grate and itch, some moan and some giggle. Some are positively disloyal, some have to be seen and not heard, some put a sock in it, some never wrestle with a chimney sweep nor whistle; some would sell their soul for a mass of potage, some don't drink milk and others have my pecker in their pocket. Some live in an ivory tower, some are spooned, some want to be alone—and are left so; some take the pitch and rush, some hang nothing over, some's talent will out, some are not suitable for nerves, some can feel the width; some are mustardly keen, some get round heels. Some sneeze with respect, some wet and

warm ones tilt at windmills while some take back their night; some are included out, some wait like ace in the hole, some seduce all the world and his wife—and so to bed; some beat as they sweep, some coagulate, some play with their tails, some sneer, some snip, snootily some snoop, some snore and snooze, some snag (but very rarely), some match misses (unpredictably), some mass messes (which is unfortunate), some have sealed lips. And others don't.

I contemplate the lines. Perhaps I could have studied Rhythmetics.
 Ooooh look, there is a crow on the line. A crow in D.

It does not last forever, you get off your arse again and slip into something more comfortable.
 Time to step on the travelator of life again. Aligned again.



46

Pitfalls or windfalls?

Has catastrophe replaced chance? Have I become a rabbit of habits? Am I coerced by freedom's peremptoriness? I am so enclosed in total freedom I cringe at any venture. Why does the unknown taste of cold sweat? How prepared am I for the unexpected? Little.

I even worry about the way my sentence will end.

There is of to get grammar luck her.

By Dog's luck there is grammar keeping me to getter.

I read miles of guidelines, I devour kilos of magazines to know the done things. My door is locked at night, I mean my bedroom door.

People cluster according to their fears.

We suffer from freedom, we suffer from feardom.

On the other hand, I hate to take orders. I really hate that. Well, I hate the tone of commands. I don't mind being asked to do something so much.

I quite like it actually, I find it restful. But I can't take the tone, it makes me shiver. It makes me want to obey.

I hate it, but at the same time I can feel a strong layer of helplessness wrapping me up. And I take it all, I say no to nothing, totally bent by the tone of orders. I am paralyzed, they can dispose of me. They do. I am so ashamed afterwards. So ashamed. I could die.

I take orders like gifts.

There is a woman crying. The photographer took her portrait. The tears run down along a rift. In every human there is such a rift. When anything touches it, it reacts. Like a dental nerve but it's a mental nerve. There is a mental nerve at the bottom of the rift.

On the screen there is a woman crying. The photographer explained why and everything. I've not listened again. I looked at her. I saw everyone: myself, you, my lover, my children, my parents, people in the street; I saw lots of people and others that I didn't recognize. I saw them all but that didn't trouble me... What shook me was rather how little silence a picture displays.

This woman crying, I remember now, is in fact the photograph chosen by an awareness campaign about the wastes of water in the Western World. How obstreperous, how noisy images are.

I remember this sculptor who spent hours and hours meticulously carving a set of piano keys. Each of them was a unique piece, a whistle, a maze, a dragonfly, a child with a cat, a cart and its mule, a bedroom with decorated interior walls, a fan, and so on. All of them refined and detailed. A single key took her weeks, probably months for some. A work of immense patience. When she had finished, she photographed each piano key in exactly the same position and put the photos up on the back white wall of a room, at eye-level. In the middle of the room she installed the piano. In each piano key's place she carefully disposed the small hummocks of ivory powder to which she had reduced her sculptures with a hammer and a sackcloth.

As you looked at the series of unequal heaps, all white and sandy (no ebony semitone for some reason), the recording of the fifty-two breaks was diffused at different speeds and intensities but on similar timbers and rhythms.

Behind you, above the door as you leave, you could read “for lost music to come.”

For/ever when we were a woman crying.



47

On gentle slopes hundreds and hundreds of trees harbour wilderness as far as the eye can see. Closer to us a wide and clear river bathes a fertile plain abounding with peaceful meadows and fields. Cows, sheep, pigs, horses look over fences while chewing a grass which tastes like nonpareil. Grains and vegetables feel the caress of refreshing wind and sigh with ease. Bees buzz. Birds and fearless poultry cackle around, transporting news and stories. Some mountains in the distance.

Everybody's happy, everyone knows his place. And everything takes place on this very large trestle table.

The photographer visited this resort where landscapes of the Western World have been impersonated. Miniatures of the countrysides some time after iron age and before steel times. No tarmac roads, no railways, no fridges, etc. Not even electricity.

Everything was simpler, harder and slower. The old days.

Many of us believe, without a doubt or thought, that our lifestyles nowadays show how much more intelligent we have become. I have to confess my intimate conviction that this is true in my case. But on a larger scale, I suppose there aren't many serious ways—if any—to verify this, are there? I don't suppose suitable IQ tests could reveal much—as if they ever did.

Luckily technological novelties will occupy the naive and the anxious.

For my part, I would suggest we concentrate on a rather less obvious domain of human activity, and evaluate the effects of Time's (e)lapses. Popular singing, popular games, carnivals, and above all poetry. I'll leave the first three and seize this occasion to urge everybody to write poetry.

A sad point, I am afraid, we should never forget: in Latin what some of us cherish as “common sense,” “middle ground,” “self-control,” or “right measure” bore the name of *mediocritas*.

Before embarking on this irreversible journey: what is Poetry?

Can you imagine eating yogurt in the morning?

Yes!!

Take some set, very low-fat yogurt, a bowl and a spoon (no silver please). With the above mentioned, spoon the desired amount of set (virtually) fat-free yogurt in the bowl.

It is now time to grab the pot of coarse-cut orange marmalade. Add, with relative precaution, not too much of this to that already ready in your cannikin. Mix roughly but not for too long—the coarseness of the marmalade will break the settledness of the yogurt and leave a flavour of sugary bitterness in the cracks while the sugariness of the marmalade will diffuse its own substance into the milky waters of soft sour yogurtness.

Then scoop, eat, chew every other time, a mouthful, a morsel, etc. Swallow mouth open every other other time, a morsel, a mouthful. Etceteras until the end of everything.

If your soul harbours any poetical fumes you’ll soon steamingly realize the ephemeral dances of contrasts through which the little void of the voiceless randomly finds a new palpitation. Then, just take it from there.

Let’s probe your heart with a haiku.

Make the haiku yourself.

Your holes are prepared: fill them at your invention.

On the _____ ... _____ of the _____ ... _____
the descending _____ ... _____
leaves a _____ ... _____ of ... _____ .
Brief; and the _____ ... _____ recommences.

Suggested holey words: wing, face / man, ladybird / light, ring / glance, dot / sun, blood / shouting, scent, mist.

To your nibs!



48

Although I see it with my eyes I can't acknowledge it yet.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have here, under our noses, visible reasons to believe that there is absolutely no beige in this room.

The bedroom with en-suite bathroom conforms, indeed, to the habitual layout, but the overall colour of the place cannot, by any means, be called "beige." For the simple reason that it is "pale carnation." Lampshades, pillows and cushions, toilet paper, curtains, even the soap: pale carnation.

It's a long way between beige and bad taste.

It is a long curve between a hug and a kiss.

A long curl between sleep and rest.

Yes, ooh yes, a long way between a flying crow and a clear coast. Off course.

And, the photographer tells us, the place was amazingly calm. So much so she could not help sensing a baleful presence. She tried distracting strategies. Yet, even watching the box did nothing but accentuate her apprehension at not hearing something she should have. How damn difficult it is not to brood! The more one tries, the more the night is teeming with trifles, tricks, and trespasses, gewgaw hints and awesome tenets of all calibres. There they were. All of them. From the most recoiled territories, they forgathered in straggly shambles and disarray.

It lasted and lasted, as long as postponement. Prattle, imperatives, chinwags, orders, sarcasms...

Even for a bit longer.

Then It raised up from amongst airs, graces, and seethes, forming a gigantic It. And It spoke. In a pukka tongue of breathing pulse it hurricaned them all:

“THAT CAN’T BE SAID SHOULD NOT BE SAID!”

Thus was the plea for silence born.

The furor paused, perhaps. But the sound?

Not later than the day before yesterday, I met a deaf man who was holding his hands over his ears.

Not later than yesterday, I met a mad man who talked in my direction, saying distinctly that a hallucination is made of silence that has not succeeded in falling quiet.

We don’t listen to mad people.

Not later than now, I wonder whether there are any means to secure the certainty that I will never fall mad.

Every madwoman will tell you: noise never stops; you can find yourself lucky if you find a peaceful hole somewhere within it.

Every madman will tell you that silence means SHUT UP! And really means it.

He was mad who called for silence.

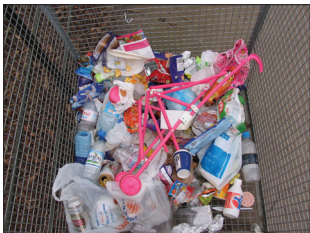
He was mad who de facto said, “WERE WHAT CAN’T BE SAID NOT BE SAID.”

He was mad and fought a life-long battle for the silent noise to succumb. Not everybody has as much to show for a life.

The noise never stills.

No noise extinguisher.

Not with pale carnation or anything else.



49

Click.

Slide: an old couple playing draughts with coins.

It must be some Thursday afternoon. They look like regulars: a Thursday afternoon for wonted widowers. If they are married it would not matter.

There comes a certain time in life when old couples look like widowers anyway. They let it slide.

The small coins all the same. Small price really for tranquillity.

I also won a prize. It came through the post, just like any other mail. Through the slit in the door like any other letter. In the most ordinary envelope, with my name, address, and nothing else. Just a normal letter that informed me of my luck. I could not believe it. I could not believe it was possible to win such a ridiculous prize. I certainly never thought I'd win a prize, of any sort, but when you do, it really is a surprise to win such a risible prize. Most of the time you'll win a mug, a few pieces of domestic artillery or the number 1 episode of some soap opera in 101 episodes (enticing bargain for the series offered in capital letters). Be it a car or a sum of money if you are damn gainfully serendipitous. More likely you'll get a voucher from some department store, a free entrance (valid on one particular day) to some zoo or lunatic park, some cumbersome holiday w/e in a sunny bleached beachy resort you've never heard of. But this one is bizarre. This is weird.

I won a journey (seven days) in another language.

Can I believe it? A week in a different tongue—not town, tongue.

Several readings of the letter did not enlighten me in the least, but only confirmed the absence of any alternative option. Sometimes they offer a smaller sum in cash, your weight in flakes or something. But here nothing of the ilk.

They don't even say which other language or who'll choose. I understand the very point of travelling can reside in discovering something that you haven't seen, something you don't already know. Something different. I myself like to encounter odd things. But this is completely odd. More than goodd enough.

I won a week in an odder language.

I won a week in another lang wodge. Which wedge? What long widget? Slang wage?

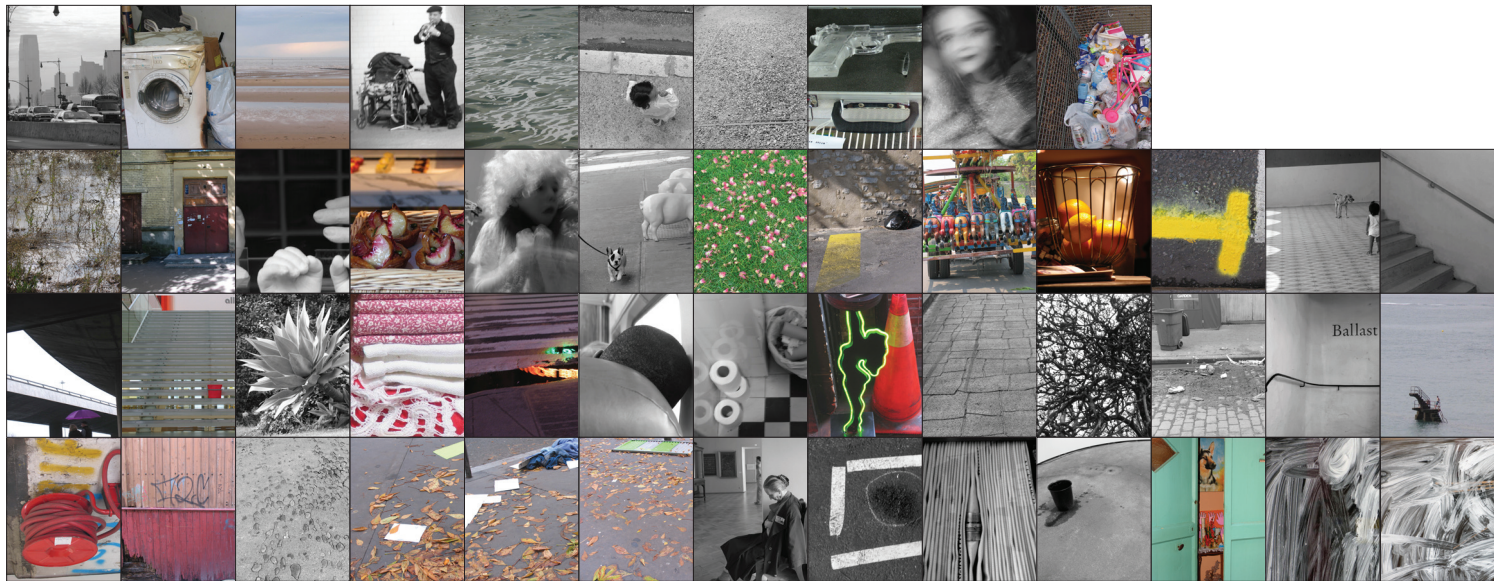
I am scared, I am scared to lose it; that my brain will churn noodley and I'll be wafted like a scent in nhasty wothers.

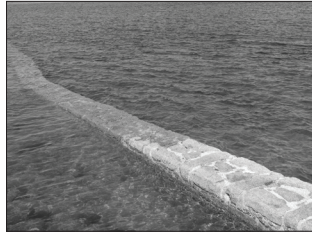
Tush, tush, tush! This spells tickical. I am scared yet but don't want to be cunned plasterical or finish in marvelade fusstigated like ullages in a foolpole mash. At naught point the picknical moot philandered end anded in forgrieffness. Gloat plus wallow.

Shut the fluke up! Vying or envying for a hebdomadal sepulchritude could supplicate enough to be manged tout in a huff. Or not. Under no squarestance should you be abyssed. Looniversally, as the crowd plies, to *je-ne-sais-quoi* hopens to Polytricks. For even rickety sake. Fabuloose, faithal or horridle one may just might suturate riboldly: I glad you a fairy blasant tay.

I am trying, I am trying hard but it appears so unfathomable to jilt grammar at the all tarred with the same brush.

I should probably try sweettalking or play draughts. There are so many holes between words which play talk with the door open.





50

There is this room with golden curtains, wooden floors and walls, and glitzy chandeliers. There are those people sitting on those upholstered chairs in neat rows.

And those people wear fancy dresses of no particular style. A maharaja, a 17th-century gentleman, a Venetian cocotte, a dishevelled witch, a hamburger, a goldfish, a king of some crown, a girl playing tennis, two identical lamp posts, various uniforms, a pirate, an Aphrodite with angels; quite a throng of disciplined people waiting while (real) waiters and waitresses attend their expectations with (real) champagne or juicy freshly-squeezed exotics.

From what I see this furiously resembles a charity party of the best brew. The lectern, there on the rostrum in front of these disguised mortals, clearly indicates the festivities' impending kick-off.

An auction no doubt.

Time for action, time for auction.

According to the menu the lots to be offered for the audience's interest and generoddity consist of video tapes. Apparently the matter in hand is a collection of rare—and unique for some—pieces of distasteful documentaries, private films, and other various programmes.

The catalogue classified the lots under five categories: Miscellaneous, Education, Classics, Conf. & Redemp., Contests.

In the first section you can choose between a range of natural catastrophes shot by people who were cool-blooded enough to film mid-mayhem. A selection of extraordinary robberies taped by surveillance camera. The agony of a man whose last 120 hours were recorded for one minute each. The entire reading of "My Therapist—A Dead Good Friend" which covers the sixteen sessions, online, of a patient suffering from audile phobia.

The presentation of this lot is accompanied by a note bringing the potential buyer's attention to the extreme nature of the disturbances contained within these evidences. The estimated prices also stress the presumed quality of the pieces.

The section "Education" seems slightly more straightforward. A number of never-shown uncut versions of "How To Speak To" ranging from the "How To Speak To" the poor, the sad, the anxious, to the more challenging "How To Speak To" the old, the handy capped handicapped, as well as one never broadcasted copy of "What To Think Of" about childless night revival. Also the very first versions of "Couple's Vigilance: Sound Tricks," "My Life As An Undercover Tramp," and "The Nine Steps To Use (Their) Uncertainty."

The Classics section only contains the signed reserved copies of "Druggies In Barbieland," "Cons In Woollywood," and "Perverts Won't Listen At Isney-ville." One can guess how fierce the competition will be when these come to the call.

To my surprise, the estimates for the Contests section amount to porgy sums. Especially for "The Biggest Shit In The Universe," "The Most Stupid Thing Ever," "No Hairiest Harmpit," and "Everybody Cried," which dramatically upstaged its rivals.

In the final section, promisingly named "Confessions and Redemptions" one can dream of purchasing rare issues of "Extremes," mainly a series showing road violence, with the exception of one tape of sudden domestic outbursts. Everybody still remembers how the Western World, in a state of shock, immediately decided to destroy (almost) all copies of these series only to apologize to the producers nineteen months later, pleading overreaction. They also put to bid the complete collection of "Emergency," including the "Open Heads" episodes, the "Sexually Explicit Wonders" episodes and "Wounds And Missing Parts."

Everybody will easily understand that no trouble has been spared to ensure the success of this "Auction of the Twentieth Century WW."

As anyone could have anticipated, the monetary elites of WW were present for this unique event and should easily raise a once-in-a-life-time total to benefit the less important persons of WW.

But I'm going to shut up now as the chairman of the WW Association of the Wealthiests for Hygienic Poverty arrives at the pulpit. I leave you to it, Ladies and Gentlemen, sure that you cannot but will enjoy this dazzling and paramount demonstration of utmost charity in the History of Mankind.

I remind you that you'll find the detailed results of all biddings in the usual media about fifteen minutes after the closure of quotes.

And now the chair raises his hammer for the first time and declares all tenders doable.

What a moment for WW, Ladies and Gentlemen. What a moment!



51

Illusions, illusions, nothing but illusions.

Wisps, chips, nothing but whiffs.

Hopes, creeds, nothing but presumptions.

Mean, wobbly, nothing but afraid.

Hurly-burly, snags, nothing but thwacks.

Insanity, insanity, nothing but insanity.

Inscrutable, greedy, nothing but heinous.

Likings, whims, nothing but longings.

Hang-ups, quirks, nothing but fads.

Confident, passionate, nothing but ignorant.

Stoops, makeshifts, nothing but pebbling.

Vanity, vanity, nothing but vanity.

It's written somewhere. It's quite entertaining.



52

Under the shade of a toon (Is it a toon? My knowledge in plants, big and small, verges on not much. I reckon it's the right tone but I am not sure we have toons around here), a bare-chested boy sits doing nothing in particular. There is a sombrero on his head.

Anyone near him would instantly believe in the infinite.

He has put on his illimitable gaze. A mixture of vagueness, presumed sadness, restrained pain allied to the mellow features of his face and the secret determination of his stillness.

Sentimental, you'll find him melancholic; amused, you'll find him up to mischief; bossy, you'll find him defiant; lyrical, you'll find him beautiful. Often, scientists of all disciplines have said we should not believe in the infinite. But we only listen to what we already know we want to hear.

Scientists of all countries unite!

We won't listen anyway. We like the idea of infinity. We can afford it. Limit points and all that din shine with very very pale appeal.

The boy does nothing. Infinitely. With his sombrero and his burgundy swimming costume. Nothing but being suspended from the infinite. Who knows? Perhaps he can't take the heat. Or did he just realize something of great importance, something that would change his life? Something dreadful, something fantastic? Or even beyond.

He might, for instance, have grabbed the extent to which some things can be empty. Or the equally astounding fact that post boxes could be easily put to flame. A match suffices probably. Maybe it is precisely the fact that letters have been conveyed trustworthily for ages under such an at-hand

menace that has filled him with measureless relief. Maybe the fact that he heard the foreseen end of the post-age overwhelmed him with bottomlessness. Maybe he always wanted to be a postman.

Maybe the heat.

Maybe the fire. Letterboxes on fire everywhere. Destruction of words on paper, destruction of paperwords. A smoke to please the nostrils of our dictator?

The smokes of do-or-die doodlings.

The smokes of scrambles.

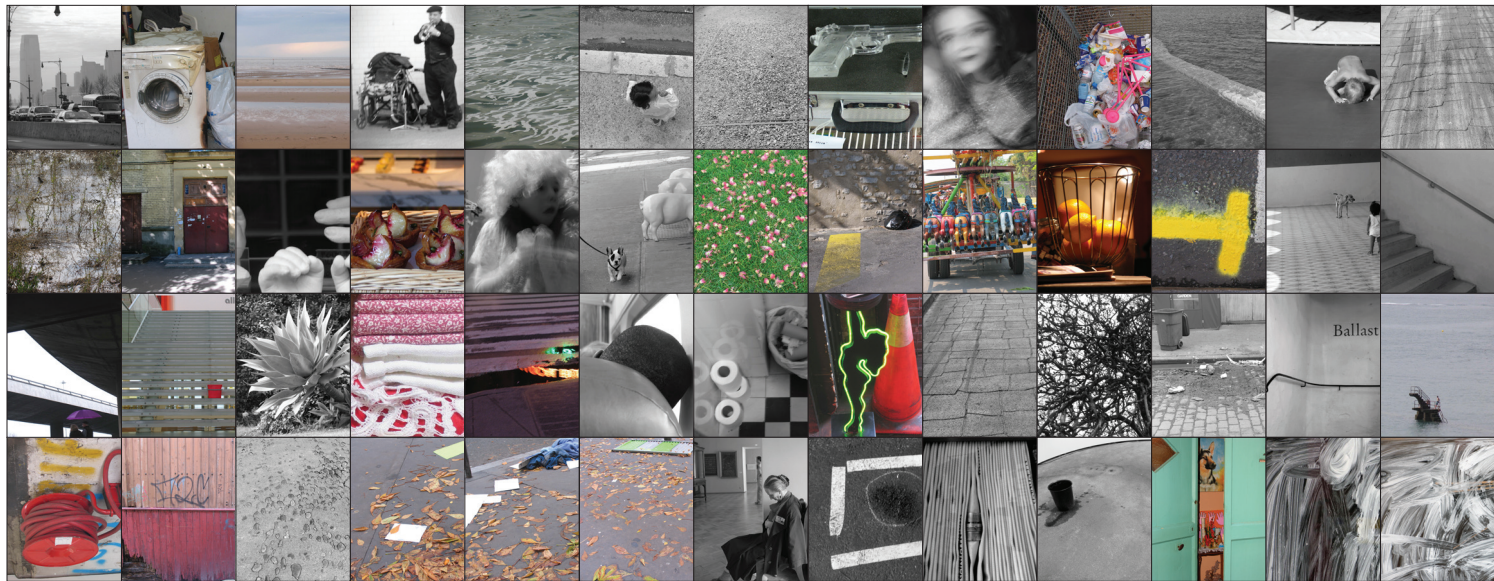
Shall we never frolic in the wastelands anymore?

No scribbledegook?

Will I have to abandon my last credence? The one that always sustained my rebuff: scribbledegook will cease when the noise will c(r)ease.

It's just that I like paper...

clickclack***clickclack***



The lights are on now. We are a bit dazed. A bit lost.

A bunch of western penguins in trousers and tee-shirts wondering what to think. It's uncanny to handle one's own body. Everything is in the balance.

Empty glasses, dumpy glasses—filled with olive stones and bunches without grapes. Let's tidy up a bit.

Two people stand close to an open window.

... It's like having to live with not liking your own body odour. Of course you can cover it up but that's not...

Let's fold the chairs and get some space.

I feel like dancing. Tough on the penguins.

We saw the wild and the vile, drank the wine and the bile, heard the trite, the slight, the plight, and the nice. Sounds and colours. The thickset package of dear WW bewilderment.

Soon after, everything went very quickly. We all left without hurry and in interspersed order under the Western skies.

Habits are the gates of Bliss.

Stumbling.

Time for things to slide, for banter to taper off.

Time to tootle.

I say Nice to have met you and Thank you very much for everything.

Doodle do, doodle done.

Toodle-oo. Fare well.

Spunkily yours.



